



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

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authority of  
The Honourable Don Toth  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
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 resumed at 19:00.]

**EVENING SITTING**

**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 Deputy Speaker:** — It being 7 p.m., the debate will continue on the Throne Speech with the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I had previously stated, my great-grandfather came to what became Saskatchewan with dreams — dreams for his children and his grandchildren. And, Mr. Speaker, they did see a better life in Saskatchewan for their children and their grandchildren. Over the years, the family farm grew and provided for those dreams right here in Saskatchewan.

Allow me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to run the clock some almost 100 years to the year 2002. For 25 years, Heather and I, with my mom and dad, had been operating Chisholm Farms. It was not without the same challenges as faced by our neighbours and in fact by all of Saskatchewan. 2002 was to be the worst drought, the worst crop we had ever experienced. The so-called safety nets in agriculture were simply not working. Crop insurance was telling us that we who had been net payers for years would have to take off a crop that would not result in proceeds that would even pay the fuel bills. It simply wasn't working. Neither were my great-grandfather's dreams for Saskatchewan, those dreams for our children and grandchildren.

We were more fortunate than many. By combining grain farming and working off farm for these 25 years, Heather nursing and myself in accounting endeavours, we were able to provide for opportunities and education for our sons. But the dreams that my great-grandfather had, the dreams for our children and grandchildren in Saskatchewan, were not to be our reality. It became obvious that Saskatchewan would not be the home for our children, and Chisholm Farms would not be operating in the future as a fifth generation family farm. The opportunities and the future for our children were not in Saskatchewan.

It was about at this time that the reality of the future of our province was all too clear, not only to us as a family and as a community, but to the entire country, indeed the entire world. In the feature article of *Maclean's* magazine, July 15, 2002, the cover of which shows an abandoned, run-down farm site, was captioned "Disappearing Saskatchewan: prairie towns are dying and taking with them a part of the country's heritage". I would like to quote in part from the eight-page article about the situation of this province:

But the sort of world that Mitchell . . . [referring to W.O. Mitchell, the Weyburn-born, renowned author] described so well is fast disappearing. The most recent census shows Saskatchewan's population was 979,000 people in 2001 — a decline of 1.1 per cent since 1996 . . . Those who left, deserted rural Saskatchewan. In droves.

The article goes on to say, "The road to success often leads to Alberta." And I quote:

If people are Saskatchewan's greatest export, Alberta is the biggest beneficiary. This is particularly true in Calgary, where even a former mayor hails from the province next door. "Calgary welcomes people," says Al Duerr, a one-time city planner [for the city of] . . . Saskatoon . . . "If you come with good ideas and are willing to work to make things happen, you're embraced here." So many have answered that siren call there's even a thriving Saskatchewan Social Club in Calgary. And whether they left home reluctantly, or rushed to hop aboard the Alberta juggernaut, many club members tell a similar story: they had to . . . move.

Saskatoon native Jodi McNabb left soon after graduating from the University of Saskatchewan 12 years ago. "The opportunities for me seemed to be to sell life insurance or water softeners, neither of which had any appeal," she recalls. So she packed up her car and drove to Calgary, sight unseen. She landed a job in just a few weeks. Today, McNabb, 34, is an associate with The Development Group, which provides fundraising services for non-profit organizations.

Growing up in Moose Jaw, Sask., John McCaig never dreamt he too would end up in Calgary. But today, he is chairman of Trimac Corp., one of the largest trucking companies in North America . . .

Since it became a province in 1905, Saskatchewan's fortunes have been closely . . . [related to those of] agriculture. These days, the sector is hard hit, battling drought, low grain prices and international trade subsidies. In contrast, Alberta's oil and gas industry is booming, as are its manufacturing sectors. "God was a little kinder to Alberta when he distributed the natural resources," notes Marvin Romanow, CFO of Nexen Inc., one of the largest oil and gas companies in Canada.

Romanow, who is originally from Canora, Sask., notes the province may have an even bigger problem. "It is difficult," he explains, "to have a big commercial presence without running into government." Former Yorkton, Sask., native Doug Baldwin, retired president and CEO of TransCanada PipeLines Ltd., adds that lower taxes would encourage more investment in Saskatchewan [Mr. Speaker].

. . . Whether they believe Saskatchewan's outlook has changed, many of those who left nevertheless credit their current success to the fact they once called the province home. "None of us grew up with a feeling of entitlement," says Charlie Fischer, Nexen's Saskatoon-born president

and CEO. “We didn’t start with an advantage. Everything we gained we earned ourselves and we’re not afraid to chase opportunities.” It’s Saskatchewan’s misfortune that they saw those opportunities in Alberta.

And I finished the quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Another notable name from the Saskatchewan socialist past would also abandon Saskatchewan and join Nexen in big, bad Alberta, and that was Dwain Lingenfelter.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was July 2002. It was at about that time that I became reacquainted with an old friend and a new client. This was an individual from very much my background, a grandson of a pioneer. This was an individual that, unlike myself, had had the opportunity to travel the world in various capacities, the most recent as the chief grain commissioner for Canada. This was an individual that I remembered well as a community builder when he had been in our community. And what impressed me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the most, was that this was an individual who made the conscious decision to return to Saskatchewan. I found someone who shared my great-grandfather’s dreams. I thank Milt Wakefield, former member of this Assembly, and seatmate, for enkindling back in me that dream. And that as much as anything else brought me to this place.

I would now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like to move the clock again, this time from 2002 to October 2008. And I thank you for your patience in allowing me to diverse from specifically this 2008 Throne Speech.

I came across another article, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this time from October 26, 2008, from the Sunday edition of the *Edmonton Sun*. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, at the present time our provincial daily newspapers do not publish a Sunday edition. I believe that too will soon change. But in my town, the only Sunday paper available is the *Edmonton Sun*. Not that Alberta envy drives me to this publication on Sunday mornings; it’s just the reality that it’s the only paper in town.

The article is entitled, “Now, it’s called ‘Saskatcha-win.’” And again I take the opportunity to quote in part from this article, and I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this does have direct relevance to this Throne Speech. The article refers to an individual who, like my former colleague, made the decision to return to Saskatchewan, the good times. And once again I will quote in part:

A decade ago a close friend of mine decided to move from Edmonton, and I knew I’d miss him . . .

While I wished him well and knew he’d succeed, I thought to myself: “Saskatchewan? Oh, my God! Why leave a bigger, more prosperous city and province to go to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan?”

I admit it. Like a lot of people, I looked down on that province that was often the butt of jokes. I’m not even sure why I looked down on it. The people are friendly and rock solid . . .

It’s just that the province is so sparsely populated, so small-town, so cold and so very, very flat.

Besides, it’d . . . been a hotbed of socialism, which pretty much guaranteed it would never boom.

I’ll repeat that, Mr. Speaker:

Besides, it’d . . . been a hotbed of socialism, which pretty much guaranteed it would never boom.

But that was then and this is now. Saskatchewanians are getting the last laugh.

Since 2006 it’s been a “have” province driven by rich resources, including oil and gas, uranium and potash.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Chisholm:** —

This week, Saskatchewan Party Premier Brad Wall announced an unbudgeted surplus projected at \$3 billion — at a time when once-rich Ontario . . . [runs] a deficit.

The business-friendly Saskatchewan Party, first elected last fall, announced the largest personal income tax cuts in the province’s history.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Chisholm:** —

People with household incomes of \$40,000 or less won’t pay a cent in provincial . . . tax.

Those earning around \$50,000 will see their income taxes cut [by] 60%.

“A working family with two children can now earn up to \$41,300 before they start to pay any provincial income tax” . . .

Albertans have long joked that, when driving to Saskatchewan you could always tell when you crossed the border: the roads were terrible. But Wall is doing something about that, too.

Besides slashing taxes like some political version of Freddy Krueger, they’re boosting infrastructure spending more than 50% to \$1.5 billion — and the government will maintain a \$2-billion rainy day fund.

The one-time have-not province will lead the nation in economic growth, stealing bragging rights previously held by Alberta. Indeed, Saskatchewan is the only province that’s predicted to have a higher economic growth . . . this year than last [year].

It still can’t beat the tax rates in Alberta, but it’s getting closer — and the way Alberta’s Tories spend money, Saskatchewanians might have the last laugh on that front too.

The article concludes:

If nothing else, we won't be hearing nearly as many Saskatchewan jokes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that kind of summarizes what I wanted to say. I appreciate the kind attention of the members opposite. Thank you. I'll be voting against the amendment and for the motion. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm happy to be back. I'm happy to rise tonight to enter some comments on the Throne Speech into the record. As all of my colleagues have done before me, I'd like to thank the people of Saskatoon Eastview, the constituency that I represent. And I have been their MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] since 1998, so four elections the people have seen fit to put me here. I am very proud to represent them and very humbled that they continue to trust me and trust in the things that I can do.

I also want to thank the people in the executive in Eastview who worked so hard to get me here too, and who continue to support me through years of being in politics. I want to thank my constituency assistant, April Anderson, who does the front work in our constituency office. The people know and love her because she really works hard and she's committed to getting the best service she can for the people that live in our riding.

I also want to thank my family, my husband and my children, who continue to support me; my daughter's family in Regina, who I rely heavily on for strength and keeping me on the right path.

I also want to welcome our newest member, my colleague from Cumberland. I look forward to working with him in the years to come — many years to come — and I know he'll do a wonderful job for the good people of Cumberland.

I want to talk about the money that's in the Throne Speech. I've been on Treasury Board in my years in government. I've been on Treasury Board, I've been in cabinet. Many of the decisions we made as a government were made with oil at \$16 a barrel. Many of the decisions we made and the choices we made were very hard. Many of the things we chose, we had to choose a little bit here and a little bit there.

We still can look around the province and look at hospitals, new hospitals, including one in Swift Current and one in Moosomin. We can look at them in Ile-a-la-Crosse. There's hospitals and renovations. There's long-term care facilities. There's schools — three high schools in Saskatoon, new public schools, new separate schools. All these things happened with a government, an NDP government that had no money, that continued to struggle with \$16-a-barrel oil — 25 was tops.

[19:15]

And the decisions we made were still made to do the best we could for highways, to do the best we could for utility bundle rebates, the best we could for keeping our licence plates

affordable, the best we could for social assistance rates, for all the affordable housing investments that we've made. And I can go on and on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We had a debt when we assumed government in 1991 that was around 14 or \$15 billion. When we left government in '07 it was 7. Somebody paid down that \$7 billion debt. Wasn't the tooth fairy.

Now when I'm looking at the Throne Speech now with all the money that the Sask Party government has to deal with and to spend, there's so many shortcomings that I see. My riding in Eastview is made up of a high percentage of seniors, and many of them are talking about, it's not affordable to live. Many of them are calling, talking about the problems that they're having with condo conversions, being put out of their apartments. They're being converted. They're not able to afford where they're living. Many of them are seeing rent increases. They're not able to stay in the apartments or the accommodations that they've had for years and the friends they've made and the neighbourhoods that they live in.

They're also talking about utility costs. We have all this money in the province but our utilities are still going up. Seniors are going to be ones that are faced quickly with those hardships.

I'm starting to get a lot of comments and a lot of letters from seniors on the drug plan. There are still many, many things that are wrong with how we deliver our drug plan, and one of the things that seniors are finding is they can't afford it. The cut-off that we had, that we've seen with the Sask Party government, isn't working for many seniors. We are looking at some of the things that seniors could use, that other people could use, in being covered under some of the drug plans. There's lots of people who are suffering, that aren't able to get coverage, that aren't able to get assistance.

When I talk about affordable housing . . . I did the task force two summers ago so it's kind of strange to see the Sask Party talk about the task force that they put together this past summer being some sort of revelation. We did it the year before and I was on it. So the things that happened from that, we saw the things that were happening around the province. People were not able to afford the housing, the costs rising. There was substandard housing. We also heard from landlords who were talking about how tenants need to have some assistance on how to be good tenants. Because they also won't build new apartments if they don't have some assurance that they'll be able to get a return on their investment and have a safe environment that they can still afford to maintain. So there's a lot of work to be done.

The hard-to-house are particularly hard hit now. Those are people who are on the street, who have no money, who have maybe a mental illness, who have drug addictions or other addictions. They are really finding it difficult to find a place to live, and some of the money that's being set aside for these things are not going to come until next year. It won't help the people this year, and they're going to certainly feel it this winter.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Ms. Junor:** — Another thing there is no mention at all about in the Throne Speech is students. There's no talk about student

housing, and in Saskatoon in particular students need a housing complex very badly.

There's also no talk about tuition — none mentioned whatsoever. And I know students are particularly interested in how much it's going to cost them. They may be getting rebates on it if they stay in Saskatchewan, but they're still faced with huge debt when they come out of their different courses.

We didn't hear anything about property tax reduction. When is that going to happen? The education portion of the property tax is something that everybody's talked about. It's been promised and promised. It's just dangling out there and there's no mention of when that's going to happen.

Now many of the opposition I've heard today, coming back today — listening to some of the speeches and some of my colleagues' speeches — the opposition seems to think that we should be cheerleaders for them. That's not the role of the opposition is to be cheerleaders for the Sask Party or for the government. Our role is to talk about things that are missing, things that we have criticisms of, things that people bring to our attention that are a concern to them that are maybe not being addressed by the government. So our role isn't to be a cheerleader. It isn't our role to say, good job, all the time.

Some things are being done really well. Lots of the things are carried on — the things that we've done, some of the housing things, some of the increase in education seats. Many of the things that we put in place are now we're reaping the benefits of those or we're seeing the government adding to them. So those were good programs and I'm very happy to see that they're kept on and that they're added to as we can afford it, which we certainly can.

I find it difficult, you know, after a year with the Sask Party in government, to continue to have them say, well you did this or you did that or you didn't do this. You can't hide behind us any more. I'm not the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health has to be accountable for his own actions. And saying whether we did or didn't do something isn't going to cut it. People are watching and they know when you're government, you're responsible. It stops there with you.

One of the things I really found disappointing is the treaties in the classroom. The previous treaty commissioner, Dave Arnot, worked very hard on treaties in the classroom with the teachers, the elders, the Education department, and he has got no credit when the government is talking about treaties in the classroom. It's as if they invented it and did it themselves. It's insulting to Dave Arnot and all the people who came before and worked with him that put treaties in the classroom, into the classrooms in our province.

The only change now is that it's mandatory. When we did it, I was minister of Learning, we weren't ready to make it mandatory. We had to try it first to see if people were willing to do it. This was pretty innovative and creative, and a step forward in actually fighting racism. And I think it's a wonderful program. I'm just disappointed that Dave Arnot doesn't get the credit that he deserves for having put this program in place. The treaties in the classroom really comes to mind because I was involved in that. So I'm disappointed, and not only on my

behalf, but on the treaty commissioner and all the people that worked with him.

But there's things in housing that are being done. We're seeing that there's lots of housing complexes being opened. They didn't start November 7, '07. They were put in the works long before that and are coming now to have their doors opened and the people come into them. Child care spaces, all those things that were put in place — new schools, highway improvements, hospitals — they're all coming on stream because of work that was done by the NDP [New Democratic Party] government when we were in government.

And history will be written, as my colleague from Lakeview said, history will be written by the historians, not by the speeches that the Sask Party has given — the fairy tales that they have told, and the things that they have missed or misrepresented. History will write the things that we did as a government over the last 16 years, and the people will know the truth.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will supporting the amendment and not be supporting the Throne Speech.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased and honoured today to rise and speak in support of the 2008 Speech from the Throne, "A Stronger Saskatchewan. A Better Life."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this summer the Premier asked the MLAs to reach out to the residents of our constituencies and ask them what they felt what we should do with the benefits of growth. In Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, we went out and knocked on hundreds of doors. The residents were surprised to see us at their doorstep. It wasn't an election, and here we were at their homes consulting with them. Many of them told me that this was the first time that a government had ever asked them what they thought.

I would like to thank the residents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley for sharing their ideas, their suggestions on the issues that were the most important to them. The message we heard over and over again was pay down the debt, more money for infrastructure, and careful spending so that the people of Saskatchewan can benefit from the strong economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan spoke and we listened. Since taking office, the Saskatchewan Party government has cut the province's debt by about 40 per cent from nearly 7 billion to about 4.2 billion, saving the taxpayers of Saskatchewan millions of dollars in interest costs in the coming years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan spoke and we listened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of our highways, schools, and hospitals are in bad shape due to years of neglect by the NDP government. The Saskatchewan Party will invest 1 billion this year and 1.5 billion next year. This record investment will

ensure that our infrastructure contributes to our province's growth. The people of Saskatchewan spoke and we listened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the residents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley told us they wanted a compassionate government — a government that truly cared about Saskatchewan, not just paying lip service. As the Premier has said, everyone should share in this new prosperity. Our government has announced the largest income tax cut ever, saving a family of four \$1,320 a year and removing 80,000 low-income earners from the tax roles. These tax cuts benefit the people that need it the most. The people of Saskatchewan spoke and we listened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley told us they wanted a government that would be prudent with the benefits of growth. They wanted a government that would show leadership, responsible financial planning. In these uncertain economic times, strong leadership is more important than ever. Our Saskatchewan Party government will reserve nearly 2 billion in the Growth and Financial Security Fund to ensure we are able to protect our health, education, and social programs during this time of economic uncertainty. The people of Saskatchewan spoke and we listened.

I would like to thank the residents of Saskatchewan who offered their suggestions on these issues. They were the most important to them. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech is their Throne Speech. People of Saskatchewan have found their voice. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are interesting times in Saskatchewan. While many places in the world teeter on economic collapse, Saskatchewan still remains strong.

As Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, nurse recruitment and retention, I have had the opportunity — with health care professionals from across our province and across Canada — this past year I've attended health careers across Canada from Vancouver to Halifax. At these events it's my pleasure to represent our province at the career town halls. I get to share with everyone the good news about Saskatchewan. I get to tell them about our strong economy and the opportunities that our province has for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care professionals are looking at Saskatchewan in a new light. Health care funding is the responsibility of the provincial government. A strong government means that there will be consistent health care funding. This is a strong message to someone looking to start their career or advance it. They want to know that those jobs are going to be there and not be cut when a government faces financial troubles.

People always want to know is there a plan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's why it's so important that the government undertake responsible financial planning. As I stated before, the Saskatchewan government will reserve nearly 2 billion in the Growth and Financial Security Fund to ensure we are able to protect health, education, and our social programs. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. Saskatchewan's economy is strong. Career opportunities are good. Make the right choice, move to Saskatchewan where we have a wonderful lifestyle and plenty of sunshine — this is a message that we can proudly share with people across Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as my role as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, nurse recruitment and retention, I've been asked to examine how the health care system in Saskatchewan addresses the shortage of nurses. I would like to thank the Minister for his support over this past year. Leading this project has been a great honour. We have had the opportunity to meet with close to 1,000 nurses across this province. Consultations and meetings are taking place throughout the province to gather the input of nurses and health care leaders and other health care providers.

[19:30]

This project is examining how the health care system in Saskatchewan will need to evolve to address the shortage of nurses. This project will be developing a recruitment plan to fill nurse vacancies, a plan to retain our present nurses, a plan to engage our Aboriginal community in the nursing workforce, a plan to maximize the effective employment of our in-province trained graduates and review the present recruitment and retention initiatives and programs and recommendations of change, to recruit and retain strategies for our future needs. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're inviting health care professionals to have their say.

Our government is building a stronger Saskatchewan, a better life for Saskatchewan people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy is strong and growing. Saskatchewan has transitioned from a have-not to a have province. In the words of our Premier, "We have experienced a rebirth to become this year country . . ." This change in large is part due to the change in attitude and policies of our new government. Our province, with its strong presence in agriculture and food, energy and resources, is one of the best places in the world to invest.

In my constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, new businesses are opening, new homes are being built each and every day. Regina Qu'Appelle Valley is the place to be. These are signs of a strong economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to conclude by thanking my family, my friends, and constituents for their support over the past year. I would also like to thank our Premier for his strong leadership and the MLAs for their help and guidance. Last but not least, I would like to thank my constituency assistant, Kelly. She's extraordinary. She is one of the hardest working, most dedicated, caring people I know. I would like to thank her for her commitment to the constituents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in support of my government's Throne Speech.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate the opportunity tonight to enter the debate on the government's Throne Speech and the opposition's amendment, an amendment, Mr. Speaker, that I know we will be voting on later tonight. And I look forward to all the opportunities to stand with the members of the New Democratic Party tonight in

support of that amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Why is the member on her feet?

**Ms. Ross:** — I ask leave to introduce guests.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member has asked permission for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Agreed.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to introduce my constituency assistant, Kelly. She is in the gallery today, and I feel quite honoured that she came to hear me present my Speech to the Throne. But also I'd like to tell everyone that, you know, Kelly has been just wonderful in her support in the constituency office. When I go and meet people they say, we really like you but we love Kelly.

So you know, it's support and help like that that makes my job easier. Thank you very much, Kelly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

### 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.]

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure tonight to join my colleagues here in commenting on the government's Throne Speech. The debate tonight is on that Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and on the amendment put forward by the opposition New Democratic Party. And, Mr. Speaker, I look forward later tonight to voting with my colleagues on the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

The Throne Speech introduced by the government actually earlier last week, Mr. Speaker, gives us an opportunity to think very seriously about the needs of the province, the people of the province, and the way in which government addressed the issues raised by the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I think that all members in this Chamber, regardless of how long they've been here, understand and realize that government is about decision making. Government therefore is about priorities. And governments, Mr. Speaker, are judged on the basis of how they address those priorities with their policies and their decision making.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to speak to a number of classrooms around the province over the years. And people have often . . . students, primarily younger students have often asked me what is government all about. Mr. Speaker, I've described it to young people in schools as being what I said earlier: government is about decision making.

And I apply it in their own lives. When you get up in the morning and you choose Corn Flakes or Raisin Bran, Mr. Speaker, you're making a decision that will affect your thinking throughout the day, your health. It's a decision that you make, Mr. Speaker, in order to enjoy your day. Mr. Speaker, when you dress for school, if you put on a sweater or a shirt or a T-shirt, Mr. Speaker, you are making a decision that's going to influence how you are judged by people when they see you and talk to you. Mr. Speaker, those are decisions that individuals make every day.

In government, decisions are also made every day, and the decisions that we take will therefore be judged by the people who are relying on government to support them in their times of need.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government in the Throne Speech has identified their priorities over the course of the next year. Mr. Speaker, I've been working with people in my community and communities that are adjacent to The Battlefords over the course of the summer and the fall months now, Mr. Speaker, as the fall is beginning. I've been talking with these people, and I get the distinct impression, Mr. Speaker, that the decisions that the public want government to engage in are not the decisions that are being outlined by the government in their Throne Speech today, Mr. Speaker.

I've been involved in the world of representing people to a level of government for 20 years now, Mr. Speaker. Not once, not once in those 20 years, Mr. Speaker, did I ever have to have someone tell me to go out and talk to my constituents, whether it was in the federal House of Commons, the municipality of The Battlefords, or in this House, Mr. Speaker. I've never had anybody tell me I had to go and talk to people because, Mr. Speaker, that's my job. My job is to understand, to listen, and to respond, Mr. Speaker.

This summer this government had only one job to do. And, Mr. Speaker, it does appear that really the toughest job they've had since they've been elected is the one job they had to do this summer — decide how to spend all the money that they were left with after the 2007 election. The Premier was so concerned about this, Mr. Speaker, that he had to tell his members, cabinet and backbenchers alike, he had to tell them to go out and ask people how do we spend this money.

How do we spend this money? That was their one big job this summer, Mr. Speaker. And it's interesting that at the same time that the Premier's reporting to the media that he's asked his members to go do what they're supposed to do anyway, Mr. Speaker. The Premier said, and this government is working on plans to provide debt relief, to provide income tax reduction, and provide infrastructure support — interesting, Mr. Speaker, absolutely interesting. The Premier tells his members to go out and listen to the public, tells them what to listen for. And wouldn't you know it, when they come back, they say what



they heard was debt reduction, income tax reduction, and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

Well there's no doubt those are important matters. There's no doubt those are important matters, and it's nice to see that this government is addressing those things. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? The people in this province are talking about, thinking about, and addressing their MLAs when they ask the right questions, a number of different things, Mr. Speaker. And there's a recognition that this province's economic prosperity, Mr. Speaker, is causing some problems at the municipal level, at the individual level, at the provincial level — problems for vulnerable people. And governments have to address the issues, not only of those who have money, Mr. Speaker, but of those who don't.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government will be judged not only on this Throne Speech, but at the end of the day, at the end of this four-year mandate that they have, on how well they have managed this boom for this province's most vulnerable people. And, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is telling us that the vulnerable people in this province, Mr. Speaker, are just not the priority at this point in time. Mr. Speaker, we've seen some program and policy that are addressing those on social services, Mr. Speaker. And we applaud some of the initiatives moving forward, because when you have \$3 billion in the bank, Mr. Speaker, you can do certain things. And, Mr. Speaker, they should be doing those things.

But what are we hearing from the people of our constituencies and our communities? Health care is still number one amongst the people in this province. Mr. Speaker, health care is still number one. Our waiting lists continue to be as long and in fact longer than they have been in the past, Mr. Speaker. And while progress has been made on the issue of waiting lists, Mr. Speaker, there is still a considerable amount of work to do. And the public is saying to this government — through me, my colleagues, and members opposite, Mr. Speaker — to keep health care number one, Mr. Speaker.

That's not what we're hearing here. We've got a \$600 billion need for capital in the health care field. The Throne Speech tells us we got about 100 million. Mr. Speaker, that is a step in the right direction, but with \$3 billion in the bank, Mr. Speaker, we should be doing a lot more than that.

I'll give you a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker. In my own community, of course, my own community, everybody in this House and around the province is aware of the need in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, for the replacement of the 100-year-old Saskatchewan Hospital. A considerable amount of work has been done to identify the design needs for the Saskatchewan Hospital construction, Mr. Speaker. And what we're waiting for now is for the government to provide the okay for that to go to detailed drawings, Mr. Speaker, detailed drawings.

The government is saying that we can't go there yet because the project costs are getting larger than we had originally anticipated. Well, Mr. Speaker, so it is with every other project in this province. Costs have risen, Mr. Speaker. So we take that into account, but let's send it off to design, Mr. Speaker, and use some of the money that's being earmarked and identified

for health capital, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that this project can continue. But we're not alone, Mr. Speaker. This summer, in addition to speaking to the constituents in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to community leaders in Lloydminster, in Turtleford, in Meadow Lake, in Shellbrook . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. And so on behalf of some of the people that I talked to this summer — because I've heard nothing from members opposite in their speeches from these communities, Mr. Speaker, on some of the things the municipal leaders told me — I want to make some representation. For example, for the people of Lloydminster. I met with mayor and council in the city of Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, and you know what they said their no. 1 issue was? The no. 1 issue of members of council and the mayor, Mr. Speaker, was health care. Yes, they've got some concerns about revenue sharing and about education property tax and all of that, but the mayor says to me, health is the most critical thing in this community. We want an interprovincial hospital, Mr. Speaker. That's what the mayor says to me. He says, represent that to this government, he said, because I don't think they are hearing us on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, in Turtleford, Mr. Speaker, I met with members of the municipal government in Turtleford, Mr. Speaker. Their no. 1 issue is health care, Mr. Speaker, and having doctors in rural Saskatchewan. On behalf of the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford, I say to the government opposite — because I sat here and listened to his speech; not once did he mention this, Mr. Speaker — on behalf of the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford, I say to the government opposite, for the people of Turtleford, Mr. Speaker, health care is very important, and deal with that particular issue — the doctors and the nurses.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, in Meadow Lake I met with the municipal leadership in Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker. I listened to the member's speech, the member from Meadow Lake's speech, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear anything representing the issues that were discussed in Meadow Lake when I met with the municipal council. On behalf of the people of Meadow Lake, I say to the government, health care in particular, a dialysis machine in the Meadow Lake hospital, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the issues in Meadow Lake. The member opposite didn't mention it. I feel I have to, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. There's starting to be a few members starting to carry conversations across the floor and starting to get very vocal with it. I would ask that you respect the member that has the floor.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And one other community that I met with, I went and talked to the municipal leadership there in Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker. And the member from Shellbrook Rosthern didn't mention the need for the new hospital in Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker. They have been talking about the need for growth in that community for some time. Reviews have been done. The inventory has been done. Mr. Speaker, the government is sitting on \$3 billion. There's \$100 million set aside for capital. It's time to start work on the

hospital in Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook opposite, I say to the Minister of Health, let's do something for the people of Shellbrook and deal with their capital health issues.

Mr. Speaker, these members also talked about issues. These people that I talked to also talked about issues that the people in The Battlefords are concerned about. They're interested in housing, Mr. Speaker. I did a collection of some newspaper clippings, Mr. Speaker, from different parts of the province, just thinking about the need for housing and the impact that the growth, this economic growth that we are experiencing, Mr. Speaker, the impact that that's having on individual people's lives in communities around this province.

Mr. Speaker, Weyburn is one of those communities that is significantly affected by the oil boom in this province, Mr. Speaker. We're all excited and delighted for the economic activity that's taking place. But when a government is judged on its decision making, Mr. Speaker, they aren't judged on how they spend the money that they get for the benefit of a few, Mr. Speaker. They're judged on what they do to help to manage the difficulties that exist from this boom.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the *Weyburn Review*, quoted this summer, in the *Weyburn Review*, here's an editorial:

The other side of the equation [meaning the oil boom] is that there are many jobs going unfulfilled in retail service and oil industries, in agriculture, both urban and rural. The growth is universal here in Saskatchewan, but it also means growing pains and challenges for how our towns, cities and rural areas will be able to handle this growth.

Mr. Speaker, that editorial in the *Weyburn Review* goes on:

Even with all the construction, for example, there's a shortage of housing available, and when homes do come up for sale, the prices are much higher than they were when they were even two years ago. Rental rates have shot up with the zero vacancy rate, and coupled with the high price of fuel, it has led to an upward spiral in the cost of living.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the *Leader-Post* goes to Weyburn and takes a look at what's happening in Weyburn. "Weyburn renters have no place to go," says the *Leader-Post* in an editorial.

**An Hon. Member:** — Why are you so grumpy?

**Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asks about why am I so grumpy? Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer that question, unlike members opposite who were asked questions earlier today and wouldn't answer them. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer the question in this very important way.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here to point out to the government that they have a job to do. That is what they said prior to the general election. That election campaign was largely fought on the basis of who can best manage the growth that's going to take place in this province. The people knew that the groundwork had been laid for growth, Mr. Speaker, and they were looking for individuals in a government collectively who could best

manage the growth. It was a message that the Saskatchewan Party opposite put out in their material, we can best manage the growth.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, you manage the growth in this province by managing the problems that come with that growth. If you ignore the problems, Mr. Speaker, you ignore your ability to manage growth.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the minister opposite says to me, why am I so grumpy, Mr. Speaker, I'm not grumpy. I'm not grumpy in the sense that, oh my goodness the sky is falling. I'm grumpy in the sense that people are telling me this government is not doing their job. They are not managing in the interests of the ordinary people of Saskatchewan, those who are experiencing difficulties in managing the growth of this province.

Mr. Speaker, that's not just individuals as I pointed out earlier. That's also municipal governments. And this government has got one big task ahead of themselves, Mr. Speaker, in managing that file. That file, Mr. Speaker, is almost a year overdue, Mr. Speaker. The municipalities are aware of how close we were to coming to an agreement on revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. They were at the table with us. The members opposite can laugh and guffaw all they want. The trouble is the municipal sector knows. They're not trying to fool anybody over there except some people, Mr. Speaker, that are willing to be influenced. The municipal sector knows how close we were.

Almost one full year later, Mr. Speaker, and there's still no announced progress on the revenue sharing file. And what are the municipalities hearing now, Mr. Speaker, about a downturn in the economy on a national scale, Mr. Speaker? We're not immune to that in the long term here in Saskatchewan. We're benefiting now from a couple of years of very sustained and strong growth in the resource sector. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, this will continue for some time.

But, Mr. Speaker, the biggest growth, the substantial growth in the resource sector, Mr. Speaker, has taken place. It will be sustained and it will continue, but municipalities now are dealing with the need for additional infrastructure within their own borders. They're dealing with additional fuel costs for their equipment. Every grader that goes on our streets, roads, and municipal roads, Mr. Speaker, uses fuel at the expense of the municipal taxpayer. Mr. Speaker, that increase in price is a direct result of the increase in the cost of living in here.

Revenue sharing is important for municipalities. And, Mr. Speaker, municipalities are still, are still having to collect the school tax that this government has said, Mr. Speaker, they are going to reduce significantly. We are not yet seeing any positive results on the education property tax reduction front, Mr. Speaker. It's still speeches over there, Mr. Speaker. Nothing has gone forward as far as the average municipality is concerned. We have to deal with those issues, Mr. Speaker. We have to deal with those issues, and we can't continue to just leave things the way they are, Mr. Speaker.

The school divisions are also incurring additional costs. Think of all those school buses we're running on rural roads, Mr. Speaker. Every one of those school buses is using fuel that two years ago was about half the cost of what it is today, even with

the reduced costs, the price of the fuel today, Mr. Speaker. And those school divisions have to pay for those costs. The costs of education, providing education, and the infrastructure to support education is also increasing, Mr. Speaker. We need to be sure that we're dealing with the big picture.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of Saskatchewan are looking for the plan — the grand plan. They thought that with the Throne Speech there'd be some recognition that in the course of this four-year mandate that this government has, that there would be some plan that would acknowledge that their role is to understand what people need and provide a way of delivering it. And instead, Mr. Speaker, we've got a reiteration of the lines that the leader of the government, the Premier, put out prior to sending out his troops across the province.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do more than tax reductions next year. We need to do more than say that we're going to put more money into infrastructure. We need to identify for example, Mr. Speaker, what that infrastructure is. Is infrastructure just roads and bridges or is it also our community airports? Is it our community recreational facilities? Mr. Speaker, what has happened to the recreation fund that this government started with revenues received from the resource sector?

Mr. Speaker, when my government under my premier identified additional resource revenues, what did we do with it, Mr. Speaker? We put it into community planning. We put it into community planning for recreation, cultural facilities — \$100 million, Mr. Speaker, in some of the first monies that we received. What's happened to that, Mr. Speaker? And where is this government's commitment to helping provide recreational opportunities for vulnerable families and communities where, Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is costing them considerable challenges?

Mr. Speaker, there is one other quotation that I wanted to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, and I just read this this morning. This is a article, again in the *Leader Post*. And the headline, Mr. Speaker, interested me because it's happening in my local area as well. The headline in the paper reads "Stoughton adjusting to booming economy." It's a great little article, Mr. Speaker, and I recommend it to everybody in the *Leader-Post* today. But I did get this interesting paragraph right in the middle, right in the middle, Mr. Speaker:

Housing is a municipal priority. Homes that sold for \$60,000 a couple of years ago now list for more than \$200,000 [*Leader-Post* article goes on to say], a meaningless figure if the potential seller's plan is to remain in Stoughton and to live indoors.

Interesting point, Mr. Speaker. The community is booming, Mr. Speaker, community is booming but if somebody wants to benefit from that boom locally they may find themselves living in a tent outdoors. Further, Mr. Speaker, how is it their fault or how is it their responsibility? The article goes on:

Council [Stoughton council] intends to annex a quarter-section for new residential and commercial development . . .

Good for them. They clap for it. But, Mr. Speaker:

. . . but the proposed rezoning is held up in Regina, where provincial government approval runs much slower than the oil business.

Mr. Speaker, we're trying to build communities. We're trying to build communities with all the component points. The most important part of the community, Mr. Speaker, is shelter — shelter for individuals who are going to go to work. They've got to afford to buy the house, and, Mr. Speaker, they've got to have the land available.

This government has a lot of responsibility. They have to stand up. They have to take that responsibility. And they have to move forward. That's what a Throne Speech is all about, Mr. Speaker, and we heard none of that. There's no vision. There's no plan, Mr. Speaker.

There's absolutely no hope that the people of Saskatchewan have that this is a government that can spend their money wisely — the people's money, Mr. Speaker. The only real decision they have to make, Mr. Speaker, is to spend all this money. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're here to ensure that they understand what the people need that money spent on, Mr. Speaker.

I will be supporting the amendment tonight, Mr. Speaker. I will be opposing the government's motion in support of the Throne Speech. And, Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that there are members opposite who realize that the people they talked to this summer, who talked about the need for health care and housing and education and not just tax reductions, Mr. Speaker, that some of those people will be able to stand up and vote with the opposition tonight in support of the amendment. Mr. Speaker, I challenge them to think. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First of all as many of my colleagues on this side have done, I'd like to welcome the newest member to the Assembly. Well I don't know the gentleman very well. We did run into each other in the hall last week, and we did have a chance to chat for a minute. And I expressed to him privately what I'd like to express to him publicly today. I very much enjoyed the last, almost a year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hard to believe a year's flown by that fast, and I very much enjoyed it.

And I certainly hope the member from Cumberland will enjoy his three years in the House. And at the end of that, I certainly hope he enjoys his return to private life. I'd like to mention I do feel sorry for him actually with the choice of seatmates, but rest assured . . . I'd like to assure him that with rookies we don't get to pick our seatmate. Oh let me rephrase that: I have a wonderful seatmate, but I do sit across from the member from Carrot River Valley. So I've been punished as well.

[20:00]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last several months have been very interesting for me. I've had the opportunity to travel around the

Rosetown-Elrose constituency, both just travelling around and talking to constituents and also going to a number of community events. I want to tell you about some of the things I've heard from some of my constituents, but before I do that I'd like to tell you about some of the events I attended.

I've been to many things. I've been to fowl suppers — too many to count, and I've got the waistline to prove it. I've attended grand openings. I've been in parades. I've even been in golf tournaments, Mr. Speaker, not near as many golf tournaments as my good friend and colleague from Weyburn-Big Muddy who golfs a lot more than any of us. But I've played golf with him, Mr. Speaker, and he certainly needs the work on his game. So that's okay.

I've enjoyed attending those events, and I'd like to tell you about just a few of them. I mentioned that I've attended some parades. One of them was in Outlook in July. And it was for their centennial; it was 100 years for the town of Outlook. They had a huge crowd for the entire weekend. It was a massive turnout. The organizers were thrilled and they deserve a pat on the back. And for the parade itself, there was many, many people lining the streets. It was just heartwarming to see all the young kids in that community, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And Outlook is a thriving community, and there are many, many exciting developments in that area. One of those exciting developments is a new residential development. It's done by a gentleman by the name of Murray Silljer, who's put a lot of time and effort into it. And it's just out of town along the river to the north. It's a beautiful, scenic development. And I was very pleased to be able to attend the sod-turning ceremony.

The Minister of Environment was at that ceremony in recognition of some of the leading edge, environmentally-friendly initiatives that are in that project. It was great to have her there, and the citizens of the community really appreciated her attendance. After the sod-turning ceremony, the mayor of Outlook, Bob Stephenson, took the minister and I on a quick tour of some of the new developments around the town.

I also spent a very enjoyable evening in Outlook a while ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was honoured to be their guest speaker at their annual Citizen of the Year banquet. The Citizen of the Year for 2008 was a gentleman by the name of David Alm who is a very worthy recipient. And he received his award at a wonderful event put on by the Outlook and District Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is led by a good friend of mine, Lyle Rankin, and the Chamber in Outlook is doing a wonderful job, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

While I'm speaking about Outlook, just a few weeks ago I had the good fortune to attend the official opening of the Outlook campus of the Great Plains regional college. Great Plains regional college is the amalgamation of Prairie West Regional College and Cypress Hills Regional College. Another big event for Outlook this year, I had the good fortune to attend the opening of a brand new hospital with the Minister of Health.

Great things are happening in Outlook and great things are happening all over the constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also attended numerous events in my hometown of Rosetown. One

in particular stands out, and I'd like to tell you a little bit about it. A couple of months ago the brand-new Rosetown golf course club house was officially opened. The project's been in the works for a couple of years, with the construction starting in September of 2007. It's a very functional, practical, well-designed building, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the most impressive part of this project is that it was funded completely by donations.

In 2007 the golf course was not able to acquire any grant money to assist them, so President Jim Duffus and the members of the golf course executive tackled it on their own. They worked hard to get donations large and small from many, many people, and it's my understanding that the entire project was completed without borrowing any money. The building cost is approximately a quarter of a million dollars. I'd like to commend all the volunteers who donated both time and money to the project. Those type of projects can't be done without all the volunteer labour, and I take my hat off to those people.

Speaking of community volunteers, Mr. Speaker, the next community event I want to tell you a little bit about is a classic example of the volunteerism in small-town Saskatchewan. The event, which is sponsored by SaskTel, was sending donations to Uganda to help AIDS-ravaged and poverty-stricken Uganda citizens, and it's from the good people in Eston.

This two-day event started on Saturday, September 20 with more than 100 volunteers from the Eston area at the old hospital to sort and box the donations. Now I say the old hospital, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because that building is no longer used as a hospital because it was closed in the 1990s by the NDP government. Not only were the volunteers from the Eston community, the donations were all from there as well. Example of donations were medical and school supplies and clothes for the men, women, and children of northern Uganda who have been living in war-torn displacement camps.

The event continued on Sunday, September 21, which is World Peace Day. There were so many donations — in fact too many for the container. The container is 10 feet high, 8 feet wide, and 40 feet long. The donations were so great that a newspaper reported that they exceeded what SaskTel would normally receive for a container project in Saskatchewan's largest centres like Saskatoon and Regina. All this from small town Eston. The excess donations were given to the needy through another container project.

You know, I learned a lesson at that event as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Eston is the hometown of our Minister of Energy and Resources and he was at the event as I was, and the president of SaskTel, and they had a podium and they had a brief presentation. The minister spoke and when he left the podium he went down and all the volunteers at the event were wearing jerseys made out of a T-shirt type material and so they could be identified. When the minister left the podium, they presented him with a jersey as I was speaking. And as he was putting the jersey on I couldn't help but make a comment that it was fitting a little snug and he must have put on a few pounds since his playing days.

Got a bit of a chuckle. The minister has got a great sense of humour. He laughed about it. I, as I mentioned earlier at the

fowl suppers, I have put quite a few pounds on since election time. When I left the podium they gave me a jersey as well. Now you have to put this in perspective, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The minister is very highly regarded and deservedly so in his hometown. When I left the podium they presented me with a jersey so I started to put it on, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was tough. I had to wiggle into that thing. But after the comments I had made about the minister, I couldn't stop.

So I put it on. It wasn't good, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I looked like a pig in a blanket. Once I got it on, let's just say it wasn't pretty. Now it wasn't as bad as . . . I remember an infamous speech from a few months ago about possibly the member from Cannington in a Speedo. It wasn't that bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it was bad. So as soon as I had it on, I wiggled back out of it much to the delight of the people who had given it to me. And then I looked at the label. It was a small, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I learned a valuable lesson there. When you are in Eston, even in fun you don't poke fun at the Minister of Energy and Resources. The people there are not only proud of him, they are very protective of him as well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention in particular two of the volunteers who were involved in that project in Eston. This project was spearheaded by Glenys Getz and Marie Knutson. They both had worked on a similar charitable project and they wanted to involve the wonderful community of Eston in something similar.

I also want to acknowledge the town council. They passed a resolution to help with the collection and storage of the donations and they provided storage space for the project. And finally I also want to mention some wonderful young people who also helped by volunteering, and those were the student volunteers from Eston Composite School and also from Eston College. Eston is a wonderful, charitable community, Mr. Speaker, and I feel so privileged to represent them in this legislature.

In my home area, a gentleman by the name of Ken Ogle, long-term reeve for the RM [rural municipality] of St. Andrews stepped down as reeve, is being replaced by another fine gentleman by the name of Garry Nisbet. I had the opportunity to get together at a small gathering for Ken Ogle to recognize his years of service to the RM, and I just want to publicly thank him for all the work he did.

Also, another person, a very good friend of mine near and dear to my heart who was very active in my election campaign and also in my nomination, the reeve of the RM of Pleasant Valley — one of the RMs that I worked for before going into politics — Jerry Spence, long-term reeve there is also leaving. They had a get-together for him, and I was very pleased to be invited, and he's being very ably replaced by Blake Jeffries. I just want to acknowledge all those people and all the work they've done for that community.

Mr. Speaker, as I met with my constituents at these community events and just touring around the constituency talking to people, it was gratifying to see how optimistic the citizens of this great province really are. And when we discussed what the financial priorities of this government should be, many people talked about debt reduction. Saskatchewan people tend to be

level-headed, practical people. They realize that too much debt is a burden that stifles growth, and they realize that debt reduction will save millions of dollars in interest — millions of dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that can be used towards increasing the quality of life for all our citizens.

Already, thanks to our *Growth and Financial Security Act*, the debt has been reduced dramatically. Several of my colleagues have referred to the rate of debt reduction as \$5,000 per minute. Just during the speech from the member from North Battleford, massive amounts of money will have been paid off.

Another topic I heard many, many times from the good people of the Rosetown-Elrose constituency was the infrastructure problem. Under the previous government, highways were left to deteriorate, schools were left to deteriorate, and hospitals were left to deteriorate — the ones that weren't closed. Highways in particular are a huge issue in my constituency as the former NDP government turned their back on rural Saskatchewan.

Last spring our government announced a \$1 billion infrastructure fund. And I'm thrilled, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this amount will be increased by 50 per cent to a total of \$1.5 billion. We have a long way to go to recover from years of NDP rule, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we're well on our way.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the good people of Rosetown-Elrose are also concerned about high taxes. Our government is implementing the largest income tax cut in Saskatchewan history. We're raising personal income tax exemptions to the point that a family of four in Saskatchewan will now have the highest level of personal tax exemptions of any province in Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Reiter:** — And the greatest impact will be for low-income people — people who need it the most. And 80,000 Saskatchewan people will no longer pay income tax at all.

And speaking of lower taxes, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to you about education tax on property. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite like to claim that our government hasn't moved fast enough on this issue. And yet what did they do during 16 years in power? Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has kept our campaign promise to increase the property tax credit — promise made, promise kept. Our election platform also called for a long-term solution, and that's exactly what we'll do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

On the other hand, what did the previous government do? In 2003 the then premier, now the Leader of the Opposition, he announced at the SARM convention — the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities annual convention — he announced, and I quote: "The status quo is not on." And then what happened? Nothing, for a year.

At the 2004 SARM convention, he again announced, the status quo is not on. Mr. Speaker, that seemed to be typical of the previous government. In fact I want to read a quote to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a quote.

We are pledged to do away with the education tax as soon

as we get the new sources of revenue to take the place of the revenue now realized from that tax. When we develop new sources of revenue sufficient to supplant the revenue now raised from the tax, we shall do away with the tax because we consider it regressive legislation.

You know where that quote was from, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It was from August 31, 1944, and it was none other than then premier, Tommy Douglas.

And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during debate just the other day in this House, the member from Regina Dewdney said that we should show — get this — he said we should show bravery and take education tax off property. That's what he said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and yet they didn't do it when they were in power. That member from Regina Dewdney was talking about leadership and bravery. Those are his words. I guess he has a much different interpretation of those words than I do. I guess to him they mean criticizing your colleagues and calling them out in the media and undermining your leader. Well to that, Mr. Speaker, I say no thank you. Mr. Speaker, I prefer the leadership on this side of the House.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[20:15]

**Mr. Reiter:** — A brilliant, articulate man who is not only leading this caucus but also the citizens of this province, who not only see the outstanding potential in our Premier, but also finally, the outstanding potential in this great province.

I'll take that kind of leadership, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every time.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Reiter:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll be voting against the amendment and will be very, very proud to vote for the original motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan):** — I recognize the member from Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into the reply to the Throne Speech.

One of the hazards of entering late into the debate is that a lot of good things have been said about this Throne Speech. And there isn't a lot more that one can add. However, this speech . . . there's many good things that is in the speech, and I think I will just reiterate some of those. I will also try to perhaps bring a unique dimension to the debate this evening.

But before I do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to first of all, as other members have done, thank those who help us in performing our duties as elected members. I'd like to thank my family, my wife Marlene, my son Kristen, who looks after the farm whilst I'm away attending to the duties as a member of this legislature.

And as all members in the legislature, in this Assembly know, we certainly cannot get along and could not perform our duties and serve our constituents without the very able help of our constituency assistants. And I have two of the very best, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I would certainly like to at this time thank both Carol and Sandra for all the support and all the good work that they do in my constituency office. They look after the inquiries and the needs of the constituents, they keep me on track and are certainly a great help to myself and a great service to the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to, along with other members from this side of the House, extend my welcome to the new member from Cumberland. I listened closely to his maiden speech last week. I must say that I was very impressed with his comments, and I'm sure he will be a very able representative of the constituents and the people of Cumberland.

I would offer a word of caution or perhaps, if I may be permitted, a word of advice. Those of us who have entered this life as a mid-life career change, perhaps we can bring a somewhat different perspective to this House, but we have to be careful that we are not drawn in, which is very easy and we often do that — get drawn in to the very partisan nature of the House.

There is certainly place for partisan remarks and partisan conduct, but we have to, I think, all of us need to remember that we are serving the people of this province. And even though our style of government is an adversarial framework that we operate under, I think we have to occasionally step back and remember who we are representing and who we are working for. However, as I said, that doesn't rule out some spirited debate which can be of a partisan nature at times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the ninth Throne Speech that I've had the privilege of replying to and I have to say — and I probably am a bit partisan at this point in time — but it is one of the best throne speeches that we've had in this House. It is forward-thinking. It has meat to it. It is, as throne speeches are, they are generally of a nature that are quite broad-based and so on, but this Throne Speech refers to specific initiatives. It demonstrates a new energy. And I think the people of the province will be well served when all the initiatives that are contained in this Throne Speech are implemented. And I have no doubt that they will be implemented.

Some of the highlights, as members of this side of the House and members opposite have mentioned, are the fiscal initiatives, tax cuts, debt reduction, the commitment to increased infrastructure spending, and also a provision for fiscal security. And these are important things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but in my mind they are not the most important things.

The most important things are the fiscal initiatives give this government the ability to implement a number of social initiatives that are outlined in the Throne Speech. Things like increased daycare spaces, more pre-kindergarten programs, a whole host of initiatives that have been announced by the Minister of Social Services and the Minister of Health for people with disabilities, seniors, and the disadvantaged in our province. Those are the people that we need to . . . and the

reason why we need to have a good balance sheet in the province so that we can look after the most disadvantaged, and we can lay the groundwork for future financial and social security in our province. And that's what this Throne Speech does, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As the philosophers tell us, it's financial security and financial responsibility are the means to provide the good life for all people of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure all members of this Assembly and people of our province are certainly aware of the recent turmoil in the financial markets, in the commodity markets around the world. We've seen a historic meltdown in financial markets across the world, wide swings in the various indices, whether it be the TSX in Canada or the Dow Jones in the US [United States] — unprecedented downturns. And then the next day we'll see, at least in the last couple of weeks, some run-up in stock prices. It all presents a great deal of uncertainty in the world markets, and not only in the financial markets but also in the commodity markets, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We've seen the price of oil drop dramatically. We've seen banks, investment banks in particular in the US, declare bankruptcy. We've seen governments around the world having to step up with huge support for the banking system to ensure that we don't have a repeat of 1929. In Canada we have been fairly fortunate in that our banking system seems to be one of the most stable around the world. But even so, the federal Finance minister has put some measures in place to ensure that we don't suffer the same fate as some of the other countries.

As I mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, something that this government and members of this province keep a very close eye is the price of oil. And we've seen, as I've said, very wide swings or great changes in the price of crude oil. And from a high in July of \$147 a barrel where today — I have to admit I check the cable station BNN [Business News Network] which I've only done in the last month or so — I never really paid much attention to it, but the price of oil closed just under \$64 a barrel today, a dramatic change from the most recent highs.

But oil and gas and gold and copper and silver aren't the only commodities that have had dramatic price decreases. Our agricultural commodities have seen similar decreases from their most recent highs, again in July. In fact if you take charts of the price swings in the oil and gas markets and overlay them with charts that show the changes in the ag commodity prices, they mirror each other. For an example, we've seen canola, which put in a high again in early July of about \$725 a tonne. It closed today at approximately \$425 a metric tonne or a change of about \$6.80 a bushel in a matter of a few months. That's dramatic to our producers in Saskatchewan.

Other agricultural commodities have seen similar declines in price. And yet the cost of inputs and things such as fuels and other inputs that our agriculture producers require to produce next year's crop, we've seen a bit of a backing off of prices but nowhere near to the extent that the commodity prices have. And unless some things change, we're going to see some challenges in the upcoming year in our agricultural sector.

There's a couple of sayings in the commodity markets. I've

been an observer and a participant in the commodity markets in one fashion or another for many years, and there's a couple of sayings that I think at least used to hold some truths. I'm not so sure under current conditions whether they apply completely now. But one of the sayings is that high commodity prices are like airplanes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, and we've never left one up there yet. And that's been very evident here in the last couple of months.

And another saying is that there's no better cure for low prices than low prices and that refers to eventually commodities. The reason why commodities are a low price is because there's an oversupply. And a low price will discourage production and therefore the market will correct itself. As I said, I'm not so sure whether they apply completely now because of the changes in dynamics in the markets around the world.

But the reason I mention this is to demonstrate the impact of what has happened in the last few months. And this is a period where those . . . That brings me to another catchphrase, I guess, that is often heard in markets, and that is that cash is king. And this is a time where I think that does hold true. This is a time where prudent investors, prudent producers are putting aside sums of cash because of the uncertainty. And that's I think what we saw in this Speech from the Throne. And we will see that in the budget where it's necessary to insure the future prosperity of this province, in that we can continue to see the economic growth in this province.

We need to have a larger than normal amount of cash in the bank. And that's why we've seen the Premier and the Minister of Finance tell the people of this province that we need to have that \$2 billion in the bank. And even though the members opposite sometimes criticize us for having that amount of money in the bank, I think the people in the province see that as a very prudent move, and it will insure future prosperity for all citizens in this province in the upcoming years.

Some of the other initiatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that caught my attention in the Throne Speech, and I'm very proud to be supporting that Throne Speech, is the creation of Innovation Saskatchewan. What Innovation Saskatchewan will do will help those developing sectors of our economy to participate and become established entities within the new economy. And things like information technology and those other areas of our economy that are struggling or have struggled in the past are growing. They need perhaps some help and expertise and advice and those sorts of things. And Innovation Saskatchewan will address some of those things.

And why is that important, you might ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well if you look at Saskatchewan's economy, a large part of our economy is resource-based, and we've obviously seen the benefits of that in the last few years where there was a large demand throughout the world for resources.

[20:30]

Now with all the uncertainty down there, with the slowdown in worldwide economies, will that demand continue? We hope it will, but it'll probably be at a reduced rate. So therefore what we need to do in this province is develop other sectors of our economy that will pick up the slack when we see a bit of a

downturn in the main sectors of our economy. And so that's why I'm so pleased to see that Innovation Saskatchewan will be put in place and will work towards securing financial security for this province for many years to come.

A third area that I would like to talk about in this reply to the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that area in education, and particularly the points made and the part that talked about making treaty education a required part of our curriculum in our schools. It's something that has been long overdue. I listened to the member from Saskatoon speak about it earlier today, and when she said that the former NDP government started it and they didn't think that it was the proper time to make it mandatory, that may or may not be so. Perhaps we could have moved on it a little earlier, but I think now is certainly the time where we need to move forward with that.

And also the Minister of Education mentioned earlier today that Saskatchewan will be hosting the Aboriginal education summit in 2009. And I commend the minister for taking that initiative. It is again something that we need to do because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the area of education, particularly as it pertains to our First Nation people, there are some huge problems. And there are problems that were brought home and highlighted last week in a report by the C.D. Howe Institute. It was authored by John Richards and it was entitled *A Disastrous Gap — How High Schools Have Failed Canada's Aboriginal Students*.

And that report highlighted the fact that the number of high school graduates in the Aboriginal communities is way below the number of high school graduates in the non-Aboriginal community, and particularly when you look at the graduation rate on First Nations schools on the reserves. The overall graduation rate in non-Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan is around 90 per cent. Yet the graduation rate on First Nations schools on reserves is 38 per cent in Saskatchewan, which is totally unacceptable. Manitoba and Alberta's rates are even lower. And this is a problem that we must address, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are issues and reasons why the graduation rate is low, and it's an issue that must be addressed by all levels of government: the federal government, the provincial government, and First Nations governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I was first elected, I was given the critic duties of post-secondary education, and through those duties I attended a number of meetings and forums where First Nations leaders spoke about the importance of education. They said that education was the First Nations new buffalo, and I absolutely agree with them. But we're not getting the job done. We must do better.

We've got to solve those roadblocks that are preventing us from doing that better job. We've got to work together. We've got to put aside the jurisdictional issues. It's all too easy for the province to say, well it's a federal issue, for First Nations leaders to say, well it's in our area of jurisdiction and we will decide. We all have to work together to get the job done because without a proper education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it only leads to poverty. In fact there's a quote in the report that I would like to read into the record. And I quote from the report:

It is almost universally the case that low education levels condemn people to fail in the modern industrial economy.

No truer words have been said, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I have seven First Nations in my constituency. Through our family we have witnessed some of the barriers that are there in place and the results of not solving those barriers. So as I said, we must work together, and I know that through the leadership of the Minister of Education — I talked to him earlier today and on a number of occasions about this issue — I know that this government will be working hard to find the solutions. The minister for First Nations and Métis affairs is certainly on board with this, and I invite all members of this Assembly to work towards solving these issues so that all citizens of our province can benefit and participate in the economy.

I think probably another quotation from the report probably sums it up more aptly than what I can. And it talks about what will happen if we don't solve these problems, and I quote:

Without an intense pursuit of better education outcomes, Canadian governments — Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal — will serve the next generation of Aboriginal students as inadequately as they have the current one.

It's a major challenge to us. Now the report doesn't have the answers, and I'm guessing why it doesn't have the answers is because there aren't any easy answers to this problem. But what I'm asking and what I'm saying today is that we need to have a commitment to work on this issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we can do that in this province. We have the resources to do that, and I believe we have the leadership. And if we have the co-operation from both sides of the House, we certainly can move a long ways into serving and solving those problems.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will conclude my remarks by saying that I will certainly be supporting the main motion. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan):** — I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to stand here today and represent the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. This is my 10th year in the legislature. I am not a seasoned veteran by a long shot, but anyway I just want to say to the people of the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency that I thanked them a year ago for allowing me to serve as their voice in the legislature for the problems that they have in that constituency.

Before I get into the Throne Speech I'd like to mention some thank yous. First of all I want to start with my wife, Sheila, of 34 years, and my kids — my three boys and their families — Newton, Tanya, Courtney, and Shayln, my two granddaughters; my second son, Deny; and my third son, Micky, and Meagen, who in a couple weeks will be expecting their first child. And as grandparents third time around, we're anxiously waiting for that to happen.

I also want to say a special thanks to the rock in my life, and that's my mom. My mom is the one that encourages me to press forward with this and do the right things for the right reasons. If



it's worth fighting for, she says, then stand up and fight for it. And that's what has encouraged me to get into politics in the first place, and that is what continued me to go on forward in this political life.

I also want to take the time to thank my two CAs [constituency assistant] in Spiritwood, Jody Henderson and Patty Heisler. Both are excellent ladies that serve my constituency well, that serve my office well. And one of the things that is nice about my office is the first time you open the door, you get a warm greeting from these two ladies. They do a fine job, and I couldn't be here and doing the job I do if it wasn't for them.

I also would like to thank my constituency president, Mr. Les Anderson. Les Anderson has been my constituency president for the 10 years that I've been an MLA. He is very resourceful. He is the eyes and ears from my executive that keeps me on the straight and narrow, and sometimes that's a little difficult — my wife complains about that also — but he does a great job. And with the constituency people that I have on my executive, they do a great job helping me, and I want to thank each and every one of them and especially Les Anderson, my president.

I also want to thank or say thank you to the people from the Shellbrook constituency, especially my hometown of Spiritwood who, when I go in the morning for coffee, they're always bugging me about what's new in the world of politics. They are probably my biggest critics because it seems like nothing I do is right, but I know jokingly they mean well and they're just giving me extra support.

I also would like to welcome to the legislature, as everybody has, the newest member to this legislature, the member from Cumberland. I want to say to him that the other day he gave his first maiden speech, and I think he did a marvellous job. I remember all too well some 10 years ago when I did my first speech to the throne, my knees were banging so hard you couldn't probably hear me. You did an excellent job. And also today in question period, I want to say, you did an excellent job asking questions. I can say to that member that having somebody from the North, that has lived in the North, understands the problems of the North. So we welcome here in the legislature his expertise and his knowledge of the issues in the North, and we will listen.

Now for the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there's many things to be thankful and happy about this Throne Speech.

This is the second Throne Speech that I participated in from the government side. As eight years of being in opposition, now — in 2007 — the majority of the people in the province of Saskatchewan have given us an overwhelming mandate to serve the people of the province, and we are doing that.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — And I remember in 2007 the Throne Speech that was given then. And you know, that was just like a breath of fresh air. The people said, finally after 16 years of social government, we finally get a breath of fresh air and hopefully some relief to the problems we have in this problem. And that's what happened. In 2007 that was a great Throne Speech.

To top it off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2008 went beyond. I can't imagine anybody in the province of Saskatchewan not agreeing with this Throne Speech. It gives everything that everybody wants in this province, except maybe the 20 members on that side of the House. But there's a reason that they're on that side of the House. Their job as opposition is to disagree, and they will do that. But it's ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In many of the comments from the speeches that we have heard from the members opposite, a lot of them do say that the speech was good. But the main thing is a lot in that speech was good.

There are some problems that have to be adjusted, but we'll work on that. But I can guarantee you it's not like them, members over there who said, we're just going to get around to it. Well for 16 years they were still getting around to it. In 2007 they gave us the mandate to serve, and we are doing that.

I want to start off, Mr. Speaker, regarding the Throne Speech, with comments made by the member from Athabasca. And that was quite a speech to say the least. But in his comments he said, and I quote, "And you'll notice, Mr. Speaker, that they have never ever spoke of pre-1991 [years]." Well just in regards to that, I can see why he doesn't want to talk about the pre-1991 years is because he was talking about the debt. When they took over he said that there was a 15, maybe a 16 billion debt. In fact I'm going to read his comment just to make sure, and I quote, "... the people that have a progressive mind, number one is that when we assumed power from those guys, we had fifteen and a half, if not \$16 billion, debt left by them, left by them."

[20:45]

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the figure that I remember, according to the auditor's report, was 15 billion. Now everybody knows that it was probably 1 billion a year for the eight years that the Conservative government served. Well that's 8 billion. So you take 8 from 15, what happened to the 7 billion? Did we accumulate that debt? Absolutely not because that was pre-1991. And who was in power before pre-1991? Well it was them. They had 7 billion debt, but they won't assure themselves that they were that debt.

Now pre-1991, I can guarantee many of those members were not serving in this House at that time. But remember, but remember in 1991 when the Conservative government was in power, many of us were not in this House either, but we're looking after our debt. But those members never ever will say that they were responsible for \$7 billion debt. Never.

In fact in years previous up to we serving as government, when there came a problem — whether it was with agriculture or whether it was with health care — they always said, well it's a federal government problem. Every time that there was an issue, it was a federal government problem. It's just like them — getting out the blame thrower and giving it to somebody else because they would not take ownership of the fact that they were in power, they were the government, and they should look after the issues.

I also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, want to talk about how we are looking after the debt. And first of all, the population is growing

— and the population growing will also service that debt — but our debt is growing smaller. As you know, like I said, it was 7 billion to start off with. And this year alone we're dropping that debt by some 40 per cent.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Forty per cent, Mr. Speaker. The revenues have tremendous growth, and they will exceed \$3 billion. We are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking after our debt because if you run government like a business, the first thing you would do is look after your debt. That's something the previous administration never ever looked at, but we are because we're responsible. We are a responsible government.

And as many of the members have said, we had a mandate for our Premier to go out. The Premier told us to go out and talk to our residents, talk to our constituencies on what we're going to do with this big surplus. Well we did that. And number one on the list was servicing our debt, and we are doing that.

The second thing I'd like to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is in regards to health care. And you know, I wasn't going to say a whole lot about health care till the member from North Battleford got on his feet and went on a tirade about what he did this summer to constituencies around North Battleford. Now I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he didn't go out on his own. I can guarantee you that the ex-premier, the Leader of the Opposition, probably told him to go out and do that.

Well he was in Meadow Lake. He was in Maidstone. He was in Spiritwood. I know he was. I wanted to go over to welcome him and to have a coffee with him, but I didn't. I was out of town. But after he was in Spiritwood and left, I talked to some of the councillors and the people who were at that meeting. And I said, so what did the former minister of Health want? And they said, well first of all, after the election a new government formed government, gives us a breath of fresh air, and we are happy with the status quo — time to move on.

Well he did and he moved on to Shellbrook. Now I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are problems in Shellbrook. It's all to do with the hospital and the health care. I went through that in the election, and I knew that when members from the opposition would go there, it would be number one issue to talk about.

Now I know, and I think most people around that area know, that something has to be done to Shellbrook with the health care facilities they have. As you know, in Shellbrook they have two facilities. They have a hospital which is somewhat old, and they have the long-term care facility. Their focus is to attach the two together to become a health care facility, and I think that's a great idea. That's what the governments of today look at now in order to get better services out of both facilities.

It's ironic that the problems in Shellbrook and all facilities in the province of Saskatchewan only come to light after the election of 2007. When the former minister of Health, the member from North Battleford was the minister, there was no problems. It's ironic. And I can guarantee you the people from Shellbrook are working extremely hard to raise money for capital for this project. They're doing a great job of raising

money.

But Shellbrook's not the only facility that has a problem like they have. There are many facilities in the province of Saskatchewan that have the same kind of issues — a lot to do with health. The Minister of Health is right by saying health is the number one issue, and that is exactly right.

Speaking of health, this summer when many of my colleagues were out doing parades and special events in the summertime, unfortunately July 15 I decided to take two weeks off and take a two-week holiday. So I decided to do an internal audit of our health care system from Spiritwood to Prince Albert, and I ended up in the hospital in Prince Albert in ICU [intensive care unit] in a coma.

So the Minister of Health asked me how it was, what kind of audit I did, and I politely told him I was in a coma and I don't remember. But I know that the facility in Shellbrook is old and it needs some updates. And I know that our Ministry of Health will be looking at that and addressing it as time goes on.

To the people of Shellbrook, they do need something. And they are working hard to do it and I hope in the years, very short term, that something will happen in that regards.

Mr. Speaker, another issue I want to talk about is in regards to the population growth. I've mentioned that our population has grown extensively; in fact just in one year we stopped the bleeding of people moving out of the province into other parts of Canada, and our growth is 16,000 people.

If we can continue to do that every year, we'll bring this province up to what it should be. The issue around that is the fact that the longer we stay as a Sask Party government, this will happen. We do not ever want to let the NDP back in power again to destroy the work that we have done.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to the Throne Speech, which I say was an awesome Throne Speech, and I'm glad to participate in the debate regarding it, I just want to give a couple mentions of some people that endorse the Throne Speech. And I quote:

We like this emphasis on investing in infrastructure. They're [the Sask Party government are] starting to think two, and three and five and 10 years ahead down the road, and that's what infrastructure dollars do.

Mr. Speaker, the person that made that comment was Steve McLellan, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. The second one is, and I quote:

Tax relief, debt reduction, infrastructure spending, all of those are priorities . . . [in our government]. So they're listening to small business.

. . . Our members have always said Crowns shouldn't be risking millions of taxpayer dollars on these risky ventures. The track record hasn't been that great.

Mr. Speaker, the person that mentioned that was Marilyn Braun-Pollon from the Saskatchewan CFIB [Canadian

Federation of Independent Business].

The next one is, I quote:

There is reason to believe the government has been prudent and taken a very positive step (to cut taxes and reduce the debt).

The person saying that was Lee Harding from the Canadian taxpayers association.

And the last one I want to mention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is:

The political risks associated with out-of-province investments — which are by nature commercial investments, that can go sour — there's no real upside for a government.

And this is from Ken Rasmussen with the graduate school of public policy.

Those are all comments, Mr. Speaker, of the positive that people had on this Throne Speech. And those are only a few. Many, many people in the province of Saskatchewan are thrilled with this Throne Speech. And that's why many of the colleagues here have said what a great thing this is for each one of their constituencies, that this Throne Speech has given life, new breath to the people of Saskatchewan.

And I can't for the life of me understand why the members opposite can't see what a great Throne Speech it is and vote for it. I mean amendment to it means nothing to the content of this Throne Speech. And a vote for this Throne Speech is what I would believe the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, another point that I want to bring up. But it just so happens that most mornings, especially on a Saturday morning, I go to the coffee shop in Spiritwood or the surrounding communities and I talk to the people in the restaurant. And many of them are seniors.

And I just want to point out some of the things we are doing for the seniors in the province of Saskatchewan, which there has never been nothing done in this province since 1992. And who was in power in 1992 but the social democrats — the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, you know, when you look at the letters N-D-P, to me that stands for no darn plan. And that's what's happened to this government for years and years.

**The Speaker:** — Order. As members are speaking in the Assembly, I would ask them to consider the rules and the decorum of the Assembly and word their comments in the manner that would be appropriate to members of the Assembly. Member from Shellbrook.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the seniors of this province, the Saskatchewan Party government made changes that will no doubt benefit a number of low-income seniors who qualify for funding and programs. The Saskatchewan government will more than double the seniors' income plan, SIP benefit, formerly known as the Saskatchewan Income Plan, from \$90 to \$190 per month for senior citizens . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — And from 72.50 to 155 each per month per couple. Now isn't that a great thing for our seniors who have worked and toiled for this province for years and years and years? I can guarantee there isn't one senior out there that isn't in favour of this. They finally see and realize that a change of government will bring prosperity to them as seniors.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — This investment will improve quality of life provided for Saskatchewan seniors with a much-needed \$1,200 per year, which is roughly \$100 a month. The new maximum income eligibility to receive benefits will be 18,593.64 instead of the previous amount of 15,953.64 — a well-deserved increase to our senior citizens of this province. This will double the number of seniors eligible for SIP from approximately 10,000 seniors to about 20,000 seniors. These benefits will now be available to about 10,000 more seniors in Saskatchewan and changes will take place effective January 1, 2009. Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you the seniors are pleased with this Throne Speech — every one of them is thrilled.

When we look at, Mr. Speaker, the highways and infrastructure program that was put forth, we look at a government that made a monumental commitment to this province in infrastructure in last year's budget and Throne Speech. And now we've increased that percentage from another 50 per cent so now that we're giving out close to \$1.5 billion, a 50 per cent increase to our highway infrastructure. And I can guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that when we're out talking to our constituents, health care was number one, debt, and then also the highways and infrastructure. And when we look at infrastructure, we need infrastructure dollars that's been so drastically needed in this province for years that our previous administration, the NDP, wouldn't look at. We need that for hospitals; we need that for schools; we need that for our highways. And the Ministry of Highways is doing a great job of looking after the highways in this province. We have done some 1400 kilometres of work this year alone on highways.

[21:00]

The ministry will also be introducing a five-year rolling plan, a rolling plan for highway construction and expansion of primary weight highway network. This plan will use clearly defined criteria to establish a method of determining in order in which highways should be repaired. And I think that is something desperately needed in this province. We have probably the province that has the most highways but we need to prioritize where the highways should be and what highways needed to be done on a first-come, first-served basis. And I know the ministry is looking at that.

In ag, and I'd be remorse if I didn't talk a little bit about ag for a simple reason — my constituency is basically ag. Just north of me is a lot of forestry and stuff but my constituency is ag. I am so glad that our government will finally take the initiative to fully fund and participate in federal programs such as AgriStability that will benefit farm families.

As a farmer myself, and I enjoy farming, but as a farmer myself

you can't go to the bank without some kind of a guarantee. And this province is learning or listening to the farmers and coming out with some real programs that benefit the province of Saskatchewan in the farming sector.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — I am also so glad that this government and the Ministry of Ag is looking at the crop insurance program and doing some updates to it. One of the things I think that we need to look at, and I've mentioned this to the Ag minister many times, and that's in the wildlife damage done to farmers in my area. We have a lot of wildlife and the previous administration would not change the 80 per cent coverage to 100 per cent coverage as it is in Manitoba and in Alberta. And I'm hoping that with letters from constituents all across Saskatchewan to our Ag minister he will look at that as part of changing the agricultural problems in Saskatchewan and which falls under crop insurance.

Also our government, our Ag minister is also looking to expand extension services in rural communities to support rural Saskatchewan. I believe some years ago it was the NDP that closed them all. The reason probably for closing them all is back then there was hardly any members, if any, that were from rural Saskatchewan. There were only urban members which they still are today.

We on this side of the House have the biggest majority of rural MLAs. We know what it's like. We've lived through it; we know what it's like. And our Ag minister is listening to us as MLAs, to the problems we have in rural Saskatchewan. And to expand the extension services in rural Saskatchewan is a positive for the people of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I'd like to just touch on something that was in the Throne Speech that is kind of near and dear to me, simply because I knew this family and I knew this gentleman very well. And that is in the Throne Speech: "A Tribute." And I want to quote:

Today, the people of Saskatchewan and my government say thank you.

Thank you to all who serve our country.

And thank you to Sergeant Prescott Shipway, Corporal Dustin Wasden, and Master Corporal Josh Roberts, all of whom made the supreme sacrifice this past year while serving our country in Afghanistan.

Saskatchewan's history is replete with examples of men and women who have sacrificed everything for the betterment of others . . .

We honour them today and pray that their remaining loved ones [and family] find comfort in years ahead, by knowing this sacrifice was not in vain.

I say this to the family of Dustin — Corporal Wasden — who grew up in Spiritwood. My son actually played ball with him, worked with him on road construction, was a close friend of his. We know the family, Ken and Bonnie Wasden, very well. And

on the 11th of this week, Remembrance Day, there's a special honour for Dustin Wasden at Spiritwood, and I will be attending that. And my heart, my thoughts, and my prayers go out to the Dustin family, as all the other families that have lost members in Afghanistan.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I definitely will be supporting this Throne Speech. I think it's an excellent Throne Speech. And I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to stand and enter into the debate on the 2008 Throne Speech. I believe this is about the tenth, ninth or tenth Throne Speech that I've entered into the debate, and there's never been a Throne Speech I've been more proud of to support.

There are a few things that I want to say before I get into the thrust of the Throne Speech and a number of thank yous, starting with the people from Indian Head-Milestone. I had a great summer around the constituency. One thing that I've noticed, and I think other members have mentioned that our having the privilege of serving in cabinet right now, it's certainly tougher to get out to your constituency, maybe a little tougher than it was before. But I had a summer that I was able to be around an awful lot, a couple of parades and a number of events that I was able to attend.

And once again I had the opportunity of meeting some of my favourite people in the whole province — obviously the people from Indian Head-Milestone. And certainly they've had a busy year again — got through harvest, as it's mainly an agriculture constituency, save for the area around the Fort Qu'Appelle area which certainly is tourism. But it's interesting to see the development in that area too, where there's growth up and down the lakes. It's unbelievable. Lakes that the shores were lined with cottages are now lined with homes as people are upgrading and tearing down those cottages and building homes. So it was a very productive and a very enjoyable summer around the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone.

I want to thank first of all my constituency assistant, Nicole, who looks after the office out in Balgonie and does an absolutely marvellous job. I think most of us that would talk about how our life is as an MLA would have to say that a huge portion of our life and a huge benefit to us — as far as conducting our business as an MLA — is certainly the constituency assistant because they're the first line of contact, I think, for most all of us MLAs. And they do an absolutely marvellous job. And Nicole is doing a great job for myself and the people of Indian Head-Milestone, as I'm probably not in the constituency as much as I was before, as I mentioned earlier.

The other people I'd like to talk a little bit about are the staff members in the ministry, in my minister's office. Perry, my chief of staff; Susan, Kim, Jennifer, Angie, and Sophie all do a marvellous job, whether it's dealing with the calendar which can be very stressful, dealing with communications, dealing with the day-to-day business of the Ministry of Health. When it's 43 per cent of the budget, it's obviously a large file, and

these people do a wonderful job within my office here in the building, the Legislative Building.

The other people that I want to talk about just briefly, but thank them very, very much, are the staff within the ministry, from my deputy minister, the new deputy minister, Dan Florizone, all the way through the associate deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, down through the whole department or the Ministry of Health. They do an absolutely marvellous job, and I really want to thank them for doing the work that they do and dealing with the issues that they deal with. Some of them are not very easy, and they deal with them in a very professional manner. So I want to thank them very much.

It was interesting — I do have to say, just in a brief moment here — is that I had been the critic in health care for about three years. And I've said an awful lot of times that I had enough to say when I was in opposition, when the opportunity came I better step up to the plate if I had the opportunity to be the Minister of Health.

But I want to thank them because they have been so professional and they have treated me so well, when I think I probably didn't make their life the easiest over the last three years as we are raising issues almost daily regarding health care. And a lot of the people that were working on those files over the last two or three years are still within the ministry. And I want to thank them for their loyalty and professionalism that they've shown me. It has been great.

The other welcome and most of the members — I think all of the members — have welcomed the new member from Cumberland. I wish him a long and relatively successful career in opposition, and I think that's certainly where it will be spent for the most part. I would advise him — and you know, if history teaches us anything — stick with the horse that brought you here. Don't be jumping around. The last member from Cumberland that thought there was greener grass on the other side of the fence didn't do so well. So I think I would stick with who got you here.

And you know, I think probably if there's one thing that you could learn about history is that don't run as a Liberal provincially in Saskatchewan, but don't run as an NDP federally in Saskatchewan. I think it's been three elections in a row that there hasn't been a seat won by the NDP in this province of 14 seats. One person mentioned to me, he said, well I mean, they're all your cousins, all those Conservative cousins. But I said, for our party, which is a combination of Liberal and Conservative, we are 14 for 14 in the last federal election, Mr. Speaker.

So the Speech from the Throne as I said was a very positive Speech from the Throne. You know, if there's one thing that I can honestly say that I have noticed as I've toured the province in the last year, 11 months as the Minister of Health — be it around the province as the Minister of Health or within my own constituency as the MLA for Indian Head-Milestone — is the absolute positive attitude that you see in every corner of this province. It's a positive attitude that I can honestly say, whether it's politics aside, was not there three years ago; it wasn't there six years ago. But it is absolutely there right now. It's palpable. You can feel it when you're out around this province. People

are positive about the future. They feel positive about the future.

But what I find very interesting is speech after speech on that side of the House — and there have been 19, I believe, speeches from that side of the House — they haven't really ever talked about the positive attitude that they're feeling. They like to talk about the two or three issues that may be negative. They'll maybe give the odd compliment. But for the most part it has been a very negative bunch on that side of the House.

And I often wonder how they can conduct themselves as they travel around the province, as they talk to people — as the member from North Battleford has talked to more people, I swear, in the last six months than he did in all his years as the Health minister, because he sure seems to know an awful lot more now than he ever did when he was sitting on this side of the House. But I guess that's what happens when you consult widely, Mr. Speaker. But how they can go around and they're talking to people — and I'm sure they're getting the positive message, the positive vibe from people — and how do they try and turn that around and twist it to say, yes but things really aren't that good, are they? I mean, they can't be that good.

Because it only benefits their party if they try and make it negative; if they try and be very negative about the economy, very negative about growth. That will try and I guess feed their political interests. But it must be very interesting. I'd love to . . . Oh no I wouldn't. I was going to say I'd love to follow them around. But no, not really. But, you know, I would love to have a recorder and tape some of their conversations as to how that conversation would go. I mean there must be a select few they can find that thinks it's all very negative. But for the most part, by far the most part, the people that I've talked to — the people I think members on our side of the House have talked to — are all very, very positive about the here and now and what's going to happen into the future.

Yes, there's some issues right now with the stock markets. There's some issues with oil and gas prices. There's some issues with the dollar sinking. But the optimism is from corner to corner of this province, all four corners of this province — whether it's oil and gas, whether it's potash, whether it's agriculture.

And as a farmer I can say it was probably one of the more enjoyable campaigns I had in 2007, as you'd stop at a farm and guys were positive, the farmers were positive. Save for some livestock and some hog issues, overall, agriculture is very positive.

And all you've got to do is go to a few dealerships. And I can think of the one dealership in my constituency — Nelson Motors, the John Deere dealership down in Avonlea and spreading across southern Saskatchewan — is that they can't keep new equipment on the lot practically. You know, their sales are as good as they ever have been in the history of the province, and that speaks to one thing. It speaks to a positive attitude of the agriculture community. And I think that's reflective a little bit of the government that they see in front of them for the next four years and even further, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we were out and about in the province,

and certainly we had a pretty good idea that there was a large surplus, and the members opposite knew there was a large surplus. They went out into their constituencies and other constituencies, and no doubt talked about what should happen with the surplus. I think all of our members pretty much did that and certainly got a lot of feedback, a lot of positive feedback as to what should happen with the surplus.

[21:15]

And I think, you know, the best analogy, and I don't know if it has been used by other members, but the best analogy that I can follow through on — and I've heard other members, if it wasn't in the House here, speak about — it's like a house. And you have a mortgage on your house — a fairly hefty mortgage, and I know all about that — a hefty mortgage on your house and you have a windfall of cash. And it's a windfall of cash that may not be there next year or the year after or the year after. So what are the wise decisions to make when you have a windfall of cash?

And I believe people really looked at their own situation. And they have a house with a mortgage on it. So what would they do? They would make a down payment on that mortgage. If they could pay off 40 per cent of their mortgage, that would be pretty significant. In fact I believe, and I've said this to a few people, that, you know, the Speech from the Throne had so many good ideas, it's a shame when you pay 40 per cent of the provincial debt down in one payment that that isn't the major story.

But it wasn't the major story. There were so many good different pieces of the Speech from the Throne that a 40 per cent reduction in the debt was almost a sideline. For most governments in a four-year term, if they could pay 40 per cent of the debt down that would be a defining moment for a government — let alone to do it in one term, in one year. I mean, in the first year of government alongside a whole bunch of other initiatives — that is significant.

They also said if they had a house that was certainly . . . that maybe they were struggling with finances, and they weren't able to repair the roof or they weren't able to put on new eavestroughs or siding or windows or doors, they would repair their house. And so, Mr. Speaker, \$1.5 billion worth of infrastructure investment is starting to repair the house. Unfortunately, I think most of us would think if we put \$1.5 billion towards repairs and fixing up the house, that should do it. Not if you let the house decay and deteriorate as much as the former NDP government did. Because quite frankly I've had the opportunity of travelling around the province and visiting many, many hospitals.

You know, it was interesting. I heard the member from North Battleford talk about all the communities he's been at. He talked about Lloydminster and he talked about Meadow Lake and he talked about Shellbrook, and I'll be glad to tell that member that I was in Lloydminster, I've been in Lloydminster in two formal meetings, been there probably three times in 11 months. I've been to Shellbrook and I've been to Big River. I've been to many of these communities. But the one thing that I did hear and I thought was very striking that he would bring up the example, that that member would bring up the example of Lloydminster. The first time we sat down and he was . . .

And the member's right. They want to have a, you know, a newer facility in Lloydminster. It needs to expand with the growth.

But after I sat and talked to them for a while, they said, well — when I was leaving — thank you very much because it's the first time the Minister of Health has ever been here to listen to . . .

Now it's interesting that he can stand and say that, oh, we should be out and listen to what the communities are saying. Had he had that thought a little bit more when he was the minister of Health, maybe . . . No, no, never mind. I won't continue on with that thought.

But I will say that, you know, we are talking about \$1.5 billion worth of investment into infrastructure. And as all of us around the table — whether it's municipal affairs, whether it's highways, whether it's education, whether it's health care — we're going to be debating hard. We're going to be going through the list of priorities. And believe you me, I am quite confident — and if it doesn't, then it will be my fault — that health care will get a good share of that \$1.5 billion. Because if there is anything in our province that needs upgrading, it's some of our health care facilities.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — When almost half of our health care facilities were built prior to 1955, you know, when we had the oldest equipment in Canada according to CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information], it is a deficiency that is unbelievable when you start touring around. When you tour some of the long-term care facilities that I've had the opportunity to follow through and tour, it really does tell you that we need a major injection into the infrastructure into health care.

I was very proud to stand in the House after the budget speech and talk about \$100 million we put into repair of a \$4.4 billion asset. Our health care assets are \$4.4 billion and this year we put in \$100 million that will go to repairing some of that \$4.4 billion asset.

And I got thinking now, do people really understand a \$4.4 billion asset and what \$100 million means to that asset? And I don't think people will. I couldn't understand it until I broke it down for my own mind, and I said \$4.4 billion is like a \$440,000 home. You can imagine a \$440,000 home.

The previous government had put \$5 million into that \$4.4 billion asset. It's like \$500 on a \$440,000 home. You got a \$440,000 home that's being used 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, some of the roughest traffic going through that house you could ever imagine, and they put \$500 to repair it. That doesn't even paint a bedroom in that house. In the budget we put \$100 million into that asset — which is the equivalent of about \$10,000 towards that \$440,000 home — and it's not enough. And I'll tell you it's not enough but at least it's a start. And certainly when you go through the Speech from the Throne and it talks about a \$1.5 billion infrastructure investment, it's huge.

Back to the house — my family or any family's analogy — we talked about the mortgage. Almost half of the mortgage paid off, 40 per cent, one and a half billion dollars towards asset. We've been struggling over the last number of years, so what do you do? You know, we haven't had the money to go out for a meal because we just didn't have the money in the pocket. Maybe we should give people a little bit more money in their jeans so that they can enjoy, you know, what we have to offer in the province. The largest tax cut ever in the history of this province was in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are 80,000 people taken off the tax roll. In other words, instead of giving money to the government for taxes, they can keep it themselves and spend it the way they want. The hugest tax cut in the history of this province. And I heard the one criticism. I can't believe the one criticism the opposition had was they didn't consult. Well you know, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell the members opposite that through the summer and through the last number of years the consultation was done. People like to have their own money back. I don't think you need to consult on that front. And so, Mr. Speaker, we gave something back to every citizen in this province, money that was theirs, that they deserve to keep, that they can certainly enjoy what we have to offer in this province.

The fourth piece of our Throne Speech that really is significant, and I know it drives the members nuts, but it is a bit of a nest egg; it's bit of a rock to build on the future. We talked about the reduction of oil prices right now and perhaps grain prices could drop down. That's why I said it is so important because this is one-time money. It could be one-me money. I don't think it will be, but it could be and if that's the case we have a buffer with money in the account as opposed to a line of credit, with money in the account that if the downturn continues on that we will be cushioned. In other words, Mr. Speaker, I think we are positioned better than any province in Canada right now with the initiatives that we've taken regardless of what happens in the economy as we move forward. I think we're positioned very, very well.

But I do want to also just look at the Speech from the Throne a little bit. You know, I talked about the analogy of the family. But every member on that side . . . And you know they have an opportunity to stand tonight and show their true colours, which I think I know what it is. But they'll have an opportunity tonight to show their true colours.

Everyone so far, 19 members, have said they're going to vote for the amendment and they're not going to vote for the Speech from the Throne. In other words, they're not going to vote for the largest tax cut; they're not going to vote for the most money for infrastructure; they're not going to vote for a kind of a bit of a guarantee into the future; and they're not going to vote for debt reduction.

But not only that, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is "A Stronger Saskatchewan. A Better Life." And you know, I've heard it from many people that have said that this Speech from the Throne doesn't just talk about things, it doesn't just talk about a better life through workforce training, but it actually has doables and initiatives that will be followed through on. Many of those in social services we're hearing about day after day after day.

I spent eight years on the opposition benches. I can't imagine what it would be like every day when you stand up and you say, well you better do this, and then a ministerial statement comes, like five minutes later, and they're doing that. That must be very, very frustrating. I think they're probably to the point saying, let's not ask for them to do anything more because they're probably going to. You know, Mr. Speaker, it must be very, very deflating. It must be very frustrating from their side of the benches.

But you know, it will be very interesting if the members on that side actually stand up and vote for a better life for seniors. Are they going to vote for a better life for seniors? Are they going to vote for a better life for people with disabilities? It would be very interesting. Are they going to vote against a better life for children at risk? I ask the member from Athabasca, is that what he's going to do? Is he going to stand in his place tomorrow and vote against the Speech from the Throne when it talks about a better life for children?

Mr. Deputy, Mr. Speaker, you can go on and on. You know, a better health care system. The member from North Battleford talked about the number one issue in most people's minds is health care, and I couldn't agree more. That definitely is — when you start with a system that really quite frankly in places was left to languish.

You know, what people are talking about out in rural Saskatchewan is recruitment of doctors. It was interesting in this House last year or two years ago when we named community after community whose hospitals were closing. He said, I don't think that's unusual. News flash — that was unusual. He finally had to go out and correct his words. Mr. Speaker, we're going to be addressing that. It says in the Speech from the Throne and we will be addressing it as we move forward because recruitment of physicians, both urban and rural, are extremely important.

The one thing I will say is I won't say, that's not our problem; that's only the health region or the community's problem. Mr. Speaker, it is our problem. We are the Government of Saskatchewan, and we're going to be taking steps to address the problems that we see in health care around this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, there are so many different aspects of this Speech from the Throne that a person could probably go on and on until the time is up, but, Mr. Speaker, we do have a bell that will be ringing here soon.

But a couple things that I do want to say though, one last thing. And certainly the member from Kindersley talked about it a little bit earlier today. The whole issue around Murdoch Carriere, I think, absolutely has stunned the public. And it really has really taken me aback. You know, I don't expect somebody to stand in this House and say 29 times that we fired somebody, and a year and a half later, a year later, we found out that he never was fired.

Mr. Speaker, and it wasn't even bad enough that he wasn't fired, but he was kept on long enough so his pension was topped up, so his pension was topped up, and he was paid on

pain and suffering that he felt — not the victim — that he felt. The issue about pain and suffering, he didn't have to pay any tax on that. It was unbelievable that they would stand in this House, say 29 times that the person was fired, and he never was.

And I would really call on the member from Dewdney, from Regina Dewdney to stand in his place. Was he fired or did he resign or did you give him a golden handshake? And I'd ask the former premier if he can stand behind his words that Murdoch Carriere was fired, or was he given a golden handshake. Or the member from Saskatoon Nutana, who had more than enough to say about the fact that he was fired when he was never fired.

He was given a golden handshake. Why? Because I think he knew those members. In fact the member from Athabasca, his picture was on Murdoch Carriere's wall. Now there was some pretty deep political connections, and that's why he was given a golden handshake, which is absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to support the Speech from the Throne. And I would call on those members, if they have toured the province like the member from North Battleford has said he has done . . . If he's done that he would know most of the things that the people are saying in all of Saskatchewan are enclosed in this Speech from the Throne. So if he's true to what those people are telling him, he'll support the Speech from the Throne, as I will.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate getting the opportunity to reply to the Speech to the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I remember back — I think this is my 13th Throne Speech, 14th Throne Speech — and I remember the first one or two that the NDP did when I was new and somewhat very, very green in this House, and I stayed awake for the whole Throne Speech. But for the next 10 or 12 throne speeches I actually went to sleep because all they were was recycled — we're going to get to it next year; we're going to get to it next year. And isn't it amazing from the members opposite now, in their first year in opposition, every issue that comes up, whether it's in Throne Speech or whatever the issue they bring up and we reply to them, how come for 16 years you didn't fix that problem, they keep coming back and saying, we were going to get to it — in our 17th year we were going to address that, Mr. Speaker.

[21:30]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with my colleagues in welcoming the member for Cumberland. I listened to his maiden speech the other day, and did a great job. I really appreciated his Throne Speech. My colleague from Rosthern-Shellbrook had said when he had done his Throne Speech, his knees were shaking. And I noticed the member was very confident and did a good job.

Today in question period, the member got up and did another very good job in question period. And I noticed the member for

Indian Head-Milestone had given some advice and a number of the members on both sides have given you a lot of advice, and I'll follow that. I'll give you a little advice because the part you had to play in question period today, I would get used to that. Because there's a number of members on that side I don't think want to get up in question period again this session because of the Murdoch Carriere situation and what's gone on in the past.

I think the member for Nutana certainly doesn't want to get up again, the Leader of the Opposition certainly doesn't want to get up again, and the member for Dewdney, we know after today really didn't want to even be up today. So all the advice I can give you is, you did a good job today. I think you're going to be up for the rest of the week for sure.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit, and all my colleagues have talked about how they appreciate the Throne Speech this year and the input we've had for the province of Saskatchewan. I'd like to tie that a little bit more to rural Saskatchewan and agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Indian Head-Milestone talked about the largest single-year income tax reduction in the province's history. And I think the members opposite would think, well oh yes well that's just great; that only affects urban people. That actually has as much to do with rural Saskatchewan, small town Saskatchewan, and for that matter, Mr. Speaker, for every farmer in this province from time to time. That income tax break is going to help every family in rural Saskatchewan weather the hard times and weather the times when their incomes aren't so great. And I know the members opposite probably — the way they abandoned rural Saskatchewan for 16 years — probably feel that rural Saskatchewan doesn't pay tax, but I will enlighten them today that there's an awful lot of tax comes out of rural Saskatchewan as we're finding out right now.

Mr. Speaker, debt reduction is very important to people of rural Saskatchewan and the farming community out there because nobody knows better than the farming community what it's like to have to carry a large debt and try and function and make your business go, carrying that large debt. So I think they appreciate that very much.

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure dollars, the reason that I actually ran in 1995, Mr. Speaker, was because of what the NDP government were doing to the infrastructure dollars for municipalities and towns all across this province. Mr. Speaker, we've been here one short year, and the total budget for infrastructure will be increased to \$1.5 billion. That, Mr. Speaker, is good for all of Saskatchewan. For Pat Fiacco as mayor of Regina; Don Atchison, mayor of Saskatoon; every mayor of every town and village in this province, it's good for. Because what it does is replaces some of the cuts that come through the '90s by the NDP government and return and backfills those dollars. But on top of that, Mr. Speaker, starts to fix our highways that have been run down for 16 years. Mr. Speaker, that's important to people of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think I was one of the ones and a number of my colleagues were, when the fund called the rainy day fund was



brought to life by the NDP. And they rode that thing and said oh, look at all the good things we're doing. The problem being with the rainy day fund, Mr. Speaker, it was on paper and there was no actual dollars in the fund. It was like an operating fund, and every time they had to dip into it, they had to go borrow more money. And that was their operating fund.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not what we've done. Mr. Speaker, we have the growth and security fund that has — how much now? — \$1.9 billion. And, Mr. Speaker, \$1.9 billion of actual dollars in that fund, Mr. Speaker, along with paying the debt down and all the other things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch a little bit on agriculture. Seeing that I am the Minister of Agriculture, I would be remiss if I left that out. And I want to go through all the things . . . We aren't solving all the problems out there, Mr. Speaker. The cattle industry, the hog industry have a lot of stress on them right now out there. And a lot of those problems are ongoing. But we are doing things. We're trying to help that sector, along with the grain sector, to get through these tough times. The grain sector, as I think many of my colleagues have said in this House, there's some optimism for a change out there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to think it's only because of higher grain prices. But I think you can also say the November 7 election last year, for rural Saskatchewan, is a sign of optimism for rural people. I think it made every coffee row out there buzz the morning after November 7, because they finally got what they wanted for 16 years. They got a government that will pay attention to rural Saskatchewan and to the agriculture industry.

Mr. Speaker, fully funding of all the ag programs in the province. I remember my former colleagues over there — the ministers in succession, Mr. Serby, Mr. Wartman. I believe, in fact the recycling program we're having in the NDP leadership race, Mr. Lingenfelter, well also he was an ag minister. And what did they do for agriculture in this problem? Actually they could have done worse I guess, but they ignored it.

Mr. Speaker, they would not fully fund the programs, and I found out as soon as I went to the federal table that we really weren't looked at with any credibility at that table because of we would not fully fund the programs when they came out. We don't have to fully agree with them, but, Mr. Speaker, we have to be to that table with credibility to stick up for our farm families in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the education tax. And I think it was the member for Battleford was chastising us on this side of the House for not dealing with that. And the member for Rosetown dealt with it and I thought explained it very clearly, but I'm going to follow up a little bit with that. If you remember back, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure you do, and that member I think would remember back, that the NDP did adjust the education tax on property. When I was elected it was 60/40. The Government of Saskatchewan paid 60, and the producers out there with ag land paid the 40.

So their adjustment and how they dealt with it was to flip-flop that, and here let the farmers pay 60 per cent, and we the NDP government will pay 40. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not good

enough for the Saskatchewan Party government. We are already up to 48 per cent in our rebate program, and as the member for Rosthern said — and he's trying to find new ways that we can even speed up that process — we'll be even doing more, not just for farmers of this province but for every property tax payer in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We're going to deal with the issue, and, Mr. Speaker, it's happening very quickly under our watch.

Mr. Speaker, crop insurance: this is a program after 2002 that the NDP saw fit to download on producers, raise every farmer's premium in this province, and cut the coverage for every producer in this province. Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough for the producers under a Saskatchewan Party government. We're having a crop insurance review, and we're going to start to repair the crop insurance program so it actually works for farm families in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Southwest has had a drought going on until this year for the past four years. And what was the NDP's response to that? The Minister of Agriculture would not even go down there and visit with them and see how bad it was. Mr. Speaker, we brought the water program in for the Southwest. Again, it doesn't solve all their problems, but it's a small piece of the puzzle in helping them safeguard their farms and their ranches for when the next drought comes around.

Mr. Speaker, we have the gopher rebate program, and we brought this in because that's a tremendous problem, especially in the Southwest but other areas in the province. And what we've committed to do is pick up half the cost for strychnine and other baits, Mr. Speaker, and we will pick up that and try and help producers, especially in the Southwest, deal with the problems they have out there.

Mr. Speaker, another area that we're talking about and dealing with out there is working with farm groups, and we did that, Mr. Speaker. If you remember back, Mr. Speaker, very early under our watch, we had the cattlemen and the hog producers come and explain to us just how bad things are in the cattle industry and the hog industry. And, Mr. Speaker, the first thing they asked for was a hog and cattle loan. Mr. Speaker, we did that. And why they wanted the loan, because they were worried about an ad hoc causing a countervail from the US. So they asked for a cattle and hog loan, and we put \$90 million into that, Mr. Speaker. Did that solve the problems completely? Not for a minute, Mr. Speaker, and we understand that as well as every producer in this province, but we hoped it would help them get from that point till maybe prices will start to improve, Mr. Speaker. And maybe we're going to see that. The dollar's dropping, Mr. Speaker, and that was one of the main problems for what's happening in the cattle industry.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to go on. I have probably enough for another hour right now, but seeing the clock, I'll let you know that I will be not supporting the amendment and certainly will be supporting the Throne Speech. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the amendment to the motion presented by the Leader of the Opposition, seconded by the member from Regina Rosemont:

That the following words be added after the word session:

and that this government no longer enjoys the confidence of the Assembly because their spending choices ignore their major responsibility to address the immediate needs of the Saskatchewan people such as high utility rates, high gas prices, high property taxes, and lack of affordable housing and child care.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — No.

**The Speaker:** — Those in favour say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

**The Speaker:** — Those opposed say nay.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Nay.

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

[The division bells rang from 21:41 until 21:43.]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Before I call the vote I just want to remind members that it would be greatly appreciated if members would allow the vote to proceed without any interference. Those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 19]

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

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

[Nays — 37]

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

Reiter  
McMillan

Bradshaw

Harrison

**Clerk:** — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 19; those opposed, 37.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[21:45]

**The Speaker:** — The motion has . . . Order. The motion has been defeated. Debate will continue on the main motion. I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour to stand up to speak to the Throne Speech; I believe a Throne Speech that is the best that this province has heard for many, many years. It's a Throne Speech that is filled with action, just not words. It's a Throne Speech that addresses something for everyone within our province. It's a Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, that discusses how we're going to share the province's prosperity with all people within Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is an unprecedented tax cut that this province has now seen. It will take 80,000 people off of the tax roll. I have listened to the members opposite talk repeatedly of how we're not helping those most vulnerable in society, and I have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, where have they been. I don't understand where they have been. We have made so many announcements over the last year of how we're going to help those that are most vulnerable within our society. And let's talk about announcements that we've had, Mr. Speaker.

Let's begin with announcements we've had in housing. We addressed housing very quickly in our mandate as a new government, and we had a task force that came forward with a number of recommendations. The first recommendation, Mr. Speaker, was to address those that are the most vulnerable. So what did we do, Mr. Speaker? Within a few weeks, we responded to those recommendations. We met those recommendations and we went beyond those recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

We increased the shelter rates for the clients that we have within my ministry, Mr. Speaker, and we indexed it to the market costs within the regions in which the housing lies. And, Mr. Speaker, we committed to revisit it every six months.

In addition we also indexed the Saskatchewan rental supplement, Mr. Speaker. We indexed it to the market price within each region. And we will revisit that every six months. Mr. Speaker, that is unprecedented in our country for any province to make that bold of a move. And we did it because we knew that it would help those most in need.

Mr. Speaker, what else did we do very quickly? Well we increased the emergency shelter rates by 20 per cent, and that was to ensure the fiscal viability of our existing shelters. We know that they are needed, and so we wanted to make sure that they were sustainable while we looked at adding to the shelters that were within our province.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we went above and beyond the recommendations by increasing the PTA [provincial training allowance] living allowance and the shelter amounts for the Canada-Saskatchewan integrated student loan program, Mr. Speaker. So we've addressed a number of issues, as well as the number of dollars that we've committed to the construction of additional housing units.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk a little bit about the organizations that work so diligently within our province to help those most vulnerable. And what have we done to make sure that those organizations, the community-based organizations within our province can remain viable and strong as they give services to those most vulnerable? Well, Mr. Speaker, we held five summits around the province to listen to what they had to say. And we've addressed — within weeks again, Mr. Speaker — a number of the things that we heard from within those summits.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased the wages and the non-salary expenses to address compensation, recruitment, and retention challenges that the community-based organizations are experiencing. We gave them an unprecedented increase of 9.3 per cent, Mr. Speaker, year-over-year funding. That is an increase they have never seen before.

Mr. Speaker, we gave 1.4 million additional dollars to the CBOs [community-based organizations] that provided mobile crisis services within our province. Mr. Speaker, that was a 90 per cent increase from what they had before. Mr. Speaker, we gave incremental funding increases for CBOs that were providing family support services of \$1.3 million. That again was a huge increase to those that are helping our most vulnerable families within our province.

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on. We made a number of announcements again today of ways that we have committed to helping strengthen our CBO sector. One of those is funding to help develop a 211 Saskatchewan directory within our province. It's a partnership between the Saskatoon Food Bank and the United Way. And it was interesting, Mr. Speaker, that one of the gentlemen said, you know, we brought this proposal forward for six years, and for six years we've been ignored. And at last we've been listened to, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about what we've done for seniors. I've heard a number of members talk about, you know, the people that we're not helping, those most vulnerable. And what falls into that category would be the low-income seniors, Mr. Speaker. And I want to read into record something that was said some time ago. I'm reading it from a fact sheet, Mr. Speaker, and it says, and I quote:

We are fortunate in this province to have one of the highest proportions of older persons in Canada. One of every seven people is over the age of 65. We owe a great deal to seniors and thank them for their part in making Saskatchewan the place we are proud to call home.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that statement was printed by the former government, the NDP. So what did they do for the seniors to show their commitment and their value of the seniors in our province? Well, Mr. Speaker, let's go on. They gave them free park entry, Mr. Speaker. They gave them free fishing licences.

They gave them a 30 per cent discount for the STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] buses. They gave them a free non-driver photo ID [identification], Mr. Speaker. And they gave them a pin — gave them a pin, Mr. Speaker. Well I'll tell you what. Those seniors that are low income, that are seeing stress in the rising costs, we decided we could do a little better than a pin, Mr. Speaker. We decided to give them a 110 per cent increase.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, they had received a zero increase for 16 years. For 16 years, Mr. Speaker, they had not received one dime in an increase to the supplement.

So, Mr. Speaker, considering the hour, I'm looking forward to going on further on how we have addressed issues with those most vulnerable within our society. But since it's getting rather late, I would like to adjourn debate.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The member from Humboldt has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

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

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has moved that this House do now adjourn. Is it the agreement of the Assembly for the adjournment?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 21:55.]



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**EVENING SITTING**

**SPECIAL ORDER**

**ADJOURNED DEBATES**

**ADDRESS IN REPLY**

Chisholm.....1529

Junor.....1531

Ross.....1532

Taylor.....1533

Reiter.....1537

Hart.....1540

Allchurch.....1542

McMorris.....1546

Bjornerud.....1550

Recorded Division (Amendment).....1552

Harpauer.....1552

**INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

Ross.....1534

# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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**Hon. Brad Wall**  
Premier

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

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

**Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff**  
Minister of Crown Corporations

**Hon. Dan D'Autremont**  
Minister of Government Services  
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and  
Gaming Authority  
Minister Responsible for the Information  
Technology Office

**Hon. June Draude**  
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations  
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

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

**Hon. Rod Gantfoer**  
Minister of Finance

**Hon. Donna Harpauer**  
Minister of Social Services

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Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

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Minister Responsible for Immigration  
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Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport  
Minister Responsible for Capital City Commission