



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

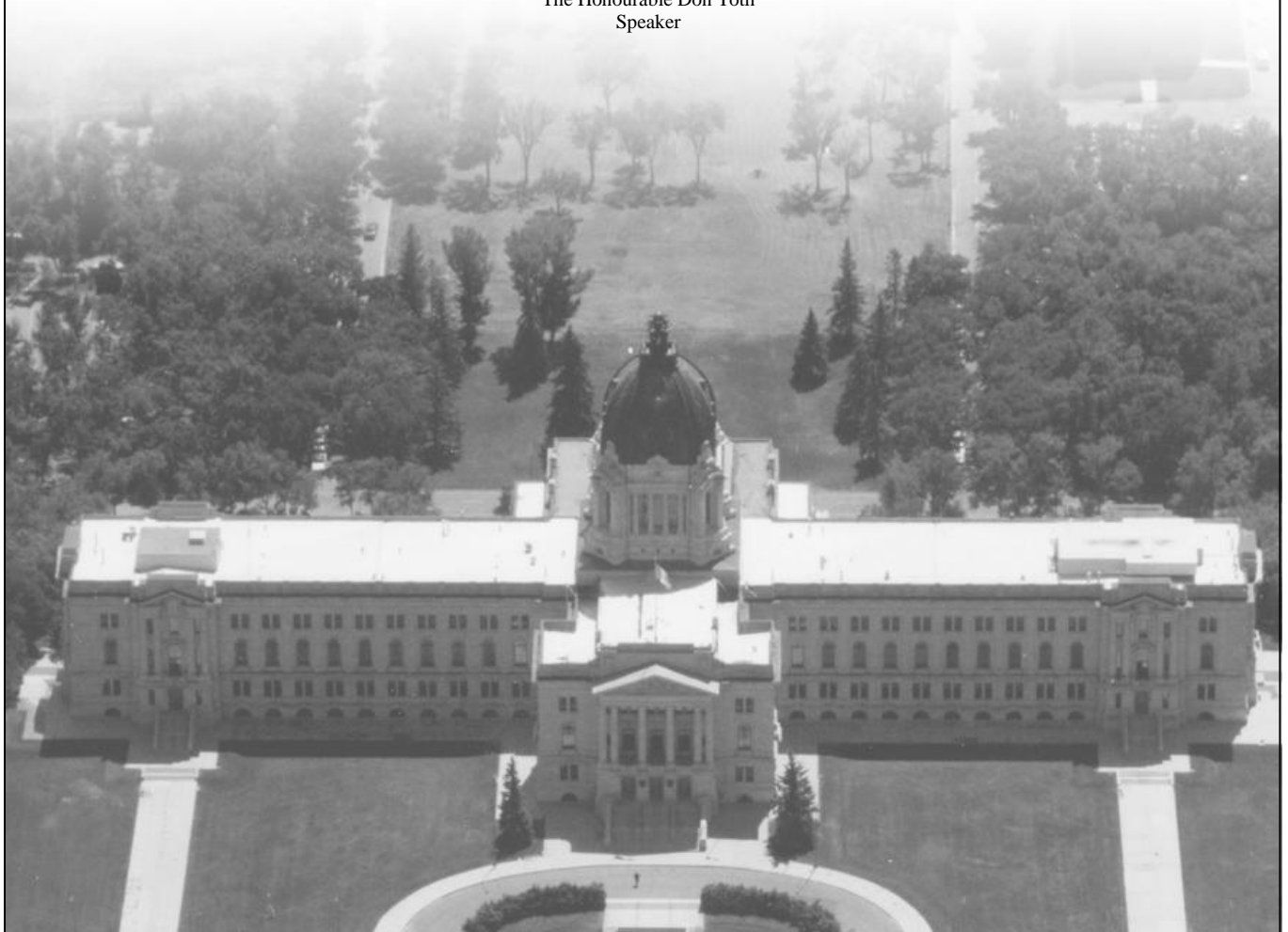
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the House today I would like to introduce 30 members from the public service who are participating in the parliamentary program for public servants. These fine employees of the public service represent 14 government ministries as well as an employee of the Legislative Library. And after our proceedings today, I'm going to have an opportunity to talk with them and field some of their questions. I'm sure the discussion and conversations will be interesting and fruitful.

This program also includes an extensive tour of the building, a session on the Legislative Library here in the legislature as well, and a session on the functions of government and cabinet. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to these participants today, and I'd like to ask all members to join me in doing so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister and on behalf of the official opposition welcome our civil servants or public servants to the Assembly today. I hope you have an enjoyable afternoon. The minister will be spending some time with you. I'll have an opportunity later on this afternoon as well, and I think the Speaker is going to be joining you for another session. The next couple of hours will be exciting and fun, and I hope you enjoy your visit here. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, through you, and to all the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce three people in your gallery. Two of them are the Co-Chairs of the Yorkton Film Festival: Janet Hill of Yorkton — just give us a wave there, Janet, or stand — and Dean Sauer of Regina. Along with them is executive director of the film festival, Randy Goulden of Yorkton. Unable to be with them here today is Ruth Shaw — a very notable person, Mr. Speaker, in that she's 90 years old last year and she has been with the film festival all 62 of its years.

They're in the city today to attend the Sask Tourism Awards of Excellence, and I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the member from Yorkton in welcoming those who are in the gallery representing the Yorkton Short Film Festival. I have had opportunity to attend that festival, Mr. Speaker. I recommend it to all members, and I congratulate those who have kept this long-standing tradition very much alive in Yorkton.

I also want to extend a very special welcome to Ms. Randy Goulden, who has served on Yorkton City Council and who came very close to occupying a seat in this legislature. Now the next time we expect to see Ms. Goulden sitting on the floor of this legislature as opposed to in the balcony, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the legislature, four visitors. I'll ask them to stand or wave when I mention their names. They're sitting in your gallery. All of the them are articling students with the Ministry of Justice.

First, Ms. Erin Schroh. Erin studied law at the University of Saskatchewan where she edited the *Saskatchewan Law Review*, and is both a teaching and research assistant. Erin Schroh was active in the Law Students' Association and Pro Bono Students.

Ms. Courtenay Phillips also worked on the *Law Review* at the University of Saskatchewan. Courtney also worked as a research assistant in the area of Aboriginal rights theory. I'm very pleased that we have an Aboriginal student in the articling program this year and look forward to the perspective that she will bring to the ministry, Mr. Speaker.

Next is Ms. Deena Wahba. Deena also comes to us from the University of Saskatchewan. Prior to studying law she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree, double majoring in criminology and psychology, from the University of Toronto and graduating with high distinction. Deena grew up in Estevan and has worked as an immigration officer as well as being an active volunteer.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, Jana Linner. Jana graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Saskatchewan with great distinction. She also holds a bachelor's degree in co-operative education from the University of Regina. Jana's an active volunteer and athlete, a former captain of the University of Regina women's basketball team.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember well how hard it was when I articulated, which was, I think, seven or eight years ago. The member from Meadow Lake tells me that as soon as he gets around to articling in Saskatchewan, he'll be able to compare notes with them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of our articling students and know that they will be a great asset to the Ministry of Justice. And I

would ask that all members join me in welcoming Erin, Courtenay, Deena, and Jana to their Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, three guests that are seated in the gallery today — three student leaders from the University of Regina Students' Union. Our caucus had an enjoyable lunch with them today.

And I would like to introduce Kristy Fyfe, VP [vice-president] external affairs of URSU [University of Regina Students' Union]; Sean Dunham, VP student affairs; and Craig Fink, VP operations. We're sad the folks from the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union could not join us today, but we're glad they're safe and sound in Saskatoon. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these students. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming the students from the University of Regina. We met with them earlier today. We had a very frank and I think productive discussion on a wide range of topics. And I certainly encourage these young leaders to continue the good work that they are currently doing. And I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming them.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have today a petition in support of addressing high tuition fees. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to addressing the burden placed by high post-secondary tuition fees on Saskatchewan students.

Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to present these petitions on behalf of people from Bruno and Saskatoon.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens that support the

government's policy on green vehicles. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government ministers named in this petition to follow their own platform and government policies and trade in their Jeep Libertys for vehicles that are on SGI's 2008 list of recommended fuel-efficient vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Regina.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition that speaks to the issues with the housing market that have translated into many challenges for renters, which includes senior citizens, and that more affordable housing options would definitely be beneficial to our seniors, especially those on fixed incomes. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to act as quickly as possible to expand affordable housing options for Saskatchewan's senior citizens.

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

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Saskatchewan residents, I so present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Furber:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of expanding options for student housing. The petition addresses the concerns of the people of Saskatchewan that they hope will be addressed by the government. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads 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 housing options for Saskatchewan students.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from Regina, Langenburg, Esterhazy, Saskatoon, Cut Knife, Fort Qu'Appelle, Macdowall, Moose Jaw, Dundurn, Canora, Prince Albert, Humboldt, White City, Langham, Perdue, La Ronge, Spruce Home, Abbey, Maple Creek, and White Fox, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. And we know that many of these folks have traditionally been underpaid and many continue to earn poverty-level wages. I'll read the prayer for you, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the development and implementation of a multi-year funding plan to ensure that CBO workers achieve wage equity with employees who perform work of equal value in government departments.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these petitioners come from a wide range of communities in Saskatchewan, including Kennedy, Wapella, Maryfield, Moosomin, Whitewood, and Assiniboia and Saskatoon. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the rural residents of Saskatchewan who again feel like they're being left behind by this government and are having to deal with the cost burden of providing quality drinking water on their own. The prayer reads as such:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to financially assist the town of Duck Lake residents for the good of their health and safety due to the exorbitant water rates being forced on them by a government agency, and that this government fulfills its commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these petitions are signed by the good folks of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of affordable housing in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners note that the vacancy rate for rental accommodation in The Battlefords is very low, and the cost for rental accommodation is increasing, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners ask that:

... the Legislative Assembly call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to invest in an affordable housing program that will result in a greater number of quality and affordable rental units to be made available to a greater number of people throughout The Battlefords and across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners all come from The Battlefords

constituency.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and present a petition in support of fairness for students through the expansion of the graduate retention program. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately expand the graduate retention program to include master's and Ph.D. graduates.

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are students from the University of Regina as well as students from the University of Saskatchewan as well as a number of citizens of Saskatoon, some of whom hold graduate degrees and work in the health care field. Thank you so much. I so present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to repair Highway 135 that runs through Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan. This petition is signed by leadership and community members of Pelican Narrows First Nations and the village of Pelican Narrows and area. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to pave the 7 kilometres of Highway 135 through the community of Pelican Narrows, as committed on August 24, 2007.

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

They are signed by good citizens of Pelican Narrows. I so present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

### Week of Solidarity Against Racism

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, on the United Nations calendar, March 21 marks the beginning of a Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling Against Racism and Racial Discrimination. It is an important week, Mr. Speaker, because racism is a fact of life for far too many in our society. It demeans and dehumanizes its victims, at the very least causing them hurt, shame, and embarrassment. Mr. Speaker, this is a time for people from all different races and cultures to share

their views and work together to help overcome racism.

Mr. Speaker, the North is mostly comprised of First Nations and Métis people who have willingly shared their traditions, culture, and knowledge. And yet First Nations and Métis people know the damage that racism can do better than most.

Mr. Speaker, I know all members of this Assembly recognize the terrible consequences of racism and racial discrimination. As legislators, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to take whatever action we can to help stop it. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

#### Yorkton Film Festival

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a 1950 October evening, a projector whirred into action. The screen lit up. The sights and sounds of life filled the stillness of the Yorkton city hall. This was the scene as the first Yorkton International Documentary Film Festival became a reality. And this May the Yorkton Film Festival, with its Golden Sheaf Awards being sought after by filmmakers and industry leaders nationwide, is celebrating a landmark anniversary — 62 years of hosting world-class films.

[13:45]

Many years ago, a small but visionary group of Yorkton volunteers had a goal: to host a national film festival that would put Yorkton and Saskatchewan on the map as a leader in the film industry. The festival was the brainchild of James Lysyshyn — often referred to in the years to follow as the father of the Yorkton International Documentary Film Festival.

The first meeting of those volunteers met with little success. It was felt there was not enough new films being produced in Canada, and Lysyshyn could not take no for an answer. He persisted and the Yorkton International Documentary Film Festival was born. And tonight the Yorkton Film Festival will be honoured as a finalist in the Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence in the promotional marketing campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join me in congratulating the many volunteers and organizers of the Yorkton Film Festival, including those in attendance here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Radiothon for Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From 6 a.m. Thursday to 6 p.m. Friday, Rawlco Radio Z99 hosted their 22nd annual radiothon in support of the neonatal intensive care unit at the Regina General Hospital.

CC, Lorie, and Buzz led the raging masses to incredible

success. Few of us stay awake for 36 hours without sleep, Mr. Speaker, let alone host radio that is entertaining, educating, and brings out the very, very finest in people, and raises \$329,052 for a worthy and needed cause.

Regina and district's raging masses are amazing people. Our collective generous giving goes to much-needed equipment for babies' care at the Regina General neonatal intensive care unit.

Join me, Mr. Speaker, as we thank every person involved in this 22nd annual Z99 radiothon. CC, Lorie, and Buzz, you amazed us again. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Saskatoon Student Tae Kwon Do Champion

**Ms. Schriemer:** — Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to recognize Ashley Foster, a 17-year-old student from Saskatoon. Ashley has participated in Olympic-style tae kwon do for 13 years, and is a third dan, world-certified black belt.

She began structured classes at the age of four and a half. She achieved her club black belt at six and her WTF [World Taekwondo Federation] black belt at the age of 10. She has participated in more than 50 tae kwon do championships, and has been an eight-time provincial champion.

In 2008 Ashley participated in a number of tae kwon do tournaments, resulting in a phenomenal record. She won a silver at the Canadian Junior, a gold medal at the Canadian Championship. Ashley was a member of Team Canada at the World Championships where she won bronze. She also won bronze at the last Commonwealth Games.

Ashley is a junior assistant instructor at Kee's Tae Kwon Do where she also trains under Grand Master Kee Ha and Master Duk Ha. Ashley has also furthered her knowledge by qualifying as a provincial WTF referee. Through her own physical training and mental discipline, Ashley remains committed as a teacher, coach, student, and competitor.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating Ashley on her achievements. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

#### Water Challenges in Saskatchewan

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday nations around the world recognized World Water Day. This day reminds us that water is essential to human life. Without water, there is no life. Without access to clean water, our health is at risk.

While many in our province have regular access to safe,

affordable water, the residents of Duck Lake, a town of just over 600 people north of Saskatoon, are unable to afford their soaring water bills, increasing from \$32 a month to upwards of \$167 a month.

Refusing to offer assistance to the residents of Duck Lake, the Sask Party government is permitting 11 families — some with children, others seniors with fixed incomes — to go without water service. Meanwhile, other Duck Lake families are forced to make choices no Saskatchewan family should have to make — the choice between paying the water bill or purchasing groceries for their loved ones.

The people of Duck Lake are not alone in facing serious water challenges in accessing safe, affordable drinking water. As of March 6, there remain more than 140 precautionary drinking water advisories and 54 emergency boil-water orders in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of World Water Day, the New Democrats reaffirm our conviction that people have a right to safe, affordable drinking water. Accordingly, New Democrats stand with our rural communities, including the 11 families of Duck Lake who are left without water by a Sask Party government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Understanding of Potash Revenues

**Mr. Harrison:** — “It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.” So quoted the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* weekend editorial regarding the member from Regina Douglas Park’s lack of understanding of the way Crown corporations are financed.

It could just as well have applied to the same member’s lack of understanding of how potash revenues work in this province. It’s simply stunning that the former NDP [New Democratic Party] Finance minister does not understand the most basic concepts of public policy. Last week, over and over again, he made the false claim that a 10 per cent cut in potash production means a 10 per cent drop in potash revenues. To put it bluntly, he’s dead wrong.

According to Darrell Swarych, vice-president of finance for Mosaic Potash, sales, not production, is by far the biggest factor in potash revenues. He said, and I quote:

The vast majority of the revenue that the government gets is not from potash production . . . it’s from potash sales. And, at current inventory levels, there’s enough inventory to make up for any shortfall in production.

Mr. Speaker, it’s truly alarming that someone could occupy the office of minister of Finance and have such little understanding of one of the province’s most important revenue sources. Today I would call on that member to do the right thing — acknowledge his serious blunder and publicly correct the false claims he made to the people of Saskatchewan about how potash revenues are calculated.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Prince Albert Native Decorated

**Mr. Furber:** — Mr. Speaker, Captain Marcel Halle was recently inducted as an officer into the Order of Military Merit. This is recognition of his work in the Canadian navy as an engineer and a soldier. What makes this honour even more special to Captain Halle is that the nomination was made by fellow naval officers.

Mr. Speaker, the Order of Military Merit is awarded to regular and reserve members of the Armed Forces. It recognizes the work and achievements of the recipient in his or her military career. Colleagues in the military nominate members, and a ceremony is held at Rideau Hall in Ottawa and hosted by Governor General Michaëlle Jean.

Mr. Speaker, Captain Halle is originally from Prince Albert and still has family at home. He attended St. Mary High School — which, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say is my alma mater — and as loyal as he is to his birth city, Captain Halle says that his career has given him experiences he would not have had in any other job. He says that being in the military is truly like no other profession and offers tremendous opportunities to its members.

His sister, Dianne Kopchynski, is St. Mary High School’s community school coordinator. She and her family, which includes two other siblings and her parents, and indeed all of us, are very proud of Captain Halle and of the great honour bestowed upon him by the Governor General. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in extending our congratulations to Captain Marcel Halle upon receiving the Order of Military Merit, and to extend our deepest appreciation to him and all that he has done in service to our country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Support for First Nations and Métis People

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week we had a \$10 billion budget and a 12 per cent spending increase. And in that budget, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite took no end of pleasure in their self-congratulation and how they thought this was just fine. In fact, on Thursday in the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, the member from Melville-Saltcoats, the Agriculture minister, said that only 20 people in this province were disappointed with this budget.

And I guess I wonder if he could perhaps talk with his seatmate, the First Nations and Métis Relations minister, and perhaps get an explanation of a quote from Morley Watson, FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] Vice-chief, who says, “As one of the largest stakeholders in the province, First

Nations are extremely disappointed' . . .”

Mr. Speaker, why were First Nations and Métis people left behind in this budget?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members opposite, I'm pleased to answer this question because First Nations and Métis people were not left out in this budget. In fact they were looked at, not just through the ministry that I represent, but through every ministry within our government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that the members opposite realize that on top of the 25 per cent increase that we have within our ministry for First Nations and Métis people, we also have \$5.9 million for the Aboriginal workforce development fund that's through Advanced Education. We have \$250,000 for First Nations health and well-being through the Health budget. We have \$265,000 for the Prince Albert Grand Council for their new youth addictions facility. And the money goes on and on because First Nations and Métis people are seen right throughout our whole community and our province. And every dollar we spend is for every person in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, Vice-chief Morley Watson, about the same time that the Minister of Agriculture was singing the praises of the budget with the amen chorus over there, Vice-chief Morley Watson was talking about how this budget was a missed opportunity to address Aboriginal issues, including poverty, education, and the duty to consult with First Nations groups affected by resource exploitation.

We know that the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations has sort of a round and round table going on, duty to consult and accommodate. I guess the question is when does that round and round end, and when will she be coming forward with a budget that actually puts real dollars on the table to address the issues that First Nations people face in this province?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased again to answer questions about First Nations and Métis people who are going to play a significant part of our growth in our province. I want to make sure that the members opposite realize that the largest income tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history also affected the First Nations and Métis people. The increased low-income tax credit also affected the First Nations and Métis people, whether on-reserve or off-reserve.

And as far as the consultation table that talks about round and round, I'm just absolutely amazed that members opposite can even bring up the issue because they never bothered consulting at all with the First Nations and Métis before they brought forward their discussions. And the round-table discussions that we are having, the deadline is June 1, and I'm very much looking forward to the opportunity to discuss with the leaders with other issues in this regard.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The minister released a press release that stated, “This budget . . . allows us to begin the exploratory phase which involves parties participating in a collaborative process to discuss issues including sharing in the economic growth . . .” The quote goes on, but I want to rest there, Mr. Speaker: “including sharing in the economic growth.”

In a \$10 billion budget, Mr. Speaker, with 12 per cent spending increase, what they've offered up for First Nations is an exploratory phase so they might begin to explore. And round and round it goes. Vice-chief Morley Watson talked about how they were extremely disappointed with this budget. Mr. Speaker, does the vice-chief have it wrong or does the minister have it right?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, the First Nations people in this province understand that our government's priority is to work with the First Nations, and not just within my ministry, but within the other ministries. And I'm pleased to say that within Education, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education, there's an increase. And this ministry has introduced a First Nations and Métis language strategy to support the retention and revitalization of Saskatchewan First Nations-based languages and dialects.

We have within Justice, we have Touchwood File Hills Qu'Appelle safe shelter, \$548,000. We have money for the Battlefords Interval Society. We have Prince Albert Shelter for Women. We have the Friendship Centre in the Northwest. We have Muskeg long-term care. And I'm sure if the member opposite has more questions, I'll be delighted to tell him about other money that this government is spending for First Nations and Métis to ensure that they can be part of the economic growth of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that this is a minister who introduced the draft guidelines for the members opposite, on duty to consult, on almost the night



before Christmas, Mr. Speaker — on December 22. She wants to talk about a meaningful consultation process. I think that would have been a good place to start, Mr. Speaker.

She talks about, you know, the dollars that are flowing in in her budget. The biggest amount of money in that budget — new dollars, Mr. Speaker — originates with the NDP gaming deal that those members fortunately haven't reneged on. So it's kind of funny that the member would portray themselves as the big friends.

So again, Mr. Speaker, a budget with 10 billion plus a 12 per cent spending increase, how is it that First Nations and Métis people get left behind?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

[14:00]

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, our government, the government that I'm proud to be part of, wants to ensure that First Nations and Métis people are not separate from . . . We realize their cultural standards and different life that they have, but also we have the same goal. I've yet to speak to a leader of the First Nations and Métis community who are not pleased for the economic opportunities we have in this province.

We are working to make sure that everyone can be involved in the economy. And I'm very pleased when our Minister of Advanced Education shows us about the increase in number of First Nations and Métis people working within our province. The best social program you have is a good job. We know that; the chiefs know that; and the leaders of the Métis community know that. The only people that don't know that are the people on the other side of the House.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, the Métis people of Saskatchewan were also disappointed with a \$10.2 billion provincial budget that left them behind. Robert Doucette, president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, believes the Sask Party must provide sustainable and meaningful solution to the issues facing Métis people and the communities, and this budget has failed to do that. Mr. Doucette said, "From our view, there was nothing [sustainable] . . . in this budget, except for the status quo."

Mr. Speaker, the status quo simply isn't good enough. To the minister: will she provide adequate core funding to the MNS [Métis Nation of Saskatchewan] as a first step to providing real solutions to the issues facing the Métis people?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very pleased to have the relationship we have with the Métis Nation in this province. In fact our Premier has had the opportunity to talk to the president of the Métis Nation many times and talk about the relationship and the fact that we have, that the Métis Nation again have a very good professional attitude, and they're respected across our province.

Last year with the Métis Nation, we honoured our tripartite agreement with 285,000 people. We've honoured the bilateral process with 100,000. We are pleased to give the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan \$200,000 to offset the consultation capacity funding they have. And we also have funding for Batoche, funding for the senate, funding for round tables. And every opportunity we have to meet with the Métis people in our province gives us an opportunity to make sure they're involved in the economy.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

#### Consultations with First Nations and Métis People

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, if real solutions are going to be found to address Métis issues, the Métis people must be consulted. The minister's last attempt to come up with a consultation policy framework was soundly rejected by both Métis and First Nation groups. The MNS has found . . . The MNS held a round table March 14 and 15 to discuss duty to consult, and the minister was nowhere to be seen.

To the minister: how is this new policy coming along? And since she was nowhere to be found at a recent Métis round table, will she simply be injecting into the framework what she thinks the Métis people need?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite and to the Métis and First Nations people in this province, no, I will not be doing, nor will my government be doing what the NDP did, and that is develop a consultation at night around a coffee table and throw it on the table and say this is how we're going to consult with First Nations. We are going to continue to consult with them.

I was not able to attend the last conference, but I did have the opportunity since the round table to meet over 80 times with the First Nations and Métis people in our province to discuss the duty to consult. And that is not just my . . . that's just my meetings, not the meetings with my ministry. In fact on March 5, I met with 16 members of the Métis Nation council, right here in this building and discussed many of the consultation issues we talked about.

Two weeks ago, I was in Beauval and met with a group of Métis in that area. Last week I had the opportunity to go to Cumberland House and meet with the Métis in that area. And yes, we are listening to the Métis people in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, if the minister had bothered to attend the Métis round table, she would have heard that Métis people need the financial resources to travel to consultation meetings and to hire legal counsel. Without the money to do the things, the Métis people will be left out of the consultation process.

To the minister: will she provide MNS and its members with the funds they need to participate in the consultation process in a meaningful way?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to stand in this House today and say that yes, the consultation funding that was in place last year is again in place. The First Nations and Métis people have the opportunity to apply for capacity funding. We are very pleased to look at the proposals that are brought forward.

Last year there was approximately 18 proposals that were . . . There's 18 proposals currently under review still at this time; that's about \$1.4 million in requests. That's on top of the \$1.1 million that's also been committed from the funds. About 800,000 of that went to the First Nations and 300,000 for the Métis Nation.

And yes, there is more money to come as we're working with the First Nations and Métis people to make sure there is a true consultation policy, which never happened under that . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

### Support for Northern Development

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The minister mentioned that she had the opportunity to meet with the Métis and First Nations 80 times, and obviously she had ample time to understand what they wanted. And, Mr. Speaker, they are not convinced in the least bit that they got anything in this budget, and northerners are feeling the same way, Mr. Speaker.

It should be pointed out that the First Nations and Métis people and northerners sat with this minister on numerous occasions expressing to her their desires, their wishes, and ambitions for their children in their community, and of course the people that they represent. And, Mr. Speaker, we're finding that pain happening all over the place with no reaction from this minister and that government.

Mr. Speaker, whether it's First Nations or Métis people or northerners, they are not buying her explanation one bit. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party chose to slash funding to the

northern economic development program by 20 per cent in last week's budget, and with 100 layoffs in one of our northern mines, the mood is grim.

To the minister: with a \$10.2 billion budget and spending increases of 12 per cent, why are northerners not part of your plan?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I'm very pleased to say that northerners are a huge part of the plan in this province — not just within this ministry, but again across the various ministries. The Minister of Highways, the Minister in charge of Enterprise, the Minister in charge of Resources, understands the opportunities we have — not just the people resources, but the natural resources in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I have a quote from the member opposite who spoke about what it was like in the North. I believe this was in 1996 when he was sitting in opposition, and he made this statement: "If I was in government, I would get the taxpayers' money out of business . . . because business can survive and thrive without government . . . if the government simply provides the right climate . . ."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this government is doing, is providing a climate to make sure that everyone in our province can benefit from being in our province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, it should be known that northern Saskatchewan suffers to a 75 per cent, 85 per cent, 85 per cent unemployment rate. And then the minister gets up and makes some comment I made 10 years ago about business development and the opportunity. Well that's quite an answer for a very stark position that I put forward when I asked that minister a question about northern development funding and also the fact that she is sitting on \$10.2 billion.

And, Mr. Speaker, that minister sat around the cabinet table while all the allocations were handed out, and guess what? She didn't speak up for the Métis people, didn't speak up for First Nations people, and didn't speak up for northern people, Mr. Speaker. So again, the point that I raise again, whether it's northern fishermen, whether it's northern fishers, trappers, or wild rice growers, Mr. Speaker, we are finding that even those traditional resource users, their budgets are being slashed . . .

**The Speaker:** — I ask the member to place his question.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why didn't the Sask Party consult with northern fishermen and fishers, northern trappers, and wild rice growers on how to improve the traditional programs in northern Saskatchewan? With spending increases of 12 per cent on a \$10.2 billion budget, why did this minister choose to provide less support to these northern

fishermen, trappers, and wild rice growers?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I am sure when he has the opportunity to review the budget, he'll see that the one part of the Northern Development Fund that was cut was the area where there was one loan application last year, and it cost just about as much to administer as it did to pay out for the loan. But the rest of the Northern Development Fund is still there. We are definitely wanting to look at the opportunities for the First Nations and the Métis people in the North if we can help them out in this area.

But he mentioned that I read a quote from 10 years ago about northerners. I think maybe I should remind the member opposite what one of his colleagues said on March 2. The member from Regina Northeast said, "... I think that perhaps not enough attention has been paid in the past to the plight of the northern residents and the needs of the northern residents."

That's what this government did. The people that were sitting there for 16 years did absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to tell you that our government has the opportunity to have enterprise regions in the North, and I'm looking forward to the opportunity we have to deal with them.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, the northerners know that in the 16 years that this government's been in power, we paid \$11 billion in interest payments alone and paid down almost \$6 billion in debt.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — We didn't sit, Mr. Speaker, we didn't sit on a \$10.2 billion budget with a 12 per cent increase and forget northerners, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — There's a big difference . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. The member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — The opportunity for us was rarely there. However when that opportunity to do something was there, we took it, Mr. Speaker. We didn't sit on a \$10.2 billion budget with a 12 per cent increase across the board and ignore northerners. Mr. Speaker, once again I'm going to ask the minister, whether it's Indian or Métis or northerners, you have forgotten them, you have abandoned them, and you've turned your back on them. When are you going to change your position and start backing up what you say at these meetings, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that First Nations and Métis people do believe that there is opportunities, otherwise they wouldn't have asked to meet with me 80 times since last May.

And I think that also maybe the member opposite should talk . . . when he talks about opportunities, the government and the members opposite sat on this side of the House for 15 years and they talked about opportunities. Their opportunity was to invest money in SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], not the North; in Navigata, not the North; in dot-coms, not the North.

I didn't see the interest that we had, Mr. Speaker. There was opportunities. It's what you make of the opportunities. And they did not decide that First Nations, Métis people, and the northerners were part of the growth of our province. We not only have solved that, we believe it, and every action that we take shows it, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Support for First Nations and Métis People

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This budget fails to address the marginalization of First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan. And that marginalization plays out in some terrible ways — in poverty, in violence, and in drug abuse.

This morning we heard about an HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] crisis in Saskatchewan. CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] reports there were 174 new cases in Saskatchewan in 2008 — a 40 per cent increase over the previous year — and they're expecting it to go up to about 300 next year, Mr. Speaker. Fifty per cent of the new cases are among Saskatchewan women, with the single largest affected group being made up of young First Nations women in the inner city. One-third of all new cases are First Nations women under the age of 29.

To the First Nations and Métis Relations minister: this government has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take a stand and provide meaningful support to address issues that disproportionately affect First Nations and Métis people. In a \$10 billion budget that increases spending by 12 per cent, why did they fail First Nations and Métis people?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government is very concerned with the recent trend of HIV infections that we're seeing in the province. That's

why I've asked the ministry to act quickly. We have struck a committee . . . We will be striking a committee with the chief medical officer as the Chair, including First Nations groups, including representatives from the federal government, including individuals from addictions groups, as well as other provinces that have seen HIV rates spike in their provinces, Mr. Speaker.

In fact we're acting so quickly, the meeting will be held tomorrow to see what we can do, on top of the needle exchange program, to address that problem.

[14:15]

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, the budget was held last week and that debate goes on. And in that budget release, the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations said, "This budget also allows us to begin the exploratory phase which involves parties participating in a collaborative process to discuss issues including sharing in the economic growth . . ."

And you know, Mr. Speaker, why I raise this again is that this is a life-and-death issue, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the participation of First Nations and Métis people in the economy, the budget should tell a lot about what's going to happen there, Mr. Speaker, and there was nothing in that budget.

To the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations: you know, when is she going to stop the exploring and start delivering for First Nations and Métis people in this province?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, the exploratory table that we've put forward as an opportunity to deal with some of the issues that weren't dealt with through the framework on consultation is the opportunity we have as a province and for industry to say how can we best involve First Nations and the issues beyond consultation — stewardship, the opportunity to be involved in the wealth of the province, traditional land use and mapping — those are the issues that we'll be talking about at these exploratory tables.

And I think the member opposite, if they've read the budget, will see we've got \$500,000 earmarked for that very important issue. It will give us a chance to talk and sit around the table with people who know that there is more that can be done, that we cannot continue to repeat the mistakes of the past when it comes to dealing with First Nations and Métis and having them involved in the economy. There's a respectful relationship that we have, and I'm looking forward to this opportunity as we go forward.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, it's so respectful that the member opposite had to deliver the draft guidelines on December 22 — you know, almost the night before Christmas. The fact that she comes forward with \$500,000 for more sitting around the table and talking, when in fact there's been a year-plus go before and a year before that, Mr. Speaker, on the whole concept of duty to consult and accommodate, the fact that the budget came down last week, with no significant new dollars in it for First Nations and Métis people, indicates pretty clearly to First Nations and Métis people that if they want to get action in this province, they're increasingly drawn to things like blockades and court action, instead of a negotiated political process.

So, Mr. Speaker, when is the minister opposite going to come forward with a real offer, with real negotiations, with a real process that delivers for First Nations and Métis people, instead of leaving them behind? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely unbelievable that the members opposite can stand and talk about our relationship with the First Nations and Métis people, when for 15 years when they sat on this side of the House, we never saw an increase in the number of people working. We never saw an increase in their health issues. Mr. Speaker, we are talking to First Nations and Métis people. We did bring down the guidelines at the end of December as we had said, as was promised. And we gave until the end of February for . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only did we bring forward issues on consultation and the exploratory table, and many of my colleagues brought forward issues, we have things like the children's hospital. Do the members opposite believe that there won't be one First Nations or Métis people in this province happy that we will have children's hospital in this province? What about the announcement on Friday where we have partnerships for First Nations and Métis people on homes in Saskatoon?

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have no realization what's happening with our First Nations and Métis people. We do. We're proud as a government to have partnerships.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

#### SaskPower Capital Spending

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to inform the House of a very important and positive development for the people of our province.

On Friday, March 20, it was my pleasure to announce, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, SaskPower's capital spending plans for the year. It is SaskPower's responsibility to ensure that the economic growth continues, and it is my responsibility to ensure that the government is able to do just that. As evidence of its commitment to the people of Saskatchewan, SaskPower will be investing \$954 million in 2009 to meet the growing demand for power in our province — nearly \$1 billion in one single year, Mr. Speaker.

The capital budget for 2009 is the most significant investment the corporation has made, the most significant investment made by any government in any corporation ever, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of thoughtful planning, SaskPower will fulfill its service mission to make the necessary investments in our province's infrastructure and in doing so, Mr. Speaker, help sustain our province's economic momentum.

When the Saskatchewan Party government took office, we discovered SaskPower was in a serious infrastructure deficit, Mr. Speaker. The only solution going forward is shown by this significant reinvestment in SaskPower's system, one that is essential as we continue to attract new industry to the province . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I recognize one member who has the floor right now, and I'd ask other members to respect the member's opportunity to present his statement. The Minister of Crown Corporations.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's essential that we continue to attract new industry to the province, support the expansion of existing industry, and accommodate the growing demand from our residential customers.

Our government is committed to having SaskPower remain a public corporation — not only that, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be a strong corporation. Simply said, Mr. Speaker, our government truly values the role our Crown corporations play in our province's future.

This single largest investment ever in the provincial electrical system is evident as we invest in adding 100 megawatts of natural gas-fired generation at the Ermine switching station near Kerrobert; adding 100 megawatts at the Queen Elizabeth power station in Saskatoon; adding 141 megawatts of natural gas-fired generation near North Battleford; building a 230-kilovolt transmission line between Poplar River and Pasqua switching station just east of Moose Jaw; completing the Boundary dam spillway project; expanding the ash lagoon storage facility at the Poplar River power station near Coronach. Spending, Mr. Speaker, \$95 million connecting new electrical services and upgrading existing customer services; spending \$10 million to replace wood power poles throughout the province; and, Mr.

Speaker, overhauling the Boundary dam power station's unit 2 and the QE [Queen Elizabeth] power station's unit 2.

Mr. Speaker, a responsible government makes infrastructure investment necessary to ensure Saskatchewan people have safe, reliable, sustainable power at the lowest possible cost. And, Mr. Speaker, in order to make that investment, SaskPower needs capital. And that is why I am very pleased to announce that our government, through the Crown Investments Corporation, will not take a dividend from SaskPower in 2009.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, suspending the dividend requirement shows just how serious our government is about investing in Saskatchewan's future. Obviously this isn't a job that's going to be completed overnight. We will continue the process of renewing and reinvesting in our province's electrical infrastructure.

I am pleased to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that all possible generation options will be on the table for consideration — renewables, imports, coal, nuclear, polygeneration — the full gamut, Mr. Speaker, along with all possible owner/operator scenarios. SaskPower, Mr. Speaker, is turning a new page in its history. SaskPower will be fulfilling its mandate to serve.

Mr. Speaker, in closing let me say that the 2009 capital expenditure announcement is an exciting one: not only for our government not only for SaskPower, but for the entire province, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan will continue to see the tangible benefits of our new economic strength through a renewal and expansion of our province's infrastructure that will create more jobs — more jobs at home here in Saskatchewan — and generate more investment in our province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by thanking the hon. minister for the advance copy of his ministerial statement.

Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to spend other people's money. If you have debt, you have to pay for it. As you add debt quickly, you add payments equally quickly. The minister calls this, "this single largest investment ever in the provincial electrical system . . ." Well, Mr. Speaker, along with the largest investment comes the larger payments. SaskPower customers will foot the entire bill.

Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke about an infrastructure deficit. Why is it, Mr. Speaker, that when the minister worked so hard supporting the Devine Conservatives, he supported them adding government and Crown debt? Why did he support stripping the Crowns and leaving them with so much debt when the Conservatives left office?

Mr. Speaker, the minister brags about not taking a dividend. Let me tell you, the very first year that Roy Romanow sat in the

premier's chair, not only was there no dividends available because they'd stripped and gutted the Crowns, but we had to pump in tens of millions of dollars into the Crowns so they could continue to operate. That was in the first year. Never mind no dividend — money came out of the General Revenue Fund to support the Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that, as the minister says, he says Crown debt was trending down, and the operative word is, was. Crown and government debt is clearly now going up under the latest iteration of a right wing government.

Mr. Speaker, there are many questions about the spending at SaskPower and in the Crowns. There are many questions about this and we will be asking them in Crown Corporations Committee and in other areas. But the biggest question is, does the single largest investment in the electrical system lead to the single largest increase in SaskPower rates? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantefoer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Van Mulligen.]

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

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to speak to the motion and the amendment concerning the 2009-2010 budget of the government.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to follow my colleagues from the two Regina constituencies who spoke so eloquently last week. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I may, before I conclude my remarks today, quote from the speeches that were raised by the members from Regina Douglas Park and Regina Coronation Park who, as I said, put some very eloquent comments on the record, Mr. Speaker — comments that mean as much in The Battlefords and across this province as they do to the constituents who live within the city of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, it's my intention to divide my comments today into a couple of categories: number one, to address issues related specifically to The Battlefords; and, Mr. Speaker, number two, to take a look at the budget as a whole, and how the impact of what is in or what is not in the budget, Mr. Speaker, affects people throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

But first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that people in The Battlefords are most interested in, and

to a certain extent, Mr. Speaker, are most concerned about and in fact disappointed in this government in this budget. Mr. Speaker, I was home this weekend as I am all weekends, Mr. Speaker, and I attended a number of events — events that are held by community organizations that attract people from all sectors in the economy that is The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

One of those events was a chamber of commerce event on Friday, and another was a United Church event on Saturday, Mr. Speaker. And even though I had no specific role to play in either meeting, Mr. Speaker, I was approached by numerous, and I think the word dozens would easily describe the approaches that people made to me, Mr. Speaker. And those approaches were almost universal in their subject matter of concern.

I think that the members in the Chamber will not be surprised to know that people were approaching me at those meetings and phoned me at home on a couple of occasions, Mr. Speaker, to talk about their disappointment in this government in not addressing the need for a new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the members opposite have on a couple of occasions mentioned that — I know that the people at home can't hear the members opposite — but they talk about why wasn't this addressed when I was minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. But the fact of the matter is, every single North Battleford, Battleford, and surrounding area resident knows, Mr. Speaker, that this issue was addressed when I was the minister, Mr. Speaker.

We provided the commitment to proceed with the project and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, we provided the regional health authority with the money necessary to advance this project through the most significant part of the planning process. And that, Mr. Speaker, is site selection, concept identification, and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, the facilities review. Now, Mr. Speaker, the next step, which was to occur after the election, was the approval of funding for the specific design work, Mr. Speaker. And for a year and a half now, this government has sat on the approval for funding for specific design.

Everybody in the health field knows, Mr. Speaker, you go through these steps. I was responsible for the first two steps, Mr. Speaker. This government is responsible now, because of the election, for all subsequent steps, Mr. Speaker. So the responsibility is now for this government to recommit funding — funding that was committed previously — but recommit funding, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that this project continues along the lines that Prairie North Regional Health Authority had started, and actually as far as concept and facility and program review, Mr. Speaker, had completed.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is taking place now in The Battlefords . . . And I think the members should realize, should recognize, Mr. Speaker, that actually even though I spend a great deal of time promoting and supporting the development of the new Saskatchewan Hospital, members opposite might be surprised to know that the hospital is not in The Battlefords constituency, Mr. Speaker. The hospital is in Cut Knife-Turtleford

constituency, Mr. Speaker. And I would think that the member from that constituency would be as interested as the member from the neighbouring constituency, Mr. Speaker, in this particular project. So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope, I certainly hope that this government will do what it needs to do with regards to this project.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it was universal in the people who talked to me about their disappointment that this project did not proceed in this budget. But, Mr. Speaker, I did what members of the government could have been and should have been doing, Mr. Speaker, and that is quite simply explaining the next steps in this process.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I said to the people in The Battlefords this weekend was quite simply, you know, let's not take the government . . . our disappointment too seriously, Mr. Speaker, because the process of determining long-term capital, health capital, has not yet been concluded by this government, Mr. Speaker. I explained that prior to the election in 2007, the New Democratic Party government initiated a facilities review of all facilities in the . . .

**The Speaker:** — There's a lot of conversation and debate going on on my right, making it difficult to really hear, for the member to present his speech. I'd ask members to respect the rights of members to speak. Member from The Battlefords.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that members opposite will be glad to hear what response they should be giving to the Saskatchewan people in regards to health facility review. But I will continue, Mr. Speaker, in the hopes that they are listening and learn something here.

So New Democrats commissioned the study of all health facilities in the province, Mr. Speaker. And we recognize that the government will at some point release a list, whether it's a three-year or a five-year or a ten-year program, to address acute care and provincial facilities to be funded, whether it's design approval or construction approval. We anticipate, Mr. Speaker, that this government will release a list, as I say, three years, five years, ten years, within the next two months or four months or eight months, Mr. Speaker, but certainly before the next budget a year from now.

So, Mr. Speaker, the circumstances we find ourselves in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, is we are simply waiting for the release of the three-, five-, or ten-year plan with regards to the future funding of acute or provincial care facilities within the province.

Mr. Speaker, the government has to recognize of course that because this study was done, well two years ago now, Mr. Speaker, that they have an obligation soon, not only to the people of The Battlefords, but to the people in Moose Jaw and the people in Beauval and others across this province, to know where funding, where funding is going with regards to acute and provincial care. The overall expansion of the hospitals in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, the expansion of the hospital in Lloydminster, the new Saskatchewan Hospital, Mr. Speaker, the new hospital or renovations in Moose Jaw — Mr. Speaker, there are a number of acute or provincial care facilities that this government has not yet identified on their priority list for

funding in the future.

Mr. Speaker, they've known about the list for a while. They have a good idea of what their long-term funding projections are and what their potential for revenue is, Mr. Speaker, so they have no excuse really about releasing this information in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, in The Battlefords we know that a project like the development of Saskatchewan Hospital is, for all intents and purposes, Mr. Speaker, this is a shovel-ready project. It needs the design work completed, the tenders put out. And, Mr. Speaker, then we'll see our hotel rooms filled, our gas stations active, our . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, the new Minister of Health says something that I'm saying here is absolutely false, Mr. Speaker. I have no idea what he's talking about as what is being false here.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, he will have a chance to speak. And I hope when he speaks he will address the issue of Saskatchewan Hospital, because when he visited the Saskatchewan Hospital, he recognized the conditions that exist there, Mr. Speaker. And he said, Mr. Speaker, that this facility certainly needs replacing.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt at all that people with psychiatric needs in this province . . . And they're not just in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker; their families are in every one of our constituencies across this province, Mr. Speaker. This is a provincial facility that requires provincial interest and provincial attention.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will be interested to find out what it is that I'm so wrong about that the Minister of Health has expressed here. Mr. Speaker, we need this facility addressed by this government.

Mr. Speaker, the other things, of course, that the people in The Battlefords are interested in are housing issues, Mr. Speaker. We have a growing population. Mr. Speaker, we have new programs at the North West Regional College. Students can't take full advantage of them because there are few places that they find accessible for accommodation. Mr. Speaker, we have one of the largest components of immigrants in the province coming to The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. Accessible, affordable housing for an immigrant taking an entry-level job position in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker — hard to come by.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a lot of people from First Nations communities. And there are 22 of them within about a four-hour drive of The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. We have young First Nations people coming into The Battlefords for school, for jobs, Mr. Speaker, to be closer to families. And there are few, very few affordable accommodations for them, Mr. Speaker. Rents are rising, the number of rental units are decreasing, but the need and the desire, Mr. Speaker, has increased.

We've had commitments from this government to address some of those issues in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, but we have not seen in a year and a half any concrete provision for new rental accommodation, affordable accommodation, in The Battlefords. Mr. Speaker, there was nothing in this budget to address that or give us reason to be hopeful, Mr. Speaker. That's another message from the people of The Battlefords with regards to

what this government should be concentrating on for priorities.

Now let's take a look at this budget, Mr. Speaker. Because in addition to our disappointment over some of the commitments that we felt had been made, need to be made, and should be made in this budget, Mr. Speaker, to the people of The Battlefords, what are the abilities, Mr. Speaker, of the members opposite, particularly those in cabinet, to manage this budget so that what they are saying will be of benefit to us, Mr. Speaker, are actually able to come true?

They have said, Mr. Speaker, quite a number of things about the outcome of this budget, Mr. Speaker. But they have failed to actually address their management capacity in order to achieve those things. We, Mr. Speaker, throughout The Battlefords and throughout Saskatchewan, do want to see a government that is able to do what it says it can do. Confidence, Mr. Speaker, is what is going to ensure new investment in this province, and confidence comes from trust. So, Mr. Speaker, can you trust a government that has its assumptions for developing a balanced budget out of whack, Mr. Speaker, with the assumptions that have been developed by everyone else other than this government, who is looking at the provincial economy?

Really what I'm getting at here, Mr. Speaker, is when you build a budget, you build that budget based on certain assumptions. Now the private sector forecasters, those people who are employed by the banks and the bond rating agencies and others, Mr. Speaker, they are always engaged in the business of forecasting — what do you think is going to happen in the next six months, the next twelve months, the next two years, Mr. Speaker? Those forecasters universally, Mr. Speaker, across Canada and North America, have looked at the Saskatchewan economy and they have said that the GDP [gross domestic product] growth in this province should be around point six one per cent — let's make sure we get that clear, Mr. Speaker — point six one per cent, less than 1 per cent growth over the course of the next year, Mr. Speaker.

So one would think that a prudent manager, taking a look at revenues generated by that economy, Mr. Speaker, should fall in line with the projections of those whose business it is to project. So, Mr. Speaker, when one is looking at this budget, one thinks that the revenue should be projected at around point six one per cent, less than 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker. But lo and behold, in order to ensure that not only is this budget balanced, Mr. Speaker, but that it produces a surplus, what do we see the assumptions based on, Mr. Speaker? That revenues will grow based on a GDP increase of 2.1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, 2.1 per cent.

To trust this government, to have confidence in this government, one must trust that the economists who sit on those benches opposite, Mr. Speaker, are able to project revenues by three times what the private sector is projecting, Mr. Speaker. This is a very, very troubling circumstance, Mr. Speaker, because this government has promised balanced budgets, it's promised surpluses, and it's promised to apply surpluses against the debt, Mr. Speaker.

But if, if, Mr. Speaker . . . And at this point in time we're all talking about ifs. This government has set up a circumstance, Mr. Speaker, in which they are gambling with the future of

Saskatchewan taxpayers' money. They are saying that if the economy gets to 2.1 per cent, Mr. Speaker — grows by 2.1 per cent — if it does that, then we have a balanced budget, we have a surplus, we'll pay down debt.

[14:45]

But if they are wrong, Mr. Speaker, and the private sector forecasters are correct, then at the end of the year we look back and we find out, Mr. Speaker, that the budget was not balanced, that there is no surplus, and that the debt has increased.

So this is all a question of, when the budget comes forward, Mr. Speaker, where is the trust? And frankly, Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to trust the private sector forecasters than I would trust the members opposite to manage this economy in these very volatile times.

Mr. Speaker, the other piece that is interesting when we look at our projections is that the government is saying to us that they are going to take approximately \$2 billion out of a \$10 billion budget from the potash sector. That indeed, for this budget — again, Mr. Speaker, to balance, to produce a surplus, and to help pay down debt, Mr. Speaker — that the potash sector has to produce almost one-fifth the revenues that are going to be received in the course of the next 12 months.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is based on the sale of potash and, by and large, the sale of potash last year was extraordinary. In fact this government had windfall revenues in the last year that were substantial, thanks to the sale of potash. But, Mr. Speaker, they are saying that those windfall profits from potash last year are not only going to be substantial, they're going to increase this year over what was taken in last year.

Interesting. When we look at potash last year at this time in the budget, Mr. Speaker, potash revenues were projected last year, by this government, as being less than \$400 million. Very conservative estimate, Mr. Speaker — 400 million. They actually brought in about \$1.5 billion now forecast to the end of the year. But, Mr. Speaker, in this budget, potash is expected to bring in more than 1.9 billion, close to \$2 billion in revenue, Mr. Speaker.

So when you consider budget projections year over year, last year's projection, Mr. Speaker, was less than 400,000. This year's projection is 1.9 billion, Mr. Speaker. What we do is . . . Are we trusting this government, Mr. Speaker, to have made the right decisions? Bottom line, bottom line, the gamble is, the gamble is at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, balanced budget, surplus revenues, and paying down debt. If the government is wrong on either of these two points, Mr. Speaker, this is not a balanced budget. There will be no surplus and the debt will increase. Simple matter, Mr. Speaker.

So when you are projecting, do you not want to project, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that you can meet your goals with some certainty? Or do you want to project to meet your goals with uncertainty? Bottom line, Mr. Speaker, this budget, this budget is based on too much uncertainty. The circumstances are completely out of whack, Mr. Speaker.

One last point before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, and I realize my



time is almost up. Members of the public should be fully aware when they look at the budget documents, the total amount of money received in taxes in this budget, Mr. Speaker — corporate income tax, fuel tax, individual income tax, provincial sales, tobacco, and others, Mr. Speaker — the total amount of money taken in or expected to take in in taxes, Mr. Speaker, is \$4.4 billion.

Remember this government is saying they're going to bring in 10.6 billion in revenues in taxes, less than half of that 4.4 billion. But on the other hand, spending, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have spending in education and health care at 6.1 billion.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know that this government needs to take in almost 60 per cent of its revenue from sources other than taxes in order to balance. But, Mr. Speaker, this budget needs to ensure that there is considerable amount of money taken in just to pay for education and health care commitments because the tax base of this province doesn't even cover education and health care costs.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is so important that Saskatchewan people trust and have confidence in their government to ensure that they are comfortable with the outcomes that are in this budget. So regardless of what you think, Mr. Speaker, about the programming that's being supported in this budget, if at the end of the day programs have to get cut, jobs have to be lost in order to provide a balance because the assumptions are wrong, Mr. Speaker, then this government is telling us they can no longer be trusted.

So I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by simply saying that I believe that this budget has failed the people of The Battlefords. It has failed the people of Saskatchewan. These are uncertain times — a lot of volatility in the system. We need certainty in our budgeting process. We need to trust our government, and you can't trust the gambling side of this budget, Mr. Speaker. You can't trust this government to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan will be well served.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is up. I thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words today.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to stand here today and join in this most important budget debate. I would like to acknowledge the privilege that I have to represent the constituents of Regina Wascana Plains in the Saskatchewan legislature. It's a great honour to serve them as their MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. I also wish to acknowledge my family for the support that they provide on a daily basis. The staff in my minister's office and constituency office, who work hard serving the citizens of the province, deserve acknowledgement also. Thanks to Marie, Alicia, Melissa, Bob, Margaret, and Darin for a job well done.

Mr. Speaker, the 2009-2010 budget *Saskatchewan: Strong and Steady* is a budget that steers a steady course through turbulent

economic times. We are not immune from the situations that surround us. Our government is full of optimism for this province and its future. We are exercising good judgment in government expenditures. We are being transparent, strategic, and thoughtful.

This budget is balanced and plans for the future of this province — and I emphasize plans for the future of this province, Mr. Speaker. In fact there is a forecasted surplus of 424 million, while keeping 1.14 billion in the Growth and Financial Security Fund.

Stable and predictable revenue sharing for municipalities based on the provincial sales tax was introduced as the municipal operating grant in this budget. This will address priorities set by the municipalities for projects that they deem to be important. The towns of White City, Emerald Park, Pilot Butte, city of Regina, and the RM [rural municipality] of Edenwold, and of course other towns and cities, rural municipalities, will now be able to move forward with projects from this revenue sharing and also from the economic booster shot announced in February '09 through the municipal economic enhancement program. Mr. Speaker, promise made and again promise kept.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Mr. Speaker, during the campaign in 2007, the promises that this government made in my constituency and across the province were so very important. It was very important for me as a person wanting to represent them in the legislature that the promises be right on, that the promises be truthful, and the promises be something that this government — now our government — could meet and ensure that we followed through and exceed the expectations of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Our campaign promises were about truth. Our campaign promises were about accountability. Our campaign promises were about confidence that we had, going into the election, in our government, our now government, to keep these promises and a strong belief in the people of this province to prosper.

This budget and what happened during the campaign was about ensuring and perpetuating what the people in my constituency believe, and that is we could be so much more than what we were. And, Mr. Speaker, we are showing today and in the recent past that we can be so much more than what we originally, in the past 16 years, what we were under the NDP.

The general thinking of constituents, Mr. Speaker, on government in my constituency is that they want government to facilitate and assist. Generally they don't want government to stand in the way. They are bursting with optimism, were bursting with optimism in 2007 during the election campaign. And, Mr. Speaker, in talking with constituents today and in weeks past, Mr. Speaker, they are absolutely ecstatic, if I can use that word, as to what this province is doing and where we are going.

The potential of this province is within this government. We believe in the potential of this province. But also the people that live in this province have long since believed in the potential. Businesses that I am aware of, that are in my constituency, have

been in Saskatchewan for a very, very long time. And I applaud those businesses, Mr. Speaker, and those citizens that stayed through the tough times in this province, in spite of the members opposite, and continued to persevere. And now, Mr. Speaker, they are finally, finally, Mr. Speaker, they are seeing the benefits and the rewards of sticking with this province. This province always had the potential. They're only just realizing it today, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — The commitment of this side, of this government, to excellence, Mr. Speaker, is the budget and our campaign promises. And the promises kept, Mr. Speaker, speak for themselves. The commitment to excellence on this side of the House is unprecedented, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — The people of Saskatchewan are seeking the guidance and the leadership that are provided by this government. They are seeking it through this government and, Mr. Speaker, we are delivering that vision and commitment for today and for the future.

This budget also delivers this government's commitment to achieve a fair balance of education funding to ensure that the education system is properly funded and to significantly reduce the education portion of property taxes.

I would like to recognize . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That is not true, member opposite. Recognize the work of my colleagues, the member of Rosetown-Elrose and the hon. member from Canora-Pelly, the Deputy Premier, for their tireless work on this important initiative. This change in structure will increase the province's share of education funding by 241 million. This government will now be funding about 63 per cent of the operating costs of pre-K to grade 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] system — truly an investment in the future. Again we're looking at the future of this province, Mr. Speaker. Once again — promise made, promise kept.

And last fall our Premier announced we would increase our investment in infrastructure to \$1.5 billion in 2009; \$500 million of this investment was unveiled last month in our economic booster shot — better schools for our children, better long-term care facilities for our seniors, better municipal infrastructure for our communities, safer highways for our drivers, more affordable housing for those with lower incomes, and more jobs to build each of these much-needed projects. The record tax cuts for Saskatchewan people, the record investment in our ready-for-growth initiative has helped to keep our economy strong and steady.

Our Premier and this government are committed to creating a better life for all people in Saskatchewan through tax reductions. Income tax rates for all citizens were reduced for 2008 and massive property tax reductions take effect in 2009.

**An Hon. Member:** — Get your refunds right here.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Step right up.

Let me compare taxes from 2007 under the NDP to taxes from 2009 under a Saskatchewan Party government. In 2007 a family with \$50,000 income paid \$3,382 in provincial taxes. In 2009 a family with \$50,000 income pays 1,327 in provincial taxes — a savings of \$2,055, Mr. Speaker, or 61 per cent — under a government committed to Saskatchewan and to Saskatchewan families.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, these savings do not include the recently announced education property tax program which put back more money into the bank accounts of Saskatchewan families. To quote Premier Wall: "Overall, we are putting over 700 million into the hands of Saskatchewan people this year."

These significant tax reductions are an important part of our plan to keep Saskatchewan's economy strong and steady and make life more affordable for all Saskatchewan people.

Last year we announced \$1 billion in our ready-for-growth plan to rebuild schools, improve hospitals and health facilities, upgrade roads and highways. Last month we announced a \$500 million economic booster shot to get dollars flowing to our municipalities, our communities, and to our people. We put these much-needed infrastructure dollars directly into the hands that need it.

With this budget, our government dedicated another \$1 billion to keep building on what we've already begun, to keep this province moving forward strong and steady. Part of this new infrastructure program will fund the SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Wascana Parkway campus for \$2 million in facility upgrades.

This \$1 billion will fix more schools and health care facilities in our province. It will expand child care centres in Saskatchewan and improve our post-secondary system. It will fix more highways, including a much-needed interchange at Lewvan and Highway No. 1.

Mr. Speaker, this \$1 billion investment will create more affordable housing and a better life for all Saskatchewan people. Our government is building on our promise for a better life for all Saskatchewan children. We're creating 1,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan for children of parents who work outside the home. And over \$12 million in added funding will go towards space expansion, training programs, and increased pay for early learning and child care workers.

We're delivering on our promise to provide \$18 million for the active families benefit. Families will receive a tax benefit of \$150 for every child registered and paying fees for sport, culture, and recreational activities.

Our government will launch a multi-year, \$25 million strategy to address complex inequities within the child welfare system. And, Mr. Speaker, we'll deliver on our promise for a new children's hospital in Saskatoon. Two hundred million dollars over two years will be provided for construction of this facility dedicated to the health and well-being of Saskatchewan's youngest citizens.

Mr. Speaker, some members opposite may say that this budget contains runaway spending. I wonder if those members will be voting against an initiative such as the children's hospital; perhaps this project is not on their priority list. Well I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, it is on the priority list. Children in this province are a priority of this government.

The Saskatchewan Party government elected 16 months ago committed to improving our quality of life. A new ministry was created and given the privilege of bringing substance and action to quality of life. Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight some of the important areas in my area of responsibility — the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

In this budget, the provincial government has committed to substantial increase in the provincial regional parks allocation. Mr. Speaker, last year we increased the funding from \$75,000 per year to \$600,000 per year. I am proud to point out that this government once again increased funding to regional parks to 1,015,000 in the 2009 and 2010 budget. Mr. Speaker, this is more than a tenfold increase in two years.

Regional parks are enjoyed by thousands of Saskatchewan residents and thousands of tourists from outside our great province. Regional parks are a perfect complement to our provincial parks system, and this government believes in keeping them strong and vibrant. And we are putting our money, Mr. Speaker, where our mouth is, in support of the many volunteers who manage and maintain our regional parks.

And speaking of parks, Mr. Speaker, I wish to confirm that our government is committed to creating world-class provincial parks in our majestic Saskatchewan. Our provincial parks are the hidden gems of this province, but they will not be hidden for long. I am proud to draw attention to an additional capital allocation of over \$2 million to the parks, provincial parks, in 2009-2010. This brings provincial park capital spending to nearly \$11 million.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to highlight a few other numbers in reference to provincial parks. We have committed to upgrading, constructing, and electrifying 442 campsites in one year, in stark comparison to 290 sites upgraded in the last four years of a backward-looking NDP, always planning for decline and hoping that the next downturn was just around the corner.

Well the Saskatchewan Party government is planning for growth and a bright future. With over 3.1 million visits to provincial parks last year, we are preparing for the best days to come for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that is commitment to tourism, to quality of life, to fix and replace aging and broken infrastructure, and to build pride in our parks and in our province.

Other initiatives that this government and my ministry have introduced, such as the active family benefit, will assist thousands of Saskatchewan families with the cost of culture, recreation, and sports activity programming. The arts, culture, and heritage sector development plan will improve economic growth, increase quality of life, and build pride in Saskatchewan. Nine hundred and thirty-two thousand dollar increase will be made in culture and heritage funding in 2009-2010.

Full participation by this province as a contributing partner in the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will create an opportunity to showcase Saskatchewan's high quality of life, rich heritage, and diverse culture to the world. My ministry will provide support for a Saskatchewan pavilion at the games to profile the province's business and tourism opportunities to Canada and to the world.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, this government and this province are in an enviable position. A budget surplus, a sustainable plan for the future, a province full of optimism, a positive business climate, an agenda for growth, and a beautiful place to call home are all those things that make Saskatchewan the place to be in 2009 and into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will be supporting the strong and steady budget of this government in 2009-2010. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. LeClerc:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to rise and speak today about the 2009-2010 budget of the government.

It also gives me pleasure to be able to correct some of the pernicious bloviating by the pretend opposition over there and pretend socialist party in the things that they have, quite frankly, in a disingenuous attempt to dissuade the people of this province of our budget, to try to play games with words and to dissuade with false allegations or illusions of exactly what our budget is. We know that the Finance critic has already, through the editorials and letters and emails from the potash industry, corrected him on what he has stood up and talked about in our budget.

And that was the Finance minister on the previous government who couldn't get it right on the reality of potash revenue, on the reality of our government and budgets in projecting in the future. But I'd like to take special challenge to the ingenuous statements made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition as she talked about this issue of the tax reduction and property tax, that somehow Saskatoon being shortchanged over Regina. And it goes to speak, I think, to the lack of information and in-depth understanding of finances and how budgets work. She made statements in Saskatoon and on the newspapers to talk about the difference of 100 to \$300; that somehow Regina was getting a \$300 tax break, and we were shortchanging Saskatoon.

Well I'd like to correct her, as much as the Finance critic has been corrected, in the reality of something called tax assessment and values of property. In Saskatoon for instance, there's been a 46 per cent increase in taxable assessment. And when you apply what is in our budget in terms of education tax relief against property, we have a \$682 savings, or 20 per cent, over a real estate market that has boomed and almost doubled in the last few years.

And yet in Regina, the Regina residential property has also boomed. It's only gone up though 32 per cent as opposed to 46

per cent. And in that tax relief that is provided in our budget, it's a 26 per cent tax relief or \$862 difference in savings. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a \$682 savings in Saskatoon, \$862 savings in Regina. Not that much different, but a lot different when you begin to look at the reality and the structure of the real estate market and the assessment value it has gone up.

I'd like to also bring to attention what our government has done under the '09 and '10 budget — \$200 million investment in a new children's hospital in Saskatoon.

You know, as a motivational speaker who travelled across this country — in fact across North America — speaking, one of the greatest embarrassments that I had as an MLA was to go to other provinces to find out that they had a children's hospital and we didn't. Prince Edward Island had the use of three within a 15-minute radius. And under this pretend socialist government, we were the only province in Canada that didn't have a place where our children could go for cutting-edge treatment and operations.

They took 23 . . . and they were going to do it. They were always going to do things. They're always going to put money into the North. They're always going to put money into the First Nations and Métis. They're always going to do it. But they just never got around to it. They always made the excuse that we didn't have the money.

Well they had the money to grow the government by 30 per cent, to the highest level of government bureaucracy in Canada. They had the money to go in and invest in SPUDCO. They had the money. But they didn't have the money to invest in the children.

We put \$23.3 million into accelerating the twinning of Highway 11 so that the people of the North could come down to Saskatoon through Prince Albert, and we dedicated that money for that. We put 15.7 million into the international vaccine centre at the University of Saskatchewan, which consists of 9.8 million in new funding and 5.9 million previously committed through the Innovation and Science Fund. We put 5 million, into the first year of 27 million overall, for the renovation and expansion of Saskatoon Queen's Bench court house; 3.2 million in the operational fund for SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]. So we're beginning to look at advanced education for our First Nation and Métis people.

The federal and provincial governments provided 86 million to build a new \$243 million bridge completing Circle Drive in Saskatoon. That was asked for year after year after year after year for the previous government, and Saskatoon was always ignored and told that they never had the money. We put 98 million in this budget, an investment in Saskatoon's Circle Drive South project; another 15 million for 400 new on-campus residential spaces at the University of Saskatchewan.

Under that previous government, Saskatchewan had the lowest ratio of university residence per university than any other province in this country under that government. And we have begun to build the infrastructure first with this 15 million, in partnership, to create 4,400 new on-campus residence.

[15:15]

Saskatoon will receive funding for a new power generation plant at the Queen Elizabeth power station in Saskatoon, and overall the Queen Elizabeth power station unit 2 from SaskPower's 950 million investment in the provincial electrical system. Under a Crown corporation that was neglected year after year after year by that previous government — where hydro poles, electrical poles were falling all over in the province, where you couldn't get up to date an electrical grid with power outage under that previous government — we are doing the investment in an infrastructure that was allowed to virtually collapse under that previous government.

A correctional system that was 150 — 150 — per cent over capacity, that had men sleeping in hallways and in classrooms and in gymnasiums, and the reality of a correctional system that in 16 years didn't have one bed added to it. And in fact what they would choose to do, and the previous Health minister when he was . . . before he was the Leader of the Opposition and before he was the premier, closed down White Spruce to free up more beds and kick kids out of long-term treatment that they needed — all of them First Nations children from the North.

We invested 22 million in Saskatoon through the per capita based municipal economic enhancement program that put \$100 million into this province to allow the municipalities to understand that they best know where their dollars go — not a top-level government like under the NDP, but in fact to partner with municipalities and say, here is your money. You know best where it goes. And we put 100 million out to the municipalities in that partnership, 22 million going to Saskatoon. We did it; they didn't do it.

Sixteen million in the construction of the new St. Mary Community School, daycare, wellness centre, housing in Saskatoon Pleasant Hill's neighbourhood. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at one time when the past premier of this province, the Leader of the Opposition, made this big announcement in the media. And he was on the front page of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, that he was in St. Mary's school and it needed to be replaced, and the furnace was falling apart and it was cold. And it was number one on the list of school replacements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was shocked when we got into government and I was to find that they transferred money out of that St. Mary's project and they bumped it to eight years down the list in the most neediest inner-city school in the province. We turned around and said, that is not appropriate for our children, for the inner city, and we put 16.3 million into that construction, for the wellness centre, the day care, and the school in the most neediest of Saskatoon's area.

To date we've committed 45 million to Saskatoon in projects from Saskatchewan Housing, supporting the development of nearly 400 social and affordable housing units. The pretend socialist government, they kept saying, we care about the people, we care about affording living, we care about the folk in the province. But they never put these housing units into place. They allowed the reality of no rental properties and no assisted living properties in there.

We just submitted the 345 million to be able to do so. That is our record. We know what their record is.

Another 30 million to twin 35 kilometres of Highway 11 between Saskatoon and Prince Albert; 20 million for the centre of mental health in Saskatoon, the Irene and Leslie Dubé, funding for the construction of that. We did it. They didn't do it.

Upgrades to Saskatoon's Nutana Collegiate, improvements totalling \$8.5 million. Now I was shocked when I saw this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it's actually in Nutana, and that is the riding for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. They never did it. We turned around and we did it for one of the best high schools in Saskatchewan. I guess they were going to get around to it. But, you know, the fact is they were just going to get. They were just going to get. Well we're doing it, and we're doing it in Saskatoon.

And not to neglect the rest of the high schools — 3.7 million for the E.D. Feehan Catholic High School renovations and upgrades, 100 million in funding for the University of Saskatchewan academic health science project, 4.7 million for safety equipment and training in improvements to hospital surgical equipment for Saskatoon health regions.

Now I can listen to the other side, all three of them over there beaking. I guess they don't like what I'm saying, but the reality of it is, is that these are the figures. This is the reality of it.

The province today announced 3 million commitment to the city of Saskatoon for seating expansion and capital improvements to Credit Union Centre. We're getting it done — 500,000 for the Saskatoon downtown youth centre, Egadz, from the Ministry of Social Services to purchase two more houses that follow in the my housing. Egadz, one of the best recognized inner-city programs in our province that deals with child prostitution, the highest level of child prostitution in Canada under that previous government with the youngest age being nine, with the highest gang recruitment. We're getting it done by partnering with Egadz to create more housing.

The Saskatoon regional health . . . [inaudible] . . . management, 43,000 for recycling projects under our green initiative. The installation of sound barriers in Saskatoon roads and freeways to cut down noise, another 1.5 million; the opening of Columbia Manor affordable housing for low-income seniors in Saskatoon, and with the feds and the municipal funding, that total 3.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, and that's just in Saskatoon. I mean that's not even covering the rest of the province. An area that they ignored, not only the rural area of our province — which we know — but also the urban area, that they played the games at, that somehow they were a socialist party who pretended with the rhetoric that they were going to take care of the most neediest and leave nobody behind. Well they left everybody behind.

And then just to prove that, just in third party endorsements, let's talk about SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. "This (the Municipal Operating Grant) increase, along with the school tax relief, makes this the best budget for rural Saskatchewan in history."

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. LeClerc:** — Now I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, when I read this in the *StarPhoenix* by Murray Mandryk . . . Now Murray Mandryk, you know, has not been at all times a Sask Party supporter, or in favour of . . . He's supposed to be in the middle, but most times he shows himself leaning to the left somewhat. And he has taken issue with us many times, which I thought was unfair.

But, Mr. Speaker, I've got to tell you, in this statement Murray Mandryk said, "Mission near-impossible: NDP's budget criticism." I mean the only way they can criticize is to blivate, to be pernicious, to be ingenuous, to bend the facts in a almost mission-impossible statement. And this is what Murray Mandryk went on to say, ". . . the Sask Party government has now addressed so many long-standing concerns that one really wonders if the NDP has anything legitimately left to criticize."

Now I happen to agree — one of the few times — with Mr. Mandryk because I have trouble understanding why the make-believe games that the opposition is playing, especially with this amendment that they want to put forward.

. . . accountant at Meyers Norris Penny:

Generally speaking I like it. I am going to give it an overall rating of 9 out of 10.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. LeClerc:** — There's something for everyone, and I believe that it's a fiscally responsible budget.

Finally we are seeing some real progress here in the K to 12 funding assessment.

And, Mr. Speaker, I need to once again point out, fiscally responsible budget, cautious, under a Finance minister that spent an enormous amount of time being very reserved and cautious as he went forward with this budget, as opposed to what the critic said — who the newspapers proved wrong the next day, that he didn't know what he was talking about — in the potash mine, and that we somehow were going to go into deficit and . . . This is a balanced budget.

Allan Earle from SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] said:

So the predictability of it (revenue sharing) is just unbelievably good news. Administrators all across the province have got to be jumping up and down.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. LeClerc:** — You know, I have to say that this is third party endorsement. This isn't us that's saying it; these are people across the province. The CEO [chief executive officer] of the Children's Hospital & Health Foundation in Saskatchewan, Brynn Boback-Lane:

Really today is about and dedicated to the children that have been challenged and lost and the children that are

challenged and winning their fight with illness and injury. This day is for them.

In that placement of \$200 million for a Saskatoon children's hospital that they never got around doing . . . They just never got around, not even building a ward, not building a wing. They just ignored it and they would say, go take your children to Alberta if they want good hospital care.

Mayor Don Atchison, a man I know well: ". . . this has been a huge step, truly monumental in the sense of provincial government acknowledging what cities have been asking for and so this has been very, very good news for us."

Mayor Don Atchison again:

Well there's affordable housing that's in there as well. There's police officers that are in there. There's a lot of good things in here for the city of Saskatoon and I'm sure for a lot of other municipalities as well.

. . . this has been a huge step, truly monumental in the sense of provincial government acknowledging what cities have been asking for . . .

You know that proves, when you put that against the Deputy Opposition Leader, it puts it against what she has been saying completely erroneously. She has been shown to be disingenuous in not only not knowing the reality of the finances of the education tax reduction and what it means for the people of Saskatoon, but also going against the people of Saskatoon and people like the mayor. Not only against people in Saskatoon, but Mayor Pat Fiacco of Regina, a very good man. I think I could have been a better boxer than him, I think, except I'm a little older than him.

**A Member:** — A little?

**Mr. LeClerc:** — Well I'm a lot older than him and in a different weight category as well. This is what Pat said:

This is a very good day for the city of Regina.

The vision for Regina is to be Canada's most vibrant, inclusive, attractive, sustainable community, where people live in harmony and thrive in opportunity. Today's budget helps to move our community in that direction.

And so when I listen to the opposition members from Regina bloviate and just stand there — and if you don't know what the word means get into the dictionary. I can't apologize for your lack of education around the use of literature. But the reality, when you begin to sit there and criticize, you got the mayor of Regina saying the opposite what you're doing. I can't dumb it down for you. I'm sorry.

Allan Earle of SUMA, in a news release:

"This budget confirms the Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to share the responsibility for making all of our villages, towns and cities better places to live" . . .

. . . "With these tax cuts, our cities, towns and villages

become more attractive to new businesses and families."

. . . "Over the past year, the provincial government has listened to the concerns and ideas of municipalities. Today they have delivered a budget that goes a long way to address those major concerns."

. . . "We enjoy a harmonious relationship with this government, and we are seeing top municipal priorities being addressed. Today's budget is another strong signal that the province and municipalities — together — are working to build a strong future for Saskatchewan."

We think we have come very close to putting two items to bed with today's budget. That being the reduction of education tax and the second one being revenue sharing or as this government would like to call it, the municipal operating grant. We're very excited.

And that is shown with the in-migration back within our province during the time that we have formed government, and the out-migration of 35,000 young people under the same time span of that government in the 16 years, in the 16 months that we have taken. Sixteen years — sixteen months. They had out-migration. We have in-migration. We had weak economy under them. We have strong economy under ours.

Of SARM, "This (Municipal Operating Grant) increase, along with the school tax relief, makes this the best budget [best] for rural Saskatchewan in history." They are:

. . . pleased and excited about today's budget, we are pleased with the increase in municipal support grants and the additional help on the school tax issue.

We are excited about the opportunities for growth this investment in the province will trigger.

With this budget, Saskatchewan is truly open for business.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[15:30]

**Mr. LeClerc:** — You know, you sit there and you listen to the opposition, the doom and the gloom and this can't possibly last and we're going to go in a deficit and the potash industry is going to fall apart and the oil industry is going to fall apart. I mean they just, they go on and on. They can't wait for it to go bad for the people, the folk, because they're looking for it, for doom and gloom, as a political opportunity for their party regardless of the expense to the folk of this province.

We are positive about our province. The people of Canada have seen us being positive. We have produced the only balanced budget without a deficit in all of Canada. And I mean they speak in doom and gloom; we speak about the reality of the opportunities that is reinforced by every major grouping of people in this province.

Les Cannam, accountant at Meyers Norris Penny: "Generally speaking I like it." It gives an overall rating of 9 out of 10. A responsible budget, 9 out of 10.

Saskatchewan construction industry, Michael Fougere said, “There’s a lot more in this budget that signifies more competition for the province . . . We are very pleased that the budget is going in the right direction.”

Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, Ed Bothner:

“We are pleased to see that agriculture is back on the provincial government’s radar” [after being ignored] . . . “It’s been decades since our industry has received this level of attention and support from the provincial government.”

“We applaud Premier Wall, Agriculture Minister Bjornerud, Education Minister Ken Krawetz and their government for recognizing that agriculture continues to be a backbone industry for the province that offers credible potential over the long-term” . . .

What a difference. What a difference in 16 months. In the industry and the segment of our society, of our province, that grew this province way back from the early 1900s when people came here to farm and to work the land, that of 16 years being ignored under that government, they finally have a government that is treating them with respect and equality in how we begin to address their concerns and needs and issues.

Again, Murray Mandryk: “. . . the Sask. Party government has now addressed so many long-standing concerns that one . . . wonders if the NDP has anything legitimately left to criticize.”

And I tell you they don’t. They have nothing. It’s bloviating. It’s a matter of trying to twist things. Bloviating. Fear and smear. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I am not a wolf in sheep’s clothing. I am exactly who I am. I say the truth as I see it, and the fear and the smear that that other side did, not only before the election but now in their referral to this budget.

You know, the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business], Marilyn Braun-Pollon, said this: “. . . too . . . [far] we’ve been tinkering around the edges when dealing with . . . [our] high education taxes.” The highest in Canada, by the way, Mr. Speaker, under that government. The highest in Canada.

We’ve done studies. We’ve done rebates. We believe this is a step in the right direction. Reducing property taxes were our members’ number one priority, and gone are the days of a patchwork of education mill rates all over the province — gone. That happened 16 months ago when this government was elected. They’re gone. And now they want to stand up there and go back to the past — that is absolutely meaningless — of dark and gloom.

Reducing our property taxes is one of the things I think we scored a pretty . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, I think you get the general drift of my thoughts and feeling and feedback and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . More?

You know, I got to tell you, you know I ran as an MLA as a social advocate in this province because I saw the mess that the previous government was doing, to the highest level of bureaucracy, you know, per capita in all of Canada — that they had enough finances to grow government by 30 per cent during

the 16 years that they were in play.

You know, they had the highest level of government bureaucracy, but they had the least amount of services. The highest addiction rate of our youth, the least amount of resources. The highest level of youth gang recruitment, no programs. The highest level of government involvement, but no solutions.

Under this budget we have produced solutions. We have addressed those most in need of a compassionate government, a government who will bring a balanced budget forward, and begin to address the issues and the ills left behind by a government way out of step of a mandate that they went into government first.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to stand and support this budget. It is the best balanced budget in all of Canada. And to speak against the idiotic motion brought forward — I apologize for calling it idiotic — misguided motion put forward by the opposition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I would like to remind members, when you’re speaking, to choose your words carefully. I found the last comment from the current speaker just to not really be a comment that would be acceptable in this Assembly, and I’d ask the member to withdraw that comment.

**Mr. LeClerc:** — I already withdrew it and apologized before I sat down, Mr. Speaker. That’s why I called it misguided.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to enter into the debate concerning the budget delivered by the Sask Party government on the 18th of this month, that places Saskatchewan’s prosperity at risk while concurrently leaving struggling working families to largely fend for themselves in what is rapidly becoming an economy that does not share the rewards and opportunities of economic progress with its citizens.

As my other New Democrat colleagues rightly discern, the budget delivered by the Sask Party government is premised on shaky economic and revenue assumptions combined with a short-sighted political spending that places Saskatchewan in a potentially precarious future position. It is that same old conservative-style accounting, Mr. Speaker, where the perceived political payoff never matches the risk to Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan taxpayers.

The Sask Party like to call this a balanced budget. Yet the only way they could balance the budget was to draw on the rainy day fund, down to \$1.2 million from the \$2 million rock that the Premier only announced last year, that he wanted to ensure that this province had in the event of an economic uncertainty. That fund is now at \$1.2 billion versus the \$2 billion rock that the Premier promised the taxpayers of this province that it would have to rely on. That’s how they balanced this budget, Mr. Speaker. So how they call it a balanced budget is again part of

that creative accounting process that the conservatives like to do so much.

Contrary to the public relations campaign of the Sask Party government, their second budget only confirms the worst aspects of the first — working people left to fend for themselves and a blatant ignorance to the problem of climate change. The second budget delivered by the Sask Party government is nothing but short-sighted conservative accounting that gambles on economic forecasts, that provides limited short-term relief to government-imposed inflation and hardship, and that repeats the same old conservative-style thinking that the environment should be treated as an annual expense rather than an asset on which to build tomorrow's prosperity.

One only has to look at what is being announced in the US [United States] by President Barack Obama and at the recent European Union gathering to see that the focus is on infrastructure spending that benefits the environment through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and advances in new technology.

When one looks for instance at President Barack Obama's campaign platform, one can see that, under the heading investing in the new energy economy, it says that President Barack Obama will invest \$150 billion over 10 years that will create 5 million new green jobs, including highly skilled manufacturing jobs, to produce the first wave of green technology.

He will also require that 10 per cent of electricity come from renewable resources by 2012, and 25 per cent by 2025. He believes that the amount of electricity consumed in the US should be derived from clean, sustainable energy sources like solar, wind, and geothermal.

Obama also goes on to say that he would extend the production tax credit to spur renewable energy for five years to encourage the production of renewable energy. There is many, many more initiatives in his campaign platform, but unfortunately there's limited time so I'll only mention those few.

The second Sask Party budget delivered on March 18 offers the same as the first — an ideological refusal to meaningfully address climate change. Mr. Speaker, climate change is happening. The Prairie region is experiencing warming that exceeds the global average. Saskatchewan is already experiencing lower summer stream flows, falling lake levels, and declining soil moisture. Our climate is becoming warmer and drier, and destabilization will undoubtedly result in more floods, more severe storms, more extreme drought. Yet the Sask Party government already has a record of ideological dithering on climate change, leaving Saskatchewan in a difficult place.

When one looks at the Speech from the Throne delivered last October 22 in 2008, the Throne Speech refers to "Saskatchewan residents also have an opportunity to do their part — and save money — by accessing a comprehensive list of energy conservation programs." It's interesting that this is part of the Throne Speech so shortly after they got the Office of Energy Conservation.

The Throne Speech also points out:

Fresh, clean water is essential for a high quality of life in our province.

People all across Saskatchewan need to know they will have access to safe and reliable water, now and in the future."

And again, the Sask Party government has failed to follow its own Throne Speech in terms of what it's delivering to the public of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP put into place a \$320 million fund to deal with issues around climate change. It was called the Green Futures Fund. And what did the Sask Party do with that fund when it was elected, Mr. Speaker? Not only did they not have a plan on how to address the issues around climate change, not only did they not have a plan as to how they were going to meet their greenhouse reduction targets despite the fact that they adopted them into their campaign platform from the NDP — which put those targets in place in the spring of 2007 — not only did they not have any way of reaching those targets, but they eliminated all possibilities of doing so by removing the funding that is necessary to introduce the technologies and initiatives necessary to achieve those targets. They ended up gutting that \$320 million fund that was put in place by the NDP to a mere \$40 million — \$40 million.

That is completely contrary to what we're seeing for instance — where? — oh in Alberta, which is where the Sask Party goes to for its advice on a regular basis. The Alberta government put into place a fund that was \$360 million. Doesn't sound too far off from what the NDP did here in Saskatchewan at \$320 million in terms of adjusting the issue of climate change — \$40 million versus \$320 million. No plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve the targets that they put in their campaign platform versus the plan that we were going forward with to achieve those targets, or else we wouldn't have announced them, Mr. Speaker.

They also gutted the Office of Energy Conservation, despite the fact in their Throne Speech they talk about the issue of Saskatchewan people needing to access the issues of conservation.

The Minister of Environment is chirping from her seat right now saying, hey Sandra, it's the same old, same old. And you're right, Mr. Speaker, it is the same old, same old. Because until the Sask Party government actually does something — anything — at addressing the issues of climate change, I'm going to be preaching the same old, same old. Because they need to hear that we had a plan. We had issues in place. We put our money where our mouth is. And they have done nothing.

I will take that back. They've introduced a low-flush toilet program. And if that's their way to address the issues around climate change in this province, then they have a long, long way to go.

They also completely annihilated the office of the Climate Change Secretariat. The Climate Change Secretariat was put in place by our government to address the issues of climate



change. It was going to be a stand-alone office to deal specifically with issues of climate change all throughout the entire government — all government programs and offices and ministries. What did they do? They gutted it. Why? Not because they have a superior plan. Simply because they didn't like the fact that it was our idea. They didn't like the fact that the NDP came up with that idea.

So if you're going to gut that because you don't like the fact that it's an NDP idea, what are you going to do? Well typically they rebrand. They take what is, for instance, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and they call it the growth and security fund. They could have taken the Climate Change Secretariat and rebranded it so it would sound like it was their idea. Who knows? That might still be coming, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

But nonetheless, in the meantime, we have nothing. Absolutely zilch. We have nothing. The only issue that they haven't dithered on so far is the issue around expansion of nuclear development in this province. They have not done anything around having any type of public consultation process on this. They're proceeding with this the same way they do with any other legislation that they want to get in place, which is simply, we're going to give you what we want to do and you are simply going to have to live with it. Too bad, so sad.

They talk about public consultations afterwards, but by that point we know it doesn't change a thing. We've already seen that with the various legislations they've introduced in the province that are highly problematic. The public has expressed them as being highly problematic and they've done nothing, nothing to make amendments to them. They haven't taken suggestions for amendments. They haven't listened to any type of public input whatsoever, and that's exactly where they're headed with the issue around nuclear development.

When one looks, for instance, at the Uranium Development Partnership, the Uranium Development Partnership has been given \$3 million over I think it's a six-month period of time to talk about and to let the government know about how nuclear expansion should happen in this province. Not whether it should happen, but how it should happen.

They refuse to disclose the work plan that's been assigned to the Uranium Development Partnership. And interestingly enough, the person that they tout as being the environment-conscious person on this Uranium Development Partnership is none other than Patrick Moore whom they like to claim is someone who has an environmental background. Well let me tell you what the person who is Patrick Moore, with what they claim is an environmental background, let's look what he has to say in *Rolling Stone* magazine from November 13, 2008. So this is very recent, Mr. Speaker. November 13, 2008, Patrick Moore says, what do we do . . . The question by the interviewer is: "And what do we do about storing all the nuclear waste?" And what does Patrick Moore say? It's a very interesting answer and I'm sure all the residents of Saskatchewan would love to hear this one: "People who don't want to live near nuclear facilities should probably move."

That's his answer, Mr. Speaker. Can you believe it? If you

don't like the issue of nuclear waste or a nuclear facility anywhere near you, then you have to move. It's that simple. So he's essentially saying to Saskatchewan people, too bad, so sad. If you don't like the agenda that the Sask Party government is going to put forward, you're going to have to move, which is interesting because they like to brag about the fact that they're getting people to move here. And in fact what's going to happen is they're now telling people you have to move. If you don't believe in our ideology, if you don't like what we're doing, then you should move. That's what the Sask Party is telling people through this panel that they have set up to deal with the issue of nuclear power.

Saskatchewan people want meaningful dialogue on the issue, Mr. Speaker. They want meaningful dialogue. There are people on all spectrums of this issue. There are people that are very much in favour of it. There are people that are very much opposed to it. There are people that don't know, that need more information. But what Saskatchewan people want is dialogue.

And we're seeing examples of that all over the province now, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing public groups get together and hold their own public meetings to have this meaningful dialogue since the Sask Party government won't allow the public of Saskatchewan to enter into meaningful dialogue on this subject.

In Paradise Hill it was only a week and a half ago that a community with a population of 500 had 450 people attend an open dialogue on the issue of nuclear development in the province of Saskatchewan. Unfortunately a couple of the invitees didn't attend. The Sask Party government didn't send anybody to attend this meeting and speak on their behalf. The nuclear power company that is talking to Saskatchewan people about wanting to set up a reactor here, Bruce Power, also unfortunately didn't attend. But 450 people out of a community of 500 attended, Mr. Speaker.

And just last week, EnerCan West was held here in Regina. It was a multi-day conference to discuss various issues with respect to sustainable energy, the primary focus of course being the issue on nuclear power development. And again we see here, whether it's community leaders or community activists or whether it's environmental activists putting together a public discussion about the issue or whether it's business leaders and environmental engineers, etc., putting together a discussion forum about the issue, people are hungry for discussion on this topic.

Why this government is so afraid of discussion is well beyond me, Mr. Speaker. Well unless of course, unless of course, unless of course there is something nefarious going on, Mr. Speaker. Because why won't they allow the public to engage in discussion before the decision-making processes have already been undertaken?

The second Sask Party government budget merely confirms the ideological rejection of climate change built into the first budget, offering pennies to a problem that requires adaptation and remediation now. The budget advertises \$17.5 million towards green initiatives. According to page 15 of the budget, 2.2 million in ongoing funding to energy projects related to carbon enhanced oil recovery that does little to address overall carbon emissions. And 15.3 million to be administered by the

Ministry of Environment to support carbon capture and storage, a technology the Sask Party claims to be cost-effective which is a claim that is simply dubious given the findings of organizations such as the David Suzuki Foundation who in their report, entitled *Provincial Power Play* released in July 2008, on page 25, state the following:

... [carbon capture storage] for coal-fired power plants is likely the most expensive option for reducing emissions from the electricity sector, surpassing even the incredibly high cost of nuclear power. The only way to make these projects viable is to inject [huge] massive subsidies from government, including a public utility such as SaskPower, as this project does.

Energy efficiency and conservations. They talk about energy efficiency and conservations despite the fact that they gutted the Office of Energy Conservation. It's like doublespeak. One side doesn't ... I mean one side of their brain is not functioning with the other side of their brain when they do these things.

And also wants water conservation initiatives. So the whole issue for us in terms of dealing with our water issues in Saskatchewan is simply conserve water. Well I've got news for the Sask Party government. There's other issues to deal with in Saskatchewan with respect to water issues besides just conserving it.

Alongside this pathetic announcement in addressing climate change, the budget document on page 15 confidently states that:

A number of [other] ministries are doing their part to change their approaches and influence their partners to be more environmentally responsible.

And among the list, Mr. Speaker, is the laughable, disingenuous claim that:

Government Services is providing leadership to ministries in environmental stewardship practices and is undertaking several measures to reduce the environmental impact of governmental operations and its vehicle fleet.

I'm glad, Mr. Speaker, that New Democrats reminded the Minister of Government Services and his cabinet colleagues of their own election promise when the Premier and at least six of his cabinet ministers were driving SUVs [sport-utility vehicle] that were not on the SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] list of fuel-efficient, eligible vehicles as late as November of last year. Government-paid-for, taxpayer-paid-for vehicles — vehicles that they promised the Saskatchewan taxpayers would fall into their campaign guidelines, would fall into their guidelines as energy-efficient vehicles, and then they did something different. Why? Because apparently they need a four-wheel drive, or whatever the excuse was, for Saskatchewan roads.

Well what about all the other people in Saskatchewan that don't have the luxury of those vehicles? Are they simply not supposed to drive, Mr. Speaker? I suggest that is not the case. This is simply the case of a government not wanting to follow its own policies. This is a government of entitlement. This is a government that thinks it can set the rules for everybody else

and then they get to do whatever it is they want.

Just as with their token adoption of our province's greenhouse gas targets, the Sask Party fails to take their promises on the environment seriously. They promised in their 2000 election platform to "... ensure that all new vehicles purchased by the provincial government are hybrid or high fuel efficiency vehicles." Despite their promise, Premier Wall and his cabinet ministers decided to drive SUVs that are not considered by SGI as fuel efficient.

Hypocrisy on the environment, Mr. Speaker, cannot be covered up with glossy print. Whether it's gas-guzzling SUVs or having no plan or dedicated resources to achieve our province's climate change targets, the Sask Party continues to harbour an ideological rejection of climate change. There's just no other answer for it, Mr. Speaker. It must be that. Because so far, like I said, we haven't heard anything from them in terms of any meaningful changes that they're going to make in this province. We haven't heard anything in terms of their sound reasoning for what they've done to gut the climate change fund of \$320 million down to 40 million. They haven't given us any logical explanation as to why they cut the Office of Energy Conservation or why they gutted the climate change secretariat. So it must be ideological rejection of climate change.

And we have plenty of quotes from members opposite in the past that would clearly substantiate that that's where they were at. I was hoping that they would have come further from there since then with all the scientific data and research that is available, which I'm sure they could have some researchers dig up for them if they needed to access that. But clearly they have not changed their position because there's just no other logical explanation for their decision making.

Saskatchewan people need more than a self-indulgent, strident professions of fiscal certainty against a rising tide of global economic recession by a government who promises their accounting on shaky economic and revenue assumptions.

Saskatchewan people need a government that can put aside its insistence on narrow, economic orthodoxy that leaves people behind; a government that puts aside its blind ignorance to the problem of climate change. Rather Saskatchewan people and government ... Government has the responsibility to ensure the rewards and opportunities of our success are more fairly shared with the people of this province. And government must ensure that our future remains promising and bright with meaningful action, not ideological dithering and mishandling on issues such as climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support the amendment moved by the member for Coronation Park, and I will now take my place and allow others to enter into the debate.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's so much to respond to after that last speech that I think it would take all my 20 minutes, but I just find it very hypocritical that a person would start commenting on

vehicles that are driven on that side when you look at some of the vehicles driven on the opposition side. And how can she stand in her place and say that it's, you know, we are so self-righteous and we are so green, when they drive some of the vehicles that they do. I mean it's always the case, when you live in a glass house you shouldn't be throwing the stone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's exactly what started on that side.

But I would like to start my comments not necessarily responding to what they had said, but thanking a number of people that I want to thank that have made my last year as Minister of Health much easier. I'm going to start, this past year, this past year as the Minister of Health, that — and maybe many more, we're not sure — have made it so much more enjoyable and quite a bit easier. First of all, my constituency assistant, Nicole Entner-McCullough who runs the office in Balgonie that deals with a number of phone calls that come in and deals with the day-to-day business that happens in the constituency office, does an absolutely wonderful job; has been the constituency assistant for the last year and a half, since the '07 election, and as I said, does a very, very good job. If there's one area in my life that . . . lots of areas in my life that I don't have to worry about, but that is definitely one of them — dealing with the concerns that come in from the constituency.

I also want to thank a number of all the staff in my minister's office, as well as many of the people in the ministry. But the people within my minister's office, within the Minister of Health's office, would be my chief of staff, Perry, who does an absolutely wonderful job; Kim and Susan, who do a great job on letters and scheduling — that's not an easy job; Jennifer, who looks after the public relations; and also Sophie and Angie, who . . . Sophie accompanies me on most of the meetings that I'm at, and Angie does a great job on all of the concerns that come into our office. She's a conduit between the calls coming in from the general public to the Ministry of Health and has done a great job. I know of a number of compliments that have come our way after the work that the whole office as a unit has done dealing with those concerns.

[16:00]

I think anybody that has been elected will know that this is not a one-person job. It's definitely the constituency assistant on the constituency level, and caucus staff . . . In my position, it's ministerial staff that keep my minister's office working. And so I wanted to thank all of those people, because it has sure made it, this year, much easier. Even though there are trying times, as any minister would realize, they have made it much easier to deal with.

I also, when I talk about the budget, the most recent budget that our government read last Wednesday and some of the responses that have come in, and listening to the opposition criticize, which they have done from their place, there has been a few opposition members that will point out some of the good things that are in a budget.

There are a few that have just been negative from start to finish and I really kind of question that. I can remember being on the opposition benches for many years and I don't know if there was ever a budget that the former government didn't introduce that there weren't positives in it. It may not have been

everything that I wanted to see and certainly couldn't agree with it all, but there are always positives in it.

But to hear some of the members opposite talk for 15 to 20 minutes and not see a positive . . . In fact most of them, when they'll talk, will say, you know, why isn't the spending here? We should be spending here and we should be spending there.

And it's interesting because, you know, you also hear from them many, many times, the opposition, many, many times they'll talk about the '80s and how much trouble the province got in through the '80s. Well I can tell you that — and I'm not going to speak on other governments and how they're able to handle their finances — but what happened through the '80s is the government of the day was certainly running deficit budgets, and I remember those days through the deficit budget. All the opposition or the NDP Party was asking at that time is you needed to spend more, you needed to do this differently, you needed to do that differently.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every province pretty much in Canada, including the federal government, are running deficit budgets, save for one. So the same mindset of just spend, spend, spend coming from the opposition is still there. What has changed from the '80s is the fiscal management of the province, of this Saskatchewan Party government — a fiscal management that has put us in a positive position, that's put us in a balanced budget, that is going to speak volumes in the future as to how we come out of the end of this economic downturn.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in a good position in this province. There are challenges with oil and gas absolutely, but you will see the prices rising right now — over \$52 to \$53 a barrel today for oil and gas.

Potash sales are set at a high record, but it's been interesting hearing the debate in the House recently, with the former minister of Finance not knowing the difference between sales and production and trying to tell people, when the galleries were full on budget day, that, boy, we'd better be worried because the potash companies are cutting production, as if that is going to have a direct impact on revenue, when perhaps he didn't know, but he should have known that it's potash sales that will have the direct impact on revenue, not on the production.

And it's just, it's overwhelming to think that the former minister of Finance . . . And all of his colleagues, I guess, agreed with that. I haven't heard anybody stand up and say that their critic of Finance is incorrect. Because he was absolutely wrong.

But we are in good position. We've not only delivered a balanced budget this budget, but in that process of the first 16 months, we've been able to pay off 40 per cent of the provincial debt. A record payoff of provincial debt never seen before in this province, especially in one year; it sets the province up very good as we move forward.

Unfortunately again, the former Finance minister, or the Finance critic from the opposition had it a little wrong again. He was talking about debt increasing. He didn't quite understand the difference between Crown debt — which when

they were in government was always fine — and general revenue debt. Big difference. Big difference, and I'm not going to spend my time educating the former Finance critic the difference between Crown debt and general revenue debt.

But I think everyone on that side would say that the general revenue debt cut by 40 per cent in one year is record across Canada, I would think, and Mr. Speaker, sets the province up very well.

As well as debt reduction, we had the biggest tax cut of personal tax rates. People are seeing that every day right now as they are getting their tax returns. I'm hearing it in my office — I'd be surprised if they're not hearing it in their offices — that people are seeing a difference in the personal tax that they're having to pay.

The other area that is record amount of spending on infrastructure, and I'm going to talk more about infrastructure when we talk about health infrastructure, but \$1.5 billion towards infrastructure. And it's been interesting over the last couple of, I'd say couple of months, as we've talked in the House and with the accelerated infrastructure spending, I've heard not only the Health critic in committee, but also the Education critic both admit that the infrastructure was in terrible shape; it was decaying in our province.

There was an infrastructure deficit, not only in education, but absolutely in health care. And unfortunately over 16 years they felt not the need to repair it. In fact when we came to power, I think the budget for repairing a \$4.4 billion capital investment of health care was about \$8 million, which was shameful, absolutely shameful. That's why I was certainly glad in last year's budget we were able to put a \$100 million into repairing that infrastructure.

But \$1.5 billion into infrastructure that will certainly continue the, I think the good times that we're seeing in the province. We're seeing people from across Canada looking at Saskatchewan as a place to move to because there are jobs, there are opportunity, and this infrastructure spending goes a long ways to keeping that ball rolling.

The other area that I was very proud of our government in the past year, is to put money away in a growth and fiscal stability fund of \$2 billion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a rock that we can build on into the future. It keeps our province in good shape, keeps the momentum moving, so that when we come out of this economic downturn we'll be in extremely good shape, Mr. Speaker.

What I want to talk about is how this budget, how this 2009-2010 budget impacts the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone. And it has a direct impact on the lives of individuals within the constituency that I represent. And the first piece that I want to talk about is the property tax, the change in education portion of property tax.

I want to first of all thank the member from Rosetown-Elrose for the work that he has done over the last year to bring forward a report that the Minister of Education, the member from Canora-Pelly considered, and looked at the proper direction to go on. And I couldn't agree more with the findings first of all,

from the member from Rosetown-Elrose, and then also the direction of our government — how we've moved on that education portion of property tax that will benefit virtually every property tax payer in this province.

And even further than that, even into commercial areas, residential areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so it's going to have a huge impact. And the reason why I think this is such an important piece is when I was elected in 1999 — as many members on this side were elected in that election, 1999 — what was happening through rural Saskatchewan through those times 10 years ago? What was happening through the year 1999, 2000, maybe into 2001, were tax revolt meetings in rural municipalities throughout the province. Anybody elected at that time had the opportunity, as you probably did yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of attending a few tax revolt meetings. In my constituency I think there were six or seven RMs that held tax revolt meetings, saying that we're fed up, we're tired of paying the proportion of education property tax that we have to. And nothing was done.

The previous government, whether they heard the message and chose not to react, or they just chose not to react, because when you look at the political makeup of the House at the time, and certainly the political makeup of the House since that time, why would they start reacting to a rural property tax revolt. It wasn't in their political interests, Mr. Speaker. Even though the former premier could stand at SARM, and the main issue at SARM that year was the education portion of property tax, and the former premier saying, status quo is not on. They failed to address it.

That's why I am so proud. And if there is one reason that I would be very surprised at members on the opposition side would vote against this budget, it would be the piece around the education portion of property tax. How will they rationalize, when they go to their constituents, when they go back into the communities that they represent or the cities that they represent — portions of cities — and say, you know, I really didn't like the way they did that education portion of property tax. We were going to get to it some time. I just don't think they worked it quite right. It's a huge savings for the vast majority of property tax owners in the province.

And I'll be very glad after the budget debate is finished, and we vote on the budget and we see those members, how they vote. If they support the budget, I'll certainly be glad to compliment them. In any of the speeches that I give or the articles that I write in my local papers, I'd be more than glad to compliment the members opposite for voting in favour of our budget.

But if they don't, if they don't, I am going to work as hard as I can over the next year to mention that every member on that side — 20 members — voted against a property tax cut, voted against an issue that has been failed to be dealt with for the last 16 years of their government. Ten years since I've been elected, they've failed to deal with it. They finally have an opportunity to support it. They can say that there's other things in the budget they may not like, but stand and support the biggest property tax cut in the province's history, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The other area I want to talk about is

municipal revenue sharing that has a direct impact into the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone. Every community in my constituency is certainly going to benefit from this. It makes a huge difference because it really does create a predictable source of funding for municipalities.

Again, we heard over and over again from many of the municipalities around the province, and especially the large municipalities — cities like Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw — were all asking for predictable revenue sharing. They had a predictable revenue-sharing formula many, many years ago.

And unfortunately under the previous government, because of financial times, whatever it might have been — and I could agree with the tough financial times at the start of their administration — they decided to take that predictable funding away. The problem is is that they took it away for a few years to say that we will, once the province turns around and things get a little bit better, we'll put back in a formula where you will know what your funding will be.

The unfortunate part is after 16 years — took the funding formula away in the first couple of years — after 16 years they had never replaced it with any sort of predictable funding. So I was certainly glad to hear when the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the member from Regina South lobbied hard for this to be in the budget, saying how important it was from meeting with the different . . . SUMA and SARM, and how important that was for those municipalities.

And all you have to do is look at some of the third party newspaper clippings that have come out since the budget. And over and over again we hear, we see many of the community leaders, many of the representatives from the various municipal governments saying how important it is. Allan Earle, for example, says:

So the predictability of it (revenue sharing) is just unbelievably good news. Administrators all across the province have got to be jumping up and down.

That's the type of reviews we're receiving from around the province from municipal leaders.

And you can go on and talk about what Mayor Don Atchison said. "Monumental" is one of the words. "A huge step" forward. Very, very positive comments regarding municipal sharing and the impact that that's going to have in their municipalities.

Because every municipality I think, whether it's urban — and when I say urban, the major centres — whether it's a rural community, such as Indian Head or Milestone or Vibank, all of them are struggling with the same issues, is how do we create the infrastructure for the growth that we're experiencing? Because every rural community is experiencing growth.

I was in Milestone a couple of weeks ago, and I was amazed. I think there are seven or eight housing starts this year in Milestone which would be more housing starts than in the 10 years that I've represented that community, in the past 10 years.

And you know it doesn't matter which community, whether it's

Vibank, they're looking at how they can deal with the growth. Certainly more and more people looking for lots and to build, and the communities are struggling. For now for these communities, these municipalities, to have predictable funding as we move forward — 90 per cent of the 1 per cent GST [goods and services tax] to be expanded next budget — is immense for these municipalities. And that's why we're hearing around the province glowing reviews of the budget.

[16:15]

Again I will ask the opposition. They're probably going to stand in their place and they're going to vote against municipal sharing. Which is a really interesting concept, how they could represent really pretty much all urban centres except save for the two northern seats, but everyone else, as I look at the benches across the way, represent city seats, and including the member from North Battleford.

So I'm going to be very interested as he goes back to his community and says, you know, sorry. Meets with the council. I couldn't support revenue sharing, something that you have been asking for for the last 16 years. I just still don't think it's the right thing to do. It'll be very interesting to see how those conversations go.

So with property tax has been a huge piece, both residential and agriculture. Municipal sharing is huge for all the communities throughout the constituency.

The other piece that I want to talk about that directly affects the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone is the whole piece around agriculture and the work that my colleague, the Agriculture minister, has done, the member from Melville-Saltcoats, and has done just an absolutely wonderful job.

It's been interesting because, you know, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition sure likes to get on her feet, and she likes to really kind of raise the debate and raise the volume. But I've really been enjoying it from my seat, as quiet as it has been. I've really been enjoying how quiet it has been for the Minister of Agriculture. Not really, because I just love when the Minister of Agriculture stands in his place and answers the questions and comes forward with information that really, really quiets the critic down. In fact it's quieted her down so much that we haven't seen her stand in the House since the budget.

It was an interesting question period today, but all the areas to go after a government on and they picked one area and one area only. Never a word about education, not a word about municipal care, not a word about education, not a word about municipal sharing, not a word about education tax. And I think it speaks volumes for what they heard over the last five or six days since the budget was read, because if they are hearing the same responses around their constituency as we were hearing from our constituents, I can see why they didn't bring those subjects forward, because it's been very, very, positively received.

But the areas in agriculture that the minister has been working on and has benefited all of our government, but will benefit producers throughout the province.

Agriculture has been a little quieter recently other than in the

cattle and the hog industry, but the grain land has been doing all right. But it's not the time to sit still and not make the changes that need to be made. If there's any time to make changes, it is now. And that's what we have done through crop insurance modifications, excellent changes to crop insurance, as well as bringing the administration back to Saskatchewan — I shouldn't say back — bringing it to Saskatchewan which many other provinces have done regarding the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program.

Most provinces have administration done within their own province that . . . they can deal with their own producers — have people from Saskatchewan that know Saskatchewan. I mean, some of the questions from producers as they'd phone CAIS and they'd get a person on the other end of the line that, quite frankly, really didn't know much about agriculture at all. Just didn't understand how you could seed a no. 1 wheat and get a no. 3 as you combined. How would that work? And so, you know, it really was I think frustrating for many, many producers. It's probably about the same frustration . . . Many producers phone when they asked the opposition to carry issues forward in agriculture. And the knowledge base isn't there in the opposition benches.

So there's the three areas that are really large in the budget that again, when the opposition vote against the budget — which most of them said they will do — when they go out into rural Saskatchewan and start campaigning for votes in rural Saskatchewan, it'll be interesting to see how they try and justify voting against an agriculture budget that is the biggest agriculture budget this province has ever seen, that is addressing some of the issues into the future that producers are really wanting addressed. And, you know, it'll be interesting.

The last area that I want to touch on is health care and some of the work that we've been doing in health care, and that is translated through this provincial budget — \$4.075 billion for health care. It's a huge budget number, but it services the province. It's usually the number one issue in most people's minds. I would say probably the shape of the economy is rivalling it for the top billing, but still, even with the economy the way it is, most of the polling will show that health care and the concerns around health care are paramount, and I don't think it's changed a lot.

There's two areas in health care that I want to touch on before I take my seat. The two areas are human resources and then capital, because I do want to answer the member from North Battleford and some of his claims about the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, and what he's been saying recently — which really are out there, quite frankly.

The first issue is human resources though, and in this first 16 months I think we've done a pretty darn good job. There's still work to do, but a pretty darn good job in addressing the shortage, whether it's the nursing profession, whether it's physicians or other health care professionals. There's still more work to be done.

And I want to compliment the Legislative Secretary, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, on the work that she's done in her work as far as recruitment and retention. And I also want to compliment the member from Saskatoon

Sutherland on the work that she's done in addictions and looking at the problem of addictions in the province. You know we had kind of a symptom of it today in question period, the issue around HIV and intravenous drug use and the problems that that can cause.

But the issue around, for example, nursing — whether it's registered nurses, whether it's registered psychiatric nurses, nurse practitioners, licensed practical nurses — the availability and the shortage of all those professions. We have moved, and again with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, we've moved on increasing the seat. Because the cure — and it's maybe not a cure but the solution for a reduced workforce — is training more of our own.

And unfortunately we've had a lag. And I won't say it's been a 16-year lag, but I'll say in the last eight years that our . . . when we in opposition talked about the importance of increasing the number of training seats. Unfortunately when the NDP were in power they chose not to do it, and as a result we have slipped so far behind that, yes, we have to increase the number of training seats. We've done it, but we have to even do more than that. We have to go and recruit not only people that used to work in the profession and get them back into the profession, but recruit outside of Saskatchewan, across Canada, and outside of Canada, really around the world.

The trip to the Philippines has been a very huge success, bringing a number of registered nurses back to Saskatchewan — over 300 right now. And you know how the member opposite said, whose idea was it? You can have all sorts of ideas, but if you don't act on it, it doesn't put one nurse on the floor, Mr. Speaker. And they didn't act on it unfortunately. And we've acted on it, and we've ensured that we're starting to address some of the human resources shortage.

You know it's a little bit like, until you can admit that you've got a problem, how are you going to fix it or change it? Unfortunately the former government could never bring themselves, until maybe the eleventh hour of a dying mandate, that they had a human resources shortage. Of course they would never address it because they couldn't admit to it, Mr. Speaker. We've been able to move in that direction in the last 16 months and have made some, I think, some significant advancements.

The other area is around position recruitment, and we need to do a lot more work in that area. We've started by certainly training more of our own Saskatchewan residents. It isn't that we don't have smart enough kids coming out of grade 12 — we absolutely do — or coming out of post-secondary. We absolutely do. The problem was, is we didn't have enough training seats. We only had 60 seats for medicine in our province when Manitoba had been up to 100 for a number of years. The former government did nothing about it. They just felt, well we'll just have an over-reliance on South Africa, and that's what they did.

They had . . . No, the former Health minister is saying something.

**An Hon. Member:** — The plan was laid out.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The plan was laid out. The problem

was, is that you can have all the plans laid out that you want, and you didn't act on it. You simply didn't act on it. And they lay out all these plans, but they don't act on it. And it's exactly what I'm going to talk about, about the former Health minister from North Battleford. He could have all sorts of plans about the North Battleford hospital, the provincial hospital. But when you don't act on it, it doesn't do anybody any good. And that's exactly what that opposition did.

And you know, I want them to keep thinking that they've done so much. I want the member from Regina Lakeview to keep thinking that he did so much, because he'll keep sitting on that side for the next 20 years. He hasn't realized that they've lost the election, and they lost the election because they didn't do anything about human resources or capital for far too long. And he hasn't learned his lesson yet.

Position recruitment is huge and we are increasing the number of training seats, but it takes a while for those number of training seats to pay dividends to the people throughout the province. That's why . . . I don't know if anybody read in the paper just recently, a delegation that went to Ireland. We had a delegation of health regions; the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association], the College of Physicians and Surgeons, one representative from the Ministry of Health, went over to Ireland because we have so many Saskatchewan and Canadians, more apt Canadians, about nine or ten Saskatchewan residents are taking their medical degree in Ireland — so many in Ireland that it would be a great place to recruit back to Canada and a great place to recruit back to Saskatchewan.

Here's what one of the members . . . The recruitment trip went last week and here's what one of the students in Trinity College in Dublin Medical School, Kelsey Fawcett who is originally from Regina, had to say. She said, "I went to the meeting last night which was great. Very informative and encouraging as far as coming back to Canada to practice."

That's the type of work that our government has done in the first 16 months. Reaching out to not only other countries to attract health care professionals, but reaching out to other countries where our own citizens are taking education — whether it is college of medicine, whether it is becoming a physician — and inviting them back to Saskatchewan. So we're moving in the right direction, I think, on many fronts.

Other health care professionals . . . It's not just about nurses and it's not just about doctors. We're short of occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists. We need to continue to recruit in all of those areas. And, Mr. Speaker, we're doing that.

The last area that I wanted to talk about a little bit is capital and the decaying infrastructure that we were left after a number of years of, really, it was just absolutely a shortage of investment. I guess they were going to live off the depreciation of our buildings, thinking that some day they would have to be paid for. Well that day has come and I'm very proud of our government and the work that it's done in investing in an infrastructure.

Whether it's 152.8 million that went into long-term care facilities that were neglected . . . And it was interesting, I

haven't . . . You know, the biggest criticism that we've got from the opposition is, but why not Saskatoon or why not other jurisdictions? And they're absolutely right. When you're left with such an infrastructure that has decayed so much, it all needs to be replaced or a lot of it needs to be replaced. And, Mr. Speaker, we've started in 13 communities around the province that were absolutely neglected for a number of years.

Whether it's in Watrous, the facility in Watrous, that when I toured there you had to have . . . and it rained, there was pails on the floor catching the drips because the roof was leaking.

Whether it was Rosetown, and you go into Rosetown and see level 3 and 4 residents that are in the basement of a facility. They're in the basement of the hospital. And what really stood in my mind is they took me down the elevator. And so we saw where these residents were in their very small rooms — some cases two or three residents to a room — and we kind of toured through there and we went back up.

And it was literally, we had to go back up this spiral staircase back up to the main floor, the main floor. And they said, you know, our biggest concern is if we ever had a fire down here and the elevator was out. Of course, fire regulations say you have to have two exits, which they do have two exits. The second exit is a spiral staircase out of the basement for level 3 and 4 patients. You can imagine how well that would work.

Unfortunately, it was never addressed. Fortunately enough now, we're able to address it and fix up a number of the long-term care facilities, including the one that happens to be represented by my seatmate, the one in Redvers. I was really interested when we were going through estimates — I have to tell this story because I know a lot of people listen to estimates, but not everybody listens to estimates. And so for the people that didn't get to listen to estimates, I just want to talk about a little bit around Redvers and what happened in Redvers.

Redvers is a community, for those that don't know, it's real close to the Manitoba border. And they were fed up with the previous government. They wanted to fix their hospital. It was outdated, completely outdated, and they wanted a new hospital.

[16:30]

Well the former government wasn't going to move on that new hospital, so the community — as rural communities do around the province — got to work and they raised a lot of money to put their 35 per cent share towards a new hospital, thinking that the government would follow through with the 65 per cent. Well the government wouldn't follow through with the 65 per cent. So Redvers continued to fundraise, and they raised 100 per cent of the money. They built a brand new hospital, just out of the fundraising done by the community.

And I was talking about that in estimates, and the former associate Health minister, who is now the Health critic, said oh, I remember that. I remember going there. I don't know if she knew all the details around it, but she was questioning why we were putting a long-term care facility up in Redvers. And she said, because I was there for an opening not very long ago. In fact I remember cutting the ribbon on that grand opening. And I thought, well isn't that interesting. You're cutting a ribbon on a

grand opening that your government didn't put a cent into, and now you're questioning why we would be replacing a long-term care facility that is antiquated and outdated.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of that \$152.8 million into infrastructure, including the facility in Kipling that the community's been working hard on, and we're moving in the right direction. There's much more to do, not only in long-term care, but also in acute care. And that's why I was so proud, and I was glad to see the, I think, the government benches stand — I didn't see the opposition benches stand — when the Minister of Finance read in his place about a \$200 million commitment going towards a children's hospital in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The only province in Canada, other than Prince Edward Island, that doesn't have a children's hospital. That's absolutely a crime, and I'm certainly glad to see our provincial government move on \$100 million this budget and committed \$100 million next budget. Now I want to . . . So we've committed to a children's hospital \$200 million.

I want to contrast that to what we've been hearing from the member opposite, the member from North Battleford, who stands almost every day — not today — but almost every day in his place and talks about a Saskatchewan Hospital, a hospital that they had funded, that they had committed money to. And for the life of me . . . And I've asked every person that I know on the board of Prairie North; I've asked the CEO; I've asked every person in that health board: how much money did you get for the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford? And the answer, bar none, has been, none. They have had no money committed to that hospital.

Now the member is going to holler from his seat. The member is going to holler from his seat that he has put money away in the General Revenue Fund. Well I guarantee you, a month before a dying government, you can put whatever commitment you want in the General Revenue Fund, because they have no ability and no capacity to have to follow through on those commitments.

And he's going around North Battleford, and he's reading petition after petition saying that he's put money away in the General Revenue Fund for a hospital in North Battleford, for a provincial hospital, when that is absolutely not true. Because if he wanted to commit to a provincial hospital in North Battleford, all he had to do was take money out of the General Revenue Fund, put it in Prairie North, and say, here is the first of two instalments — as we have done to a children's hospital. But he didn't do it.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I can tell you that I've heard more from the MLA from Cut Knife-Turtleford as far as what needs to be done there and the work that needs to be done there and the importance of that facility, than I think the former cabinet heard out of . . . Eight years I think the member was here before he moved to the opposition benches. Maybe not that long. I can guarantee you that I've heard more from our member on this side about the need for that facility than that opposition when it

was in power, when their cabinet did from the member from North Battleford.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — He's got all the things . . . He can say an awful lot about it right now, and he talked about it in his reply to the budget. But the bottom line is . . . And I didn't say there had been no planning money. But he said that we committed \$54 million to building a hospital in North Battleford, and we committed to it in the General Revenue Fund. And it's absolutely wrong; there was no money moved to Prairie North.

Just as we've done, whether it's a children's hospital, just as we've done, whether it's a long-term care facility in Redvers, whether it's a long-term care facility in Prince Albert or Kerrobert or any of the 13 . . . The money, when you commit to it, when you commit to it, you need to put the money behind your commitment. Unfortunately that government, when it was in power, never did.

And the member from Cumberland is saying about the long-term care facilities, and he's pointing out where they're at, which constituencies they are at. I would ask him to stand in his place and tell me: which one does he not support? Which one of those long-term care facilities does he not support? Please stand in your place and say it. If you're going to start pointing fingers, stand in your place and tell us, which long-term care facility do you not support?

And if you've been through them, should we not replace the long-term care facility in Rosetown, where people are actually living in a basement? Should we not replace a long-term care facility that has antiquated windows and no air conditioning, and the temperature hits 40 above in there during the summer? Celsius. Are those the ones that we shouldn't replace?

Now it's interesting that he would start pointing fingers, because I can guarantee you that every long-term care facility that we are replacing absolutely needs to be replaced, as do many others around the province. And give us another number of years and we'll be replacing those long-term care facilities.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to stand and support a budget that not only deals with capital issues in health care, not only deals with human resources issues in health care, but deals with some of the challenges in Ag, deals with the revenue sharing piece, deals with property tax. And those are just the highlights of a much more extensive budget, a budget that I am going to be very surprised if the members opposite can't support, because I sure can. I won't be supporting the amendment. I will be supporting the budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible] . . . I'm very pleased and proud of our Saskatchewan Party government's second budget. It remains a time of growth



in our province, Mr. Speaker, even though we are feeling the effects of global economic challenges. It is critical that we continue to accommodate this growth, to encourage this growth, and to stimulate even more growth in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Through this budget our government has set the course for a strong and steady Saskatchewan. By sticking to our solid economic plan, by remaining sound fiscal managers, we will stay on course. This budget is also about keeping our promises, Mr. Speaker. Our government has now delivered on more than 100 of its campaign promises.

Mr. Speaker, our new budget is a balanced budget. We may be the only province that tables a balanced budget this year. And although we have maintained a balanced budget, we were able to deliver on major commitments to the people of Saskatchewan.

As I have said, Mr. Minister, our Saskatchewan Party government continues to deliver on its . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said, Mr. Speaker, our Saskatchewan Party government continues to deliver on its promises, having now delivered on more than 100 of our party's campaign promises.

What I find most encouraging is that our people across Saskatchewan continue to exude confidence and remain optimistic about our future. Surveys, questionnaires, and polls continue to show that we are the most optimistic and confident province in the country.

We will stay strong and steady through meaningful tax reductions like the largest education property tax cut in Saskatchewan's history. We will stay strong and steady through meaningful infrastructure projects which keep our province working and keep our economy moving forward. This government has now invested more than \$2.5 billion in our highways, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure to help our province move forward. And we will remain strong and steady through meaningful investments in Saskatchewan people and families and students and children and seniors and First Nations and Métis, in those from rural and urban Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this represents the first full budget for Enterprise Saskatchewan. Enterprise Saskatchewan has been working tirelessly to move the economic development mandate forward despite the current global economic concerns that have touched Saskatchewan. And I thank everyone at Enterprise Saskatchewan for their hard work and for their help in moving our economy forward. No agency of government has experienced as much change in 15 months, and no staff has displayed more commitment to the economy and the people of Saskatchewan. And I sincerely thank them, Mr. Speaker.

Our province is resilient and diversified and is one of the few places in the world that enjoys a positive economic situation, a positive future forecast, and more than a positive outlook overall for our province and our people. In fact last week we

received more great news from Stats Canada reporting that Saskatchewan is number one in the country in three important economic categories: wholesale trade, retail sales, and new vehicle sales.

Mr. Speaker, the key highlights for Enterprise Saskatchewan in this budget include \$5.3 million to the enterprise regions program. This is a renewed approach to regional economic development that replaces the regional economic development authorities.

Economic growth in Saskatchewan will be further stimulated by a \$5.1 million investment in the Western Economic Partnership Agreement — or WEPA, Mr. Speaker — a federal-provincial partnership that helps our province strengthen its key sectors and provides businesses with . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I find it grossly unfair that the member who is speaking does not have the respect of his own members. I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — WEPA, Mr. Speaker, a federal-provincial partnership that helps our province strengthen its key sectors and provides businesses with more tools to succeed in the knowledge-driven global marketplace. The Strategic Investment Fund will receive \$3.8 million to support initiatives such as research capacity, the development of innovative products and processes, and other projects of strategic economic importance.

Communities and workers negatively affected by international economic volatility will be assisted by \$8.4 million in funding through the federally funded Community Development Trust Fund, Mr. Speaker. This budget will support our enterprise region sector teams and strategic issues councils. We will, through out sector teams and issues councils, identify, develop, and monitor competitive advantages and disadvantages in each sector. They will prescribe action, remove barriers to growth, and facilitate stronger economic planning by accommodating increased leadership and partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all of the women and men who are generously contributing their talents and valuable time to the sector teams, issues councils, and enterprise regions to help make Saskatchewan a better place to live. Moving forward on the economic development front would not be possible without their participation, contribution, and sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working towards the establishment of Innovation Saskatchewan to build an innovation-driven economy in our province. Like Enterprise Saskatchewan, Innovation Saskatchewan will bring together government, industry, and key stakeholders. There will be an exciting opportunity to integrate Innovation Saskatchewan's work of improved research and development, commercialization, and productivity into the practical world of Enterprise Saskatchewan's economic development strategy.

Consultations will continue with the innovation community and provincial stakeholders. One of these events is the innovation summit planned for this spring where additional input will be received and used to ensure of a most informed structure and focus for the newest agency of government. One of the new

agency's important functions will be to improve the link between the research, development, and commercialization of new ideas and technology.

Mr. Speaker, the uranium development partnership is expected to deliver its final report later this month. I look forward to its recommendations. Our government is committed to exploring the possibilities available for uranium development and value-added opportunities. We will be moving ahead with public consultations and information gathering in order to arrive at a decision that is environmentally sustainable and benefits the people of Saskatchewan and our businesses. This year we'll see progress never before witnessed in our province on this very important and timely issue, Mr. Speaker.

[16:45]

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased with the Enterprise Saskatchewan board and the work it has accomplished over the past number of months. The board has made a significant contribution to key items in our budget. I thank each member of the board for their valuable contribution.

The Enterprise Saskatchewan board recommended a more competitive tax environment, Mr. Speaker, and in this budget we see the largest education property tax cut in Saskatchewan's history. The highest priority and further tax reform in our province, Enterprise Saskatchewan will continue to look at both personal and corporate income tax reform.

The importance of the innovation climate was highlighted in this budget, with a fully refundable research and development tax credit. This will help with cash flow for innovation start-ups and new commercial innovation. This will also help create one of the most competitive research and development tax credit systems in Canada.

There are numerous key infrastructure projects in the budget, from upgrading of key economic corridors through the Ministry of Highways to the critical innovation packages such as InterVac at the University of Saskatchewan. The Enterprise Saskatchewan board input on this achievement has been significant.

The northern enterprise regions initiative comes out of a recommendation of Enterprise Saskatchewan board to support economic development in the northern part of our province. Harmonization of the federally sponsored, labour sponsored venture capital corporation rates will bring the federal and provincial funds to similar levels, another initiative recommended by the board. I thank all members of the Enterprise Saskatchewan board for their continued excellent work and dedication to the job at hand.

Mr. Speaker, Enterprise Saskatchewan is moving forward in its mandate to enhance economic development in the province. To that end, a review of the current structure has identified a need to streamline and refocus the mandate of the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission. We will soon move from having a commission that has complete operational functions including staffing and administration of programs to a labour market issues council. This will allow a more focused policy advisory board to review and address labour market issues in our

province. This will leave the operational side to business, industry, and other organizations such as the enterprise regions.

The changes will allow Enterprise Saskatchewan to continue in a lean, nimble, and advisory capacity with its issues councils, while still addressing the labour market challenges in Saskatchewan and at substantially less cost to our taxpayers.

I also note that the changes come at a pivotal point. The Labour Market Commission should be congratulated on achieving near completion of a comprehensive labour market strategy. Its key goal has been fulfilled and follow-up work will now continue through other processes and partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, one of this government's highest priorities is getting the word out far and wide that Saskatchewan is the best place to live, work, operate a business, and invest. We have everything the world wants. We always did have everything the world wants but the former NDP government didn't get around to telling anybody about it, and the opportunities for our province are overwhelming now. Our Premier has done a tremendous job of communicating our message to the world and we must continue to do this. This budget sends the message to everyone across our nation, North America, and the world, that Saskatchewan is open for business finally, and it is the best place in the world to do business.

Mr. Speaker, 2009-10 will prove to be a very busy and challenging fiscal year. However it is also full of promise and optimism. Enterprise Saskatchewan will be at the forefront of that activity and promoting the further growth of our great province. I look forward to a full and prosperous year for Saskatchewan. I also look forward to supporting this budget which sets the course for a strong and steady Saskatchewan. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget and not supporting the amendment.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this afternoon to stand and enter into the budget debate. Mr. Speaker, this budget is a budget that sees a 12.4 per cent increase year over year in expenditure, Mr. Speaker, and with a budget that has that great of increase in expenditure, Mr. Speaker, there are many things that the people of this province are going to like. And you can expect that people are going to like a budget that sees that great of expenditure year over year.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the key issues about a budget is, is it built on a solid foundation? Is that budget built on assumptions and revenue projections, Mr. Speaker, and on a solid foundation so that the people of this province can have confidence that that expenditure is sustainable over time?

Mr. Speaker, this particular budget, although it is a budget that addresses many needs of the people of the province of Saskatchewan — and I'll acknowledge that — but, Mr. Speaker, the real question is, is this budget affordable? Is this budget sustainable, Mr. Speaker, and does it truly meet the needs of the people of the province of Saskatchewan? And, Mr.

Speaker, that is the real question of this budget.

Of course, if you're getting property tax relief and you're getting expenditures in a number of areas, people are going to like that. But, Mr. Speaker, at this time can we afford a 12.4 per cent increase year over year, and is it sustainable?

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a number of things, a number of assumptions, and a number of conclusions that this budget draws. Mr. Speaker, to start with, I'd like to talk about the fact that the assumptions made on economic growth and growth in GDP within our province is far, far higher — the projection made by the government — than any of the independent raters, Mr. Speaker. As an example, Mr. Speaker, the government's assumption is for 2.1 per cent growth in GDP next year, Mr. Speaker, and not a single, not a single independent agency gives anywhere near that rate of growth, Mr. Speaker — not anywhere near that rate of growth.

Mr. Speaker, the private sector average for economic growth for the province of Saskatchewan in 2009-10 is point six three, Mr. Speaker, point six three. And the government is saying that they're going to have an economic growth in GDP of 2.1 per cent. Mr. Speaker, never have I seen projections so different, so different, Mr. Speaker. I have never seen projections so different from those in the private sector analysts, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, that brings into question the foundation on which this budget was established. Mr. Speaker, there are also many other things that raise concerns about this budget for the people of Saskatchewan, and for those of us who are, by our responsibility, to ensure that we make sure that the government is looking at all their options and all their responsibilities when they're putting forward a budget, Mr. Speaker, and that they're accountable to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in this budget we see an overall increase in debt, an overall increase in debt of \$922 million. Mr. Speaker, the people of the province of Saskatchewan are seeing the debt go up this year by \$922 million. Now, Mr. Speaker, you can say that it — because it's in the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, and it's not GRF [General Revenue Fund] debt — that it doesn't matter. But the total debt, the total debt in the province of Saskatchewan is going up \$922 million, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that raises curious concern because it has been many, many years since we've seen that level of debt increase. Mr. Speaker, it's more than 14 years since we've seen that level of debt increase in a single year — \$922 million. Mr. Speaker, is this budget sustainable? That's the question the people of this province need to ask. With an increase of \$922 million, does that not raise alarm bells? Does that not bring concerns for the people of the province of Saskatchewan?

And, Mr. Speaker, I say it does. I say this budget needs to be looked at very, very carefully, and we need to examine very carefully the foundation on which this budget was built. And can we carry on? Is it sustainable, long term? And that's what the people of this province need to understand, and that's what they need to examine out of this budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are seeing for the first time, debt-to-GDP going up for the first time in 14 years. The

debt-to-GDP ratio in Saskatchewan is going up. Mr. Speaker, we have not seen that for 14 years, the debt-to-GDP ratio going up. And what does the government say about that? What are they telling the people of Saskatchewan? And do they know, do the people of Saskatchewan know for the first time in 14 years, the debt-to-GDP ratio is actually going up?

Mr. Speaker, those are key things. These are key building blocks in the foundation of a budget. And they know their debt is going up. They know their debt-to-GDP ratio's going up, Mr. Speaker, and they know that this budget is on a shaky foundation. And is it sustainable long term?

I want to take a few minutes to talk about a couple of key issues, Mr. Speaker, that are outlined in this budget. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, total debt is going up, that over a four-year period total debt's going up 36.25 per cent, Mr. Speaker, by the government's own projections in their budget document. Over four years — over four years, Mr. Speaker — government debt's going up 36.25 per cent. A huge increase in debt. And each of those years we see an increase in debt-to-GDP ratio, Mr. Speaker.

That, Mr. Speaker, leaves those of us in the opposition and the general public, Mr. Speaker, asking if this budget is built on a solid foundation, Mr. Speaker.

Now there is, you know, without doubt, Mr. Speaker, extensive spending in this budget. But is it too much? Is it sustainable?

Mr. Speaker, we hear the members opposite, the government saying that they're going to get their budget expenditures in line, and by the fourth year of their term that it's going to be no greater than 3 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we have the Finance minister saying, by the fourth year of his term expenditures are going to be no greater than 3 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, with 12 per cent on top of over 10 per cent in a two-year period, Mr. Speaker, it's not achievable. How are they going to do that? Where's their road map to go to get there, Mr. Speaker? It's not here. It's not before us. So is this budget sustainable? That is the fundamental question that needs to be asked.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out something to the members of the general public as well. We see in this budget for the first time in many years a decrease in health spending as a percentage of overall budget. Mr. Speaker, we see a decrease in health spending as a per cent of overall budget, Mr. Speaker, a drop from 44 to 39; a 5 per cent drop in spending in health as the percentage of the total budget, Mr. Speaker. That is something that we have not seen in many years.

So, Mr. Speaker, is this budget what the people of the province of Saskatchewan need? Is it what they want? Is it sustainable, Mr. Speaker? Those are the questions, those are the questions that we in the opposition have. Those are the questions we hear in the general public, Mr. Speaker.

And for those very reasons, that this foundation on which this budget was built is not sustainable, Mr. Speaker, I am going to support the amendment, Mr. Speaker, and not the primary motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — Being near 5 p.m. this Assembly will recess until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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