



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

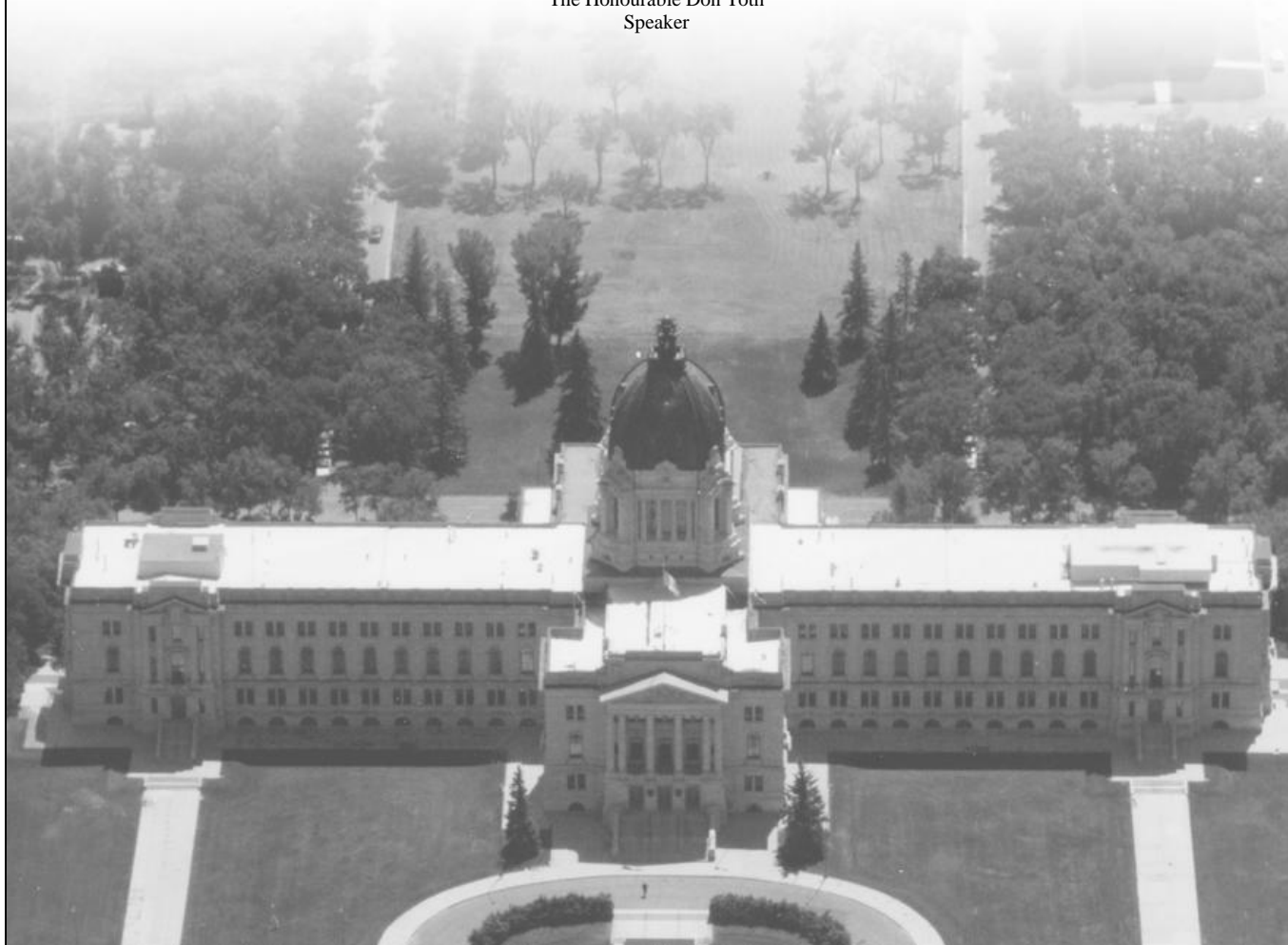
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
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Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
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McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and . . . Seated in your gallery is a young gentleman by the name of Jordan Crawford. Jordan — just give us a wave, Jordan — Jordan is a grade 11 student at Vanier Collegiate in Moose Jaw. And for his work experience he asked to work for the member for Moose Jaw North as part of the work experience. And I was more than honoured that he would request that. Please make him feel welcome. And although he's sitting in your gallery at this point for his first time ever in the House, someday he will probably be sitting on the government side in this government. So I'll ask everyone to make him feel welcome today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone, the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have one of these beautiful pink sheets which can only mean there's probably a school group in your gallery, and there is. From Bert Fox Community High School out in Fort Qu'Appelle there are eight grade 11 and 12 students that are taking Law 30. Accompanying them are Valerie Brooks and Ron Dong, who are also in the gallery. For those of you that aren't familiar with where the beautiful Fort Qu'Appelle is, it's in the Qu'Appelle Valley, a great spot for tourism. Oh I guess I shouldn't do a tourism ad for the valley here right now.

Anyway I'd like all members to welcome them here. I'll be meeting with them, I think after the question period, to kind of answer maybe some of the questions as to how this place works. So welcome to your Assembly, and we'll look forward to meeting you after.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan families who are struggling to find or be able to afford adequate child care. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately add at least 1,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present on behalf of constituents in Moose Jaw.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in support of expanding options for student housing. And I'll read the petition as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to aggressively working with partners to expand on-campus and off-campus housing options for Saskatchewan students.

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

Mr. Speaker, it's signed by folks from Prince Albert, Holbein, Duck Lake. And I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to present a petition concerning the high cost of post-secondary education. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to increase funding for post-secondary students and help to alleviate the large financial burden placed on students for pursuing a post-secondary education at a Saskatchewan institution.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition was circulated by the Canadian Federation of Students, the University of Regina Students' Union, the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union, and First Nations University of Canada Student Association. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Moose Jaw Masonic Lodge 125th Anniversary

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recently, Mr. Speaker, the Masonic Lodge of Moose Jaw No. 3 celebrated its 125th anniversary. It was in 1883 that a group of men applied for the privilege to institute a lodge, and that

privilege was granted in September of that year, making the Moose Jaw chapter the third oldest in the province.

The Masonic Lodge has been described as a worldwide fraternity that strives to do good works in our society and strengthen the people who serve. Moose Jaw's Masons apply their service in countless ways, including the community roadside cleanups most of us are familiar with.

At a banquet to honour the 125th anniversary, a commemorative plaque was unveiled by the longest serving former worship brother, Les Timar, along with Moose Jaw's mayor, Dale McBain.

Also honoured at the event was Vern Traill, a lodge member for more than 50 years, who was awarded the first ever Saskatchewan Mason of the Year Award for his community service and leadership within the Masons.

Vern is well known in our community of Moose Jaw, a very active member of the Masons. And one of his distinguishing features that was spoke of that night was his ability to attract new members to the lodge.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating the Masonic Lodge of Moose Jaw No. 3 for reaching this tremendous milestone. And best wishes for many more years of service to our community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Prince Albert Student Housing Project

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saturday was National Housing Day. As the Hon. Diane Finley, federal Minister Responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation stated:

... [this day] is not only an opportunity to learn about new approaches to housing, but also a day to recognize the progress that is being made to implement affordable housing solutions . . .

Mr. Speaker, an example of such a solution would be the recent sod-turning for a student housing project in Prince Albert. This project will house 36 low-income families who have a member attending SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Woodland Campus. The students and their families, many who are Aboriginal, will be provided a safe, affordable, and good quality rental option while they pursue their studies. This not only benefits the people of Prince Albert by providing affordable housing, but it assists SIAST in meeting the demand for skilled workers in this province.

This project also supports northern students in accessing post-secondary education and achieving their academic goals. This government recognizes that growing economies bring other growth-related issues. Early in this government's mandate, it developed a task force on housing affordability and has already implemented many of its recommendations.

Last Friday, many community members such as Eddy Head, Gary Merasty, and I attended the Prince Albert student housing announcement to show our support. Mr. Speaker, problems can always be resolved when we work together to find a solution. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

YMCA Peace Medallion Recipient

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week YMCAs [Young Men's Christian Association] across Canada celebrated YMCA World Peace Week. A highlight of the celebration in Saskatoon was the presentation of the YMCA Peace Medallion to Maureen Strawson, community school coordinator at Bedford Road Collegiate. Terry Gibson, president of the Saskatoon YMCA says:

The Peace Medallion recipients have led the way in showing how any one of us has the power to create positive social change without special resources. They are a tremendous inspiration and role model for improving the quality of life in the community, either at home or abroad.

Terry goes on to say that:

Through Maureen's work in schools and through her broad range of community connections, she has contributed immeasurably to some of the best things that happen for young people.

Mr. Speaker, many of us will know Maureen for her leadership in the community schools in Saskatoon, and in fact throughout Saskatchewan where she has contributed immensely to the education of young people for over 30 years. Most recently she's been involved in the restorative action program at Bedford.

Mr. Speaker, Maureen Strawson is a constituent of mine. I am delighted to represent Maureen in this legislature. And I invite all members to join me in congratulating Maureen Strawson on being awarded the YMCA Peace Medallion 2008. It is truly well-deserved.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Investment in Disability Programming

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to inform the House about an exciting new investment in Outlook involving people with intellectual disabilities.

In October our government announced the largest investment in the history of the province in support of people with intellectual disabilities. This \$76.9 million initiative was to ensure 440 people waiting for help lead supported and fulfilling lives. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to announce the first of many

investments that will reduce the existing wait-list.

This new investment in Outlook will see additional individuals from the community being served through residential and day programming. Two new six-space group homes will be built, and renovations to an existing home will be completed to provide 18 individuals with a place to call home. In addition 15 new spaces will expand the current day programming offered by the Variety Place Association, day programming that is increasingly effective in supporting people with disabilities to lead better lives.

Mr. Speaker, Outlook is a wonderful Saskatchewan community. With this support, the community will be able to ensure that these 18 individuals can live a better life. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and excited to support this program and its beginning in Outlook. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Stem Cell Transplants

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Stem Cell Transplant Advocacy Group, or STEM, recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first Canadian bone marrow transplant done here in Regina. At the reception held to celebrate the occasion and raise public awareness, the Saskatoon Health Region and the Saskatoon cancer clinic spoke about the new proposal for a state-of-the-art stem cell transplant program in Saskatoon at Royal University Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, my 46-year-old cousin died following a stem cell transplant three years ago in Saskatoon. The program was discontinued shortly thereafter, and a major review was done. Now there's a proposal with the Saskatoon Health Region and the cancer clinic to put a world-class stem cell transplant program into Saskatoon.

A touching and very personal account of one family's experience with the stem cell transplant done out of the country had many audience members in tears. Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that families are not torn apart at this most frightening time. We need the program in Saskatoon to serve all of Saskatchewan citizens in Saskatchewan.

Congratulations to STEM and the survivors of stem cell transplants and their families, for their ongoing commitment to excellence and support. In memory of those who did not survive, let's make sure this new program happens as soon as possible. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Palo Mine

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, a recent announcement of a 10-year agreement between Otish Energy, a resource exploration company who is focused on an exploration and

development of uranium properties and ZEOX Corporation, an operating partner of Nanostructured Minerals Corporation, owner of the Palo operation near Landis, is welcome news.

Palo mine will supply sodium sulphate to Canada's largest producer of potassium sulphate, effectively keeping the mine site near Landis open for the next 10 years.

NMC [Nanostructured Minerals Corporation] has upgraded the Palo facility since it took ownership in September 2007 and plans to increase its workforce as necessary to meet the supply obligations. Currently production capacity is estimated at 100,000 tonnes per annum, and there is land to expand facilities and capacity.

The sodium sulphate at Palo is produced at purities of 98 to 99 per cent. The Palo facility has several strategic advantages. It is located adjacent to a national rail line, enabling the company to service large volumes of material year round. In addition, there are heavy mobile handling equipment, rail lines, mining permits and bonds granted by the province of Saskatchewan.

The deal is also a joint venture between ZEOX, NMC, and Otish to acquire mineral rights for prospective potash development at the Palo site. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Dairy Farmers of Saskatchewan

Ms. Atkinson: — On Tuesday evening November 18th, I was privileged to attend the Dairy Farmers of Saskatchewan dinner in Saskatoon. The dinner was part of a two-day conference and AGM [annual general meeting] for members of the association.

The Dairy Farmers of Saskatchewan is a non-profit organization which advocates and promotes policies, programs, and services in the best interest of Saskatchewan's dairy farmers. The dairy industry began in our province in 1895 when a co-operative butter creamery located at Saltcoats. Over the last century, dairy production and processing has grown into the successful industry we have today.

Dairy Farmers of Saskatchewan liaises with their sister organizations and collaborates on recommendations for industry policies at the regional, provincial, and national levels. Their concerns include agricultural and nutritional education, media promotion, public relations, and the school milk program.

During last Tuesday's dinner, members paid tribute to the former Milk Control Board and its Chair, Leonard Blocka. They also gave accolades to directors Alvin Schultz and Emile Marquette for their dedicated past service to the dairy producers.

A highlight of the evening was the announcement of the 2009 Dairy Youth Ambassador, Mary Fink, daughter of Barb and Kim Fink of Vibank. Mary was selected after an interview and presentation. Other applicants were Erin Klassen of Herbert and Jessica McLeod of Caronport. I want to congratulate all of these

young people for their commitment to a significant industry contributing to Saskatchewan's healthy economy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Schools Under Review

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, there are currently six schools in this province under review. Abbey, Morse, Wishart, Nokomis, and Landis are looking at closure; Lyndale is being considered for discontinuance of grades. The Sask Party once campaigned on keeping schools open. This has turned into empty rhetoric and broken promises.

To the minister: how many of these schools will pursue a school of opportunity designation? And more importantly, when will the minister level with them as to what this designation will actually provide?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is correct in identifying the schools that have enrolment numbers as of September 30 that do not meet the guidelines as printed in the handbook. That handbook was circulated throughout the entire province. All the stakeholders, including directors of education, school community councils, understand the numbers that are in those documents.

Those schools that do not have sufficient enrolment, as the member would know, have the ability through the school review process which was initiated on October 15, they will now have the opportunity to consider whether or not they will become a community, and subsequent to that, a school of opportunity. Those are the criteria. They're very well explained in the document, and the member knows that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the process of pursuing a school of opportunity application puts a huge strain on a community's resources. They need to know the facts about what this designation provides. When pressed on this issue by his own members amidst the glory of the Sask Party convention, the Premier suggested a review of the policy, the new policy, is needed — so soon. The communities facing closure need some clarity, and they need it now.

To the minister: is he reviewing the schools of opportunity policy, and when will these communities know what's on the

table?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, page 35 of the document, section 6, deals with schools of opportunity. It is an extensive document that talks about what the community needs to do in order to achieve a school of opportunity status. Mr. Speaker, if that community is able to look at its development and look at its influx of students, Mr. Speaker — because after all it is enrolment that will dictate whether or not a school meets the current criteria — if they look at all of that information and believe that there is development within this area, Mr. Speaker, unlike the former government who was in power for 16 years when literally hundreds of schools closed, this will be an opportunity for the community, through a process of additional funding by this government, to in fact allow that school to prove to itself and to the ministry that they are a school of opportunity and will attract the students that they need to achieve the status as required.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that doesn't answer the fact that the Premier is saying that the minister's policy needs to be reviewed.

This government spends \$8 million a year for Enterprise Saskatchewan to make recommendations on issues important to our provincial economy. In their September 30 report, the board of Enterprise Saskatchewan recommended that in light of the changing Saskatchewan economy, any decision on rural and northern schools be suspended for a three-year period.

So to the Minister of Education: does he consider Enterprise Saskatchewan an education stakeholder? And will he accept Enterprise Saskatchewan's recommendation and impose a three-year moratorium on rural and northern school closures?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my ministry values input from people right across this province. I get dozens and dozens of letters from individuals. I get letters from town councils. I get letters from RM [rural municipality] councils. In fact we have a recommendation from the Enterprise and Innovation board to put in place a moratorium. The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is no. We will not be putting in place a moratorium.

Mr. Speaker, what we are considering, though, in light of some good suggestions from the Enterprise and Innovation, is that a two-year period for a community to prove itself regarding the influx of some businesses that's going to bring in some young families with children, we're looking at that two-year period of maybe that is not quite enough, Mr. Speaker, and we may want

to change that to three years. Mr. Speaker, we are considering that. For the benefit of the member opposite, we are considering whether or not two years is adequate, and maybe we need to look at a three-year plan.

Mr. Speaker, that is how we are going to deal with growth in rural Saskatchewan. That's how we are going to ensure that communities who believe that they are growing have the opportunity to prove themselves and maintain a school — unlike the NDP [New Democratic Party].

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that minister better get his facts straight before he sends communities on a wild goose chase that drains their resources. The school is at the very heart of the community. As we speak, communities are trying to plan for the future. Mixed signals, endless backroom discussions, and prolonged review are not fair to these communities.

The Sask Party touted Enterprise Saskatchewan, and now they're calling for a moratorium. The Premier has told his own party that there's likely a better plan available and there will be a review.

To the minister: when will he provide these communities the certainty they deserve? When will he share with Saskatchewan communities the Premier's new plan for school closures?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in this Assembly today and the Premier has indicated before, there isn't a change to the process. The process is there. The dates are there. Everything is still going to be the same.

And, Mr. Speaker, clearly next spring when the first opportunity will be there if indeed a board of education decides that it is in fact going to close a school, Mr. Speaker . . . Just because a school has been placed under review doesn't mean it's going to close.

But if it does, Mr. Speaker, and that motion has been put on the books, the community has the ability to put in place its game plan to explain to all of its residents why it will be able to meet the criteria for enrolment, Mr. Speaker.

And we're looking at it and saying that two years might not be quite enough, and maybe we need to move to a three-year ability for that community to achieve those goals. Nothing has changed for the community. And I dare say that the member opposite needs to understand that himself first of all.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Clean Coal Project

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party continues to put a lot of its environmental eggs in the carbon capture and storage basket. It's counting on clean coal to help it meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets. But the real story here, Mr. Speaker, is of clean coal and its cost.

The Sask Party claims the project is going to cost \$1.4 billion. They claim the province's share is 750 million, and we know Ottawa has put up \$240 million, and they're saying not a penny more. And we're told the rest will come from private sector investments. That's what they're saying.

To the minister: how's the search for private sector investors going so far? How many investors, nine months after the announcement, are banging down the door for the chance to share in this clean coal project?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to speak in this House regarding clean coal and the leading-edge demonstration project that the federal government has the confidence in the Government of Saskatchewan in, and that we are taking that responsibility very seriously, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member and I had a chance to discuss this in committee just a couple of nights ago, and I provided that information to him at that time. And I'll do so again. It's a \$1.4 billion project that we're looking to the private sector for in the neighbourhood of \$400 million for ancillary costs regarding the distribution and other facets.

The Saskatchewan government, through SaskPower, will have a budget in the neighbourhood of \$750 million. As all members know, SaskPower has a capital budget in the neighbourhood of 4 to \$500 million over the past number of years. That will continue into the future. That will actually increase, Mr. Speaker, because of the increased economic activity and the increased need for safe, reliable power, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — I didn't hear a single company, Mr. Speaker, that's lining up. Mr. Speaker, like Saskatchewan, Alberta is pursuing carbon capture and storage. And there are lessons to be learned from what's happening in Alberta. The Alberta government's Carbon Capture Council says the cost of developing the technology could be as high as \$200 per tonne.

There are also liability issues to consider if the CO₂ ever leaks after being stored, including damage to water wells. Given all of that, private sector investors here in Saskatchewan will want to know how much they will have to pay, and who's responsible for cost overruns.

To the minister: will SaskPower customers end up paying the bill for cost overruns and other liabilities?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the operative question here is, are members opposite in favour of CO₂ sequestration? They put money into it; I suspect they are. But maybe with questions like that it's time that they put that on the record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they had a plan for a \$4 billion greenfield clean coal plant in southern Saskatchewan. They abandoned that. Did they have a plan B, Mr. Speaker? No, none whatsoever. We take this responsibility seriously. We are putting the plans in place.

It's a \$1.4 billion project. It's on schedule right now. To answer the member's earlier question, we are accepting requests for proposals. There's about 10 companies that we were hoping would bid in that regard. They are bringing information forward. It's on track. It's on schedule.

To pre-empt the next question from the member, there is some risk involved. We're very responsible with that risk, and we're moving forward in a responsible way. That's why the federal government had the confidence in us, and that's why we have the responsibility to move forward.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's Ottawa cousins have made it crystal clear that cost overruns are not their responsibilities. And private sectors will not give this government a blank cheque for any cost overruns or other liabilities. So that leaves SaskPower customers holding the bag, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister: how much will SaskPower rates rise to pay for the cost overruns on this clean coal project?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said before in this House, it's a \$1.4 billion project. Boundary dam 3 is in need of refurbishing anyway. That's why the fit was a very good fit. It would cost about \$260 million to retrofit Boundary dam 3. In this regard we're able to do both things at once.

When the previous government left the greenfield clean coal technology project and didn't have a second option, it was incumbent upon this government and incumbent upon this minister to act very quickly to ensure that we did have a project in place to ensure that our commitment to reduce greenhouse

gases is intact. That's indeed what we've done. We've got a plan going forward, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no guarantee there'll be any significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. We know that the government is spending a lot of money on this clean coal project, and we know that the government is putting carbon capture and storage strategy that is similar in many ways to that of Alberta's. Well the *Calgary Herald* reported last week that the Alberta provincial auditor has said, quote, "Alberta could spend a lot of money, but not achieve emissions targets."

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why is this government putting so many of its eggs in the costly clean coal basket with absolutely no guarantee of reduced greenhouse gas emissions?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I answered these questions as well in committee a couple of days ago but I'll, for the benefit of all members of the House, go through the information again.

We will reduce the carbon footprint of SaskPower by some 1 million tonnes per year in the 2011-2012 process. Again this is a demonstration project. When it does work, when it does go forward, we will be able to use this.

The member talks about what's happening in Alberta. For the member's information, TransAlta and other companies in Alberta and across Western Canada and across North America are interested in what we are doing with this. We are leading the way, and we take that responsibility seriously. The member opposite talks about eggs in . . . Well I'd rather have all the eggs in one basket than none of the eggs in any basket, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — That being said, Mr. Speaker, we're in favour of hydro development. Is it going to be more costly? Yes. We're in favour of wind power development. Is it going to be more costly? Probably. Are we in favour of nuclear power? Yes, we want to hear, we want companies like . . .

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

Response to Deputy Minister's Report

Mr. Yates: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Moen report on the Sask Party's mishandling of the improper release of a prisoner from the Regina Court of Queen's Bench was released on Friday.

The report recommends that the deputy minister of Corrections be reinstated. Also on Friday, the government announced that Terry Coleman would be shuffled to Municipal Affairs. I guess someone with this minister's talents doesn't need any . . .

The Speaker: — Allow the member to place his question.

Mr. Yates: — I guess someone with this minister's talents doesn't need advice from someone with Terry Coleman's credentials. After all he's only a former chief of police.

To the minister: if Terry Coleman was cleared of any wrongdoing, why is he no longer the deputy minister?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member opposite for his question. In the case of this review being done by the deputy minister of Justice, Mr. Moen, a very senior civil servant, we took his advice. We heeded his motions and his advice on this one. And in this case no wrongdoing happened. No one was terminated, Mr. Speaker.

And it was at the time of the report review being done, it was decided that at the time I have an interim deputy minister, it was a time to make a shuffle in executive government — the deputy ministers in three areas, Mr. Speaker. No one was terminated. No one did anything wrong, Mr. Speaker. It's just fine to make a shuffle.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, according to the Moen report, the deputy minister was in this building when he was informed of the mistaken release by email just before 10:30 on Thursday, October 23. Presumably he knew that the minister was in the Assembly. It seems very strange that he didn't at least give the minister a heads-up. But what's more curious is that the Moen report has blacked out the names of other recipients of that email in question.

Just to clear things up, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: did either he or one of his ministerial staff receive that email?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member opposite for the question. It was very clearly stated in the report, the review, that the former deputy minister in Corrections, Public Safety and Policing would have been wiser to advise me of his notification of the incident, Mr. Speaker.

To the question, no one else in my office was made aware of

that, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we asked Mr. Moen to broaden his scope of his review not just to the Justice area but to this ministry as well. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister has been very clear in his belief that he knows everything. When asked last week in this Assembly why he thinks he knows more than front-line workers at the Regina Correctional Centre, he did not hide behind false modesty. Instead he gave us his resumé.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Moen report describes the two front-line workers in this instance as well-intentioned and hard-working and notes that they have received commendations for their past service. To the minister: will he give the benefit of the doubt to the front-line staff in this incident given that, unlike him, they are ordinary people prone to human error?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for his question. As clearly stated a few weeks back, I too am prone to human error, Mr. Speaker, and I'm okay with that. It's okay for me to say that in this House. I have no problem apologizing for things I've done.

To recognize the hard-working staff involved in this case, no one was terminated. The deputy minister did discipline, and the discipline was meted out in such a fashion that was equal to the level of irresponsibility that happened that day.

As we stand now, Mr. Speaker, the situation was handled. It's over. We're moving forward. We're taking the advice of Mr. Moen with some policy procedures for internal working to make sure this does not happen again. And we now have a minister who has assumed responsibility for a ministry, has put in policy direction. Procedures are now instated, Mr. Speaker, unlike the former member opposite who was a minister of this portfolio, union leader, and a corrections worker, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, we are asked to believe that the events of last Friday are just a coincidence. The Moen report recommends that the suspension against Mr. Coleman be lifted and that he continue in his role as a deputy minister. At the same time, the Premier's office announces a mini-shuffle and sends Mr. Coleman over to Municipal Affairs. Fair enough, Mr. Speaker. We're not suspicious people over here on the opposition benches. So if the Premier chooses to characterize this as a coincidence, we'll believe him.

While we're on the subject of coincidences though, Mr.

Speaker, to the Premier: when can we expect the equally coincidental cabinet shuffle?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan have high expectations of whoever their government happens to be. I think the people of the province expect their government to react when there is a mistake made. They want their government to admit readily of it and then to correct the mistake, Mr. Speaker. They also, I think, want this current government to fix some of the problems that exist because of mistakes made by the previous administration, though you never hear any of those mistakes from them. And so in this case, Mr. Speaker, this government and this minister have implemented a policy of notification for the public when someone who is clearly dangerous is at large.

Mr. Speaker, amazingly, that policy did not exist when that member who asked a question was the minister responsible. Those issues have been addressed. The Moen report has been received. The recommendations, Mr. Speaker, have been implemented. And that, Mr. Speaker, I believe is the kind of government that the people of the province want and they will get from this side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Support for Livestock Producers

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today livestock producers in our province are receiving about half of what their parents and their grandparents used to receive from feedlots and packing plants decades ago. We have a livestock industry, Mr. Speaker, in crisis. And I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, postponing debt isn't the answer.

Now on Wednesday the Minister of Agriculture indicated that he would be talking to the federal Minister of Agriculture later that day. And I believe Thursday the Premier indicated the Minister of Agriculture would be speaking to the federal minister on Thursday. I'm not sure if he had one or two conversations. But can the Minister of Agriculture today report to this House the response he's received from the federal Minister of Agriculture? And can producers in this province expect some federal support payments soon?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition, I did have the opportunity to talk to the federal minister on Friday and highlighted the problems and the stresses in the livestock industry in Saskatchewan. The other issue we talked about was COOL [country of origin labelling] and what's that doing to us from the United States and protectionism coming out of the US

[United States].

We talked a number of issues and I highlighted the need for . . . Whether we improve the programs or we deal with an ad hoc, whatever it was, I was wondering whether there will help coming from the federal government. And he took notice and he will be getting back to us. At this point I have no commitment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, taking notice and getting back to us isn't helping the producer of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the minister apparently has had one conversation with the federal minister, and if I read in the press correctly, he's quoted as saying, "He [the federal minister] was non-committal in the area right now but at least we have it on the table . . ."

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're happy that there's something on the table because there's clearly nothing on the table from this federal government or this provincial government for the cattle producers of Saskatchewan.

So my question to the Minister of Agriculture: if the federal minister is saying he's noncommittal or intends not to act on this, will he reconsider his own decision? And will he provide, from his treasury, support for the cattle industry in the province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I think we've done a number of things. We've talked about the water program. We've talked about the education tax rebate that we are increasing up. So we're putting money back in their pockets, not taking it from them because we know they know better how to spend those dollars than we do as government — something the former government never did.

One thing I want to remind the member opposite though — and I'm sure he checks cattle prices and the member for Nutana checks cattle prices every morning because I know they're very interested — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind them that cattle prices as of October 1, '08 are actually higher than they were October 1, '07, right before the last election.

And what did that NDP government or NDP opposition now have to say in that election? What was in their campaign literature? Absolutely nothing dealing with what was going on in agriculture, dealing with what was happening in the livestock sector. And, Mr. Speaker, things were actually even worse at this time last year than they are as of today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, one year later with a Sask Party . . .

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

Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, one year later with a Sask Party government and a Sask Party Minister of Agriculture, absolutely nothing for the producers of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in 2005 the current Minister of Agriculture called for an emergency debate in this legislature to deal with the crisis. Following question period later this day, Mr. Speaker, I intend to introduce an emergency resolution calling upon this government and the federal government to in fact put substantive effort in dealing with this crisis. Now interestingly, Mr. Speaker, the motion that I will introduce is very, very similar to the very same motion that the now Minister of Agriculture introduced in 2005.

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture: will he support that motion, virtually the same motion that he made in 2005?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to the member opposite, I would look forward to a debate on agriculture with the members opposite any day, any time of any week. I would appreciate having the opportunity. Because you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if one of the members actually took a wrong turn leaving Regina and realized that rural Saskatchewan is still out there because for 16 years, they didn't seem to know . . . or whether they didn't know or they didn't care, agriculture was not on the list.

I look forward to debate the issue because we really care about rural Saskatchewan and we care about the livestock producers in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 70 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 70, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved that Bill No. 70, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Apology

Mr. Taylor: — Point of order.

The Speaker: — What's the member from The Battlefords point of order?

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order dealing with the motion that's just been called by the Clerk, and it stands in the name of the government today.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, this motion as it is currently worded is not in order for the following reasons. Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention to citation 565 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th Edition and I quote:

A motion should be neither argumentative, nor in the style of a speech, nor contain unnecessary provisions or objectionable words.

I would also draw your attention to citation 566 of Beauchesne's, and again I quote:

Any irregularity of any part of a motion shall render the whole motion irregular.

So the rules are clear I think, Mr. Speaker — if part of the motion is irregular, then the entirety of the motion is irregular. A motion is irregular if it contains unnecessary provisions or objectionable words.

So let me draw your attention to the part of the motion that is objectionable. It is the phrase, Mr. Speaker, that, and I quote from the motion: “. . . inaccurate description they were provided regarding . . .”, etc. That is the issue at hand here, Mr. Speaker. If this motion were to pass, it would create a situation where this Assembly stated as a matter of fact that an inaccurate description was provided by either this Assembly or members of this Assembly to the general public. And perhaps comments from the government in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, might lead you to understand the point of my point of order.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, this is clearly reflecting on the conduct or motives of present or former members and an attempt to use the weight of government via a motion for political reasons.

Now the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, will possibly argue that since this motion does not name individual members, that the motion is in order. The precedents would not support that assertion, and I will demonstrate.

In point of fact, the precedents I believe are clear in the opposite direction. Merely calling into disrepute the actions of members

named or unnamed or reflecting on the integrity or honesty of those members is not in order.

First, dealing with the issue of having named or not named specific members in the motion, I draw the Speaker's attention to Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, 19th Edition, page 144, 145, and I quote:

Reflections upon Members, the particular . . . [member] not being named or otherwise indicated, are equivalent to reflections on the House.

I would also add to that from Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second Edition, page 253:

To reflect improperly on a vote in the House and the motives of some members is a breach of privilege.

So, Mr. Speaker, from May and Maingot's, we have that to reflect poorly on a group of members, named or otherwise, is the same as a reflection on the motives or actions of an individual member on the House as a whole.

So is this phrase in the motion in order, Mr. Speaker? I think you have to agree the answer is no.

Now I quote from Marleau and Montpetit's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 522:

Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order.

And further I would add Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, edition no. 2, page 251:

Contemptuous references hold the Member in disrespect of his parliamentary conduct and thus the House . . . in disrespect.

And again from Maingot's, page 253, "To reflect improperly on . . . the motives of some members is a breach of privilege."

And, Mr. Speaker, from Erskine May, page 152 and 153:

As examples of speeches and writings which have been held to constitute breaches of privilege or contempts [the following] may be mentioned . . .

Reflections on the motives of a Member or a group of Members . . .

Even though the motion as written does not specifically name individual members, the precedent on this is clear. Particular members need not be named in order for this motion to not be in order. And the motion as written is clearly reflecting on the motives of current or former members of the House and is calling them into disrespect.

The offensive section . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to allow the member to place his point of order.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The offensive section of the motion reflects poorly on members and calls their motives into question. This section is therefore not in order. If a section of a motion is not in order or is objectionable, then the entire motion is objectionable. If the motion is objectionable, it is irregular and should not be put in front of the House in its present form.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of yourself to the Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, citation 565:

It is the Speaker's duty to call the attention of the mover and of the House to the irregularity of a motion; whereupon the motion is usually withdrawn or so modified as to be no longer objectionable.

And citation 566: "The Speaker has the unquestioned authority to modify motions with respect to form."

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is proposing that the Speaker rule the offending part of the motion to be not in order and use the unquestioned authority that you have to amend the motion to change the government motion, perhaps to read as follows:

That this Assembly apologize to the victims of Murdoch Carriere for the years of harassment they were forced to endure while in the employ of the Government of Saskatchewan.

The opposition has no problem with the apology portion of the motion, and that motion would indeed be in order. But the rest of the motion, we argue, is out of order, and should be stricken from the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with the pleasure that I rise to speak to the point of order. Mr. Speaker, we were very careful to ensure that the wording of this motion was done indeed very deliberately and very appropriately. Certainly we believed that the victims of this harassment deserve an apology by the Government of Saskatchewan, and the opposition has just articulated that they support that as well.

And so an apology is a very important part of this motion, but it is important as well, Mr. Speaker, to also recognize that inaccuracies about the employment status of Mr. Carriere were also misleading to the victims of this harassment and to the people of the province in general. And as such, we believe that it's important that that be owned up to and apologized for as well.

Mr. Speaker, we were very careful that we didn't name names. We didn't imply any members in this Assembly. We just said simply that these facts that were transmitted were inaccurate and should be apologized for. It doesn't speak to intent. It just speaks to the inaccuracies of the information.

Mr. Speaker, we believe, if you review this, we trust that you'll

find this motion to be completely in order. And we would urge that that ruling happen presently so that we can proceed with the debate.

The Speaker: — I thank the members for their points, the member for his point of order, and for the Government House Leader for his comments. And having just had this point of order brought to my attention, I would like to also inform the House that I was aware of the motion. And I took the time to look at the motion even before even entering the House, going over it this morning.

I would like to reflect that while the basis of the member's position is that the motion is out of order on the grounds that it improperly reflects in the conduct of motives of present and former members, rule 50 and (f) does stipulate that:

When a motion is under discussion, no Member shall:

make a personal charge or accusation against a Member
...

And this rule is based upon established parliamentary practices as outlined in the procedural authorities of the House of Commons in Ottawa and in London.

And as I reviewed the motion, I looked at the motion very carefully, and I would suggest that the text of the motion does not make a personal charge, as the member stated, or accusation against any other member. Nevertheless even if it was drafted to identify specific individuals, this in itself would not render the motion out of order.

This Chamber is a place where members have the opportunity of debating many motions. And many motions brought before the Chamber can become and constitute emotional or argumentative debate. And I ask the members, do we want to stop total opportunity for members to debate very specific motions? When we look at the qualifier to the subsection 50(f) it states "... except by way of substantive motion with notice."

This phrase clearly acknowledges that our members are not prohibited from questioning or challenging the conduct of their colleagues, but that if they choose to do so it must be done directly with notice by way of substantive motion which we have before us.

And the Opposition House Leader did cite several references. I find however that the references are not applicable to the present circumstances and that they were made in regards to persons outside of parliamentary publishing or making offensive remarks.

As I reviewed the motion, as I've listened to the arguments, I find that the motion before us properly processes the question to the Assembly, which I would suggest to you is a motion that is in order. And debate will proceed on the motion.

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Usually when I rise to speak in this House, I begin by saying it's a pleasure to

rise. I cannot say that today. I don't take any particular pleasure in speaking to this motion today. We shouldn't be here today, Mr. Speaker. The NDP should have voluntarily apologized to Murdoch Carriere's nine victims a long time ago.

And I know that some of the nine women are watching us today. And, Mr. Speaker, through you to them I would like to say, thank you. Thank you for your tenacity and determination. Thank you for entrusting your story to us. It has been our honour to be your voice in this Assembly.

We've been raising questions about the NDP's payoff to Murdoch Carriere for almost two years. For almost two years the NDP have given incorrect information. They have dodged questions and deflected. Had they been forthright from the beginning, I would not be standing here today. But far more importantly than that, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Carriere's victims could have started the healing process.

One of the women said, and I quote, "If they [the NDP] were honest with us right at the beginning I think we could have got over it." That has not been able to happen. Carriere's nine victims, nine brave women who came forward to tell their stories, deserve to be defended by their government, and the NDP failed them. And so we stand here today.

In February 2007, we were told by the NDP that they had fired Murdoch Carriere and then offered him a financial settlement. They had given him a \$275,000 golden handshake. Obviously that begged a few questions, not the least of which being, why? Why would a man who was apparently fired for harassment and convicted in a court of law be given such a sweet deal? Why did the NDP give him such a sweet deal after a former NDP Justice minister vowed to fight this in the courts? And why weren't Murdoch Carriere's victims defended by their government? Why were these nine women given only a fraction of what the NDP eagerly handed Carriere? What was the real story?

Sadly, the more questions we asked, the more questions we had. Carriere was clearly guilty of harassment. No one was denying that, not even the NDP. And his actions were vile and disgusting. We know that from what the women have told us. And while we attempted to get answers for these women, the NDP chose to bury their heads and hope that this all went away. The NDP were slow to act when these women needed protection, but they were quick to offer up excuses — excuses that we now know are not necessarily correct.

Last year when the Saskatchewan Party was in opposition, we made a freedom of information request for the NDP's settlement with Carriere. The NDP responded that for legal reasons they could not release it. We know that to be absolutely incorrect, Mr. Speaker. When a reporter from the *Leader-Post* made the same freedom of information request this year, we were told that we could release it.

[14:30]

This obviously made me ask why the NDP chose not to, so we did a little digging. The information that came back was that both the Justice officials and Environment officials all told the NDP that the settlement could be released. It was the member for Regina Lakeview, when he was Environment minister, who

interfered and for pure political reasons blocked the release of the settlement.

We also know that the member for Saskatoon Nutana was to be in on this denial of our request so that there would be the appearance of cabinet, and I quote, "solidarity." And then this decision was supposed to be signed off by the member for Riversdale, the then premier.

Hiding the settlement was a political choice for the NDP as the settlement clearly showed that Carriere had not been fired. He had resigned. The member for Saskatoon Nutana, the member for Regina Dewdney, and the now opposition leader stood in this Assembly 29 times and told us that Carriere had been fired.

The member for Saskatoon Nutana said, and I quote, "We did not want him in our employment. He was fired." The member for Regina Dewdney said, and I quote, "Mr. Carriere was fired." The member for Riversdale when he was premier said, and I quote, "Mr. Murdoch Carriere was terminated."

Releasing that settlement would prove that these statements were not correct. Twenty-nine times they stood, Mr. Speaker. They had ample opportunity to tell us exactly what had happened and chose not to.

What is most disturbing about this information was that Carriere's victims initially felt some relief, knowing or believing that Carriere had actually been fired. It was with this belief that they agreed to sign the settlement agreement with the NDP when they offered it to them.

Once the reality of the situation was revealed this fall, that the NDP never had fired Carriere, they said that they never would have signed that agreement. And this is how they felt when they found out, and I quote: "You know the disbelief you feel when you first hear that a friend dies? That's the disbelief we feel. We feel like fools." The NDP fooled them into signing. And after all they had been through at the hands of Carriere, this is reprehensible.

The NDP settlement agreement gave Carriere \$275,000. This is an extraordinary amount of money for a man with Carriere's record. And why so much? Well the member for Saskatoon Nutana maintained that settling would be cheaper than going to court, even though the NDP had previously said they would fight this in court. She maintained that going to court would be far more expensive, and the NDP were just being prudent. She said that she had a legal opinion that said so.

On March 15, 2007, she told this Assembly, and I quote, "On the best legal advice, we were told to settle or it . . . [would] cost considerably more to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan . . ."

On March 19, 2007, she said, and I quote, "The Government of Saskatchewan compensated Mr. Carriere because we were advised by legal counsel we were going to lose the case." Well, Mr. Speaker, I've read that exact same legal opinion, and it says no such thing. That very legal opinion actually says that there was no way that Carriere would have received anywhere near \$275,000 if he had pursued this in court.

The NDP could have done the right thing and pursued this in

court, an action that would not have resulted in a \$275,000 payoff. They chose not to. They chose instead to make sure that Carriere was well taken care of.

Not only did the NDP pay off Carriere with a ton of cash, they paid him for his pain and suffering. That is pretty hard to fathom, Mr. Speaker. How could a man who sexually harassed female employees have encountered any pain and suffering? We are still waiting for an explanation from the NDP on this. But considering the information or lack thereof that we've received on this issue, I do not expect a reasonable answer.

The women involved certainly want answers. Upon hearing that the NDP paid Carriere for his pain and suffering, one woman had this to say, and I quote, "We want to know what pain and suffering that man had." And another woman said this, and I quote, "Carriere's pain and suffering surely can't be the same as ours."

And the terms of the settlement were misrepresented as well. While we were in opposition, the member for Canora-Pelly wrote to the member for Saskatoon Nutana with a list of questions regarding Carriere's settlement. We had asked in a letter dated March 1, 2007, on a list of questions, question no. 2 is, and I quote, "Has the government paid any of Mr. Carriere's legal costs, and if so, how much?"

On March 7 we received in reply to our question no. 2, and I quote. This is from the NDP, "The government has not paid any of Carriere's legal expenses."

Now let me quote from the NDP settlement agreement with Carriere, and I quote:

The settlers shall pay to the Plaintiff Carriere the amount of \$275,000. The parties agree that the settlement amount is inclusive of damages, costs, interest, and legal costs.

Rules concerning parliamentary language do not allow me to use the words that I would like to, Mr. Speaker. But at the very least, the information that the NDP provided about paying Carriere's legal costs is absolutely incorrect.

Carriere's victims have legitimate questions. We asked legitimate questions. The NDP responded repeatedly with incorrect answers. At the end of the day, the NDP's decision to settle out of court was an effort to make sure that their political friend was taken care of, pure and simple. They protected him by transferring him from one office to another. They protected him by ignoring the women's complaints. They protected him by allowing him to resign. And they protected him by making sure he resigned with a full pension and a huge settlement.

And what about the women, Mr. Speaker? Did the NDP protect them? No. Have the NDP showed any remorse for what happened to them? No. Have the NDP once shown any empathy for these women? No. Was there any indication that the NDP were choosing the women's safety and well-being over Carriere? No. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they haven't learned a thing from this very sad situation, and their comments and attitude over the past few days in particular show that they have learned nothing.

I've been in and around politics long enough that there are very few things in this business that shock me, Mr. Speaker. However I was stunned last week by comments from the opposition. Last Thursday my colleague, the member for Saskatchewan Rivers, delivered her statement that highlighted the motion that is before us today. She was urging the NDP to do the right thing and join our government in an apology to these brave women. And what was the NDP's response? They heckled her from their seats. The member for Prince Albert Northcote told us to stop flogging a dead horse. That's their view apparently, Mr. Speaker, of these women: that they are a dead horse that we should simply be walking away from. The member for Athabasca said that we were revictimizing these women.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if standing up for these women is flogging a dead horse, we are gladly guilty of that charge. If making sure that their voices are heard is flogging a dead horse, we are gladly guilty of that charge. If showing the NDP's abject failure of these women is flogging a dead horse, we are gladly guilty of that charge. And if offering these women an apology is flogging a dead horse, then we are gladly guilty of that charge.

And as for revictimizing these women, the only party in this Chamber who has done that is the NDP. They were revictimized when the NDP failed to take them seriously. They were revictimized when the NDP paid off Carriere with \$275,000. They were revictimized when they found out that contrary to what the NDP had claimed, Murdoch Carriere was never fired but he was allowed to resign. They were revictimized when the NDP gave Carriere \$275,000 and just a fraction of that to these women.

And while we understand that no amount of money can undo the hurt, the shame, and the pain that these women have suffered, our government today has offered these brave nine women an additional compensation payment. We cannot undo what Carriere did to them. We cannot undo actions over the past few years. We cannot take back the money that was paid to Carriere. What we can do is acknowledge that they suffered once at the hands of Carriere and once again by the disinterest of their government at the time. And we hope that this acknowledgement with the additional payment and the apology that we are offering today, that these women have a sense of closure so that they can begin to heal.

Mr. Speaker, also last Thursday, the Opposition House Leader scoffed at this motion and questioned why it was a priority for us. It absolutely is a priority for us. I am proud to be a member of a party and a government who has dedicated so much time and effort over almost two years to make sure that the voices of these women are heard. We have done so because it is the right thing to do. These nine brave women wanted and deserve answers. We have not received accurate answers.

The NDP told us that the settlement agreement could not be released. That is not correct. The NDP told us that the legal opinion said that going to court would cost more than settling with Carriere. That is not correct. The NDP told us that Carriere's settlement did not pay for legal costs. That is not correct. The NDP told us they had fired Carriere. That is not correct.

The NDP had the chance to do the right thing years ago by protecting these women, and they chose not to. The NDP have the opportunity to do the right thing today — accurately answer our questions, stand in this House and apologize to these women. They can do the right thing today, Mr. Speaker. And after all that these women have been through, it is the very least that they can do. The very least that we can all do.

And I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP would stop and consider this for a moment. If these women were their wives, their sisters, their mothers, their daughters, their friends, would they hold so tightly to their callous attitudes? If these nine women had faces and names, would the NDP continue to scoff and ridicule? Because, Mr. Speaker, while their names are not public, they are not nameless. Their names are mother, daughter, wife, sister, friend. They may not be sitting in front of us today, but they are not faceless. And while most of us do not know them personally, they deserve our respect.

I will close by repeating what my colleague said last week: the time is always right to do the right thing. Mr. Speaker, today is the right time. And I move the following motion:

That this Assembly apologize to the victims of Murdoch Carriere for the years of harassment they were forced to endure while in the employ of the Government of Saskatchewan and for the inaccurate description they were provided regarding Carriere's employment status and severance settlement with the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Martensville has moved:

That this Assembly apologize to the victims of Murdoch Carriere for the years of harassment they were forced to endure while in the employ of the Government of Saskatchewan and for the inaccurate description they were provided regarding Carriere's employment status and severance settlement with the government.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP was the government of the day when Murdoch Carriere was an employee of the provincial government. As the government of the day, it was ultimately our responsibility for what happened in the civil service at that time.

And let me be very clear. What Murdoch Carriere did was wrong. What happened to his victims was wrong and should not have happened. And it certainly should not ever happen to an employee of any workplace. It certainly should not happen to the employees of the people's government.

Our party and the members of our caucus have always believed that people should not only have the right to come forward if they feel a workplace is not respectful or harassment-free, but they should be protected once they do so. Our party and our caucus have always believed that it is a fundamental human

right to have a harassment-free workplace. The Government of Saskatchewan should lead by example and should be harassment free.

Unfortunately the government of the day did not achieve that goal. Unfortunately there were victims of harassment in that workplace. We regret that we did not achieve an harassment-free workplace. We also regret that we did not do a better job of communicating with the women involved in this matter as it developed. This is an area in which we certainly could have done better.

This has been said before and, if need be, it will be said again. In fact I would like to quote from an article in the *Regina Leader-Post* from March 22 of last year. Quote, "Public Service . . . [commissioner] Pat Atkinson apologized Wednesday for there not being 'a respectful workplace' at a Prince Albert office four years ago when a number of women made claims of harassment."

The article goes on to quote the member from Nutana. Quote, "I think what's clear is that we had a workplace that was not harassment-free and we are truly, genuinely apologetic and sorry that that workplace was not harassment-free." The member from Nutana is quoted again later in the article as saying quote "There's no doubt that these women are continuing to bear the brunt of what happened several years ago and for that we're truly sorry."

Mr. Speaker, members of our caucus and our former government have apologized before. But, Mr. Speaker, if there's anyone who thinks that the NDP or the members of this caucus have not sufficiently apologized for what happened, fair enough. So once again, on behalf of my colleagues, on behalf of the entire NDP caucus now and of the time, and on behalf of the government and the premier of the day — we are sorry. What happened to the victims of Murdoch Carriere is inexcusable and unacceptable.

And if this motion was about apologizing to the women again, then all of our members would gladly stand in their places and vote for that apology. But, Mr. Speaker, this motion is not just about apologizing to the women. It is not just about apologizing to the victims. If it was, we would gladly vote for it. As you heard my colleague, the Opposition House Leader, point out, there is an offending clause in the motion which reflects poorly on members of this House and calls their motives into question. This clause is unacceptable to us. It is factually incorrect, and it demeans members of this caucus and by extension the entire House.

[14:45]

Not to reargue the point made by the Opposition House Leader, but the precedent is clear. Reflections on the motives of a member or a group of members is not allowed, and this motion does indirectly what the members across the way know full well they could not do directly. The clause is about politics, Mr. Speaker.

And so I rise today, not only once again to offer apologies to the victims of Murdoch Carriere; I rise to propose an amendment. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Opposition

House Leader:

That the words after "while in the employ of the Government of Saskatchewan" be removed from the motion.

And what would be the result of the amendment, Mr. Speaker? Very simply it would make the motion of an apology to the women who were the victims of harassment. And as I said earlier, if this motion is about apologizing to those women again, then all of our members will gladly stand in their places and again vote for that apology.

Now it will be interesting to see what the government does with this amendment, Mr. Speaker. If they truly believe that the members of our caucus should stand in their places and vote for an apology, then they will support the amendment, and that will be the result. They will support this amendment, and then we will stand and support the motion.

But if this motion is more about politics than it is about an apology, then the members across the way will vote against the amendment, Mr. Speaker. If they vote against this amendment, they are saying that this . . . [inaudible] . . . really about an apology. This is really about trying to do through the back door what you cannot do through the front door. This is about playing politics.

I hope that is not the case, Mr. Speaker. I want to believe that the members of the government really want a unanimous apology to go to these women. I want to believe that this is not about politics, but this is about a principle.

If the government defeats the amendment, then it is our opinion that it is an invalid motion and that the motion reflects poorly on members of the House and calls their motives into question. If the government uses their majority in this House to push through a motion calling into question the motives of the minority, then that is quite simply unprecedented, unparliamentary, and unfair. And we will not participate. If this amendment is defeated, then we will be left with no choice but to abstain from the motion at hand, Mr. Speaker.

The members across the way will no doubt try to use this fact against us. They will claim we were unwilling to vote for an apology when nothing could be further from the truth. That will prove once and for all that this is about politics, not about an apology. The choice is entirely in the hands of the majority, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party today gets to choose how the NDP will vote today. Will they choose an apology or will they choose politics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move my amendment.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Meewasin has moved an amendment to the motion which reads:

That all the words after "while in the employment of the Government of Saskatchewan" be removed from the motion.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt, please.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was interesting listening to the member from Meewasin speak to the motion and then bring forward amendment because the NDP obviously want to strike out the second half of the amendment.

And the member talked about choices, Mr. Speaker. And they too, when they were government, when the NDP were government, they had choices. They had choices over a long period of time as these women brought forward their concerns and their complaints. There were nine women that were victimized, nine women that brought forward what was happening to them. And the NDP government had choices at that time, and they chose time and time and time again, the perpetrator. They chose to support Murdoch Carriere instead of supporting the women.

The reason why it's important to keep the motion in its entirety, Mr. Speaker, is because it speaks to not just the victimization by Murdoch Carriere, but also the revictimization by their government of the day. The NDP revictimized these women by not giving them the entire truth. They did not give them all the information. They told them time and time again that Murdoch Carriere was fired, and that was not the case, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to read back into the record what my colleague, the member from Martensville spoke into the record earlier, saying with all the information, that the NDP failed to give the correct information to those women. The NDP told us the settlement agreement would not be released. That is not correct. The NDP told us that their legal opinion said going to court would have cost more than settling with Carriere. That is not correct. The NDP told us that Carriere's settlement did not pay for legal costs. That is not correct. The NDP told us that they had fired Carriere, and that is not correct.

The NDP had the chance to do the right thing years ago by protecting these women, and they chose not to.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Meewasin talked about choices and so is the government of the day, so is the Saskatchewan Party. We are choosing to do the right thing today by not only apologizing to these women but recognizing that the previous government, the NDP, did not give them the correct information time and time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, I do not support the amendment. I do support the motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Question before the Assembly is the amendment to the original motion brought forward by the member from Saskatoon Meewasin:

That all the words after “while in the employment of the Government of Saskatchewan” be removed from the motion.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All opposed say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

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

[The division bells rang from 14:52 until 14:53.]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the amendment to the original motion:

That all the words after “while in employment of the Government of Saskatchewan” be removed from the motion.

Those in favour of the amendment, please rise.

[Yeas — 19]

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

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the amendment 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	Ottobreit	Ross
Reiter	Bradshaw	Harrison
McMillan		

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

The Speaker: — The amendment is defeated. The motion before the Assembly is the original motion:

That this Assembly apologize to the victims of Murdoch Carriere for the years of harassment they were forced to endure while in the employment of the Government of Saskatchewan and for the inaccurate description they were

provided regarding Carriere's employment status and severance settlement with the Government.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion carries. Call in the members. Those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 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	Bradshaw	Harrison
McMillan		

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

[Nays — nil]

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

The Speaker: — The motion carries.

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we move into orders of the day, I would ask leave of the Assembly to move an emergency debate under standing order 59 of our *Rules and Procedures* of this Assembly. The motion that I will be presenting is clearly of a pressing and urgent necessity for the cattle producers of our province and, I would argue, for we their representatives here in the Assembly today.

I hope that the government will allow this motion to be put forward in front of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I can really think of no other issue that is as urgent in terms of Saskatchewan people and our economy, Mr. Speaker, and made even more urgent by the non-response of the federal government in the Throne Speech last week.

So, Mr. Speaker, today I rise to put forward this emergency debate. Interestingly enough, the exact wording of the debate is taken from a very, very similar motion made by the current Minister of Agriculture on November 15, 2005. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would propose to move:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government for completely ignoring the current agricultural crisis in its Throne Speech; and that this Assembly condemn the provincial government for its failure to raise the importance of the current agriculture crisis with the

federal government . . .

Now again, Mr. Speaker, that's almost word for word from the Minister of Agriculture's motion in 2005, but we would add one further clause:

and furthermore that the provincial government take immediate action to deal with the crisis in the cattle industry.

And I would so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:00]

The Speaker: — The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has asked for leave to move a motion of emergency debate regarding the livestock industry. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

MOTION UNDER RULE 59

Livestock Industry in Jeopardy

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I think we can agree, all of us in this House, that our livestock industry in Saskatchewan is facing some very, very difficult times.

I think we can all agree that to date, the Minister of Agriculture has indicated that he is not willing to respond to the request from the cattle industry for some very direct financial, cash support. And it would appear that our federal government is unwilling, and perhaps now unlikely to offer support from the federal treasury.

I think we can all agree and observe that our neighbours to the west, the Alberta government, has recently provided their producers with a cash support program of over \$300 million. They have made the decision to stand behind their cattle industry.

On August 1 of this year, the Saskatchewan livestock producers wrote to Saskatchewan Party MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] asking for a similar support package as to that provided to the producers in Alberta, and I quote from their request. Quote, "Without similar and immediate support for Saskatchewan's cattle producers, a significant reduction in forage acreage and cattle numbers within the province will occur."

These, Mr. Speaker, are the leaders of the industry indicating unless there is immediate support for the industry in our province, support not dissimilar from what's happening for producers in Alberta, that there may well be a significant reduction in forage acreage and cattle numbers in this province. And the letter, Mr. Speaker, to the government MLAs, from the leadership of the cattle industry in our province, indicated that \$148 million was required — \$148 million to provide parity

with the producers in Alberta. And now I understand the Minister of Agriculture has said that he would not accede to that request.

Now we know that the minister's acted in recent days to provide some deferral in terms of the loan program but, Mr. Speaker, in my view and I think in view of many of the producers, postponing or extending debt is not, is not the solution.

Mr. Speaker, I had some opportunity this past weekend to be in the Southwest, to be in Shaunavon, and I talked to some who had been in the cattle business for a lifetime. They believe that the future of the industry is today in some very significant jeopardy. They believe that even a year from now we could almost see the elimination of the industry in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I well recall May 2003, May 2003 when we received word of that one infected cow, the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] infected cow, and how at that time it threatened the industry. And how well I recall working with the federal government at that time to put a BSE recovery program in place.

Now it took a little pulling in Ottawa to get them to come on board, but they came on board. And we had a national program I believe at that time worth \$460 million. I know in 2004, in the provincial budget of 2004 we included \$55 million in the provincial budget for that program alone, Mr. Speaker, that very direct program to the cattle industry, to the livestock industry as affected by BSE.

Well we're in the circumstance today, Mr. Speaker, where I'm told the prices of cattle are lower than they were at the time of the BSE issue. Mr. Speaker, we need this provincial government to stand behind our cattle producers. The industry requires it.

And I think we've all read the commentary of Kevin Hursh when he talked about how this government has been less responsive to the needs of the cattle industry than the former government.

Mr. Speaker, this political party in government enjoys a great deal of support in rural Saskatchewan. They've had a great deal of support from the cattle producers and livestock producers. Mr. Speaker, it's time that they stepped up to the plate to support those producers.

Now we know that the Minister of Agriculture has had at least one conversation with the federal minister. And he volunteers that as a result of that conversation, well the minister is noncommittal but now at least it's on the table. Well I hope this wasn't the first time our federal minister heard about a situation facing producers in this province. I hope this isn't the first time that somebody put it on the table.

Again, we have a federal minister from Saskatchewan who ought to go to Ottawa fully cognizant of this issue. And one would have expected to see something at least in the Throne Speech. We saw nothing. And now we have conversations between our Minister of Agriculture and the federal minister and we find out that, well it's only now getting on the table.

Well I had a brief chance this morning, Mr. Speaker, just a brief chance to speak to some of the producers that are over at Agribition. They are saying there is a requirement for the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan to step up to the plate, as the Government of Alberta has for their producers.

I reflect back again, Mr. Speaker, into 2003 when we faced the BSE crisis, and when we as a province and the federal government came together. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when we came with that support in 2003, the price of oil and the surplus wasn't anything like what it is today.

This government has some resources. They can stand behind the industry. And this motion, which again I repeat, is virtually the same motion that the current Minister of Agriculture made back in 2005. This motion should enjoy the support of this legislature.

And perhaps through this motion we can begin a process of moving the federal government, and perhaps through this motion we can begin a process of moving the Executive Council, the cabinet, the Minister of Agriculture, and the Premier into taking some very concrete steps here in the province with their treasury to support this industry.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that government has allowed this motion to go ahead and look forward to the support of government members and opposition members for this motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as a relatively new member here, I'm still learning some of the procedures. I will, Mr. Speaker, be very pleased to move this into the record:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government for completely ignoring the current agricultural crisis in its Throne Speech; and that this Assembly condemn the provincial government for its failure to raise the importance of the current agricultural crisis with the federal government; and furthermore that the provincial government take immediate action to deal with the crisis in the cattle industry.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government for completely ignoring the current agricultural crisis in its Throne Speech; and that this Assembly condemn the provincial government for its failure to raise the importance of the current agricultural crisis with the federal government; and furthermore that the provincial government take immediate action to deal with the crisis in the cattle industry.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate having the opportunity to debate the livestock issue that's going on in Saskatchewan. Any time we can debate agriculture, I think, is important to this legislature, but important to producers out there.

I just want to talk about some of the comments that the Leader of the Opposition had talked about in his presentation today. And one of the things he said was that cattle prices are lower today than they were when the BSE struck.

I remind the member opposite that actually — and I use cull cows as an example — but I think everyone would know that there was times where 10 or \$20 was all you could get right after BSE hit for a cull cow, Mr. Speaker. And today possibly that number would be in the range of 4, 5, \$600 which is not great — don't get me wrong — but it's a far cry from where we were with the BSE.

One thing, Mr. Speaker, that also the member talked about was the hog and cattle loan, and that doesn't . . . He said, if I remember exactly what he said, that won't solve any problems out there. I find that an amazing comment when that's exactly what the previous government did at one point, a few years ago, was put out a hog and cattle loan.

Mr. Speaker, I was on the record to say we know this will not solve all the problems out there, but I remind the members opposite that it was the cattle and hog industry that requested this very shortly after we formed government last fall, and that's why we came out with the hog and cattle loan. And one of the issues at that time was why they asked for a loan and not an ad hoc was because of countervail. And after the BSE experience, they certainly didn't want the US border and other borders to close, and cut off our cattle markets to that country, to the US [United States].

So, Mr. Speaker, I find some of his comments somewhat amazing when really when you think about it, and in the case of the hog and cattle loan, it was something that they had done. If that program is not worthwhile now and won't solve any problems, I wonder what their reasoning was at that point and why they did it at that point.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite about this, and I touched on this in question period, and I did some checking. October 2007 cattle prices, compared to cattle prices in October 2008, are slightly higher now than they were one year ago. And yet I find that amazing because I checked in the platform of the NDP in the last election, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, where once do they talk about the crisis in the livestock industry when prices were actually slightly lower than they are now? I mean, Mr. Speaker, if there's a crisis there now, and we know there's stresses in the livestock industry, but they're calling it the crisis, well how come it wasn't a crisis last year in the election?

You know how serious they were about really dealing with what was going on in the agriculture industry, Mr. Speaker? And the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, would

know this very well because two years in running he said at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention that the status quo was not on when addressing the education property tax issue.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what did we see in the NDP campaign literature last year in the election? Absolutely totally contrary to the previous premier's from the NDP government's days to what he is actually talking about. Mr. Speaker, in their propaganda or their — well I guess you could call it that — but in their literature from the NDP campaign last year, they didn't once say they were going to put any additional dollars into the education property tax rebate, so really what he was saying is, status quo is on. We're not going to help farmers in rural Saskatchewan. We're not going to do one thing more for you when it comes to education property tax.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not where we're going. We've gone from 38 per cent rebate to 47 to 56. In the next year we will follow up and higher, Mr. Speaker. But we also have the member for Rosetown, Biggar that's looking into the education tax and seeing if we can actually do something quicker, Mr. Speaker, or more long-lasting, but at worst we'll honour our commitment, Mr. Speaker, as we've done in many occasions.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's so many issues that I think the previous government neglected over 16 years, I find it almost amazing. And as I said, Mr. Speaker, in question period, I think one of the members over there took a wrong turn when they left Regina heading to Saskatoon or somewhere else and actually realized rural Saskatchewan still exists out there.

Mr. Speaker, many of us on this side of the House represent rural ridings, but I can say I think with pretty good credibility that there's very few on that side of the House that have more than just a small part of their constituency actually is in rural Saskatchewan. And that didn't happen, Mr. Speaker, for no reason. That happened for a good reason because rural Saskatchewan just completely saw them for what they were on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. They totally ignored rural Saskatchewan. In fact if they ignored agriculture, we would have been better off, Mr. Speaker, because what did we see them do with crop insurance?

Let's go through the crop insurance program. 2002 was a heavy drain on crop insurance. We understand that. But after 2002, what we saw was higher premiums for producers and less coverage, and what we saw was probably a number of producers that dropped crop insurance and weren't into the program and didn't have that coverage they needed.

Mr. Speaker, what are we doing with crop insurance? Well number one, our commitment in the election campaign was to do a crop insurance review. We've done that, Mr. Speaker, and we're costing out the opinions of producers out there and what they'd like to see included in them. And one thing, Mr. Speaker — I might add loud and clear — one of the main things that came out of the crop insurance review was reinstate spot loss hail.

Well do we remember, Mr. Speaker, who actually cut spot loss hail from the crop insurance program? It was the caring members opposite. And for the Leader of the Opposition to

stand up now all of a sudden, be the saviour for the livestock industry, I find that more than just a little hypocritical. For 16 years they didn't know we existed in rural Saskatchewan, and now all of a sudden in the last couple of weeks it's come to light that all of a sudden we need to do a cash payment for the livestock industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to agree. There is stress in the livestock industry, and there's tough times out there. But, Mr. Speaker, to compare it to be worse than the BSE, I find that almost unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, funding for AgriStability was always a bone of contention when I was in opposition, Mr. Speaker. And the minister of the day on the NDP side would never get to the table and fully fund the program upfront, but at the same time never had input into any changes that might have helped producers in this province. And that's why we've got a program that doesn't fully deal with times like this when the livestock industry is stressed and trying to . . . a hard time making ends meet, and now we're trying to improve that part of the programming.

Mr. Speaker, bringing AgriStability administration back to Saskatchewan I think is something that will help all producers out there, not just on the livestock but I believe on the grain side — all of agriculture out there, Mr. Speaker. And again it was something the producers were asking us to do — find a way to improve the programming but find a way to make these programs reliable and bankable, Mr. Speaker. And bankable is the key word there because the lending institutions cannot rely on the programming as they are and has been since actually the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program was then cancelled in 1992 by the then Romanow government when they started to really show their neglect for rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I believe by bringing ag stability back to Saskatchewan will not fix all the problems in the program, and we're going to work with the federal government on that. But at the present time, I think it's one of the things we can do to speed up the process, get the files processed quicker, and if there's dollars owed to producers, get those dollars in their hands in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, we brought in the farm and ranch water infrastructure program — something for the Southwest. And I want to really talk about the Southwest right now, Mr. Speaker, because when the Leader of the Opposition was premier, again for four years there was a drought in the southwest part of this province, totally ignored by the NDP. In fact the previous Ag minister did not even take the time to go down and just see how bad it was, Mr. Speaker, and they were totally ignored. And there's a lot of livestock producers down there, Mr. Speaker.

So for 16 years, especially the last four in the Southwest, what did they do for livestock producers in the Southwest? Well, Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing. And again today all of a sudden it's a crisis. It wasn't a crisis last fall when prices were actually lower than they are now. All of a sudden it's a crisis, Mr. Speaker. Very hypocritical of the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, with the farm and ranch water program, we are

assisting 65 per cent, and we've just enhanced that, Mr. Speaker, for wells, pipelines, dugouts, power into these facilities, generators. And we're going to cover 85 per cent of cost of community wells. Mr. Speaker, is this going to solve all the problems in the Southwest, especially in the livestock industry? I'd be the last one to commit that this is going to solve all their problems.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a long-term solution I believe. The next time a drought comes along — and we know it will because it's cyclical — that the wells that we're drilling today will be there to provide water in those times of the next drought. And again, there'll be hard times when that happens, but the situation where these wells are drilled, at least they will have the option of having adequate water supplies to help them through hard times.

Mr. Speaker, gopher control. And you know, many I think in the province, especially in urban Saskatchewan, would say, well this is not a big issue out there. Mr. Speaker, in the southwest part of this province and actually other areas in the province, it's a tremendous problem. You have to see it to believe it, but you actually have to go out to rural Saskatchewan to understand what I'm talking about. So that's why we come out with the gopher rebate program where we're going to rebate 50 per cent of gopher control costs for bait for producers that have spent, in some cases, thousands upon thousands of dollars to try and control the gopher population in rural Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, producers out there, whether it be RMs, First Nations, or individual producers, are all eligible for this program. We're getting many, many forms coming in, and we're responding to them as quickly as they come in. And we would encourage all producers that have spent more than \$100 on gopher bait control out there to apply through your local RM and put in, and we'll reimburse you for half of that cost.

Mr. Speaker, extension services is something that I think is pertinent to the conversation today because the debate we're having is about agriculture. And we remember the NDP's record back — I'm not sure if, Mr. Speaker, it was like three or four or five years ago — where the then NDP government cut 22 rural service centres. Now that's really caring about rural Saskatchewan. I believe all it is is nothing more than a cost saving and really do we care, because we don't have any votes in rural Saskatchewan, so go ahead and make those cuts.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what are we doing? We're not cutting rural service centres. We're going to expand extension services in the province of Saskatchewan, and I believe that's something that people within our Ag offices around this province were not allowed to do the last number of years. I think the previous government thought if they sat there quietly, that everybody would just go away and not bother them. Oh, and what they did do, Mr. Speaker, is they put a 1-800 number in place, and that was supposed to solve the problems that producers had. Well, Mr. Speaker, it didn't even come close.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a minute on an . . . especially related to the cattle industry, but the country of origin labelling that the US has brought in. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe this is nothing more than a protectionist measure by groups in the US, and it has nothing to do with food safety.

Mr. Speaker, I will be on the record, and I think many of our members on this side would be on the record, in saying that Saskatchewan and Canada produces the safest and best beef of anybody in the world. Right here in Saskatchewan at Agribition today, all you have to do is take a walk through the barns and you can see the quality of the livestock that the producers in this province raise. And I would put our cattle industry — in fact our entire livestock industry — up against any of that, anywhere in the world, and I think we will come out on top. So country of origin labelling is really nothing more than a protectionist measure to keep our cattle out of the US.

I think what's interesting to this though, Mr. Speaker, I believe there's a number of slaughter plants, packing plants, and actual feedlots in the US that actually want our cattle. And they also really aren't all that enthused about COOL or the country of origin labelling. I believe it doesn't agree with NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] or it also is almost close to a WTO [World Trade Organization] challenge. I spoke to the federal minister on this issue, Mr. Speaker, and passed on our concerns of how important the country of origin labelling regulations are going to affect us — and in fact I believe are already starting to affect us — and please lead the charge with the US to try and find a way to soften these regulations or, even better yet, remove all of them from dealing with our cattle when they go to be exported into the United States.

One of the things that the members opposite have talked about, that producers are asking for, Mr. Speaker, is that we wanted parity with Alberta. Well let's talk about that for a minute, Mr. Speaker. The ad hoc payment that Alberta came out with was much appreciated, I'm sure, in Alberta by their cattle producers. And that's what our cattle producers are talking about.

But I think some of the burdensome regulations that Alberta is bringing in along with that ad hoc, none of our producers that I've heard from today are really that interested in us making it mandatory for age verification, premise ID [identification], and everything that goes along with the payment in Alberta. So I guess it's one of those things, Mr. Speaker: be careful what we ask for because we certainly don't want, I don't believe, want to go down that road. And I as Ag minister am not going down that road until I hear from our industry saying, this is where we want to go.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to whole traceability — and that's part of the Alberta plan — and reporting of cattle movements on a database, submit farm records to the government, breeding records, vaccination records, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Alberta program down the road is going to add millions of dollars in costs to the cow-calf sector, especially in rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we all know that every time costs are passed down in the livestock industry, it's the cow-calf guys that are going to pick up that cost, whether it's through lower prices for their calves or however it is, the cost of setting up a computer system to do all this registry that they're bringing in in Alberta.

And in most cases, Mr. Speaker, we get along very well with Alberta. But in this one issue, we have come to agree to disagree. And I think many of our producers agree with my position at this point. If producers in general and a large majority of producers come to me, Mr. Speaker, and say a year from now or in the next six months that we feel this is where we

have to go, Mr. Speaker, we will assist them with that. But I need their direction and their leadership. And we won't be forcing them into anything that they don't want to go, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think I could talk for probably hours here about what's happening in rural Saskatchewan, what has happened in the past 16 years before we got to be government, but, Mr. Speaker, I want to pass an amendment to the motion today. But I would like to say before I do that, that I think in our one short year in government, I would put that record against the members of the opposition for the last 16 years. I would put that record against theirs any time of day.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to pass an amendment to the original motion. And why I'm doing this, Mr. Speaker, is because once again “that this Assembly condemn the federal government.”

I'm not here to stick up for the federal government, but that did not get us any results in 16 years of NDP government where all they did was condemn the federal government, be at . . . And it's not just the Conservative government, Mr. Speaker. I go back to when the Liberals were in power federally, and they had that same opinion on the other side of the House — it's better to be confrontational because you know you're going to get nothing out of the federal government, so therefore we don't have to cost-share it in the province of Saskatchewan because remembering we ignore rural Saskatchewan and we don't care about the agriculture sector in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's not where we are coming in because we represent rural ridings on this side of House, and we'll represent the whole Ag industry and the livestock sector. So, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That all of the words after “this Assembly” be removed and replaced with the following:

“urge the federal government to address the current crisis in the livestock industry and that this Assembly urge the provincial government to continue raising this important issue with the federal government and continue provincial efforts to assist the livestock industry.”

I so move, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture, an amendment to the motion:

That all the words after “this Assembly” be removed and replaced with the following:

“urge the federal government to address the current crisis in the livestock industry and that this Assembly urge the provincial government to continue raising this important issue with the federal government and continue provincial efforts to assist the livestock industry.”

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives me not a great deal of reassurance to hear the now Minister of Agriculture saying that he'll stand up and represent livestock producers like my daughter and son-in-law, my cousins, and other people that I hold very near and dear to my heart around the whole issue of livestock production.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to point out that livestock prices have gone down. We've got a BSE crisis. We got all kinds of problems compounding in around livestock producers. And what's changed since the last time when we had a emergency debate on livestock? I'll tell you this, what's changed is that the price that farmers have to pay and ranchers have to pay for a litre of diesel fuel is just about double what it was then in 2005 to 2008 — three short years later.

Another thing that has changed is the price of fertilizer where this year we saw phosphate fertilizers approaching \$1,200 a tonne. We saw fertilizer prices double and nearly triple what they were in 2005. And yet, and yet the return for producers — be it for livestock or be it for crop — has not gone up commensurately. Yes, we had a nice little blip and we . . . I hope it's not a blip, but it seems like it is because the price of commodities was going clearly in an upward trend. And then the world seemed to fall apart, and the prices are clearly trending down and trending down fairly fast. We've got a crisis.

We've got now the Minister of Agriculture saying, oh but don't worry, I'm the defender of agricultural producers in Saskatchewan. That's what he says. Well just last week what he said is, oh but I've got a very important call with my federal counterpart, my federal cousin, the Minister of Agriculture. I'm going to be talking to him and we're going to get action. That was what he said just a few days ago. Left us with a clear view that livestock producers and farmers could expect, well you'd almost think a cheque in the mail. Of course it doesn't work that quickly. But at least we expected an acknowledgement that there's a very, very serious crisis that seems to be getting worse not better. A serious crisis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's getting worse instead of better.

And while that's going on, now we have the Sask Party Minister of Agriculture saying, oh but let's amend this opposition motion because after all the opposition wants to condemn the federal government for its inaction.

Well imagine that, Mr. Speaker. We want to condemn a federal government, a federal government that claims its got a solid base in Western Canada — in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia — a solid western base they claim. And yet not one word about cattle operations in the Throne Speech that they gave just last week. Not one word, not one peep. No mention at all about the crisis. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is small wonder that on this side of the legislature we're condemning Stephen Harper, Gerry Ritz, and the whole gang down in Ottawa because they are being silent while our Saskatchewan livestock producers and farmers are heading into a crisis.

[15:30]

And I know we've talked about the cost price squeeze since I was a little boy growing up on a farm. We've talked about that all these years. But my goodness, when you've got diesel, which is a major fuel for farmers and livestock producers, having nearly doubled in three years, nearly doubled in price, that virtually doubles just the cost of fuel which is a major, major cost of farming.

And you've got fertilizer doubling and almost tripling in that same time frame, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is small wonder that members on this side of the House say there's a crisis.

What we have is a quote . . . I have a quote here from the Sask Party Minister of Agriculture on November 15 in *Hansard*, this legislature's *Hansard*. He says quote, ". . . we'll actually get the message through to the federal government." He was explaining how they'd get the message about the ag crisis through.

And I heard a question directed to the Sask Party Minister of Agriculture by the Leader of the Opposition in question period. And what the Agriculture minister said essentially boils down to this: Ottawa said to us, don't call us; we'll call you. And then the Sask Party Minister of Agriculture went on and said, as he did just in his speech just now, for livestock producers and farmers of Saskatchewan, don't call us; we'll call you.

Everything flows downhill. And I can tell you that having grown up in a farm and having had livestock, I know what flows downhill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's clearly flowing downhill from that side of the legislature. And what a shame because we've got livestock producers and farmers that are in a real crisis right now. They need not just words. They don't need to hear from the provincial government that, oh trust us, we're your friends. They need much more than that.

Mr. Speaker, we have . . . I want to, just before I leave the fertilizer prices and things like that, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the now Minister of Agriculture what he said in November 15, 2005 when he was proposing an emergency debate on agriculture. And what he said is producers have, quote:

. . . no money to pay their fertilizer bill, no money to pay their chemical bill.

We get an increase in SaskEnergy costs for farmers along with everybody else. SaskPower now has asked for an increase which, when it comes out, it shakes out, usually farmers are asked to pay a little [more] . . .

That's what he said November 15, 2005, three years ago when fertilizer prices were half to a third of what they are today, when diesel costs were just about half of what they are today, when livestock prices were very similar to what they are today, very similar, and grain commodity prices were not strong then and most commodity prices are not that strong right now.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got this interesting situation. The Minister of Agriculture was talking about SaskEnergy and SaskPower rates going up, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well one of the things that's different . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. There's a little more

conversation going on. I'm having trouble hearing the member that has the floor. I recognize the member for Regina — order — Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of the things that's happened just this fall, October 1, SaskEnergy rates went up 20 per cent for the fuel — 20 per cent. And you bet, livestock producers and farmers that have natural gas on their farms and ranches, and virtually all do, are going to pay the 20 per cent increase.

Then on top of that, what they did is they snuck an additional \$2 delivery fee a month after the 20 per cent, an extra \$2 a month which doesn't sound like a lot. It's \$24 a year this year and next year and the year after and the year after. And it's \$24 that this SaskParty is picking out of the pockets of farmers and ranchers, cattle producers, throughout Saskatchewan. They're picking it out of everyone's pockets, but that area as well and at a time of unprecedented crisis.

We've already got the Saskatchewan . . . the Saskatchewan Farmers Union has done research and have shown that the return on livestock, if you adjust for inflation, is half what it was for my parents and my grandparents. It's half what it was a decade ago. It's at an unprecedented low, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's why we're standing up on behalf of cattle producers.

Government members are of course free to heckle. Government members are of course free to get up and speak to this debate, this issue to this motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I look forward to perhaps that happening.

We have got a situation where . . . I know I talked about fertilizer prices and fuel prices. And we don't often, non-farmers don't often think of fertilizer as a problem for livestock producers. But I want to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that land in Saskatchewan is suitable for . . . Typically throughout the agricultural prairie area the land is suitable for two things and mostly it's one or the other — sometimes a bit of both — that is for livestock production or crop production. And of course if it's crop production, then it's dependent on the vagaries of weather. And we have a history of canola being grown traditionally more further in the north than in the south; that sort of thing is going on. And the use of fertilizers varies depending on the farm and the needs of that farm. But no matter how you slice it, there is a problem for agriculture producers. I don't care how you slice it, there is an imminent crisis.

We see prices going down for commodities, and we see costs going up for the inputs. And we see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a government that has never been more flush with cash than they are today. Never more money, never more resources at the beck and call of an administration than what this administration has at its beck and call. Close to \$3 billion could be meted out for anything and still not hit a deficit.

And how does this . . . Why I raise that, Mr. Speaker, is simply for this reason. I want it absolutely to be crystal clear that this Sask Party has got the resources. They've got the finances. They've got the ability to deal with this crisis today. They could deal with the crisis right now if they wanted to, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to point out that in — again I go to November 15, 2005 and I'm going to again quote from the now

Minister of Agriculture who said, quote, talking about the New Democratic Party government of the day, quote:

. . . that government has money falling out of all their pockets but only that government has money, they see fit to neglect our farmers and rural Saskatchewan.

That's what the member for Saltcoats, today's Minister of Agriculture, had to say in 2005. Now the reality in 2005 was a lot less buoyant than it was as late as 2007 and certainly through 2008.

In 2007 we saw the economy, it took off almost like a spaceship. It took off. Saskatchewan's economy took off. We were delighted and elated with it and we continue to be delighted and elated that after all those years of dealing with getting the financial picture in order, all those years of trying to help improve the situation for Saskatchewan's producers and businesses, that the economy was going to take right off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're pleased that it continues to take off.

But I point out the fiscal situation, the financial situation because this Sask Party cannot hide behind empty cupboards. This Sask Party has got the resources. They could do anything they want, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our livestock producers clearly do not need to be held back because of this government dithering, this government that wants to be an apologist for the federal government, this government that is a do-nothing government, the very government, the Sask Party government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that had all the answers 13 months ago before the last general election in Saskatchewan. They had all the answers 13 months ago and I submit to you that today they've got much to answer for. They had all the answers before the election; none of the answers subsequent to the election.

What have they done? What have they done of their own volition? Well to hear the Minister of Agriculture, you know what one of the things they did is? They did a study and they've costed some of the options for crop insurance. Well gee, here we are 13 months post-election and they've costed some of the options in crop insurance.

I want to again point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that wasn't what they were saying, that now Minister of Agriculture, wasn't saying oh, we have to cost out options, or oh gee. He was a lot more definitive than that in opposition. And he was clearly saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we had the fix, they knew what was wrong with crop insurance. And if they knew it then, tell me what's changed.

Well I can, again I tell you what's changed, is they got about \$2.5 billion more now that what they thought they might have. Two and a half billion dollars seems to me is not an argument to slow walk changes that they might want to make in crop insurance. It seems to me it's not an argument that would leave our livestock producers and our crop producers hanging out in the field, hoping, hoping that somehow or other their bankers will help them get through the winter, which is cold — a cold, cold winter with high, high natural gas costs.

And the Minister Responsible for SaskPower, the Minister

Responsible for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] has said, and we can expect SaskPower rate increases soon. All of that's going to happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's funny how they can make a rate increase happen for SaskEnergy or SaskPower really quickly, but ask for a little bit of help for a livestock producer or a farmer — help that they had all the answers for 13 months ago — but today the silence is absolutely deafening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture, I keep picking up on some of the things he said because I want to refute a little bit of it or at least have a discussion. He talks about the gopher control program, and like we don't have a clue what that is, is what he would have livestock and crop producers believe.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to tell you that I've spent . . . I grew up on a farm. I've worked on a ranch. And I want to tell you that I was the gopher control expert — maybe not expert — but I was certainly the one that was sent around with the, much as I may regret, the strychnine, which causes a very painful death for gophers. But I was the one that was sent out, took care of a quarter section one day.

And it's a very effective way of eliminating the gopher population. The rancher I was working for said, normally I don't do this, don't like to. Normally Mother Nature takes care of it. We'll have wildlife that will feed off of the gophers, but every once and a while there is just this huge imbalance, and the gophers just take right over.

And I know that's what the Minister of Agriculture was talking about in the Southwest. How do I know that? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that because I've talked to my nephew who's gone out on to a farmer's land to try and help control gophers there. That was their notion, they would invite people out for a little bit of target practice. And I have a nephew who's a pretty avid hunter, and he went out and made a weekend of it. I don't think he made much of a dent in the gophers, although he claimed to have a great shoot.

[15:45]

The point is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, gophers are not something that is brand new. Gophers will cause a problem. Rabbits will cause a problem. I can remember the rabbit population going up and down like a yo-yo. And I can't just recall whether it's a 7- or 8- or 9-year cycle — something like that. It seemed to just go in cycles, and we'd be overrun with rabbits. And then the next year you could hardly find one. And then they'd build their population up again slowly, and the same thing would happen.

With respect to drought proofing rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is something that the CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party] championed. We have a long history — a lot longer history than the Sask Party ever could dream of — in terms of drought proofing rural Saskatchewan. We introduced the largest irrigation projects in Saskatchewan's history, being in around the Lake Diefenbaker-Outlook area, Riverhurst, and so on. It was expanded under Grant Devine's Conservative administration; there's no question about that. But I want to say that the notion of drought proofing rural Saskatchewan has been around longer than any of us in the Chamber have been alive.

That's the simplest way I can put that.

And it is important that we have dugouts and wells and as much resources as we can so that we can get through a drought. But the problem with a severe drought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is you simply — like the drought that southwestern Saskatchewan had a few years back — you simply can't grow the bales to feed the livestock. So then you need to implement a program to move bales in.

But we're not in that situation today. What we're in is a cost-price squeeze and a situation that the federal government and the provincial government, the Conservatives in Ottawa and the Sask Party in Saskatchewan, could fix. They, both governments, have the ability to fix it. And I've got to ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how it is that the member for Saltcoats, the Minister of Agriculture, will say, oh we shouldn't say anything untoward about our cousins in Ottawa. He says we shouldn't be adversarial. We should just go cap in hand, and maybe we'll get some of the oats that drops.

You know, Conservatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have always believed in the trickle-down theory. Always they've believed in the trickle-down theory. The problem for Saskatchewan's ranchers and grain producers is they're getting awful tired of following the elephant around just to get some of the oats.

How is it that the federal government could come up with something like 35 billion — that's with a b — billion dollars, to help out the banking industry. We've got a worldwide economic crisis right now, so they'd have everyone believe. But how is it that the federal government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could come up with 35 billion roughly, for banks and nothing for livestock and farmers — livestock producers and farmers. How does that work? Where are the priorities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Clearly, we've got an abrogation of responsibility at the provincial level. The Sask Party Minister of Agriculture and the Sask Party government are just turning a blind eye and turning their backs and saying oh well, it'll get better. And if it doesn't — and they're right about this — if it doesn't, well at least there'll be fewer livestock producers and fewer farmers left for them to deal with, *ergo* less noise.

How does that affect any of the livestock producers or the farmers that are potentially going to lose or in the process of losing their livelihood? How does it affect a producer that may have been raising livestock for 35 years, 40 years, to see their herd disappear?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to tell you that, unlike to my knowledge, anyone in this Assembly, I've seen it. I've seen two of my cousins who had a herd that had been a beautiful herd of livestock, beautiful herd that had been growing for — I'm trying to think — it would be something more than 40 years because they took it over from my uncle. A beautiful herd. Sold it all last year, every single animal. Sold it all. There was a crisis then. Now they're relying on canola and other crops.

But what a pain that was. What a hurt, what an emptiness in the heart to see a cow-calf herd that had been growing and culled . . . And many people understand how it is that you improve

your herd from year to year. And they had been doing that for 40 years — improving their herd, improving their herd — and then to have to just simply sell it all, that's a hard blow. And I've seen it first-hand.

So I don't want any Sask Party MLA to try and say, oh somehow New Democrats don't understand the pain. That's just nonsense. Nothing could be further from the truth than to say that New Democrats don't witness, don't live, don't see the pain that our agriculture producers are experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, we have all kinds of reasons why the government should be stepping up to the plate. We have all kinds of reasons why this administration, the Sask Party, should be opening up the chequebook and helping out our livestock producers and our crop producers. Not one of them is related to hardship by the provincial government. If anything's changed in the last three years — other than your input costs for livestock and grain producers has gone up and livestock and crop receipts have not — if anything else has changed, it's the treasury of the provincial government which is just huge by comparison. Today it is just huge. Again I say this Sask Party could do whatever it is they wanted to do for our livestock and our grain producers.

I want to thank the hon. member opposite who said, we've got canola in the bin. And I can think of no better analogy. And honestly I thank the member for that because the canola's in the bin, and they can sell it. The canola's in the bin. This government's got the cash. It's even better than the canola in the bin. They're already selling the canola, and they have the cash in hand, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm about to wrap up but I just wanted to . . . I think I have covered the territory that I want to. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that I have colleagues that are right ready to take up the cause.

I just want to close by saying the governments of Ottawa and the Government of Saskatchewan should both step up to the plate. How is it the federal government's got \$25 billion or more for banks, and they're not done. And they're talking about having billions of dollars for the auto industry, and I'm not lacking in support for that. But how is it that they can see those problems so clearly, and yet they can't see the crisis for livestock producers. How does that work?

And then I have to ask, where are our federal MPs [Member of Parliament], our Conservative MPs? What on earth are they doing about it? What are they saying? Are they going to Ottawa and saying, hey Billy, we got the good times now. Because that's about what we're getting.

They're apologists. Before they were elected they used to say, oh we need an energy equalization accord that should be worth something over \$800 million a year for Saskatchewan. And then now they're saying, oh well forget that. Well they gave up on \$800 million a year, but for heaven's sakes, how can they give up on our livestock producers and our grain producers? How could they turn their backs on the very people that helped elect them? How could it happen so quickly, Mr. Deputy Speaker? How could the federal Conservatives in Ottawa react so much like the Sask Party in Saskatchewan? How is that possible?

Mr. Speaker, I am very much in support of our motion. I will be opposing the amendment put forward by the Minister of Agriculture, but I'm very, very proud to stand up and speak on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers, Saskatchewan ranchers, cattle, livestock-of-all-kinds producers, and crop growers throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis. I say for heaven's sakes, take the blinders off, open up the wallets, and talk to your Uncle Stephen in Ottawa. Get some cash flowing to rural Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to say I welcome this opportunity today to speak in favour of the amendment put forth by the Agriculture minister, the member from Melville-Saltcoats. I want to speak to this motion simply because my constituency, the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook, is basically an ag constituency. It's fuelled by farmers which are grain farmers and cattle producers. And not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amount of cattle that my constituency produced — or my area, not just my constituency, my area that produces cattle — is the highest number of cattle in the province. I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, heard lots about the crisis in cattle.

The point I want to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it didn't start last year, November 7. This problem with the cattle started years back. And I can guarantee you for 16 years the previous administration, the NDP, had no darn plan, no darn plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they still don't.

They feel that we should be going to the federal government and giving them a cheque. Well I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Minister of Ag has been talking to the minister, the federal Minister of Ag in Ottawa. And, yes, there are crises out there. But I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government here in one year has done more for ag in the province of Saskatchewan than they have for 16 years.

It's ironic to listen to the member previous stand and talk about ag. Well I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all members on this side of the House are affiliated with rural Saskatchewan and ag problems. Many of us on this side of the House are cattle producers. I am for one. So I know the problems out there. But I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Ag is doing a great job of working with the federal government and colleagues here to come up with plans that will suffice the problem, and help our cattle producers. It's not going to solve all the problems, but we are at least working on it.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the former member that was talking about the cattle producers and his cousin that has a herd, a huge herd, and for 40 years he's had this herd and he's built this herd — well that's how farming in cattle goes.

Once you get a good line of cattle, you keep breeding them to get the best that they can produce. But that member, in talking, that said he kept this herd for 40 years and had to sell it last year

because he couldn't make ends meet, well where was the NDP to help him? They weren't there.

But I can guarantee you, in one year's time we have come up with programs to help that member if he would have stayed in cattle. But he choose not to. But that's his prerogative. We on this side of the House are coming up with programs to help the farmers and the cattle producers.

[16:00]

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my talks at home . . . And I have many people come in and talk to me about the cattle crisis and the prices of cattle. And, you know, when you sit down with each and every one of them and you explain the programs that we have implemented or are implementing, they look at us and they say, well at least you're helping, which is more than the previous administration, the NDP. And I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after talking to each one of the farmers on the phone or in my office or wherever, once I explain to them the programs that we have in place, they are relieved at the fact that we're helping.

And that's what our job is. Our job as MLAs is to transfer the information from our minister to our citizens that are concerned, and explain to them what we're doing. And it is working.

Is there work to be done? I can guarantee you the Minister of Ag, the member from Melville-Saltcoats, will be the first one to say there's more to be done. But at least we're working on it. In fact, I believe it was on Friday he talked with the federal Ag minister, Gerry Ritz. And I know Gerry Ritz personally myself, and I've talked to him about farm issues — not only just cattle, but other farm issues.

But he is with the federal government, and he is working on issues there in a bigger scale than what we are here in the province of Saskatchewan. And with the co-operation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of our Ag minister and the federal Ag minister together, hopefully they will come up with some programs that will help stimulate the growth in our cattle industry and keep it to where it is.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in regards to the cattle and the hogs, and I do have hog producers in my constituency, and they are also saying that the price of hogs is low. But if you look at the cattle and the hogs, it's an up and down swing. When grain prices are high, cattle and hogs are low. It's a known fact. Right now grain prices are high, so it's naturally going to be low for cattle. There is a problem, though, because with the cattle industry it didn't just start last year. The cattle industry has been suffering ever since BSE.

And who was in power when BSE hit? It was the NDP. And what did they do for those number of years from 2003? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And yet they stand here today and they say, we should just write them a cheque. Well I can guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, when they were in power and they started talking about ag problems, what did they do? They blamed the federal government. Whether it was the Liberal government or whether it was the Conservative government, they blamed the federal government. So why don't

they get out the blame thrower? That seems to be their number one instrument they use when it comes to issues in the province is blame the federal government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at that and taking it into hands. And we're working with the federal government to solve some of the issues and the problems we have. Just alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, regarding the cattle industry, the problem with countervail — and that is one of the major problems when it comes out to an ad hoc situation. The cattle industry in the province of Saskatchewan does not want an ad hoc program because it raises problems with countervail.

Now on the other hand, you look at Alberta and they went forth and they've come out with \$300 million to give to the cattle producers. \$150 million was given in the springtime which, according to my information, there was little or no strings attached to that 150 million. But the last 150 million that was given to the Alberta cattle producers, there was strings attached and the strings attached to that was age verification. And that's why many of the farmers, the producers in Alberta, are upset with that. They thought that they would just get another cheque like they did in the springtime to utilize for whatever they want.

Is that what the producers of Saskatchewan want? Is it for us to come out with an ad hoc program with ties to it like age verification or maybe COOL or whatever? I don't think so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They don't want that.

Our Ag minister is working with the players in the province of Saskatchewan to come up with solutions that will fit both all the ag producers, the cattle producers, but work within the system that we've got so that we're not affected by countervail.

I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by talking to some of the ranchers that have bought land in Saskatchewan — and my area has a lot of land that Alberta farmers are either renting pasture or utilizing that pasture to fuel their livelihood with cattle — they're not happy with the Alberta government, not one bit. Yes, the money came. but when you have ties to it, at the end of the day they're not happy with the system and they're not happy with it. And we don't want to go there and we're not going there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So for the members opposite to come out, because we're sitting on a mountain of money, let's just write them a cheque, well that isn't going to happen, Mr. Speaker. We are a responsible government, responsible to the people of this province in all sectors. And before we come out and just writing a cheque, we're going to make sure that we do our homework and make sure that there's plans in place that this money is going to the right places for the right reasons.

Just alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about the education, the increase to the education tax rebate. Well we've increased ag land rebate from 38 per cent to 47 per cent. That's a huge increase, Mr. Speaker. Does it help the farmers, the producers? Well it's going to help all of them. Yes, does it turn dollars and cents into the cattle producer? In a roundabout way, yes it will. The problem is it cuts down on their overhead, so it offsets some of what the cattle prices being low.

But just on that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the cattle

prices being somewhat low, I know on Monday of last week the cattle prices took a huge increase. They were probably up anywhere from 8 to 11 cents. Again on Tuesday, the following Tuesday they dropped that. It used to see it where cattle prices would go up one week and then fall maybe the next week. Now we're seeing with the markets right now, the cattle prices are going up one day and they're falling the very next day. So it's hard to predict when the prices are going to be high. But that's how the business is operating right now, Mr. Speaker.

But I know the cattle producers in the province of Saskatchewan, when it comes down to it, they definitely are supporting our government on the plans that we have to implement, to help them far more than what that government, the previous NDP did in 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also want to talk a little bit about just what the previous administration did for rural Saskatchewan and the cattle producers and the farming producers over the last 16 years. Well first of all they closed 22 rural offices in 2004. They also closed hospitals. They also shut down the 1-800 line. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has hurt the rural people in the province of Saskatchewan. It's hurt my constituents, and it has hurt all constituents in the province of Saskatchewan. It's one more stab in the back to the rural area of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about three weeks ago I had the opportunity to go down to North Dakota and speak to people down in North Dakota. And at that time I brought up the whole issue of cattle and the pricing and why our cattle is not going across the border. And one of the main reasons that the farmers are having a crisis in cattle is it's tough to get the cattle across the border. The United States people down there also know that, but they want our cattle.

I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our cattle in Western Canada rank probably as high as you can get. In fact they rank number one in the world. Everybody wants our beef. We have to come up with plans how to sell our export to markets around but not just using our southern border, United States. There's other markets in this world that would like our beef, and we have to use our expertise in getting that export out. But that falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Our Ag minister, our provincial Ag minister is helping in that to get the members from the federal government to look at that. But when it comes to cross-border shopping and the problem with getting our cattle across the borders, that's a federal jurisdiction. And I know if we could somehow eliminate some of that, our price of our cattle would jump.

I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was down in the United States, North Dakota, talking, they were saying what they were getting for cattle versus what we were getting for cattle up here. And there was probably a 20 cents difference between a steer there and a steer that we produce here. That is hurting us. But they want our cattle. So we need to curb some of them problems with the border to let the United States purchase our cattle, and our price of our cattle would climb to what they were years ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, well when I was also down in North Dakota, I talked about the age verification and COOL. And it's

ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that talking to producers down there, they don't want it. They don't want COOL. They say it's going to hurt them as it is going to hurt us. I've also had members in the cattle industry saying that maybe we have to go this route, not because we want to but because we're forced into it. This also hurts our cattle producers because they've got to change their ways in order to work with the age verification and the COOL process.

But I can guarantee you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there's any costs because of age verification and COOL, it will be borne by the cattle producers. And that is going to be a huge cost to them. And when you have the price of cattle being somewhat lower, it adds to the expense side and they don't get as much.

Also in my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my producers that are cattle producers, well they're getting up there in age. There's very few young farmers, ranchers that are taking on working with cattle. So when the older generation of cattle producers look at what it's costing them, they just say, well maybe it's time to get out. Maybe it's time; I'll just sell my cattle and get out.

The markets will change. Given time, the cattle markets will come back. But right now, they're somewhat lower. But I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this side of the House, this government who was represented by rural Saskatchewan, represented by farmers, ranchers, they are happier that we're in government because we are there to help them, not like the previous administration.

It's ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this motion came to the forefront just in front of when the exhibition is on. And the motion put forth basically condemns us as the provincial government and condemns the federal government. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can guarantee you both levels of government are working hard to solve some of the problems. I guarantee you that the constituents of mine, after talking with them, maybe don't like what's happening, but they are sure happy that the fact that we are at least looking after them.

And I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of my colleagues who are farmers, cattle producers, would also like to speak to this motion and to the amendment. But I'm so happy that I had the opportunity to stand and speak on behalf of the constituents of Rosthern-Shellbrook, and we support the amendment put forth by our Ag minister. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm pleased to enter into this debate as the opposition Agriculture critic, and I want to say that the livestock industry in this province represents over a \$1 billion contribution to our GDP [gross domestic product]. And if people don't understand this, the reality for the livestock industry in our province is it is facing its biggest crisis in the history of our province, Mr. Speaker.

And the Sask Party government and the federal government in

Ottawa have done very little, Mr. Speaker, in order to aid those producers with any kind of emergency payment. Without some form of payment, Mr. Speaker, I will predict this: the size of our herd will seriously decline, not only in our province but across the country. And in fact this sector will be at its lowest level ever.

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, we live next door to a province that has basically bought the beef industry in this country, and they have put in billions of dollars in order to support their beef industry. Now, Mr. Speaker, the cattle industry in this province in August of this year, 2008, wrote to all Sask Party MLAs asking for a similar amount of money to go into the Saskatchewan livestock industry.

Now the members opposite understand that there is a problem with one-half of the Alberta program. But, Mr. Speaker, I would make this observation. If it is the view of the Government of Saskatchewan that they don't like the terms and conditions of one-half of the Alberta program — it's very simple — don't implement it, Mr. Speaker. They are using the difficulties with one-half of the Alberta program to say to our livestock producers there will be nothing for you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the livestock industry, through the stock growers and the cattle feeders and the Saskatchewan cattle association, have asked for money from the Government of Saskatchewan. And they've indicated that if that money is not forthcoming, there'll be a significant reduction in forage acreage, and the cattle numbers in our province will decline.

The letter calls upon the Government of Saskatchewan as represented by the Sask Party . . . And I do note, Mr. Speaker, that there is member after member after member over there that represents a rural Saskatchewan where there are thousands of livestock producers that are their constituents. And, Mr. Speaker, that letter calls upon the Sask Party to put \$148 million into the livestock industry in our province.

Now what has been the response from the Sask Party MLAs that represent rural Saskatchewan and thousands of livestock producers? The response, Mr. Speaker, has been zero, Mr. Speaker. It has been zero other than to say, you don't have to pay back the principal of the loans we gave you a year ago and the accompanying interest costs. Now, Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap. Talk is cheap. And we know that this loan program is a very big deal when you have negative margins.

Now the members opposite have talked about moving ag stability to the province from the federal government. I do note that the majority of those jobs are here in Regina. And they're talking about moving those jobs out to Melville and that this somehow is going to mean a better service for those producers that require AgriStability, but I'll make this observation. And I've had livestock producer after livestock producer contact my office in Saskatoon to tell me that ag stability means absolutely zero for them because they've had negative margins since 2003, Mr. Speaker. They've had negative margins, so ag stability does nothing.

Now we have a federal Conservative government in Ottawa.

We have a conservative government here in Saskatchewan. We have 13 members of parliament that represent the Conservative Party, and we have a Conservative Party that represents every rural constituency where those over 10,000 livestock producers live.

This is a government that has over \$2 billion in the insurance fund. This is a government that says it's going to reduce the provincial debt by over \$2 billion because we've had unprecedented commodity prices, but what does this government do? This government does absolutely nothing for an industry that contributes over \$1 billion to our GDP and represents over 10,000 livestock producers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now livestock producers have said that they need some form of assistance. AgriStability doesn't do it because they've had negative margins for several years. And what can they rely upon in terms of the government? The government has said, well in the southwest part of Saskatchewan we've been able to bring in a program to help with water distribution, Mr. Speaker. Well let me say this. It is very little in comparison to the kinds of prices and the kinds of hurt and kinds of crises that the livestock industry is presently facing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite don't think much of the National Farmers Union, but I really would urge them to read a piece of research that has been done by the National Farmers Union that looks at the livestock industry in this country since 1989. It is a very good piece of academic research, Mr. Speaker. And what it shows clearly is that the livestock industry is facing a crisis of a monumental proportion, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, they are facing crises that they did not experience in the '40s, the '50s, the '60s, the '70s, and the '80s.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there has been a consolidation of the meat-packing industry in this country, and with that consolidation we have had the meat-packing industry starting to own their own herds. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, there have been times over the last several years where cows or cattle owned by the meat-packing industry represented two-thirds of the animals that were going into those packing plants. And what they've been able to do as a result of this integration of cow to basically retail sales, Mr. Speaker, is they've been able to keep the prices for these cattle artificially depressed, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NFU [National Farmers Union] is calling for this notion of getting rid of captive supply on the part of the meat-packing industry. And, Mr. Speaker, it makes some sense that if you are in the packing house industry and if you control the animals that can go in and out of that packing plant, Mr. Speaker, you can, by the very force of your involvement in the cattle industry, you can keep those prices artificially low. And, Mr. Speaker, what we see in the cattle industry in this country and in this province is a group of producers that have been absolutely devastated by these artificially low prices. And what I note, Mr. Speaker, is at the height of BSE in 2003, producers were getting more for their steers than they are today.

Mr. Speaker, I represent an urban constituency, and I can tell the members opposite that day in and day out I have people who come from their constituencies contacting my office about

the hurt and devastation that that's being wreaked out there, Mr. Speaker. And what are the members opposite doing? Absolutely nothing. And I hear the Deputy Premier chirping from his seat. And he represents, Mr. Speaker, those very livestock producers. They're contacting his office. And what are they doing, Mr. Speaker? They're doing nothing, Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing. And they're sitting on \$2 billion of money.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And here's the other thing. He says, ask what's happening at auction. Well I'll tell you what they're telling me. They take animals to auction. They're not interested in heifers, Mr. Speaker; they're interested in steers. That's what happening at auction. And they're getting prices that are below their cost of production. And, Mr. Speaker, they . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well they say nationalize them. Well that is ridiculous.

And the member from Wood River, chirping from his seat, well his constituents are contacting me, Mr. Speaker, and they've contacted that member, and does he phone them back? No. Does he talk to them about what's happening on the farm? No. Has he said he'll do anything on their behalf to squeeze some money out this government to get a program in place to help them get through this crisis? The answer is no.

There are constituents after constituents of the members opposite that are contacting our constituency offices. They send information to them, and they do absolutely nothing. Their CAs [constituency assistant] say well, I'll talk to the guys; they're in Regina right now. And they never hear back, Mr. Speaker. And this is happening time and time again.

Now the members opposite can laugh and joke all they want. But producer after producer after producer, they know what's happening on the farm, and, Mr. Speaker, they can't keep at this much longer. And what we're going to see is a serious significant decline of the cattle industry in our province.

We live next door to Alberta. Alberta has supported their cattle people. Mr. Speaker, I believe that it's incumbent upon the members opposite to do something similar. Now, Mr. Speaker, they can laugh and joke all they want, but the reality is that someone in this province that is an observer of cattle policy and agricultural policy has this to say about the members opposite. And I want to quote him, and this is regarding the Sask Party's sincerity on this issue, and I quote:

The Sask. Party government has been largely ineffectual in stemming the downturn in the cattle and hog industries. The new government has actually been less supportive than the previous administration.

Now Kevin Hursh is not a member of the NDP. Kevin Hursh is an observer of agricultural policy in this province. He is the consultant, and this is what he had to say about the members opposite. And then he says, and I quote, "Now that he's [and he's referring to the Minister of Agriculture] in power, he has no response to the hundreds of millions of new dollars Alberta is handing its livestock sector."

Now what the member's response is, is we don't want to get involved in countervail. Well the Alberta government has been putting billions into the industry for decades, Mr. Speaker, and there has been no countervail offered by the US government in terms of what Alberta is doing. It's a ruse, Mr. Speaker.

And then he says that:

While . . . [the Minister of Agriculture's] candor is appreciated, it doesn't change [and I'm quoting here] the dishonesty as a Saskatchewan Party catering to the farm vote when it was in opposition.

The Sask Party seems content to watch the industry wither away [Mr. Speaker].

And then it says, and I quote, "Politically, the lack of leadership for the livestock sector is unlikely to hurt the Sask. Party. But that isn't an excuse for ineffectual policy." Well, Mr. Speaker, whenever this issue is raised in the press, in this House, what do the members opposite have to say? They talk about their water policy and help for farmers in the Southwest, which I note, I note, it's not helping all of the farmers in the Southwest . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh it's not helping the ones that need water in the Southwest.

And they talk about their gopher policy. Now they are prepared to have a gopher policy that is retroactive, but they are not prepared to help farmers retroactively deal with the drought and water conditions.

Now these are members opposite that called people into legislature and said that the farmers that were dealing with drought in the southwest part of the province needed help. They had them up in the gallery. And the Minister of Agriculture said, well let's wait and see if there's going to be any rain. And they waited and waited and waited down in the Southwest. And you know he said he'd be there after the session and before the beginning of summer. He came on the long weekend in July. And what did he offer them? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing. The people in the Southwest are still dealing with drought. What he came up with was a gopher rebate program.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you're in crises — if cattle prices are collapsing, you've dealt with drought for the last seven years, you've dealt with gophers, you've dealt with all of these things — and all your member of the legislature in the Sask Party can offer you is a water program that's not retroactive for the guys that had to deal with it last year, and a gopher program that doesn't apply to all people in the southwest part of the province, but they are prepared to go retroactive on gophers, that's it, Mr. Speaker. That's it.

The cattle people in this province are asking for a program. They haven't been able to get any kind of help out of this government, even though they're sitting on all of this money.

Now they have money for many other programs, Mr. Speaker. They have money for disabled people; they have money for senior citizens — these are good programs, Mr. Speaker — they have money to deal with infrastructure; they have money to deal with the arts. They have money to deal with all of these

other areas of public policy endeavour, but they don't have money to help an industry that contributes over \$1 billion to our GDP. They have nothing for them.

They say they're talking to their federal cousins. Well you'd think, Mr. Speaker, that their federal cousin who is a Conservative . . . They have these great relationships now apparently, but they haven't been able to get anything out of the federal government.

[16:30]

And in fact we have our own Member of Parliament here for Regina on Throne Speech day, what is he talking about? And he represents the cattle industry. He represents people out in that Craik area and Aylesbury area. What's he saying? He's talking about the car industry, Mr. Speaker. He's talking about the car and the automobile industry and the aerospace industry. Was he talking about the livestock industry and the hurt that has been wreaked in this province? Not at all.

And that member apparently says that the Premier contacted the Prime Minister. Well this is the Prime Minister's Throne Speech. He's talking about Ontario — vote-rich Ontario — and he's taking Saskatchewan for granted, Mr. Speaker.

They've got 13 MPs representing the Conservative Party, and they don't think they have to do anything for the cattle industry in this province or the hog industry because they're looking out for the Oshawas in Ontario where they hope to form a majority government, Mr. Speaker, while the people of this province have supported Stephen Harper and his brethren in Ottawa for several elections, Mr. Speaker.

Don't take us for granted, Mr. Speaker, because when you take people for granted they can sometime turn against you, Mr. Speaker. And one of the things I know is that there are people in their constituencies that are beginning to turn against them because they believe that they are being taken for granted.

People in the cattle industry who have worked for decades in this industry, that are helping their young people get involved in the cattle industry, Mr. Speaker, are waiting for some response, some response from the federal government and the provincial government. And so far, Mr. Speaker, there has been no response.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the government believes that by giving peace a chance that this is somehow going to lead to some form of changes in the agricultural programs that we have in this country. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say, how is it working for you? This government's been in office for a year. This government's been in office for a year. They have Conservatives in Ottawa. They said they were going to give peace a chance and work with their federal counterparts that are Conservatives. Many of them are members of the conservative family in Ottawa. And how's it working? Well it seems to me no one in Ottawa is listening to the Premier of this province and obviously no one in Ottawa is listening to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, livestock producers are receiving half of what their parents and grandparents were

getting for their cattle, and seed prices have gone up and the cost of production has gone up. The Sask Party savour themselves as champions of rural Saskatchewan and the agriculture sector. Well, Mr. Speaker, they have done nothing in the last year to support the livestock industry. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the public that they have turned their backs on the livestock sector in our province. And this is just another example of saying one thing in opposition, and day after day calling upon the government to do something to assist the livestock industry, and when they get in power, and they have 5 billion extra dollars, Mr. Speaker — because we left them 1.8 billion — they do nothing.

And so my question is: what are the rural MLAs doing over there? What are they doing on behalf of their livestock producers? Are they talking to the Minister of Agriculture? Are they talking to the Premier? Are they talking to Executive Council? Are they talking to the Minister of Finance? Are they talking to anybody? And if they are, obviously no one is listening, if they are truly representing their constituents, Mr. Speaker. Because their constituents are telling us that this is a crisis. It's a crisis never before seen in the history of our province; that the price of cattle have collapsed. And people, if they don't get help soon, are going out of business.

Now they groan when I say it's a crisis. Well, Mr. Speaker, they're not listening to their own constituents — day after day people phoning, emailing, writing letters about what's happening in the livestock industry.

Now maybe they don't spend time in their constituencies any more. Maybe they're spending time travelling around the world. I know that there's been several trips to China and the Philippines and, you know, Germany and wherever else. Maybe no one goes home to talk to their constituents each weekend after the session. We're supposed to go back into our ridings on Friday and talk.

I know this: they're phoning my office. I'm talking to them when I'm back in my riding on Fridays. And in fact they're phoning my house on Saturdays and Sundays, Mr. Speaker. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, they're stopping me in the street to say, keep up the fight. Do you think they're going to do anything? And my answer is, I don't know; you've got to phone them too.

Now they say oh, no one's phoning Saskatoon Nutana. Well I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker. They are phoning. They're phoning daily into my constituency office, and they're phoning from all across the province. They're phoning from the North. They're phoning from the Southwest. They're phoning from the Southeast. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, they're phoning from your constituency. They are phoning from every part of this province.

They're phoning from around Yorkton. They're phoning from the Deputy Premier's riding. They're phoning from the Health minister's riding. They're phoning from Enterprise Saskatchewan's riding. They're phoning from the Minister of Agriculture's riding. They're phoning from Weyburn. They're phoning from Biggar.

Oh and they say, no they're not. And they're certainly phoning

for the member from Wood River. The phone is ringing off the hook from those producers in the southwest part of the province where they have faced drought for years, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Anybody from Kindersley?

Ms. Atkinson: — As a matter of fact they're phoning from Kindersley too. And they're phoning from Rosetown and Carrot River . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Pardon me? The member from Regina Northwest, I don't think I've received any . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Saskatoon Northwest. I don't think I've gotten any calls from his riding, but I certainly have gotten calls from many, many members of the opposition including Lloydminster, Turtleford. They are phoning from all across the province.

And I would say, keep phoning, keep phoning from all across the province. Ring those phones because we're keeping track, Mr. Speaker, of the numbers of people that have contacted my constituency office and others, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know, I know, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite think that they've done a good deed by decreasing the education tax on farm land. And, Mr. Speaker, we do have to get the education tax off of not only farm land and pasture land, cultivated acres, but also, Mr. Speaker, for those of us that live in small towns, villages, and cities, Mr. Speaker. But I can say this, that you can reduce the taxes on pasture land and cultivated land, but if you're not getting anything for what you're selling at auction, Mr. Speaker, you're hooped.

And, Mr. Speaker, they can talk about changes to crop insurance. Well I can't remember the last time crop insurance insured a cow, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, AgriStability is supposed to be there to assist farmers, but unless you've had a couple of positive years, it doesn't work for you.

And I have had several people contact me with their forms, fax me their forms, Mr. Speaker, and you know what I've learned? Zero per cent of zero is zero. And so you have people who have negative margins that aren't going to get a thin dime.

Now these are the people that say that they're going to fix the program so that it works for people. Well we've got Gerry Ritz in Ottawa; he's been the Ag minister for a couple of years. We've got a conservative here in Saskatchewan. Now it seems to me that it shouldn't take you more than a year to fix the program if you really wanted to fix the program, but they haven't been able to fix the program.

And you know what? Livestock guys are catching on. They're catching on. The spin of, we don't want to have, you know, any kind of countervail. The spin about, well we put some money into gophers. The spin about, well we've helped you a little bit with your cultivated and pasture land, and we helped those guys in the Southwest with water. That's not cutting it.

They need a program that deals with the reality of what's happening in the livestock industry. And the reality is prices have collapsed, Mr. Speaker. They're still feeding cows. They still have all of their input cost. They still believe that, you know, there is some future here in this industry, but they need a government that's going to support them get them through this

downturn, Mr. Speaker. And the response from the members opposite has been nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are talking about leadership. What the livestock industry wants in this province is for the people opposite to stand up and provide leadership on this fundamental hurt that's taking place in rural Saskatchewan. And has there been any leadership? Well there's been a couple of phone calls. Oh they say there has. Well you know what? It's not being felt out there. No one will say that they provided leadership in the crisis of livestock industry. Not . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Everybody will have their turn in this debate. I recognize the member of Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Now, Mr. Speaker, not one person will believe that there's been any leadership provided by the members opposite. I was over at the branding event over at Agribition and listened to the minister. And the minister said, there is hurt in the cattle industry. Well you know, yes, we all know that. Everybody in the place knows that. The question is, what is he doing about it?

Now he's had a couple of phone calls with Gerry Ritz. But there's no activity, no movement to date, no change to AgriStability, no emergency program, no nothing coming from this Minister of Agriculture that had a whole bunch to say in the past about the previous government. Well he's been in office for a year. Stand up and provide some leadership on behalf of those producers that are facing a crisis. And all the minister can do is offer platitudes.

Well you know if it's not working, the telephone calls aren't working, maybe take a little delegation of all their backbenchers and some cabinet ministers, and go down to Ottawa and camp on the steps of the Parliament building and see if you can wring some money out of Stephen Harper and company. They'll have billions for the auto industry, Mr. Speaker. They'll have billions for the aerospace industry, but they're not going to have one thin dime for the producers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, not one thin dime.

And you know what? They have the horses over there to do it. They have enough rural MLAs that they could get on a plane, go to Ottawa and lobby those Conservatives in Ottawa to part with a few shekels, Mr. Speaker, because they're going to part with a few shekels for the auto industry. They're going to do something for the aerospace industry. Well let's see what these guys can do because you know they've been giving peace a chance for the last year, and we're supposed to have all of these great things coming to Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know what's come to Saskatchewan. We're going to have a clean coal project that's going to cost us billions of dollars, and my kilowatt hour of electricity is going to go through the roof. That's what Ottawa has given us.

But have they given us anything for the livestock industry? Have they given us one thin dime with this give peace a chance? Well the answer is, no. And in fact what's so galling, what's so galling is that the Saskatchewan members of parliament are talking about the auto industry and the aerospace

industry, and they're not talking about the hog industry. And they're sure as heck not talking about the cattle industry. And, Mr. Speaker, those people are desperate. They are desperate. It's not about losing their job. It's not about losing their pension, Mr. Speaker. It's about losing their life's work, and the government members have absolutely nothing to say about this, absolutely nothing.

Now they say we had 16 years. Well I do note that we have a member, and I referred to him earlier, Kevin Hursh who's an independent observer. And he said, "The Sask Party government has been . . . ineffectual [ineffectual] in stemming the downturn in the cattle and hog industries." And then he says, and I quote, the government has actually — can you believe this; can you believe this — they've been actually less supportive than the previous NDP government.

[16:45]

Well you know to hear those people talk, we did absolutely nothing for the agriculture sector in our province — absolutely nothing. And here we have an independent observer who says the new government has actually been less supportive than the previous government. Well can you believe that, Mr. Speaker? Given what all of those members over there had to say about the NDP when we were in government, given what they've had to say since they became government, here's an independent agricultural observer that says that the Sask Party is actually less supportive than the previous NDP government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, these people control the purse strings. These people have all of the rural seats. These people represent over 10,000 operators involved in the cattle industry. These people control it all. They've got friends in Ottawa, you know. They've given peace a chance, a lovely relationship between the Premier and the Prime Minister. You know, I see that they're trying really hard to get things for the province of Saskatchewan.

Well I say, how's it working for you? How's it working for you so far? What have you gotten Saskatchewan? A clean coal plant where we're going to put up over \$750 million and a quote, private-sector partner, which they haven't been able to find yet, a federal government that says they're not going to put any money up if there's any cost overruns — a technology that we're not sure about, Mr. Speaker.

And what's going to happen to you and me, the citizens of this province? This little lark, I think, could lead to very significant increases in the cost of electricity. And by the way, Mr. Speaker, you will know and others will know that electricity forms a lot of the cost of production for people involved in the livestock industry. Electricity forms a lot of the cost of production. And I predict we're going to see a very significant increase in our power utility rates.

Now, members opposite could have done something with capping the cost of SaskEnergy for those livestock producers. Did they? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. When we were in government, we capped the increase which was recommended by the Rate Review Board which was also recommended to the folks opposite. But no, they're not going to do a darn thing to try and mitigate any of our SaskEnergy costs — which I do note, Mr. Speaker, have dropped since the government agreed

to implement the SaskEnergy utility rate increase.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know . . . I just wanted to repeat this. Now this was at a time when oil was less than 50 bucks a barrel. What did the Minister of Agriculture have to say? That government has money falling out of all of their pockets, but only that government has money, and they see fit to neglect our farmers and rural Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, if he thinks we had money falling out of our pockets, and this was said probably four years ago — no, three years ago — can you imagine the money that's falling out of their pockets?

They're predicting a \$2 billion Fiscal Stabilization Fund or insurance fund or whatever you want to call it. They have so much money that they're going to reduce our GRF [General Revenue Fund] debt by the end of March by \$2 billion. We left them with \$1.8 billion in the bank, Mr. Speaker.

So if the Minister of Agriculture could say three years ago the government has money falling out of all of their pockets, but only that government has money, they see fit to neglect our farmers in rural Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, toute de suite, same thing. Billions of dollars sitting in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund or their insurance fund or whatever they want to call it, and not one thin dime for the livestock industry. Not one thin dime, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in opposition, the Minister of Agriculture has had this to say:

In opposition I could say just about anything I wanted and I did on a lot of occasions for 12 years.

. . . when you're minister, you're responsible and you have to do it right.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're waiting for the Minister of Agriculture and all of those rural MLAs to get it right.

And this is what the minister said explaining why he wasn't going to provide any of those drought-stricken producers in the Southwest part of the province any provincial help, even though he had committed on behalf of your caucus to help people after you were sworn in. And they got no help.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here's what he said. I've made one commitment to the livestock industry here and I stand behind it. We're not going to force them into any program like Alberta has done until they ask for it, and then we will assist them to go that way. Well, Mr. Speaker, the livestock industry has asked for help. They have asked for help.

The minister opposite doesn't have to implement half of the Alberta program, the half he doesn't like. But they have asked for help, and that minister and that government has the money to do something. And the response so far has been nothing — a big zero.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the minister, who's into this giving peace a chance, asked Gerry Ritz for aid. What did Ritz say? "He was non-committal in that area right now, but at least we have it on the table and he's heard it from us." Well, Mr. Speaker, people are waiting. Gerry Ritz represents a part of the

province where they have thousands and thousands of head of cattle. That member represents a part of the province where they have thousands and thousands of head of cattle. Those members over there represent the cattle herd in this province which is over 4.5 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this industry is worth over a billion. It represents 10,000 producers and countless other people who provide service to those producers. Well, Mr. Speaker, they're waiting. They're waiting for something, and I would call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to do something. Now, Mr. Speaker, I note that we're close to adjournment, and I would move adjournment of this debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In order to allow the Standing Committee on Human Services to do its work this evening, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has made a motion that this House now stands adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:54.]

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