



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

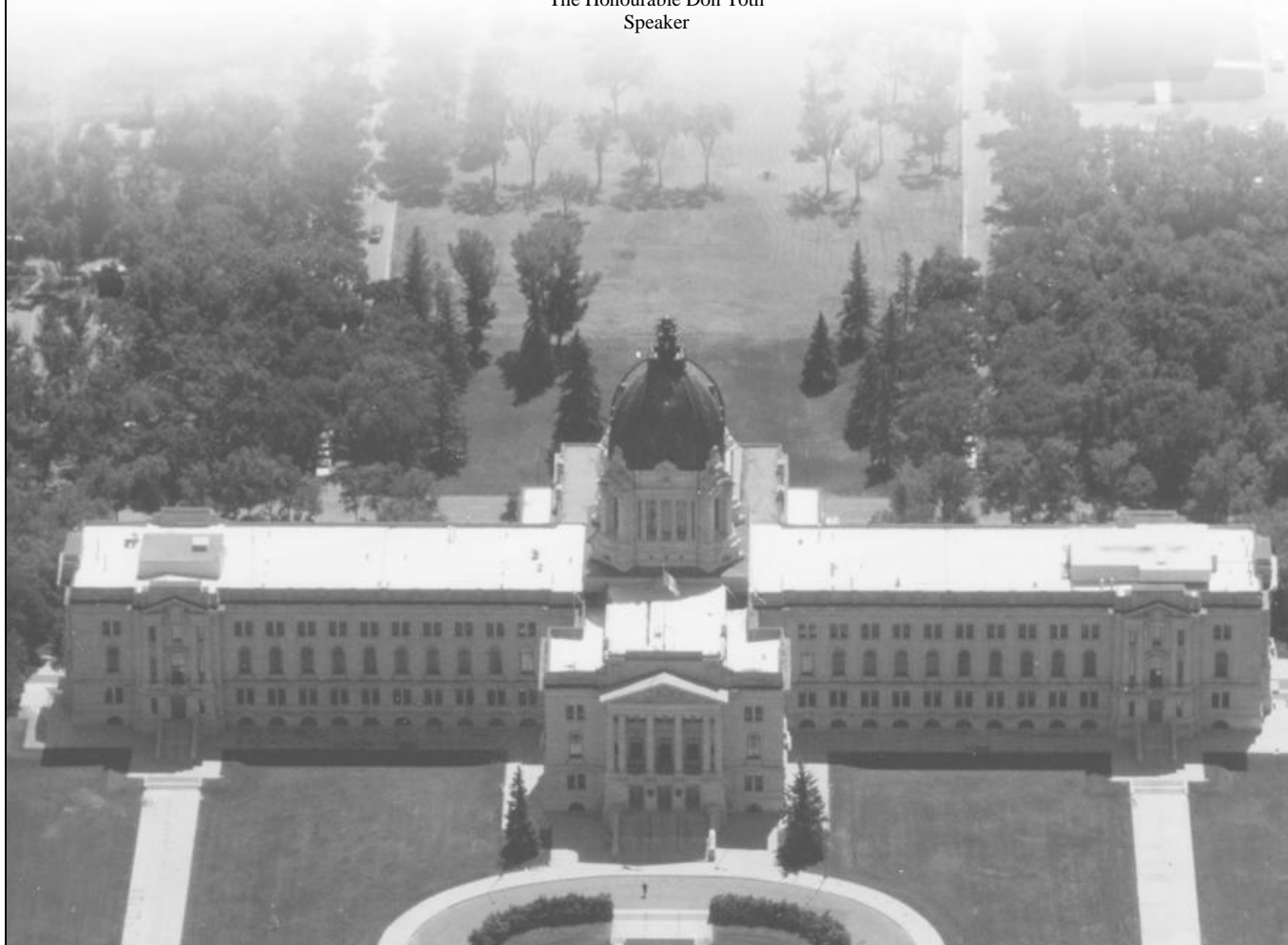
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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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 Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege and honour this afternoon to introduce to you and to all members of the House a large group sitting in the gallery, in the west gallery. Mr. Speaker, these students are from the Canora Composite School in Canora, a community in my constituency.

There are 38 grade 8 students that have made the trek to Regina and visiting the Legislative Assembly here this afternoon. I would like to welcome the students, as well as we have a couple of teachers along with the group. We have teacher Carlena Bulich, and we have principal Brent Castle along with them as well. And we have two chaperones, Teena Quick and Brandy Zavaslack.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to welcome these students and chaperones and teachers to their Legislative Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce two guests sitting in your gallery. One I don't think needs an introduction. She's probably pretty well known to most of the people in the Assembly. Her name's Donna Brunskill from the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, who of course works tirelessly in the province to promote the province, but also to attract and make sure that we're looked at as a place to come and work as far as the nursing profession is concerned.

Also accompanying her is Rachel Bard. She is the executive director of the Canadian Nurses Association. I'm looking forward to being able to meet with these two individuals shortly after and talk about the nursing situation, not only in Saskatchewan, but across the nation.

So I'd like all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too, on behalf of the opposition caucus and in my position as Health critic, would like to welcome Donna. Welcome, Donna and welcome, Rachel. I had such a great time at the CNA [Canadian Nurses

Association] last year. I'm looking forward to continuing to meet and talk about our issues. Welcome to the legislature.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just noticed coming into your gallery a very, very special guest . . . well, guests that have joined us perhaps for the rest of the question period proceedings here today.

In 1997 the previous administration quite properly established a Distinguished Service Award to tribute those people from outside of our province's borders who have had a powerful impact and a positive impact in Saskatchewan. We just came from a luncheon, a number of ministers and myself, to honour Ron Cavell, Dr. Ron Cavell and his wife, Patricia. And I'll introduce the others that have joined him.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, here on the record, as we did earlier at the luncheon, how grateful this province is for Dr. Cavell's absolute, essential, and key input into ensuring that the Canadian Light Source Synchrotron is located here on the Prairies, in the city of Saskatoon, working in tandem with the university and, again, the previous administration. Obviously that's a very important asset to the country — the only one in Canada; Canada's largest science project — and he was instrumental in making it happen. And so we want to say thank you to him today, as we did earlier at the luncheon.

Joining him are his wife, Dr. Patricia Cavell. And his daughter is Catherine Bailey. Her husband, Doug, is with us. And Harvey Allyn, who put his name in a nomination, has joined us as well as other guests.

Would all members please help me welcome them to this Legislative Assembly and to say thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the Premier in congratulating Dr. Cavell on the Distinguished Service Award, to thank him again for his contribution to the synchrotron project and its location in Saskatoon, and to recognize also his family who are here. We welcome you. We thank you and we congratulate you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents who are in support of the government's policy on green vehicles, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan who have signed this petition are from the good city of Regina.

**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 this is a big issue. We know that the low wages paid to CBO workers has a negative impact on the quality of care clients receive. I'd like to read the prayer.

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.

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

And these folks are from Lloydminster, Meadow Lake, Battleford, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Regina. 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'd like to stand and present a petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who are seeking assistance from the provincial government in dealing with the exorbitant cost of clean, quality, affordable drinking water in their riding. And the prayer reads as such:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly 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 fine residents of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan.

**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 cost of rental accommodation is increasing and the number of apartment units is decreasing. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners ask:

... the Legislative Assembly to 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 come from the constituency of The Battlefords.

**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 today and present a petition in support of fairness for students in Saskatchewan 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, from the University of Saskatchewan, as well as a number of health care professionals with graduate degrees practising here in Saskatchewan. 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 No. 135 that runs through Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan. This petition is signed by the leadership and the community members of Pelican Narrows First Nations, the village of Pelican Narrows and area. Their 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.

It is signed by the good citizens of Pelican Narrows. I do present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Remembering Ed Bloos

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my sincere, heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Ed Bloos. Ed was truly an important member of the community of Regina as well as our province. His dedication and hard work on behalf of those less fortunate is an inspiration to us all.

Ed was born here in Regina in 1938. After a short period of time as a young lay missionary doing work in Papua New Guinea, Ed and his wife Luverne returned to make their home in our community. It was here he began a lengthy career helping to nourish those in need.

In the early 1980s, Ed took a job as the first manager of the Regina Food Bank. For 23 years, Ed gave up his time and effort acting as a fundraiser and a promoter for the food bank in addition to his managerial duties. His work touched the lives of so many of the members of our community and will not soon be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to extend my condolences to those who knew Mr. Bloos — not only for his family and his friends, but for those who benefited from his compassion and sympathy time and time again at the Regina Food Bank. His life and his work are certainly worthy of our appreciation. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Saskatchewan Lung Association Walking Program

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a chronic lung disease and a major cause of death, disability, hospitalization, and health care costs in Saskatchewan. Over 32,000 Saskatchewan citizens suffer from COPD, and it will soon be the third leading cause of death in the province. One of the newest initiatives of the Saskatchewan Lung Association is a walking program in Saskatoon's Confederation Mall, geared towards people who are living with chronic lung disease.

The program has both an exercise and an educational component and concentrates on keeping the participants moving. Participants and their families join up with the program coordinators and various health care professionals three times a week to walk around the mall. Everyone involved learns the importance of regular exercise, good nutrition, and other techniques designed to keep participants healthy and happy.

With the generous assistance of program supporters, such as ICR industries, the company who owns the Confederation Mall

and VitalAire, the Lung Association of Saskatchewan is improving the lives of Saskatchewan citizens. They recognize that not having to spend as much time in the hospital or the emergency ward would be a great benefit. However the improvements in quality of life from the COPD rehabilitation go well beyond that. In many cases it is the difference between living and having a life.

Mr. Speaker, I hope other malls will join in the walking program. I'm thinking of how valuable this program would be at Market Mall in my constituency of Saskatoon Eastview. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Prince Albert Student Receives Terry Fox Award

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night Prince Albert city council awarded a very special and deserving young man with the Terry Fox Award.

Jordan Herzog is a grade 8 student at Vickers School in Prince Albert. He's been a classmate of my youngest daughter, Mackenzie, since the two first met in kindergarten.

Jordan was born with spina bifida; however, this disability has never got in his way. In the few short years he has been alive, Jordan has been a tireless supporter of several worthy causes in and around Prince Albert. Jordan has been involved in the Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life for over the past eight years and has acted as a team leader for seven of those years. The Cancer Society recognized his achievements by awarding Jordan with the Leader of Tomorrow award.

In 2007, Jordan received the Yes I Can Award from the Saskatchewan Council for Exceptional Children. This was given to an outstanding student who has overcome a challenge.

Years ago, Terry Fox's brother, Darrell, spoke at Jordan's school during the annual Terry Fox Run. Since then, Jordan has repeatedly raised the most money for the Terry Fox Run at his school, for several years now.

The Terry Fox Award is given for work ethic, compassion for others, and commitment — these are all qualities young Jordan possesses. He's an amazing young man, an inspiration and true role model to those around him. I know the staff at Vickers are proud to have Jordan at their school, and I want to add that Saskatchewan is truly a better place because of this young man.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Jordan Herzog on receiving the Terry Fox Award and thanking him for his incredible contribution to the people of this great province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Remembering George Terry

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of a former constituent, George Terry, who passed away February 8 at the age of 85.

Mr. Terry was Saskatchewan's most decorated Aboriginal veteran. George served in World War II and the Korean War as a medic, supply officer, and parachutist, and completed a 32-year career of faithful service.

After his retirement from the Canadian Armed Forces, Mr. Terry volunteered with numerous organizations including Senior Citizens Action Now, the Moose Jaw Aboriginal Association, The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 59, and the Moose Jaw race relations committee. And in his spare time, he counselled and provided spiritual leadership to many groups.

George Terry received the prestigious honour of being inducted into the Order of Canada in 1997, and beyond that remarkable recognition he also received 13 Armed Forces medals, Moose Jaw Citizen of the Year, the Multicultural International Peace Prize, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, Saskatchewan Festival of Words, Moose Jaw Honours Award. And in 2005 I was very pleased to present him with the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal.

George was a proud man with a quiet sense of humour. He cared about the well-being of his community and his fellow citizens. He was predeceased by his wife, Ann, in 1991, and he leaves to mourn five children and their families. He will be laid to rest this summer with his fallen comrades in the Field of Honour at the Moose Jaw Cemetery. I ask that all members join me in extending condolences to Mr. Terry's family and friends. He will be sadly missed and fondly remembered as a true inspiration.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

### Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening Tourism Saskatchewan celebrated its 20th annual Tourism Awards of Excellence gala, held at the Delta Hotel. This event was attended by approximately 500 people from across the province, all involved in the tourism industry, whether they are hoteliers, tourism operators, or event promoters.

The Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport presented the Corporate Partner of the Year Award to Viterra of Yorkton for sponsoring a walking tour titled Crops of the Parkland. This one-of-a-kind attraction welcomes visitors from across North America, showcasing the importance of the agriculture sector to the province. Approximately 20,000 visitors have taken the tour and Viterra has covered all costs, making it free for the public.

The Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations presented the Award of Excellence, sponsored by SaskTel, for the best

promotional or marketing campaign to the Regina convention team. The Regina convention team made it their mission to get conference and event planners from across Canada to think Regina when planning future locations.

The Chairman's Lifetime Achievement Award went to Donna Carlson-O'Keefe, who spoke about her experiences establishing a fishing and hunting resort at Reindeer Lake in the early 1970s.

I congratulate all the award winners, a 1 billion industry in Saskatchewan for tourism. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Anne Luke Recognized on Retirement

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today in recognition of an individual who for many years has been a shining light for a multitude of children and families in Regina's inner city, Anne Luke. Anne Luke has devoted her life's work to early childhood development. Thirty-two years ago, Anne left her job at the Regina Public School Board because she saw a need in the community, and the move changed her life forever.

Anne says that "There were a lot of issues — poverty, racism, poor housing, lack of communication between schools and families, and it seemed to me the only way of resolving that was to go outside of the institution of school and talk with parents and find out their hopes and dreams and then offer my services as an early childhood teacher."

Anne Luke created a unique program which has served as a lantern for the community. The Regina Early Learning Centre combines culture, health, community, children, and early childhood education in a way that has had a tremendously positive impact on so many lives.

Two years ago, Anne stepped aside as executive director, but instead of heading into retirement, Anne put her shoulder to the wheel as the leader of the Early Learning Centre's Small Hearts - Big Dreams Capital Campaign, and they are on the verge of having raised the targeted amount of \$1.5 million.

The goal about to be met, the end of March will see the formal retirement of Anne Luke from the Early Learning Centre. And though she may be retiring, Anne's legacy of commitment, community service, and love will go on for many lifetimes to come. I ask this Assembly to join me in recognizing the work of Anne Luke and to say very clearly to her, on behalf of so many kids and families in the province of Saskatchewan, thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Opinion on Retirements

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

many people these days aren't too impressed with the performance of the NDP [New Democratic Party] opposition, including one of their own leadership candidates, Yens Pedersen. Mr. Pedersen seems to think that some of the NDP MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] have passed their expiry date and it's time to clean house.

In a blog posting on his website yesterday, Yens Pedersen said, and I quote:

As leader, one of my first actions will be to privately discuss with our MLAs their plans for the next election. If any MLA is overdue for retirement, I will not hesitate to pointedly (but respectfully) encourage him/her to move on.

Mr. Speaker, obviously Mr. Pedersen thinks that a number of the current NDP MLAs are "overdue for retirement".

In the last NDP leadership campaign, the member for Riversdale promised to tour the NDP MLAs around the province on a bus. Yens Pedersen is taking a slightly different approach. He wants to throw his MLAs out of the bus. Mr. Speaker, I would look forward to learning exactly who is on Yens Pedersen's hit list of NDP MLAs who are "overdue for retirement".

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Inner-City Health Care

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Westside community clinic serves some of the city's poorest and most disadvantaged citizens. A key part of the Station 20 project was an expanded Westside Clinic. The expansion was put on hold when the Sask Party axed the Station 20 project.

At that time, the Westside Clinic was invited to prepare proposals for expansion at a different site, which they did. And in their proposal, they targeted the expansion of their capacity to address and treat the HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] issue in the inner city. They were left hopeful that funding would be coming in this year's budget.

Last week, Westside was both surprised and disappointed to find no funding in this budget for their expansion. To the minister: why did the Sask Party leave some of the province's most vulnerable citizens out of this budget? In a \$10.2 billion budget that increased spending by 12 per cent, why was there nothing for the Westside Clinic?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to answer that question. And, quite frankly, I'm glad to see that member on her feet. Mr. Speaker, the issue with inner city, some of the

issues on inner city are definitely troubling, and we are very aware of that. That is why our government has worked with the Saskatoon Health Region to put a primary mobile bus touring the inner city in many of the different locations that see some of the problems that the inner city sees, for example, in Saskatoon. At that time the only fault that that member opposite could find was that it was a private partner, MD Ambulance which has served the community extremely, extremely well.

Mr. Speaker, this bus has been well received. People are feeling very comfortable. Where they wouldn't enter a hospital or into a primary health centre, they're entering the bus and receiving education and all sorts of health care benefits, Mr. Speaker. It's working very, very well.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A conversation about the effectiveness of the bus will be left for another day. My question is about the Westside Clinic today. This clinic is over capacity and needs funding to expand. And the minister announced a review yesterday to talk about the HIV problem, but we don't need another review which we're being told could take another year.

While the minister is conducting his review, we already know there is an HIV crisis in the province with a disproportionate number of inner-city residents, especially young Aboriginal women, being affected. And this crisis is not likely to slow while the minister is conducting his review.

Yesterday the minister said he learned of the HIV crisis on Friday. The Westside Clinic says they were ringing the bells of the increasing number of HIV infections in their proposal they submitted last fall.

To the minister: the HIV crisis was being brought to his attention in the fall. Did he not read the proposal before he denied it?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — As I mentioned yesterday, Mr. Speaker, this HIV situation is peaking now for sure. It has been going on over a number of years, a number of years when that government was in power and chose to ignore it, Mr. Speaker. Our government is not ignoring it. That's why the chief medical officer has struck a committee that is meeting today, will be meeting over the next three days, to see the best practices from across Canada to start addressing that issue, Mr. Speaker.

But I can tell you that we've already moved in the area of HIV, whether it was the needle exchange program and the review of that; also the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund, Mr. Speaker, where one of the approved proposals is \$715,000 that's going to Aboriginal health transition to address the issue of HIV in that community.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Junor:** — As I said, Mr. Speaker, a year-long review isn't going to help the people who have HIV now and are going to be getting it in the future. To say that we are peaking suggests that we are now going to be going down. That's not what the report has suggested. They have suggested we're going to see continual increases.

And one of the consequences of neglect of the poorest and the most disadvantaged people in our province is a dramatic rise in HIV infection rates. People in low-income neighbourhoods also have higher injury rates, are more likely to attempt suicide or suffer from diabetes or coronary heart disease.

An investment in the Westside community clinic would have been a first step in improving the health of people living in inner-city neighbourhoods. But the Sask Party made other choices in this \$10.2 billion budget, choosing to continue the pattern of neglect that led to an increase in HIV infection rates.

To the minister: why is the Sask Party continuing to choose policies that perpetuate the neglect of this vulnerable population?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I couldn't disagree more with the premise of that question. In 16 months this government has done more for inner city than 16 years of that opposition.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, we've announced St. Mary's School that will be being constructed in the very near future.

Whether it's a primary health care bus . . . The members will talk about Station 20. Let's talk about Station 20. It was \$12 million to a building that didn't address the needs on the street, Mr. Speaker. Our government is addressing the needs on the street.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, last fall the Lemstra report recommended a \$300 million investment to improve the health of Saskatchewan's poorest citizens — an investment the report estimated would save Saskatchewan people \$1 billion over the long term. At the time the Sask Party claimed they were doing enough, but the rise in HIV infection rates and other growing health disparities make it clear that they're not.

To the minister: in light of yesterday's news, will the minister implement the Lemstra report's recommendations? Will he take

concrete steps to improve the health of Saskatchewan's most vulnerable citizens?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that in 16 years where this disparity was created of neglect in the area of inner-city Saskatoon, we have spent \$16 million in 16 months. Eight million for a new school has been committed by this government, as well as an additional \$8 million for housing on top of a housing commitment that was already made by the previous administration.

Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite mentioned \$300 million — and Lemstra said that that would just fix the problem — well we did more of that, more than \$300 million, Mr. Speaker, to address major tax cuts which will be money in the pockets of the low-income people in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### SaskWater Operations

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, what's not in the budget is more often of concern than what's announced in the budget. And people looked to last week's budget to see if it would provide some answers for the people of Moose Jaw. But experience teaches us that the Saskatchewan Party likes to sit on bad news until they can put it through the spin cycle. Mr. Speaker, there are many concerned people in my community.

To the Minister of SaskWater: is he proposing a change to the mandate of SaskWater?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to answer questions regarding SaskWater. SaskWater is a water utility in the province that is going to be enhancing its responsibilities going forward, largely because of the increased concern across the province regarding safe and reliable water.

But approximately two weeks ago I had a chance to attend the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention to talk to many municipal leaders from across the province and talking about the need for enhanced municipal water and enhanced residential water. It's something that we're looking at very seriously through the Crown corporation. We've engaged Meyers Norris Penny to look at the corporation itself. We'll be looking at if there are improvements that can be made. And we'll be announcing those in due course.



**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of concern in my city that a change in SaskWater's mandate will mean job losses at the head office in our city. And when the minister said that he will impose his views on the Crown corporations, could he please give Moose Jaw a pure business deal assessment on SaskWater? Will he provide a guarantee today to the people of Moose Jaw and SaskWater employees that there will be no position cuts at SaskWater?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. The employees of SaskWater provide a valuable service to Saskatchewan residents. Many of them have the skills necessary to provide that service in many different areas. What we're looking at is changes and enhancements to the responsibility to the job that SaskWater will be doing. It's something that the Saskatchewan residents are asking for, it's something that we're committed to doing, and as I've said before in this House, the responsibility that will be undertaken as far as water management goes will be increasing in the province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, an analysis was prepared for SaskWater on its role on industrial water infrastructure projects and it shows that not all change is desirable. And I quote from the analysis. "A decision to remove new industrial projects from SaskWater's mandate will have major negative consequences for the corporation." And, "Substantial layoffs would take place from the corporation's existing staff complement."

To the minister, again I ask: will he guarantee to the people of Moose Jaw and SaskWater employees that he will not take a course of action that will lead to substantial layoffs at SaskWater?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, and for all members and especially for the member who asked the question, the purpose of SaskWater's creation was to primarily address the municipal and residential side of water services.

SaskWater going forward has had the opportunity to participate

in the industrial side as well. They've done so in a manner that reflects their mandate — in a break-even type of manner. The industrial side of the equation can be serviced by the private sector and indeed is done by the private sector.

What we're seeing is an enhanced need for services on the residential and municipal side. That's where we're focusing our attention. That's where the growth will take place. That's where the enhanced responsibilities from those many people that provide that service will be required and that's what they will be asked to do going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Tuition Fees

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I and several of my colleagues met once again with university students who are concerned that they will be paying more and getting less with the Sask Party in government. These students presented several recommendations from the Canadian Federation of Students dealing with the critical issues of affordability and accessibility.

They also presented a survey by Viewpoints Research that showed more than 80 per cent of Saskatchewan residents are concerned that students may not be able to afford university. In fact, a majority of people in rural Saskatchewan and a majority of people making less than \$40,000 per year are concerned about increasing tuition. I understand the students also presented these recommendations and information to the Sask Party.

To the minister: did the government listen to these students and what will be changing as a result of this meeting, or was the meeting simply an empty gesture?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to highlight our tuition management strategy. It includes increased operating funding for universities, Mr. Speaker. It includes increased infrastructure and renewal, Mr. Speaker, \$25.1 million after more than 26 million had just been invested.

2008 was a record year for Saskatchewan in that infrastructure for advanced education: \$23.5 million as far as an offset on tuition with a very modest increase in tuition, Mr. Speaker; enhancements to student loans, Mr. Speaker, including one-year programs, including the capacity for student housing, including the capacity for student loans on a weekly . . . [inaudible] . . . rate that hadn't been moved since 1994, Mr. Speaker. Plus the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker, the most aggressive youth retention program in the country. Happy to report we are supporting our students fully, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the students I met with yesterday are worried about the impacts of rising tuition. While the Sask Party claims that the average increase will be 3 per cent, students are concerned that this will impact some much more than others.

Students are already planning for next fall and need to know how much extra they need to earn this summer in order to be able to afford a more expensive education. They need to know which colleges will be hit the hardest by this government's decision to increase tuition. Will the professional colleges be hardest hit? For example, will law and engineering students be facing a 10 per cent increase? To the minister: which colleges will be hardest hit by this decision to hike tuition?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, it's with full respect to the institutional autonomy and the partnership that we've established with the institutions that I read the following quote. This is from *A Reappraisal of University Access and Affordability 2009*:

During the 1990s and the early part of this decade, university tuition fees rose at unprecedented rates. In Saskatchewan, the average undergraduate tuition fee was \$1,545 in 1990-1991, but by the 2004-2005 academic year the average had risen to . . . [over \$5,000]. This amounted to an average annual increase of 8.5 per cent over these fourteen years, almost four times the average annual rate of inflation, [which was] 2.3 per cent . . . During this time, a university education became much less affordable [Mr. Speaker] . . .

And it was the members opposite that oversaw that, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, not only will thousands of undergraduate students be hurt by the Sask Party's decision to hike tuition but so too will thousands of graduate students.

Sadly we already know that the Sask Party's budget failed graduate students by continuing to exclude them from the graduate retention program. But now by deciding to force tuition to increase, the Sask Party is making it more difficult for graduate students to pursue their training. We need professionals like business grads, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech language pathologists, and researchers to fuel our economy and provide much-needed services. But with the Sask Party in government, graduate students are truly paying a whole lot more and getting a whole lot less. They're paying more for tuition and they don't benefit from the

retention program.

To the minister: why the double insult to graduate students, and how much more will he force graduate students to pay in tuition?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows very well that, on an average, Saskatchewan has the third lowest tuition rates for graduate students in all of the country.

But, Mr. Speaker, it leads to another question. The member from Regina Douglas Park calls the budget, he characterizes it as having out-of-control spending, while his seatmate from Saskatoon Massey Place calls for an even greater spending, saying it just makes good economic sense, Mr. Speaker. What is it, Mr. Speaker? Is it out of control or do they want more spending, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, over the past year, the minister has often referred to a tuition management system. While he has often referred to this system, the details have never been clear. But the details are slowly emerging. Apparently what the minister means by a tuition management system is that student recommendations will be ignored, some students will be hit harder than others, grad students will be especially hard hit, and only some students will get their tuition rebated.

Based on these characteristics of his tuition management system, I now understand why the minister was so reluctant to share the details of the system. To the minister: will he admit that his tuition management system is simply a euphemism for students paying more and getting less?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, quite simply I flatly reject the assumption and the accusation that have been inserted in that question.

Mr. Speaker, operating and infrastructure — going up. Tuition support — going up, Mr. Speaker. Scholarships, student loans — going up, Mr. Speaker. The graduate retention — going up, Mr. Speaker. We have put in place a graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker, that is the most aggressive across the country. We have a tuition management system and strategy, Mr. Speaker, that reinforces that students and institutions, Mr. Speaker, students and institutions are a key priority for this government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### SaskPower Capital Plan

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister Responsible for SaskPower. We listened yesterday as he made a ministerial statement reannouncing the announcement that was made on Friday, I believe, of last week concerning the capital expenditures of SaskPower, which he has announced will be, I think, in the current year \$950 million planned and expended, which is about, Mr. Speaker, on par with the announcements and highlights of the 2007 annual report of SaskPower where, I believe, the total was 996 million in 2007.

But, Mr. Speaker, the difference here is the 950 announced is in addition to the 7 or 800 million the government has now committed to clean coal, which will be in addition to any capital requirements or costs associated with a nuclear reactor.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government has already submitted a 13 per cent increase proposal for SaskPower utility payers. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: how does he intend to pay for this capital? Because, Mr. Speaker, it'll either be through debt or through increased utility charges. Which is it? And if it will be increased utility charges, Mr. Speaker, how much will they be?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I answer a question on SaskPower. On Friday last I had the opportunity to announce the largest ever capital injection into SaskPower by any Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker. It's a responsible thing to do going forward because we have a growing economy, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite were not planning for growth. It's something that SaskPower is indeed doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about what this government is going to do to show its commitment to Crown corporations. Well I'll tell you what this government is going to do. We have announced that we will suspend the dividend from SaskPower and reinvest it, not in Guyana, not in some place around the world, but right here in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — To ensure that that we have safe, reliable power, that we can continue to ensure that the fastest growing economy in the country is right here in Saskatchewan where it should be, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, one dividend is not going to pay for this capital investment. My question was, how will it be paid

for? Will it be paid through debt or will it be paid through utility rate increases? The minister refuses to answer.

Perhaps he will then answer this question. I've reviewed his commitments around capital infrastructure. I do not find, Mr. Speaker, anywhere on that list 1 kilowatt hour of new renewable energy production for SaskPower Corporation. Mr. Speaker, why is there no renewable component to the capital plan of the Sask Party government?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, there's two questions in there. I'll answer the latter first. We're undertaking a wind study right now. We're looking at biomass. We're looking at the contributions that solar can make. Right now in Saskatchewan we have one of the highest percentages of generation of wind power anywhere in the country. We will continue to work on that. Saskatchewan, as residents know, is in a wind tunnel and has some natural advantages.

But I want to talk about the finances of SaskPower. That's an interesting question coming from that member. He talks about operations and borrowing. Yes, there will be increased debt, there will be increased money going into the corporation. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what will not happen from this government, and this member should know, and I quote from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, Saturday, March 21, this past Saturday, and it says, back in 2003:

Among the things . . . the total debt of the public utilities was the move by premier Lorne Calvert's government in 2003 to carve out a cash dividend of \$169 million from SaskPower, even though the company's profit [for] that year consisted mainly of an "on-paper gain" of \$133 million from currency rate differentials.

So the currency rate differential . . .

**The Speaker:** — The minister's time has elapsed. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the very direct question to the minister responsible is: how much of his capital expenditures does he expect to pay for through increased rates to the businesses and consumers of SaskPower in Saskatchewan? It's a very simple question. What can we expect as a rate increase?

We've already got a 13 per cent increase on the books by this government being asked for. What more will they ask for from the consumers of electricity in this province to pay for the capital projects?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, of the \$954 million, \$293 million will be funded through internal

operations; \$661 million will be funded through additional borrowing. The capital requirements of the Crown continue to increase. And the capital asset value of that Crown will continue to increase as well.

What's more interesting, Mr. Speaker, is for the last 16 years, and certainly in the last two elections, that NDP opposition — that NDP party when they were in government — they wrapped themselves in the flag of the Crown corporations, saying they were the defenders of the Crown corporations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when we became government, we saw that that is not true at all. They provided equity stripping. They did not fund the Crown corporation to the tune that it should have been funded. They didn't plan for growth. Mr. Speaker, we'll let the people decide who are the true defenders of the Crown corporations in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Certainly the people will decide. And they're going to be deciding as they look at their power bills going up and up and up. Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister of Canada was in Estevan . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I recognize there is a number of members who want to get into the debate, but I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Calvert:** — Well thank . . .

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll try again. When the Prime Minister of Canada was in Estevan, joining with this government in announcing the clean coal project, the Prime Minister made it very clear in what he said that day — with this kind of technology, we can expect costs to rise. The president of the Power Corporation at that same time, our current president of the Power Corporation said, with this clean coal technology, with these kinds of technologies, you can expect costs to rise.

But last Friday the minister now responsible said:

What we do have here is a commitment to keep rates as low as possible. And that's why we're undertaking things like clean coal initiatives, to ensure that we can keep the rates as low as possible.

Well the Prime Minister of Canada says, if you do this, rates are going up. The president of the corporation says, if you do this, rates are going up. The minister says, if you do this, rates are going down. Which is it? Who are we to believe — the Prime Minister and the president, or the minister?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to talk about why this government has made clean coal technology a commitment and a priority, Mr. Speaker. Certainly with the likes of people like Dr. Malcolm Wilson here in Saskatchewan where he's doing leading-edge research in carbon capture and sequestration and projects like the North Dakota-Weyburn project, like the proposed project between Montana and Saskatchewan — that indeed will keep costs as low as possible as we go out and do leading-edge technology, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the members opposite what they did in the dying days of their administration. They looked at a \$4.5 billion clean coal proposal. They found that the costs were rising. They walked away from it, Mr. Speaker. Did they have a plan B? Did they have a plan for providing sustainable, responsible power to Saskatchewan people? No. They had no plan for growth. They had no plan whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

#### SaskEnergy Funds Natural Gas Purification Research

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I make a ministerial statement today on behalf of SaskEnergy.

Research is a vital component of our province's economy. The solutions developed by our universities today create jobs, investment opportunities, and continued growth for tomorrow. That's why I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to announce as Minister of Crown Corporations that SaskEnergy is funding a major research project to benefit the energy sector and the environment.

This work will be conducted by the Faculty of Engineering and its students at the University of Regina. Over the next three years, SaskEnergy is committing \$300,000 to the U of R [University of Regina] to find ways to improve the quality of natural gas that comes from producer wells.

Mr. Speaker, we're challenging the engineers at the U of R to design a new purification process for natural gas and gas associated with oil production. Natural gas or associated gas often contains impurities like carbon dioxide, nitrogen, hydrogen sulphide. If not removed, these impurities can interfere with pipeline operations. They can also reduce the safety or efficiency of natural gas appliances such as furnaces and boilers, Mr. Speaker.

SaskEnergy maintains extremely high pipeline specifications for the gas it transports and distributes. So natural gas with impurities either has to be processed at a gas plant in order to be ready for the marketplace or it can't be used because it doesn't meet these standards. Often a gas plant is not nearby, so this energy source remains unutilized. This project involves removing these impurities through a unit that can be designed at the individual well sites. That will provide access to increased

volumes of natural gas for Saskatchewan. This will be a particular benefit to smaller scale producers in more remote areas without access to gas plant processing.

Mr. Speaker, that's why SaskEnergy and our province's natural gas producers are turning to the University of Regina. They feel the university has the right people in the right place to find a solution. It is SaskEnergy's hope that this investment in research will provide cost-effective natural gas purification technology. This is groundbreaking work, Mr. Speaker, with intellectual property implications for this technology far beyond our borders.

Saskatchewan has had a long history of leading the way when it comes to innovation in energy technology. In the 1960s TransGas, the pipeline subsidiary of SaskEnergy, developed the use of underground salt caverns for natural gas storage. That technology is in use around the world today.

Mr. Speaker, while there are obvious economic advantages to developing this technology, it also has important environmental benefits. Natural gas with impurities which cannot be processed is often flared producing more greenhouse gas emissions. SaskEnergy is committed to working with the industry to capture this resource. Mr. Speaker, this partnership shows our Crown corporations, industry, and universities at their very best. We have a full confidence in the U of R professors and students involved with this project.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to providing updates to the House on these exciting results of this investment research. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

At the outset let me thank the minister for providing this side of the House with an advance copy of his speaking notes for the announcement today.

Mr. Speaker, the research being funded, if successful, will have great benefit for SaskEnergy, SaskEnergy customers, and the environment in Saskatchewan. And the minister is correct when he says that this is groundbreaking work with potential application around the world.

We're pleased to see this research is to be conducted by the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Regina. The Faculty of Engineering has an excellent reputation for work of this nature, and the work is well done there and well situated, given the nearby location of the Petroleum Research and Technology Centre and the Greenhouse Gas Technology Centre at the university.

Mr. Speaker, this is a win-win project for SaskEnergy, SaskEnergy customers, the environment, and the University of Regina. We welcome this announcement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present the third report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills, which I now do lay on the Table. Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. The motion is carried. And pursuant to rule 98, the private Bill 902, *An Act to incorporate the Stephen and Michelene Worobetz Foundation* and Bill No. 903, *The Ancient Order of Melchizedeq, Inc. Act* are deemed to be read the first time and are ordered for second reading on the next private members' day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the answers to questions 263 through 294.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 263 through 294 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. I'd like to order 295.

**The Speaker:** — Question 295 ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. I'd like to table the answers to questions 296 through 319.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 296 through 319 are tabled.

## 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. Gantfoer that the Assembly approves

in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Van Mulligen.]

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to resume my speech from last night. I guess I'd like to wrap up a few things, Mr. Speaker, in terms of things that I thought were decent measures in the budget.

I was happy to see the \$200 million for the new children's hospital. I was happy to see money for the early learning and child care sector. I was also happy to see the improvements coming forward for the child welfare system, though of course, Mr. Speaker, we'll be watching very closely to see how that plays out.

Under the stronger and safer communities portion of the budget, again operating grants for municipalities increased. That's a fair measure, Mr. Speaker. The monies for additional police officers, I think that's a fine measure as well. I also understand that there are attendant increases for the safer communities and neighbourhoods program, something which I'm glad to see being built upon. Community-based organizations seeing an increase of \$27.2 million — again, Mr. Speaker, any monies into the hands of the CBOs, I think in a general sense, is good money being spent.

So, Mr. Speaker, the other things. Investing in education and skills training, it was interesting. It was a bit of a blast from the past, Mr. Speaker. The minister was quoting from the McCall report, you know, again to use the common usage.

And I can remember when the interim report came out, the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs said, you know, tuition is at this level; we should be below the national average at a minimum. And we couldn't get there fast enough, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure he was outraged to see an increase on the average of 3 per cent coming with the \$23.5 million to the universities. So it's interesting how times change, Mr. Speaker. The member from Silver Springs, you know, continues to evolve on this issue and in a most interesting way.

I was happy to see the extra money for the 1,100 apprenticeships and additional training seats. I'm interested to see the 5.9 million for the Aboriginal Workforce Development Fund. We'll see, Mr. Speaker. And again I'm presuming that this is money that's flowing through from the Labour Market Development Agreement. We'll find out about that in the days ahead.

We'll also see, Mr. Speaker, what happens around things like the Aboriginal Access Bursary as the millennium scholarship fund wraps up, and how Saskatchewan is impacted in that regard. Other measures associated with students — glad to see those, Mr. Speaker.

I guess the last few things I'd like to touch on in terms of general impressions of the budget, the monies for enhancements to the seniors' income plan. Again we're glad to see that, Mr. Speaker. I'll be interested to see how the monies previously

announced, whether or not they've actually flowed to the intended receivers. I know something in my office, there was a lot of fanfare with which the measure was initially announced. And there's some interest, of course, in terms of seniors that expect a great increase to their income. And there's also been some disappointment, Mr. Speaker, when the seniors come into my office and find out how much they're actually entitled to or not entitled to, and whether or not it lives up to the hype that it was announced with.

I'm happy to see the 12.5 million for the adjustment to shelter rates. Again I think that's a decent measure. I'm also happy to see, you know, some money to new affordable housing units. Again, Mr. Speaker, the amounts that are allocated speak to the priority that the government puts on these things.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, when we had the good fortune as a government to come across an extra 100 million mid-year in '06, the pleasure that we took in being able to put that towards, 40 million of that towards expanding adult basic education opportunities and adult education opportunities in the inner cities of Saskatoon and Regina. And putting an additional \$60 million, you know, on top of the monies that were already there in terms of the centennial affordable housing program and the HomeFirst program, an additional \$60 million on to housing. And a great share of that, Mr. Speaker, going towards the building of new affordable housing units.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see expenditures being made in a micro sense within the envelopes of the budget. But the amounts that they deal with overall, I don't think speak to the need that is out there. I know in the city of Regina, vacancies at point five per cent, an issue that comes up time and again in terms of my constituents is the availability of housing. And it seems to me that the current government, by not turning sod on new housing projects on a scale that was in keeping with the pace that had been achieved in bringing new housing stock on stream, it's a lost opportunity, Mr. Speaker. And it means that more families are going to be raising kids, and they're having their homes and houses that are substandard and that ought not be lived in. So again, Mr. Speaker, I think there's a lost opportunity there.

[14:30]

There's also a lost opportunity around in terms of resources available, and the opportunity to move in an aggressive way on an anti-poverty strategy. I know our spokesperson for social services issues, the member from Saskatoon Centre, will have some more precise things to say about that, and I'm quite looking forward to it, Mr. Speaker. But again, there is a great opportunity here for an anti-poverty strategy, and that opportunity has been missed.

In terms of how this budget has affected First Nations and Métis relations, Mr. Speaker, and in terms of the funds that this budget brings forward to First Nations and Métis issues in this province, again we'd had some discussion of it yesterday in question period, but I think the headline of the *Leader-Post* story which appeared page A4, Friday, March 20, 2009, I think this says a lot.

The title of the story is "Totally excluded", Mr. Speaker. And

the totally excluded comment arises from comments made by Vice-chief of the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], Morley Watson who had held a press conference on Thursday after the budget.

And again in terms of the stakeholders and the people that are dealing with these issues on the grounds, you know, what someone like Vice-Chief Watson has to say on this, I think, is fairly important and fairly instructive. I'll quote a bit more at length from what he had to say, Mr. Speaker. And I quote:

“As one of the largest stakeholders in the province, First Nations are extremely disappointed,” Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) vice-chief, Morley Watson said at a press conference.

Despite a \$5.9-million investment in aboriginal . . . initiatives, Watson said First Nations were almost “totally excluded” from the budget.

He described the budget as a “missed opportunity” to address aboriginal issues, including poverty, education and the duty to consult with First Nations groups, affected by resource exploitation.

And again, Mr. Speaker, the past year . . . And before that of course, there's been a lot of talk and a lot of expectation around the whole file of resource revenue sharing and what's happened with duty to consult and accommodate. And the file of course, Mr. Speaker, is getting more and more complex and more and more contentious all the time. And I think there is an opportunity with this budget to come forward with funds that says, we take this issue seriously. When we talk about First Nations and Métis people sharing in the wealth of the province, there is an opportunity with this budget to come forward in a meaningful way with those funds. And of course, Mr. Speaker, it was a missed opportunity in this budget.

And I think the way that this is playing out in a . . . You know anybody that reads the paper can see this to be so. I think you're going to see more recourse to courts of law in terms of First Nations and Métis people trying to address their interests. And I think you're going to see more activity like we saw this fall around the blockade with Enbridge.

And you know the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations is hollering over at me, asking if that's what I'm encouraging. And I'll say again for the record, Mr. Speaker, that if anyone reads the paper or watches the evening news, that's what you'll see going down. And I don't think it does the people of the province or, you know, the minister whose got a portfolio that deals precisely with this, any good to try and inflame the issue more than it already is.

And I guess the interest that I have, Mr. Speaker, is that over the past year — despite the sweet words that were said on this file by the members opposite — they've taken a year and they've wound up even further behind in terms of where they were at with the draft guidelines. And First Nations and Métis people become increasingly frustrated when they've seen a year where they've tried to work in good faith, where they've tried to work in respect, where they've tried to work in partnership, and they see those efforts going for naught, Mr. Speaker.

Because what this budget was about was sending a signal to First Nations and Métis people that their issues were being taken seriously.

And I hear the member from Saskatoon Northwest hollering over, shame on me. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, if I'm going to, if I'm going to look at the budget and . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I would ask members to respect the right of other members to speak, but I also ask members not to draw other members into the debate. I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

**Mr. McCall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, drawing them in. If he's jumping in, I mean you know, what do you do?

**The Speaker:** — Order. I just ask the . . . Order. I ask the member just to resume his speech on the debate. Member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. And again the members opposite like to holler over different things about trying to inflame the situation, but I would point out they've had a year plus to work on this file. They've raised expectations sky-high before the election in terms of what duty to consult and accommodate would mean in terms of First Nations and Métis people sharing the wealth of the province.

And it's instructive I think, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, over the past little while we've seen things like the draft guidelines being put out on the week before Christmas, at a time when, you know, I think that minister was well aware that the First Nations would not have sort of maximum opportunity to respond.

I think you've seen the interesting fact where the FSIN has a general assembly, and again, Mr. Speaker, it's sort of like if SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] had an assembly or SARM had an assembly and if the minister didn't show up. So where was the minister for not just one FSIN assembly but the past two FSIN assemblies? Where was the minister? Nowhere to be seen, Mr. Speaker.

And in the past couple of weeks, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan has had a duty to consult forum. And I think again it's instructive that, where was the minister? Nowhere to be seen. Because perhaps in that forum you don't have maximum control over the way your message gets out. You can't spin things the way you like, so you just duck it.

And again, Mr. Speaker, you heard from the people at the microphones at that gathering that they were very disappointed and felt insulted by the fact that they had expected that minister to be there and she was not.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I wonder in the days to come, where this government has talked about working in consultation and in partnership and in respect, where they've arbitrarily set deadlines and changed deadlines, I fear for how these negotiations are going to go, Mr. Speaker.

So if the people over yonder are concerned about blockades and court action and those kind of things, I think they should take a

look in the mirror, Mr. Speaker. I think they should take a look at how they've been conducting themselves at the negotiating table, at how they've been conducting themselves in the bilateral process, and if it's not working . . . You know, the fact that they want to blame everybody else for their failings, I find kind of sad in a standing government, Mr. Speaker.

So we'll see how the days and weeks ahead play out around duty to consult, but if this budget is any indication as to the good faith measures being put forward by this government, I think we're in for a rocky ride, Mr. Speaker. So with that, I will conclude my comments. I'll be voting for the amendment and against the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter this debate on the 2009 budget. Before I begin, I would like to echo the sentiments of some of my colleagues and very deeply thank my family members, including my wife Leone, my daughters Rayanne and Katelin — without their support I could not possibly be here — as well as the help of my constituency assistants Lauretta and Annie, again very valuable assets. And the people of the constituency of Yorkton who elected us by the narrow margin of 60 per cent, Mr. Speaker. I'm lucky enough to be here and I really appreciate the opportunity.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the stuff that we've done over the last year and a little bit . . . I want to bounce back to even during the election some statements I made to some Crown corporation employees, government employees within the constituency of Yorkton — a lot of them friends of mine — who were worried about voting for a Saskatchewan Party government. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the statements I made to them was, you give us the opportunity now, I'll take that. The next one we're going to earn.

Well what I've heard after our last two budgets and our throne speeches, Mr. Speaker, is a lot of those constituents are saying you've more than earned our support for the next election. So we're fully expecting those numbers to increase as long as we stay on the course and keep things strong and steady.

As well I'd also extend my thanks to the Premier and some of the appointments he has given me. I have had the opportunity to work with the Minister of Social Services on some important work, and I was really grateful for that opportunity to learn under her guidance. And now he's given me the opportunity and I'm very lucky to be working with the Minister of Environment for some very important environmental initiatives, specifically with recycling and waste management. And I'm really looking forward to working with her on that and helping her out on that file, Mr. Speaker. So, you know, some positive things that we're moving ahead with there.

One thing I've noticed, Mr. Speaker, over the last year and a half is negativity. And my wife is a very, very intelligent woman, and she gives me a lot of good advice over and over again. And two pieces of advice she gives me: you know, when you think you should have done something and you don't and

you say I should've, would've, I should've, would've, should've, would've . . . And I hear, you know, a lot of that from across the floor. We were going to do that; we were going to do that. And my wife's advice is, don't should on yourself because shoulding on yourself is never very good. So, you know, don't use the word should. You just have to think about what's happening that's positive, get behind it, and move things forward.

As well as some of the negative that I do hear . . . And another very important comment she makes to me is you bring about what you think about, and negative thoughts just keep bringing on negative outcomes. And I think we've seen that over and over again. Another thing, Mr. Speaker, I've noticed is if you speak it, you walk into it, and over and over I think I've seen the negativity that, you know, members opposite keep walking into.

And I think if they'd just get on board and start thinking positive and working positively and, you know, point out the shortfalls and nobody's perfect. Our government isn't perfect and we recognize that. But work in a positive manner with positive comments and positive criticism; anybody's open to that. And I think that's where we have to strive for, Mr. Speaker, working collaboratively and productively and not with some of the things I see happening.

We are looking forward, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at positive outcomes and positive moves within the province. Saskatchewan's economy is strong. Our government's taken actions to make it steady and strong, and also moving along with that is we're making life more affordable for the Saskatchewan people. And as I said, Mr. Speaker, that's been recognized. A lot of constituents have recognized that and reflected that to me, and I'm very encouraged by that and that keeps me going day to day, Mr. Speaker. As I said, you know, we're trying to be positive. The people of the province out there are positive. If we could just get the members opposite to be positive, I think, all working together, we can really get things moving ahead for the better of all people in this province.

One thing to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, is this budget came in the time of a global recession where other jurisdictions are coming up with deficit budgets or worse. And you know, we're not immune to this, Mr. Speaker, but we're doing very well. And you know, the world's recognizing Saskatchewan as a very stable economic environment. They're looking to invest somewhere stable — Canada top of the G7, Saskatchewan, I would argue, the top of those provinces within that country. We have a lot of interest in this province right now. All the more reason for the members opposite to really get behind what's going on in the province and get more of a positive attitude, Mr. Speaker.

We are forecasting growth. And one thing I've really noticed from the members across, they are pointing out some numbers that some private organizations have come up with, with growth. But I think, Mr. Speaker, part of the problem with that, they might be pigeonholing some of the smaller amounts, smaller forecasts, brought out by some of the private organizations. I think if you take an average, I think you'll see the 2.1 per cent growth forecast is pretty close to accurate. We see a province that's growing. And again we're optimistic but,



Mr. Speaker, we're cautious.

With that, Mr. Speaker, as well I'd like to fall back — and no pun intended — and think about some of the past announcements that have happened with our fall announcements: the tax cuts, the investment in infrastructure, the stimulus packages, or the investment in the province's economies and the province's infrastructure for a true stimulus package. Not throwing dollars at some maybe empty job creation, but throwing money into meaningful projects that are asked for by municipalities and needed by the province, Mr. Speaker, that are definitely falling short, that create real jobs that we can use to create a stronger economy in the future. Some of that infrastructure that investors from outside the province and outside the country really need to move forward with business in our jurisdiction. So that's very positive.

Some of the tax measures introduced by the Premier in the fall will benefit most Saskatchewan people if not all — actually all, Mr. Speaker, but those that have the lowest income will benefit the most whether they pay income tax or not. The record debt reduction, another long-term legacy I think, Mr. Speaker, that's going to pay dividends to the province for many years to come. What that means is less interest costs, less that weight being carried by the burdens of the taxpayer, meaning we can invest more into programs and infrastructure for the province to keep it growing.

[14:45]

The billion-dollar ready-for-growth initiative announced last year, very positive, and admittedly, Mr. Speaker, we did bring out 500 million from this coming year's budget for shovel-ready projects for that added stimulus. We want to make sure that momentum is going. We don't want to hold that money back and hold those projects back to the point that they can't really get going till late in the summer and maybe not finished in the upcoming fall and winter season.

So that money coming out ahead of time I think really keeps our momentum going, keeps those projects moving ahead for added investment in our province and in our people, including schools, long-term facilities, municipal infrastructure, highways, affordable housing, and the much-needed jobs to help build that infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. As I said, true jobs, true stimulus — not empty gestures.

Now on to the budget. One thing that's very exciting is in these economic times worldwide, we're looking at a balanced budget for Saskatchewan, arguably maybe the only one in the country. It's said that maybe one other jurisdiction in our country may come out with a balanced budget. But as my esteemed colleague from Kindersley did point out, that that jurisdiction may be getting a two and a half billion dollar transfer payment. And I don't know what kind of infrastructure investments or other investments they're doing, Mr. Speaker, so I think all told, a very positive move on the part of our government, and really received well by the people of the province.

And touching on that as well, Mr. Speaker, I think we'll hear a lot of criticism, you know, maybe a little bit of arrogance, maybe a little bit of over-jubilance. But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that for myself, and I know I can reflect the thoughts of a

lot of my colleagues. That has nothing to do with any sort of arrogance or any kind of patting on the back for ourselves, Mr. Speaker. That goes . . . speaks to happiness for the people of the province that they're feeling as well, Mr. Speaker, that positive attitude with a lot of the positive things that are happening in this province. And they are reaping in the benefits, Mr. Speaker. People of the province are really excited about that and feeling really positive and upbeat.

The property tax, I think, a great, great program. I know the hard work that the member from Rosetown put into that project, Mr. Speaker, how many nights I would see his lights burning late, late in the night, meetings over and over again in some of our meeting rooms, and unbelievable amount of work and I think some really good work done on the part of the member from Rosetown and the Deputy Premier on that file. So, you know, hats off to them. And I know many, many people are very encouraged by that.

I've heard some criticism as to, you know, maybe some of the school boards might not be happy with it, Mr. Speaker, but I've heard from many school board people that have said it's a weight off their shoulders. They're very happy about that. They know they're going to be funded properly. They're going to be worrying about the operation of that school. They still have their autonomy. They don't have to be the tax collectors. The government's going to fund this for them — 63 per cent this year, up to 66 per cent financing for next year. Very happy about this for the most part.

And I've talked to some new people that would like to get on school boards, that this is actually encouraging them to maybe come on board, get on the school board because the one negative thing they saw was them as being tax collectors. That's off their plate. They're very happy, Mr. Speaker.

So it's \$103 million extra financing tax relief to the people of the province, tied with the retroactive tax relief from the Throne Speech, and tied in with the upcoming tax relief, Mr. Speaker. Another stimulus — \$700 million in the pockets of the people of the province to keep this province moving forward and let the people that pay the taxes, the people of this province find the places they want to spend money. The government doesn't have to tell them how to spend money. This is the largest property tax cut in history; \$240 million in extra income going to the schools this year, Mr. Speaker.

Municipal revenue sharing. Now, Mr. Speaker, this I was surprised — well I guess I shouldn't say I was surprised — I was very encouraged by the reactions I got from this. Municipalities have been asking this for over and over and over again for years and years and years. Nothing was done but, Mr. Speaker, now we're seeing . . . Let's use Yorkton for example. Before the budget they were hoping for a point seven, point eight — you know, they would be happy with that.

To come up with a point nine per cent of PST [provincial sales tax] this year and an additional point one next year for a full percentage point of PST next year — fully sustainable and fully bankable income for those municipalities, Mr. Speaker — they are so excited. And with Yorkton, we are looking at, we just did an announcement on Friday at the chamber of commerce luncheon. The member from Regina South was there, the

Municipal Affairs minister. Two cheques he presented to the city of Yorkton, in total over \$8 million, Mr. Speaker, with the Building Canada money.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Hear, hear. Building Canada money, the MEEP [municipal economic enhancement program] money, Mr. Speaker. As well as the mayor pointed out to me it's not all — with the SIGI [Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative] money that the city received, the low interest loan, another \$2 million-plus in interest savings, Mr. Speaker, we're talking over \$10 million in those initiatives alone.

The surrounding RMs [rural municipality] around Yorkton: \$200,000 for the larger one; 90,000-plus, almost 100,000 for the smaller one, Mr. Speaker. Very excited, they can't say enough good.

Predictable revenue, like I said, totalling nearly \$170 million this year. And we have to keep in mind is, Mr. Speaker, that's on top of the \$100 million one-time funding for infrastructure, shovel-ready projects that the Premier announced this February.

So what we're looking at is something that the municipalities wanted, the leaders wanted — a predictable revenue source. And, you know, we delivered. And I just have to touch on a few quotes here. A lot of the members in the House have been using quotes from different sources; I might be using some of those as well.

A very respected local mayor, a phone call to me right after the budget, Mr. Speaker, "Who cannot be in love with the Saskatchewan Party government now?" I couldn't agree with him any more.

And another comment he made on Friday, with their cheque presentation, "This is the most amount of money any council in the city of Yorkton has ever achieved or gotten from any provincial administration prior to this one." Mr. Speaker, you know a very . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Yes, very encouraging words, and you know I'm very thankful for those comments. But you know, I think it just goes to realize that, you know, our government, our cabinet, our Premier realizes the value of Yorkton, third largest trading area in the province. And it's recognized and there's investments in that respect.

This budget, another \$1 billion in infrastructure to keep things strong and steady, Mr. Speaker. Again, more of that stimulus money to keep things rolling and keep our province economy moving.

Some of the promises we've talked about, Mr. Speaker. I think it's well over 100 promises we've kept. We've pretty much completed the whole platform document. That's great news. We've got over two years to go before the next election. So many more things to achieve, you know, to clean that off of our slate and really address other issues that come forward.

And what I've seen with a lot of the spending we've done, Mr. Speaker, it's not reactive. Reactive spending is never a good thing. You're always behind the eight ball. I've always termed that sort of the whac-a-mole system of finance; something pops up, you hit it. You're all over the map, you don't have any definitive plan.

There's such a strong plan here. The Minister of Highways, a definite plan. Five year rolling plan; flexible yet, you know, you can see where the money's going; see where the plan is; and we can see where things are going.

**An Hon. Member:** — Transparency.

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — A lot of transparency as pointed out by my friend, the member from Saskatoon Northwest, very knowledgeable, well-spoken man.

Proactive spending, Mr. Speaker, preventative spending. Something that in meetings early in our government, Mr. Speaker, some of the meetings I sat in on where I would use these words or some of my colleagues would use words like preventative and proactive, we would have people actually stop the meetings — thinking they were angry — and saying they had been meeting with administrations time and time again for a number of years, never have they heard proactive or preventative, Mr. Speaker. Those aren't my words. Those are the words of people that we have met with from north, south, east, and west. So you know, that's really encouraging for us to know that they feel we're on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, safety in our communities — so very important. As in Yorkton, not really any specific gangs at this point, but definitely gang activity is all over jurisdictions, all over cities. I think the majority of our areas are finding that there is some of that gang activity.

Thirty more police officers, again keeping up to that commitment that we made. Eighteen new RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officers in this province, Mr. Speaker. And the commitment from my friend and colleague from P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton that Yorkton is going to be seeing the benefits of some of those police officers, you know, so very exciting again. The mayor from the city of Yorkton catching wind of that could not be happier and cannot wait till we come to Yorkton with an announcement sometime very soon. Please keep tuned.

And as well as the funding for the western gang strategy database, to share knowledge of these criminal activities across the jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, not to just kind of look after your own little area. Let's share information. These gangs don't stay in small areas. They are province-wide. They are nationwide, Western Canada wide — sharing, collaborating, being co-operative to address that problem along the board.

Help for the most vulnerable in society. A lot of good movement. We saw from . . . I said with my work with the CBO initiative through the hon. minister from Humboldt — great work, a great lady to work under, and a very good mentor.

Some of the things that we came forward with through those CBO meetings, Mr. Speaker, some of the initiatives that have

been brought forward and acted upon already, quite honestly to me are quite stunning. As slow as government can move, how quickly she acted on some of these initiatives. And quite honestly, it really stunned a lot of people out there. They were very shocked and pleased — the extra money for additional funding to CBOs, as the hon. member across has spoken about.

Another quote I've gotten very shortly after the budget, and it was an email from a friend of mine that is the head administrator for Sask Abilities Council in Yorkton. And it reads:

Great provincial budget with interim funding for recycling operations and the 3% lift of Social Services CBOs again, plus capital for physical upgrades and construction. The enthusiasm amongst our staff is palpable.

Mr. Speaker, they could not be more excited with the investments that are being made.

Better life for all Saskatchewan children, Mr. Speaker. A thousand new child care spaces in Saskatchewan for those parents who work outside the home. Twelve million dollars will go toward space expansion, training programs, increased pay for early childhood learning and child care workers, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how much I'm running on time, but this is one point, it's very close to my heart, and it's not specifically in Yorkton. This is a province-wide initiative in Saskatoon. But this is one I'm going to have to apologize to my fellow members, I might go on long.

My family's past history with health care in this province — I can't say enough about the quality of care. The quantity was always the issue. The quality of care that we got when our son was sick, and ultimately passed away from cancer. Mr. Speaker, from the Saskatoon Cancer Centre, the child care we got there was second to none.

But with this new investment, Mr. Speaker . . . and I mean it was over and over, it was seen that we needed one. And a story I'll relay: when at one point we were in the hospital with our son, and we were up on the third wing and walking down the hallway. And I'm walking down there with a couple of the oncologists, and I said, you know, I thought this childhood cancer was so rare. What's going on up here? This ward is full of it. His statement to me, Mr. Speaker, was, they're all here. They're all here, the cancer kids.

So what does that say about that ward being full of cancer kids, Mr. Speaker? Where are some of the overflow? Where are some of the other kids with serious issues that maybe can't fit in? They're maybe not quite as serious with cancer. Mr. Speaker, I can really relate to my friend, the member from P.A. Carlton as well. When I saw this, I was teary eyed, Mr. Speaker, from sheer jubilation and happiness that some of the children I've seen fight and win, some of the children I've seen fight and lose, Mr. Speaker, those little souls putting up that fight.

And now we're putting some real dollars or real investment in this, \$200 million over the next two years. It's hard to say it myself, but you know I've got a few quotes here that I've really

got to, I've really got to reflect on, Mr. Speaker. Brynna Boback-Lane, President and CEO [chief executive officer] of Children's Health & Hospital Foundation of Saskatchewan:

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 or injury." This day is for them [Mr. Speaker].

There's a few more here, and I've got to share these because I was reading through these and I couldn't just pick and choose yesterday, Mr. Speaker. And there's one I really want to focus on. Mayor Don Atchison:

I can tell you, that children's hospital is not only for the . . . [citizens] of Saskatoon. [As I said, Mr. Speaker, this is for all of our people in the province.] That's for the entire province of Saskatchewan. We're one of the few places that do not have a children's hospital and I can tell you there's going to be a lot of happy families in the province [Mr. Speaker] of Saskatchewan.

And I am one of those families. My family is one of those families. We still have a lot of contact with the Saskatoon cancer centre, and I know a lot of those families there that are going through this battle, this fight right now. They can't be happier for that kind of investment in the quality of life and the quality of care for those very, very valuable children.

This one here really spoke to my heart, Mr. Speaker. Maura Davies, president of the Saskatoon Health Region:

I met with the minister very briefly and I gave him a hug and I don't often give the Minister of Health a hug, but I had to give him a hug today. I'm just thrilled about it . . .

He's lucky he's not sitting down there right now, Mr. Speaker; the camera would have to pan, I would give him one big hug. He might even get a wet kiss.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — And very, very deservedly so. He's probably hiding outside.

We have the investment in education and skills training, Mr. Speaker, as touched on by my one-legged friend from Saskatoon Greystone. \$23 million to enable universities to limit tuition increases to the average of 3 per cent, enhance our student aid program to make education more accessible, the student tuition reimbursement program, support training seat expansions for doctors and nurses.

Millions of dollars this year in a comprehensive plan to track more nurses and hard-to-recruit health care professionals. Some good work done by my very great member here that sits beside me from Regina. More funding to recruit more physicians to our province.

Investing in Aboriginal workforce development fund, program highlights new employment opportunities for those First Nations and Métis. Eleven hundred new apprentice seats and additional apprentice training allowance support. More

promises to keep our economy strong, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

As I touched on the infrastructure investment across the province, another investment in our city of Yorkton, Mr. Speaker, the truck bypass for Yorkton to service not only the new canola plant, the new canola industry, but those spinoffs developing that whole northern corridor that's expected to grow in Yorkton there, Mr. Speaker, and get our economy booming and keep our economy strong and to support those industries coming and wanting to invest in our province. This means a great deal for Yorkton and again the city of Yorkton's surrounding communities, very excited about this investment, \$40 million that will help rehabilitate municipal roads to better support heavy loads and our growing economy; again, Mr. Speaker, province-wide support all of our economies and constituencies, something that benefits every person in the province.

The Saskatchewan research and development tax credit encouraging motivation and that kind of investment in our province, Mr. Speaker, develop technologies here — Saskatchewan based technologies — grow them here, we can help jurisdictions around the world with what's developed here so, Mr. Speaker, very, very promising.

Never-before-seen, I don't think, investments in agriculture, Mr. Speaker — agriculture people I've talked to in my constituency and around the province are very excited. A lot of the green initiatives, the members across say, not enough money. But I'm looking at a lot of the priorities, Mr. Speaker. With my background in environment issues for the past . . . I would argue 35 years or so, Mr. Speaker, I've grown up in it and I've worked in it my whole life. I've never seen a Premier, I've never seen an environment minister, I've never seen government caucus before — being on the other side of the fence — so prioritized on environment and some of these initiatives right now.

Definitely we're in a crisis. Nothing caused by the people in the province that are looking after this good work for us, Mr. Speaker, but recognized and willing to move forward. And I've never seen, like I say, such a proactive and such a high priority placed on this initiative, Mr. Speaker, so very good initiatives.

And along with the prior budget announcement of \$2 million to help a lot of these predominately disability groups doing recycling in the province, Mr. Speaker, over 900,000 for those, over 300,000 for the waste regions, and 600,000 municipalities shouldering this burden on their own for a long time, showing definite investment. And we're not done there yet, Mr. Speaker, more good news to follow. We have ambitious projects helping to make life more affordable for our people that are needing help — government subsidized rental housing, more money to adjust shelter rates for income assistance program people, increased transit for disability people, help for seniors.

And, Mr. Speaker, with that, I think I'm going to wind things up here fairly quickly. We're on a strong and steady course I believe. As I've said, nobody's perfect, you know. We're open to criticism, address that criticism, and move on in a proactive and a positive manner.

But in these financial times, Mr. Speaker, I can't be more excited about the investment, the tax cuts, still having a .425 billion-dollar surplus, Mr. Speaker, .425 billion-dollar surplus, still over a billion in the Growth and Financial Security Fund, education property tax, infrastructure investment, investments in our people.

One more quote, Mr. Speaker, I want to use before I close, this by a respected journalist in Yorkton. I won't use his name because I never cleared it with him. Any members that want to ask me who he is, definitely I'll give them his information.

Coming out of the Chamber at lunch, Mr. Speaker, he walked up and he says, you know, Greg, you know I'm no supporter of yours; and I said, you know, I know you're not but I respect your views. With him, an interview is never an interview. It's always a debate, Mr. Speaker, but he reports very fairly and, you know, a very fair journalist, and I can't argue about that. His statement to me was, you know I'm normally no supporter of your party, but 90 to 95 per cent of what you are doing, I like. Now, Mr. Speaker, that — very positive news.

I could get into some of these charts with the tax cuts, people benefitting. I think some of the other members have touched on that. So I'd like to just close by saying how excited, honoured, and truly blessed I am to be working with these men and women on this side of the floor — the Deputy Premier, the cabinet ministers, the legislative secretaries, everybody in caucus pulling their weight, doing their part to make things move ahead and proactively for the province.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, I can't say enough about our Premier, so I won't. That's what you call a career limiting statement.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the amendment. I will be using less language than my friend, the member from Saskatoon Northwest used, but I will be voting in favour of the main budget motion. I am very pleased to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMillan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I start my speech today, I would like to mention a couple of the people that work in my office back in Lloydminster. Marilyn, who really helped me through a tough time there after Christmas where I was quite busy in the office and we were a little short staffed. And Caren, who has just joined our team, she's an excellent team member. In fact I think the way she handles herself and the professionalism that she shows in my office, I truly appreciate. So having those two ladies on this team is just fantastic.

Now, Mr. Speaker, today we're talking about the budget. This budget is titled *Saskatchewan: Strong and Steady*. Strong and steady is first and foremost a balanced budget, a commitment to fiscal responsibility, living within our means, keeping our financial house in order in a time of economic turmoil around the world.

Mr. Speaker, strong and steady is a commitment to infrastructure, putting the pieces back together after 16 years of neglect. Infrastructure is the engine that will keep our province productive as we go through this difficult time in the world economy. Strong and steady is keeping more money in the pockets of the men and women who work and live in this province, allowing these people to prioritize what's important to them in this changing world. Strong and steady is the right position for our province.

Historically we have experienced the full effects of what global turmoil can do if a province is not prepared. Our province was filled with optimism and promise in the 1920s and was not prepared when the downturn of the Depression hit in the 1930s, and the effects of which have been felt for decades.

Over 100 years ago the bravest people I can think of started this journey by settling the territory, then province. I scarcely comprehend the courage of these immigrants who spent their life savings to take a chance on a better life. They gambled everything to travel to an untamed frontier with no experience and little training. The lure of free land turned our barren prairie into an agrarian powerhouse, with families on almost every quarter section by the 1930s, with almost 1 million people in Saskatchewan by 1930. We had the third largest population in Canada. It was a very prosperous time in Saskatchewan.

The boundless optimism was met with the cruel reality of the Depression, as our province felt its full effects and the effects that lingered for years after. Two generations and 70 years after the Great Depression, our province was still haunted by it. Its impact affected how we handled ourselves and how we were viewed by our neighbours.

In 1990 I went to university in British Columbia. Being from Saskatchewan at that time had a stigma although my Wranglers and cowboy boots may not have helped break their stereotypes — likely not, Mr. Speaker. On a regular basis, my university counterparts would say their family roots were in Saskatchewan, but they had moved out long ago. I felt a little sore that Saskatchewan was often the butt of their jokes. While Torontonians were teased that they were from the “centre of the universe,” and Albertans were stereotyped as rich oilmen, you knew the jokes about Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan was often jested at a combination of being barren or flat, cold, a dry cold, prairie dust storms or snowstorms. We know the jokes, Mr. Speaker. Though meant in good humour, there may have been some truth. When honestly pinned down, their views of Saskatchewan was that Saskatchewan in the 1990s was kept afloat, and barely afloat by the good grace of equalization funded by their benevolent province. But Saskatchewan was a socialist basket case whose future held nothing but an exodus of our best and brightest.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would argue tirelessly. I would say to my counterparts, my friends, no, that is a simplistic view of it. In fact Saskatchewan is more than that; it is filled with hard-working people that have pride and confidence. But, Mr. Speaker, no sooner would I make these arguments than we'd see on the TV an NDP politician, sometimes the premier, saying, in fact no, no we are a wee province. Or in fact we will be in and out of equalization.

Mr. Speaker, some of them went so far as to say, the more of our young people that leave, the more there'll be left for the rest of us, now just perpetuating the negativity that was viewed of Saskatchewan at that time. And I knew that Saskatchewan was full of confident, hard-working people that didn't believe in equalization handouts, Mr. Speaker. But we would see on TV on a regular basis our politicians cutting the legs out of that argument.

Now, Mr. Speaker, how things have changed — and for the better — since the election in 2007 and the ensuing change in perspective in our province, not to mention the cross-country attention we have received. I can tell you the tone of my university counterparts has also changed. At a recent wedding in the United States, people would come up to me and instead of a joke would say, wow, Saskatchewan. What are you guys doing there? It is prosperous. You guys are the shining light in Canada. I would have Americans come up to me and say, I heard about Saskatchewan on CNN [Cable News Network]. What's going on? Now, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you I felt full of pride to have people from the United States, Alberta, and British Columbia fawning over Saskatchewan as this shining light.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMillan:** — Mr. Speaker, discussion would ensue about how our economy is robust. Our Premier is seen in a positive light, who is impressing everyone across our nation and south of the border with his balanced, progressive approach. It is nice to finally be on the map. Now many years, many generations later, the veil has been lifted, and our province is again the envy of the nation and continent.

This is why I got into politics — to be part of a team of optimists who share a positive vision for Saskatchewan, who know that we have not yet reached our full potential. Today I'm proud to stand here and see how far we've come in the last 16 months. But I know how far we have left to go over the long term.

While the NDP and their doom and gloom attitude may finally be history, our government is making history: the largest property tax cut in Saskatchewan history, a 14 per cent reduction in education property tax.

When the NDP were in government, they talked about the problem. They recognized the inequity. They recognized the unfairness. They talked and talked. Sometimes they gave the same speech in two consecutive years to the same group. They never solved the problem. It wasn't a priority for them.

This budget will increase the share of funding to school divisions by \$241 million this year to a record \$990 million. Our province will now fund 63 per cent of the operating costs of education this year and more next year. Heralded by both people in rural and the cities.

To quote a couple. Dave Marit: partly because of the property tax and partly some other issues that were addressed in the budget he said, and I quote, “This is the best budget for rural Saskatchewan in history.” Mr. Speaker, that is a long history, and I'm very proud to be on this side of the House when the

stakeholders are making comments like that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I find that the members on the opposite side of the House often make the mistake that this budget is rural or urban; it's good for one and bad for the other. Mr. Speaker, this budget is good for everyone, and the property tax issue is no different.

I will quote Mayor Don Atchison and he says in regards to property tax, "There are a lot of good things in here for the city of Saskatoon and I'm sure for a lot of other municipalities as well." And Mayor Pat Fiocco, he gets on board by saying, "As a taxpayer personally, I think it's going in the right direction." Mr. Speaker, to have endorsements from cities, rural, from farm groups, it is great that a budget can address the needs on a fundamental level. This is on top of the historic tax cuts, income tax cuts we've made, historic levels of debt repayment in this current year, historic spending on infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is again history and our party is making history. Historic revenue sharing — point nine per cent and a full 1 per cent point of PST to municipalities in revenue sharing this year.

Mayor Don Atchison says, "We've been asking for years now to have long-term, sustainable, accessible funding . . ." Allan Earle of SUMA adds this is a historic day for a new formula for it to become a reality.

Mr. Speaker, these groups have been asking for years. This money was clawed back and they've been asking for years and the NDP — I heard them — they talked about the problem on a regular basis. They again recognized it, they identified it, they said it needed fixed. That's as far as it got, Mr. Speaker, that's as far as it got.

Finally municipalities won't be subject to just ad hoc, unsustainable programming. They will have sustainable planning that can go forward over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, in two short years our government has made historic changes to set us on a new path, a path started by our founders over 100 years ago. The same optimism, entrepreneurship, the roll up their sleeves hard work that they too shared upon arrival in this province is again moving us forward.

[15:15]

My eldest daughter who is now four, she often asks me, dad, what are you going to speech about today? Then she tells me that it's probably going to be boring unless it's about her, her mom, and Gracie. Well I certainly can think about my young family when I critique this budget, Mr. Speaker; how the previous government's policies drove out entrepreneurship, drove out optimism, and drove out families.

I am proud to think of the new direction our government is taking. My daughter may choose to stay here in Saskatchewan when she grows up, that her future may be one where people say, wow you're from Saskatchewan; that is such a thriving, exciting place; it's been leading Canada for decades.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMillan:** — Mr. Speaker, historic investment in the children's hospital, \$100 million this year, \$100 million next year. This is good, good news for my family, Mr. Speaker. It's good news for families in Saskatchewan. And it's good news for families who are thinking of moving to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This is again something that's been long talked about in Saskatchewan, but it wasn't a priority for the members opposite. They knew that Saskatchewan didn't have one. They knew that it was a concern of people. They talked about it, but it wasn't a priority.

The CEO of the children's hospital and health foundation of Saskatchewan said, "We are grateful and feel privileged to be part of such a momentous time for the next generation of this province . . ."

Historic funding for child care spaces and early learning, an increase of 12.6 million. Mr. Speaker, 1,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan — this is historic. The most ever was 500 spaces in one year. This year 1,000, Mr. Speaker. Active family benefit, \$19 million. Increased funding for libraries, Mr. Speaker. This is good news for my family. This is good news for every family in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another initiative that must not be forgotten is the infrastructure investment. In last year's budget, we spent \$1 billion on infrastructure. We called it our ready-for-growth initiative, our ready-for-growth budget. \$1 billion had never been seen on infrastructure in Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, it was well received. It was well needed. It moved our province forward and it will continue to move our province forward.

This year, Mr. Speaker, we decided we're going to put another billion dollars into infrastructure because it's needed. Sixteen years of neglect has left this province in need of countless amounts of infrastructure. That government didn't make it a priority. This government got it done, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMillan:** — Safer communities — 30 new police officers in Saskatchewan. This keeps our commitment in the campaign; this keeps our communities safe. This is a priority for our government. It wasn't a priority in the past, Mr. Speaker.

Agriculture got a 58 per cent increase in spending, Mr. Speaker. Greg Marshall of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan said that "The government 'did a great job of [great job for, quote, great job for] listening' to the concerns faced by farmers and by rural Saskatchewan."

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is something we've heard from many groups, that in the past the doors to the offices in this building were closed, and that the new government has taken on a new direction of listening to the concerns of the people involved. I think that the former government got tired of talking about the issues with the stakeholders. But never being able to accomplish any of them, the meetings got somewhat repetitive and tougher for them to handle, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to at this point maybe point out a couple inconsistencies that I've seen from the critique coming from the aisle opposite in regards to this budget. I've noticed some stuff that maybe wasn't particularly accurate, and I would just like to address a few of those issues.

Part of the problem may be that such a well-rounded budget is hard for them to find an angle that they can attack. And I think this is borne out by a quote from Murray Mandryk, a columnist that often sits in this Chamber, and he said he wonders if the NDP have anything legitimate left to criticize. Mr. Speaker, I think that that might go part of the way to explaining the response we got from the members opposite.

And this was evidently borne out in a John Gormley interview with the member from Douglas Park, the critic of Finance. When asked by John Gormley what he would change about the budget, he came up empty. Mr. Speaker, he didn't have a response. And in fact worse than that, the Leader of the Opposition and the Finance critic were both found out this past week that their understanding of the potash industry is somewhat limited.

When they were starting to criticize that the revenues coming off potash may be tied to production as opposed to actual sales, it quickly backfired. But I think it left us all with a little less confidence that when they were in government, the people who were in charge of the finances didn't understand such a large portion of the budget.

Further than that, many of the members on their side have asked a lot of questions that I personally haven't felt had a lot of depth. Most were centred on the morning's newspaper and how that would relate to this broad document in the budget or something no more insight than yesterday's stock prices.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when a budget is designed, when the process is moved forward, the modelling takes private sector forecasts; it takes historical trends; it brings in information from all sorts. And we have a Finance department full of experts whose professional, professional job is to design a budget that brings in the best information. It models it, and it scales it out over an entire year — not over yesterday's stock price — over an entire year, Mr. Speaker. And I think that the members opposite don't take that into account.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on one other angle that I've noticed coming from across the floor and that is that, you know, they were going to get to this or they had planned that. We were going to do it. That's our project. Mr. Speaker, I have to agree with them. I think they did plan a lot of this. In 16 years, they had a lot of time to think about what they should be doing. The reality is that in 16 years, they didn't get it done. In 16 months, we have accomplished so many things.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMillan:** — Mr. Speaker, a perfect example of that is the member from North Battleford who has taken it on his personal charge that the project in his riding is all of a sudden the number one priority. We hear from him on a daily basis that this project, the Saskatchewan Hospital, in his riding is number one.

But, Mr. Speaker, when I look at history, I seem to remember he was the minister of Health for a long period of time. He was the decision maker. He was the guy that set the priorities for his government. And when he was making the decisions, it wasn't a priority for him. He was the guy that signed the cheques, and he said, you know, that's not something his government wanted to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes there are countless priorities in Saskatchewan. We are addressing them one at a time and, Mr. Speaker, at some point we will be addressing every priority in this province. And they will try and take credit for each and every one. Mr. Speaker, they didn't get it done.

Mr. Speaker, when they say they couldn't get it done, often it's because we didn't have enough money; we didn't have enough dollars. Mr. Speaker, it wasn't dollars that was the problem; it was common sense.

Mr. Speaker, they had lots of money. It was just that they didn't have the right priorities. They thought that spending money on dot-coms, on potato schemes . . . And I call it a scheme because it wasn't a plan. It wasn't a well-thought-out business model. It was a scheme. And the taxpayers of this province paid for it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, their plan was that as soon as their South American gamble paid off or their mega bingo payday paid out, they could build a children's hospital. Not that they could spend the money instead of on the potato scam or the mega bingo project on the children's hospital, but we would invest it there. And when it cashed out, we would spend that money on infrastructure for Saskatchewan.

You know, I sat around the table as a child and we'd talk about, you know, one good crop. If wheat prices go up this year, you know, maybe we can go to Disneyland. You know, one good canola crop and we can buy a new car. I wonder if those members would sit around their table and say, you know, if we have a good potato crop this year, just one good potato crop, and maybe we can fix the highway system, Mr. Speaker. Yes, one good potato crop.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMillan:** — If that Guyana power project hadn't been a wash, you know, maybe that could have been when the property tax issue was solved — maybe; maybe not, Mr. Speaker.

I think that the NDP had the resources; they just didn't have the priorities. They squandered opportunities again and again. One might have to question their philosophy, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has the confidence of the people of Saskatchewan. I heard this weekend from the members in my constituency how important it was that we have a balanced budget. I also was told by many people how much confidence they have in our Finance minister and the direction our Premier is leading. The people are proud of this budget. The people I talked to, they have their chests puffed out a little bit; you know — we have a balanced budget; the country doesn't.

Lloydminster is right on the border of Alberta and for too long we've watched our Alberta neighbours swagger around with their confidence. And good for them; they've done very well. But the people in Lloydminster who have lived on the Saskatchewan side, this year are standing just a little taller, Mr. Speaker, because we are the province with the balanced budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMillan:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of this team and a part of the optimism and growth. This budget is the next step on the journey started so long ago, and is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, and I will be supporting the strong and steady balanced budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to enter into the 2009-10 budget. And we know this is one of the most important parts of our job on both sides of the House, where we look for what's good and right for this province, and what we should be doing, and what may not be as it appears.

But before I get too far into my remarks, I want to send a special thank you out to a few folks, and of course on both sides we do that. I want to thank my family, of course, for their support over the past eight years. As we do this, as we engage in debate and sometimes it gets pretty heated and sometimes the comments are not quite on the mark but, you know, generally we have some pretty fruitful discussions in here and I appreciate the support from my family.

I also appreciate the support of my constituency assistant, Leslie Bennett. She's a tireless worker, helping out as much as she can, getting the services for people, making sure that they can find their way through sometimes the challenging bureaucracy of the government. And she does an excellent job.

Also I want to thank my constituents. Saskatoon is a very rich and diverse community. It's the heart of Saskatoon — I represent seven different communities, different parts of them. And it's an interesting and fascinating job to represent the core, the different challenges that core communities face, but also the downtown community in the high-rise apartments, whether they be Saskatoon Housing Authority apartments for seniors and for affordable housing, or from some of the upscale condos and the challenges that they face, and especially over the last couple of years around the housing issue in Saskatoon.

I do want to say that there are some positives in this budget, and of course many of us on this side have remarked on this. We have a limited time of about 15 minutes, 20 minutes to speak on this, so I won't go into length.

I am excited to see the continuation of our commitment to the children's hospital. Now I am concerned that it will take as long

as we've read in the paper; 2013 may be the date when it actually opens. But we understand that this is what happens, and we're glad to see that remains a priority.

We're excited about the student housing project at the University of Saskatchewan. Very, very important.

On a more sombre note, the work in terms of social services around the children's welfare response is an important move forward, and I will have more to speak about that in the future.

Of course we do have some concerns, and I'll let the specific critics on this side do what they're supposed to do, and that is to ask the questions. Sometimes the other side thinks that we should have the answers before we have the questions. Of course we don't have the privilege of having the answers, the full answers, and so we have to ask those questions. And that's what people in this province expect us to do, and we will do that, Mr. Speaker, no doubt about it. And we've been working hard, studying the documents, to really fully understand, what does this mean for Saskatchewan?

For example today we had some questions about Westside Clinic, and we'll have more questions about that. What is the implication for the core communities fully when we understand the importance of health in the communities?

Around environmental protection, I have some questions about that. We see what's happening federally. Jim Prentice, the Minister of Environment federally, has said that there may be some shortcuts when it comes to environmental protection. We sure hope that's not the case here in Saskatchewan.

Another issue that I have some concerns about is around tuition. We understand there's been some money set aside, but the minister today said that he respects the autonomy of the university to set their tuition fees. And so what does that mean? We give them so much money but there's not really much they can do. So this is an issue.

[15:30]

Well what do we judge the framework against? What's the framework that we evaluate this budget? Of course we talk about transparency and there will be the opportunity in estimates to ask questions, and it's important that we get full and frank answers from the ministers. At that point, our committees really get down to the nitty-gritty and do the important work of asking questions and getting the answers of what does this budget mean for people here in Saskatchewan.

Of course, fairness is also an important one. And of course we saw the headline on Friday morning in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* talking about Saskatoon being shortchanged. And we sure hope that's not the case. We have to wait and see.

The communications out of budget really asked us with some serious questions about what does the education part of property taxes really mean, especially in some of the communities in some of the larger centres. This is something that we have some questions about.

And of course my colleague, the member from Saskatoon



Nutana, had some very good questions about the intercity comparisons. And we asked about that. We can see the 2007 intercity comparison for a single person. At \$25,000 total income, their total costs were 9,671, and in 2009 it boosts up to 11,149. This is a reality of people who are living in Saskatoon who are single.

Now they can talk about taxes being cut, but the fact of the matter is costs are going up. And what are they doing about that? And I can go through this quite at length, but I want to get on to the main parts of my speech today. But clearly, costs of living are going up for people right across this province, and I have some serious questions about whether or not the government is actually meeting the challenge here in a meaningful way.

And of course I think the biggest question we have on this side is about the sustainability of this budget. What is it that makes this a solid budget? And we've had some different descriptions of this, talking about the shifting sands. And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I have some serious questions about this. I think that our critic, on this side, of Finance raised some serious points, some serious questions about what have they based this budget, the revenue projections on.

And of course the first one that came to mind, and I was shocked by the member from Lloydminster who was alluding to the fact they would just throw out the private sector forecast of GDP [gross domestic product], because they have better people inside the Department of Finance. Clearly we think that people inside the department are very capable, but I don't think you dismiss what the private sector is doing, particularly the current forecast. He can say you got to do this over a year. Mr. Speaker, we all know what's been happening in the economy around the world over the course of the past year.

Clearly this government's not taking the world price of oil over the last year, averaging it out. We know what it was like year. So clearly this is a problem. The private sector forecast of GDP growth is point six. We've established that and the rosy predictions of this government is 2.1. How can that be? Do you think they might take just another little look at that? I think they really need to do that.

And of course the reliance on one commodity of potash. We think potash is a really important sector of our economy, clearly an important sector. We've worked hard to make sure that sector can grow. In fact I seen the ministers in the front row wearing rose-coloured glasses. It's so bright in this . . . [inaudible] . . . right now, they've taken to wearing sunglasses in the House. But, Mr. Speaker, the reliance on one commodity, one out of every \$5 of the revenue for this budget comes from one sector.

We hope they're prepared in case things don't work out as well. We think that the comments, and particularly we see the layoff notices, the questions about the future production of potash, clearly makes us stop for a moment and think about where is . . . what is the future of this commodity over the course of the next year? We hope that it's up. Clearly it's got a strong track record, but the reliance on one commodity is problematic.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, the increase in debt and the

staggering increase in spending is something that we all have to worry about for sure.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, the one point that I want to make today as critic for Social Services is that this is clearly is a missed opportunity to really do something in a landmark fashion for this province. It's a missed opportunity. And we saw last November, and it was referred to earlier in the question period, but a report was released last year, last November, the health disparity report in Saskatoon — a very thick document. And all I remember last year in the budget debate asking the minister if he saw the precursor to this report, an article talking about the implications for the core communities of Saskatoon in terms of health disparity. And he assured me he had. And I hope he's had the time to take a look at the full report. It's a very thorough investigation into health disparity in Saskatoon.

And what is their first recommendation? What is their first option? Well, they talk about a poverty reduction plan. And I'm not going to read the whole thing here, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to talk about, they do a little review around the world — what's happening around the world. Well clearly Ireland is moving in a big way. The Netherlands is moving in a big way. Sweden's moving towards this, the United Kingdom.

What's happening in Canada, Mr. Speaker? Well, we see that there's other provinces that are moving in this direction as well, and doing amazing things. For example, Quebec has taken on the idea of a poverty reduction plan, and making major inroads into this really unfortunate area. We see that Nova Scotia's doing this, and as well, Ontario's doing this as well.

Well, their option number one, Mr. Speaker, and I want to read this into the record, is very clear because I think if the Minister of Social Services did any one thing this is the first thing she should have done, and I will quote:

Evidence Based Policy Option #1 — Develop a Multi-Year, Targeted Plan to Reduce Poverty.

Develop an effective plan to reduce poverty and health inequality for Saskatoon and Saskatchewan that includes a multi-year approach with concrete measurable targets, broad support and an evaluation plan.

The plan should:

Consist of interventions that have been shown to be effective

Include an evaluative component that continues to conduct research directed at the development of new interventions

Include concrete targets for each of the proposed strategy areas to measure progress

Include both short and long term targets

Be broadly supported across many sectors (both public and private) in order to be effective

[And] The results should be reported publicly on an annual basis.

Clearly a very well thought out recommendation. And I think it's very unfortunate that both the Minister of Social Services and the Minister of Health have it seems, it appears that they've concluded to dismiss this report, and I sure think that's a step backwards, Mr. Speaker.

I know in my community much of this work has been based on was hoping they would see more work from the government to meet the options and the recommendations outlined in this report. It's a landmark study and it's just unfortunate this government has chosen to ignore this.

Now as I said, others are calling for this as well. And I had a chance to meet with some of the folks from the National Council of Welfare, and they call for this as well. They're calling for a national conversation about an anti-poverty strategy. And what are the four cornerstones? And I talked about this last year, so this is not new. But this is what people are talking about Canada. What are the four cornerstones?

Well they talk about "A national anti-poverty strategy with a long-term vision and measurable targets and timelines." That's what Lemstra's talking about. Why can't we be doing it here?

The second one: "A plan of action and budget that coordinates initiatives within and across governments and other partners." Clearly again what the health disparity report talked about — both public and private, right across governments, both federal, provincial, and municipal. And I think we're missing an opportunity here.

The third point: "A government accountability structure for ensuring results and for consulting Canadians in the design, implementation and evaluation of the actions that will affect them" and "A set of agreed poverty indicators that will be used to plan, monitor change and access progress." So important, Mr. Speaker, and I think we've missed an opportunity.

We see, Mr. Speaker, across Canada, in fact in Saskatchewan, and in fact in Saskatoon, how the wage gap — the income gap — is spreading, and we need to do more to make sure that doesn't adversely affect people in Saskatchewan. And we have the tools at hand to do this, and I would really encourage this government to take some time to do it.

And as I said, Ontario just released their new one, and it's called the *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, just released a few short weeks ago.

And of course, I've got to mention for sure poverty-free Canada, formerly known as the National Anti-Poverty Organization or NAPO, has also been calling for this for many years. But clearly, provinces, countries are getting on board, and why is Saskatchewan lagging behind when we can be a true leader, but more importantly, serve the needs of those less fortunate in our society.

Now the other issue I have, and it's part of this and very much connected to this, is around HomeFirst. And we are, as I said, very excited about some of the announcements the minister has made in terms of the student residence at Saskatoon and the Milton apartments here in Regina and a project in P.A. But there's not an overarching policy framework or a vision that

talks about how we view housing as a basic human right and a need in our communities. And in fact it was interesting. Merriman even talked about this in his report when he talked about the housing continuum. We need to do more and we need to make sure all levels of government are on board.

Now the unfortunate thing here is that this housing policy framework for Saskatchewan 2004, of course, is a five-year plan and expires this year. And we were really looking forward to seeing what this government would do to replace it as a framework. As I said, there are many interests in one-time announcements, but how does it all tie together? And I think we're really missing an opportunity to really break through and talk about Saskatchewan's new direction in housing. We recognize there are challenges now in Saskatchewan that weren't there in 2004, that are here in 2008 and '09. And we need to make sure that some work is done here.

Now again I just want to emphasize that we really do want to see work in this area. And unfortunately when you don't have partnerships between the three levels of government . . . We know the municipal governments are stepping up to the plate. We've seen that in Saskatoon and Regina and some of the other communities, but we have not seen the federal government step up to the plate on housing. In fact we see them retracting, and we need this provincial government to really call on the federal government to say, we want you to engage in housing in a meaningful way right across the board, not on selected issues. And the issues they have are very worthwhile — First Nations and seniors — but you need to do more than that.

Now I see that the minister has set aside \$15 million as well as the 29 million for the three projects that she has. But she doesn't talk about what's that going to be used for.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we saw the unfortunate circumstance of what NHOP, or the neighbourhood ownership program, happened last summer where in the middle of the summer, actually early in the summer, the program ran out of money. And the government did not put more money into this. And so I am worried that this is a signal to low-income earners that NHOP now is finished, that it will be done and we won't hear anything more about that. And so I'm looking forward to more specific announcements in the near future; what this \$15 million is all about.

And I also want to raise a concern around those who find themselves in absolute homelessness circumstances. We see very little, if anything, from this government. We know there are community groups who are ready to move forward on this, but this government has chosen to be silent on this issue. And I think this is really truly unfortunate when you've increased spending some 12.4 per cent, but yet you have no money for those who are in absolute homelessness. And I worry about this. So we call on the minister to come clean with this as quickly as possible.

But, Mr. Speaker, probably more importantly is what I see happening over in Alberta. Last week, the Alberta government announced a \$3.3 billion initiative to end homelessness. And in fact, that's the headline on the government website, on their press release. And I have to applaud the government of Alberta and their task force for bringing this forward. This is visionary.

It sets out a framework for how they're going to end homelessness in their province. They recognize that there is a problem. They're going to work with communities; particularly Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer on this. And I have to congratulate them for doing this.

[15:45]

And probably the most important thing that they're doing though, as well as setting some benchmarks, and I find this very interesting, and I'll read directly from the press release:

Along with developing a ten-year provincial plan to end homelessness, the Alberta government has a plan to create 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012. To date, Alberta has supported the development of 5,600 affordable housing units.

Excellent. They've set some targets and they're going to meet them, and they're in a short time frame.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, that I think is very innovative — and I would like to see this government embrace this — is to endorse the housing first approach. And I'll quote from the press release on this:

The plan adopts a 'Housing First' approach of providing immediate housing along with client-centred support services such as mental health services, addiction counselling, employment training and other tailored supports as needed. Other jurisdictions in North America such as Portland and New York City have found the approach to be successful and sustainable over the long term.

That's something we should be thinking about, Mr. Speaker, very seriously. Clearly our neighbour to the west has recognized this as a problem that has gone on way too long, but they are stepping up to the plate.

Before I move on to the next issue, I just want to say there are some shovel-ready projects. I want to see them move quickly.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about how this government has been reluctant to really support community-based initiatives, programs like Station 20, and now today we hear Westside Clinic is not going to be supported in their expansion. I think this is truly unfortunate. Too often this government has waited until the eleventh hour to act and here is another example, especially when we've heard the news around HIV. We have been following this over the last little while. We were shocked to hear that the minister did not know about this, but he's taking now, I guess, the option to study it. We just think this is not the appropriate thing. He needs to act quickly on this.

I want to talk a little bit about a very important report that came out just last February, and it's called, it's the report from the Children's Advocate office, *A Breach of Trust*. Clearly the work around the foster care issue needed to be done. The report was very thoughtful and very thorough. The advocate, the Children's Advocate talks about the history of this, starting back in the '80s. And unfortunately we needed to address this now.

And so I think that the minister's response has a lot of merit to it. We are looking forward to seeing the results of this. I agree with many of the initiatives. And I particularly am committed, and I think the right thing is around the children and youth first principles. I am glad to see that the government is embracing that. These are principles that we can set our legislation and our policies on, and I think this is very important.

I do have a concern — and I hope the minister will take some time to think about this — and this really relates back to our anti-poverty strategy. I think the real solution to the issue facing the increased numbers of children at risk is really addressing the needs of vulnerable families. We need to really step up to the plate and make sure we strengthen the vulnerable families right at the very beginning.

And we've heard some talk. We've been hearing the questions on HIV. But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we've not seen the amount of resources that we need to see to go into the communities right across the province — not just the core communities of Saskatoon, but right across the province — so we don't have that unfortunate circumstance where children need to be apprehended.

I'm hearing that way too much in my office here. We have many families — and this is really unfortunately happening way too many times — people are coming in, moms are coming in saying, what can I do to get my baby back? And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's just truly unfortunate when you have moms coming into offices saying, what can I do to get my baby back? And for them it's too late. They needed the resources before that. And we need to make sure we have those resources in place so that just doesn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, in estimates I will have questions about the initiatives, particularly around the actual costs, the timelines, and the benchmarks. But we will discuss that further.

Particularly I have a question around the \$15 million price tag around the computer system. There are about 6,000 youth and children who are in the system, and I look at that and I go, this is about \$2,500 a kid. And I look at this, and they're saying they need three years to do this. I think that there's some serious questions about why does this take so long. We've heard the minister say we are the last province to do this, so if we're the last province, why could we not just see what other provinces are doing and take it off the shelf if we need to?

So I have some serious questions around the computer system. Fifteen million dollars seems a little much. And in fact it's been announced for over a year now that she's going to be moving in this direction. We've not seen any real movement on this.

But as I said, Mr. Speaker, I do think at the end of the day I have to say the minister is being short-sighted. I understand, and I understand fully the crisis that we find ourselves in and that it goes back a long ways. But this is really the time to put resources into supporting vulnerable families so they find themselves that they can meet the challenges of raising young children and young people in our province. And this speaks to affordable, adequate housing and to community health. And I think that clearly we need to do more.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to address quickly a couple of concerns that I have. And I hope the minister can address this, maybe in some announcements in the days ahead. I understand that there's been an increase of \$2.7 million to SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] and to TEA [transitional employment allowance], but we don't see the details. We know and we appreciate the increases to the rental supplement and the housing supplement — very good stuff. But when I look at the budget document, a big question mark: what is the \$2.7 million is there for?

Now I had my colleagues raise this question earlier and I have to ask this as well. And I can't, I actually can't believe this — I don't know if this is an oversight — but we've heard the Minister of Education talk about the 1,000 new spaces of child care. He's not quite done the 500 prior, so we're getting quite a backlog.

But when I look at the budget document and I look under Social Services vote 36, the child care parent subsidies this year is 17.1 million and last year was 17.1 million. Mr. Speaker, there's no change. Does this mean those new 1,000 spaces are not for people who will be getting subsidies? Or they're not increasing the subsidies? Or was this an oversight? Clearly this has not been well thought out and we have some problems.

Indexation, Mr. Speaker. Now we know that the minimum wage is going to go up to nine twenty-five on May 1. We were hoping this government would index that, put the legislation into this so it removes it from the political arena, and it would just go up to the cost of living. And this would be a wonderful thing. And I've just been so disappointed that this government has chosen not to index it. And we'll fall back, fall behind like we were in the '80s, and I just feel that this is unfortunate.

But the other one that I think is unfortunate is that they've decided not to index the seniors' income plan. They increase it with quite a bit of money, and that's a good thing, Mr. Speaker. But unfortunately that money will soon be eaten up because it was not indexed. In a few years this \$100 will be worth \$95, then 90, and then we're into the 80s. And this is unfortunate. The irony, Mr. Speaker, is its partner program, the GIS [guaranteed income supplement], is indexed. So why is it that we have one indexed and the other not?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask this question too. A year ago we had quite a kerfuffle, quite a thing about the modernization strategy. It's gone silent on that front. I would hope that we would hear more about that, what has been happening on that strategy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that every day I've had the pleasure to present petitions calling for wage equity for CBO workers. Now we know that they put some money into this, but clearly not enough. People are looking for equity with workers in the departments, and we hope to see that would happen. We know that they have been traditionally underpaid and many continue to earn poverty-level wages.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that this results in high staff turnover, and a subsequent lack of caregiver continuity has a negative impact on the quality of care clients receive. And we know that CBO workers care for and provide valuable services to some of

the most vulnerable members of our society, such as those living with mental and intellectual disabilities; women and children in crisis; low-income, at-risk individuals; young children; youth; Aboriginal; immigrant and visible minorities. And so we know that they're also paid 8 to \$10 per hour less than employees performing work of equal value in government departments. And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that this issue should be addressed in the near future.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I draw to the close, I want to say, and I appreciate the . . . One of my colleagues last night talked about seeing this movie before. And I've got to say, I've got that same eerie feeling.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue is I've listened to some of the members opposite, you know. I would just like a little straight talk from the other side. It has been so glowing and over the top. Just a little straight talk.

I think there is a lot of good things in this budget. There are a lot of good things. I've said that. And you know, and I appreciate it. And I have to say, the ministers in the House . . . And I appreciate the comment you made about recognizing One Arrow housing. Very good.

But we need to hear some more straight talk. We often get blamed on this side for being too negative. But I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, sometimes I've got to say, I just feel a little uncomfortable about how over-the-top those folks are over on that side.

The member from Lloydminster talked about doing things one at a time, and I couldn't agree with him more. They do like to do things one at a time. And there is a reason for that, Mr. Speaker. They like the photo op. They don't want to do a lot because they miss just too many photo ops. I have a real problem with that, and for repeating announcements.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am going to take my seat, but I do have to say that across Canada they are calling for a national anti-poverty strategy. Let's do that here. Let's not ignore this health disparities report. It's just too, too good. There's too much in it to be ignored completely. I have a problem with that. Let's get an anti-poverty strategy happening here, a comprehensive housing strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for the amendment and not for the main motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Martensville, the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin today by thanking my staff, both in the constituency office and in my office in Regina — to Whitney, Drew, Drew, Krista, and Kelly — for the work that they do. We have a whole lot of fun in my office. I told them when they were hired that I don't take myself very seriously at all — I certainly take my job seriously — and we have a pretty good time.

I'd also like to recognize and thank my nieces and nephews. I

have six of them. They certainly help to keep me humble. They don't care at all that I'm an MLA or a minister, doesn't matter to them, and all they care about is when is auntie coming home so we can play on the weekends. So they're pretty special to me, and I'd like to thank them for being my friends, as well as being my nieces and nephews. They're pretty special.

I'd like to thank also my new Legislative Secretary, the MLA for Yorkton. He has a specific role to play with the Ministry of Environment on recycling. It's a very important initiative for our province. He has an excellent background and a passion for this file. Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the continued good work that he's going to do.

This is a very exciting budget for the Ministry of Environment, and I'd like to take this opportunity as well to thank all the staff within the Ministry of Environment and Saskatchewan Watershed Authority for all the work that they do. Over this last year, the ministry has been undertaking a regulatory review. We will modernize the ministry and move to a results-based framework. And I'm very proud of the hard work of the ministry staff and, Mr. Speaker, we are finally moving the Ministry of Environment into the 21st century.

I found it very interesting when I learned that a results-based model had first been proposed by ministry officials in 1978. To quote from a Ministry of Environment report prepared in that year, and I quote:

The regulatory burden for industry has an identified impact on project development in the province. The benefits of a Saskatchewan Results-Based environmental management model will not be realized without cooperation between federal/ provincial/municipal agencies.

Mr. Speaker, 1978 was a very long time ago. In 1978 I was just learning to read chapter books in Mrs. Markwart's grade 2 class. My colleague from Weyburn-Big Muddy hadn't even been born. And 1978 is so long ago, it was the first year that Dwain Lingenfelter was elected to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[16:00]

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — I was even more surprised, Mr. Speaker, to find out that for three decades the NDP completely ignored these recommendations. Instead they were addicted to a prescriptive approach that's awkward, inflexible, and very time-consuming, both for the ministry and for proponents. It does not necessarily provide the best protection for our environment, and it's frustrating for industry and Saskatchewan people.

My ministry has been working in a bygone era. Thanks to the NDP, permits and applications are all paper-based. If an oil exploration permit is requested and granted, it first has to be mailed, mailed to the office in Melville, and then we will mail the permit back to the proponents, Mr. Speaker. We are living in an electronic world in the 21st century, and it's about time that the ministry gets with the times, and that's what we're working on. The 2009-2010 budget includes an investment to

provide modernized electronic information platform with a view to conducting 90 per cent of ministry business electronically by 2011.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's North is a land of amazing potential and opportunity. This area of the province is home to a vast array of natural resources. A balance between the environment and economic development is needed in this valuable region of our province. For the second year in a row, we are investing \$1 million to support the northwest sustainable development plan. We need a sustainable land use plan in the Northwest to position our province to meet the future challenge of balancing economic interests with environmental integrity. This work had not been undertaken by the NDP, even though they happily signed off on exploration permits. You cannot plan for economic development while ignoring environmental protection. The NDP failed our North on this front.

We are also concerned about the impacts development will have on the North. That is why we are providing \$378,000 to develop an acid deposition monitoring framework. The program will address the potential risk of acidification in northwestern Saskatchewan and will also look after air monitoring.

Mr. Speaker, speaking rather late in the rotation on the budget means that most of my colleagues have outlined the very good things that are involved in this budget, but it also allows me the opportunity to set the record straight on some of the misinformation coming from the opposition benches. Unfortunately there was so much of it, I don't have time to address it all, so I will address the things that affect my ministry.

The NDP Environment critic opened her speech yesterday praising President Obama's climate change plan. She praised the idea that Obama wants to have 10 per cent of the American electricity coming from renewables by 2012. Well, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, according to former MLA Peter Prebble, Saskatchewan already receives 29 per cent of our electricity from renewables, so I'm not sure exactly what she's proposing except that we actually go backwards to 10 per cent to meet the President's goal.

She also praised the amount of money that Obama will be spending over the next few years on green technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I find it a bit curious then, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP is now so opposed to the money that SaskPower is spending on clean coal. And what are we spending that money on? Green technology that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy is rather astounding.

But, Mr. Speaker, the NDP critic apparently only has three talking points — the Office of Energy Conservation, the NDP climate change secretariat, and their phantom fund of \$320 million.

So let me begin by addressing the Office of Energy Conservation. The office consisted of two people. One was a part-time contract position. One of the positions is now housed in SRC [Saskatchewan Research Council], a world-leading research facility, doing great work on the climate change file. And we changed the part-time contract position to a full-time

position within my ministry to work on environmental education. All the activities that were present under the Office of Energy Conservation before are still in place. There has been no reduction in programming.

The NDP's climate change secretariat meant nothing more than the NDP's attempt to grow government, and it would provide a forum for the NDP to do more talking about climate change. There were no actionable items associated with the secretariat. On this side of the House, we are not interested in more talking. We are interested in action which is why we will do what the NDP absolutely failed to do. We will take real action, and I will speak about that a bit more in a moment.

And for all the member opposite's blustering over her mythical money, the phantom fund of \$320 million, it was a press release. It was never allocated. Kind of like their \$40 million for the North Battleford hospital, it was dumped into the GRF [General Revenue Fund] and there was no corresponding plan. Had they been serious about this . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — They would've actually done something with this money.

On one hand, the NDP continue to say that we're spending too much money in this budget, yet on the other hand are saying that we are not spending enough. The NDP Environment critic seems to believe that \$320 million was the magic number needed to solve all of our environmental issues.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to run through all that we have done in 16 months: \$70 million for green initiatives; \$500,000 for increased funding for watershed planning; \$400,000 increase funding to conservation and development authorities; \$1.8 million for a water availability study; \$9.5 million funding to the Petroleum Technology Research Centre and International Test Centre for CO<sub>2</sub> Capture with the University of Regina; \$758 million through SaskPower to reduce their carbon footprint through clean coal technology; \$2 million over two years for northwest development land use plan; increased funding and added staff to the Ministry of Environment, environmental protection branch; \$11 million over four years for the provincial toilet replacement rebate program; increased funding for air and water testing in the North; \$2 million in bridge funding for struggling recycling organizations; \$2.4 million for the SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] hybrid rebate; \$3 million for SaskBIO [Saskatchewan biofuels investment opportunity]; \$21 million for the ethanol fuel program.

Mr. Speaker, if \$320 million was going to solve the problem, just imagine what \$1 billion will do.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — I was also a bit shocked yesterday, Mr. Speaker, to hear the NDP Environment critic condemning carbon capture and storage. She cited the millions of dollars that we have set aside for it and called it, and I quote, "... a technology the Sask Party claims to be cost-effective which is a claim that is simply dubious . . ." Mr. Speaker, apparently she's

not aware of the work that her own government did. She's surrounded by three former Environment ministers. Perhaps one of them could fill her in on the details.

The NDP are obviously against nuclear. They're against carbon capture and storage. They're against clean coal. The NDP say that they have a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Perhaps then they could explain how — considering they're against every available technology to reduce greenhouse gases — how they plan to meet the targets, Mr. Speaker, targets by the way that they introduced without doing a cost analysis. I asked for one to see what was left in the ministry after the NDP moved over to the opposition benches, and there was nothing done.

The member for Regina Lakeview when he was Environment minister said that Saskatchewan residents would happily pay higher SaskPower bills in the name of climate change but refused to say what those costs would be.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP Environment critic also said that on water, there was more to do than just conservation. I couldn't agree more. That is why again we are doing what the NDP failed to do. While we are promoting conservation through our toilet replacement rebate program, we are also ensuring the long-term sustainable use of our water supply. That is why we are engaged in forming an integrated water strategy. I know the NDP talked about doing this, but again, Mr. Speaker, they just didn't get around to it.

We are also making sure that our water supply is safe which is why we are doing what the NDP failed to do. We have increased funding for monitoring lakes in the North to get base line information. Mr. Speaker, the NDP actually discontinued monitoring of Lake Athabasca in 2006. They stand here and they're concerned about the effects of the oil sands in Saskatchewan at exactly the same time they stopped the monitoring process in the North. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to announce that we have reinstated the monitoring in Athabasca.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — We are also concerned about capacity and health and safety issues facing our communities, which is why again we are doing what the NDP failed to do. We have supplied unprecedented infrastructure money for communities, an additional \$100 million in per capita funding for municipalities, and established a new revenue-sharing deal with municipalities. All of these things will help communities address water issues.

The NDP seem to want us to do what they did. Well, Mr. Speaker, doing what the NDP did isn't good enough for us. They failed to offer a real plan on environment. They failed to offer any support for our communities to meet water needs. We will not do what the NDP did. We will do and must do better.

And back to climate change for a moment. The NDP Environment critic was praising President Obama yesterday. Allow me to quote the president's chief energy and climate change advisor, Carol Browner. She said and I quote, "You can get the clearest instruction by passing legislation." I couldn't agree more. So while the NDP spent the last year in office

printing up glossy brochures on climate change, we have done the heavy lifting the last 16 months, and I will be introducing climate change legislation into this House this spring.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, the NDP's position on the environment is absolutely different from ours. And for that I am very thankful. The member from Saskatoon Centre, when he was Environment minister, oversaw the NDP government's cutting of 200 jobs from the Ministry of Environment. At the time he said, and I quote, "We have our priorities and we have to support those priorities." Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the environment was not the priority for him or his NDP government. Mr. Speaker, not only is this budget good for the environment; it is extremely good news for the people of my constituency and all of Saskatchewan.

We can be very proud of what we have accomplished in this province. It wasn't that long ago, Mr. Speaker, that our beloved province was the butt of jokes and derision throughout the rest of Canada. That likely had more to do with the previous stewardship of this province than anything else. Today we have the number one economy in all of North America and are quickly becoming the new destination of choice. Ours is likely to be the only provincial government in the country to post a balanced budget, let alone a surplus this year.

It is true that this is in large part due to our good fortune with natural resource prices, in particular potash. But, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that that is all. The NDP like to think that we would be enjoying the same level of success today if they were still on this side of the House. Mr. Speaker, there would still be resource revenue, but I think the difference is the level of confidence that the business community and the resource sector have in our government.

It's one thing to have high resource prices but if the companies that develop those resources won't come into your province, you will realize no benefit. And that, I think, is what held this province back for too long. We have always had the raw potential but until recently we did not have the leadership required to turn that potential into success. The resource sector always had in the back of their minds that the socialists might try to renationalize the industry. That is why one of the very first Bills that we introduced upon forming government was to reverse the NDP's previous legislation.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — And, Mr. Speaker, that has not gone unnoticed by industry. The NDP, under the leadership of the member for Riversdale, simply did not inspire enough confidence among the business community to move this province ahead. That is something, Mr. Speaker, that my constituency of Martensville has always understood.

The Saskatchewan Valley area north of Saskatoon has consistently led rural Saskatchewan in population growth during the last few decades. What's also interesting, Mr. Speaker, that not once has my constituency ever been represented by either a CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] or NDP member.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, that is not a coincidence. It's that kind of forward thinking that explains why the towns in my constituency have historically been able to grow at phenomenal rates even when the NDP were chasing people out of the province.

The folks where I am from simply didn't buy into the NDP's doom and gloom mentality. Maybe they didn't appreciate the NDP's adherence to the *Regina Manifesto*, something that the NDP still proudly proclaim on their website. One of the *Manifesto's* main tenets is that they will not rest until capitalism is eradicated from Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, try selling that in my constituency.

Well I guess they did, but last election they received only 18 per cent of the vote. I would venture to guess, Mr. Speaker, that more people believe that Elvis is still alive than anybody who actually still believes the NDP philosophy in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the opposition members have been getting out their maps and hitting the road and venturing out into our constituencies. And I'm sure the map is required considering that they've ignored rural Saskatchewan for the last 16 years.

The member from Massey Place in particular, I hear, has been out and about in my constituency and, Mr. Speaker, I welcome him. I am glad that he's there. And I believe that he can learn a lesson or two from the people of my constituency. They have a lot to learn about growing economies, about how to grow communities, and about how to grow this province, and I think my constituency can offer some of that information for them.

I hope that the member from Massey Place is listening to my constituents and taking that advice back to his colleagues on the other side, Mr. Speaker. It's important to all of us in this province that the NDP — even in opposition — also grow in their understanding and try to move ahead.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the member from Massey Place has taken note of the huge infrastructure need that exists in my constituency. Today growth is through the roof because people understand that we now have a government that shares the values of its people and understands what it takes to grow.

Mr. Speaker, I think I represent the most constituents of any member in this Chamber with the exception possibly of the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Crown Corporations. And there are infrastructure needs in my constituency. I have two towns — Warman and Martensville — that have both far surpassed the population requirements to be named a city. They actually both sit about 6,000 people, and the people moving into these two towns are almost all young families. New schools are needed in both communities. These new schools, Mr. Speaker, I predict will be almost full by the time we build them. That is how fast my communities are growing.

[16:15]

There are other needs as well. The growing community of Hepburn needs water. They are moving from the status of a

village to a town later this year. They understand the need for a municipal water system and have recently chosen to move ahead in securing that water supply. As Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, I was pleased to offer free testing to Hepburn residents. They operate on private well systems that are not regulated under any government ministry, and we offered free well testing so they would know what the quality of their water was.

And, Mr. Speaker, for all the NDP Environment critic's lamenting about the need for clean water in Saskatchewan, perhaps she could explain why, between 2001 and 2006, the NDP government systematically denied every MRIF [Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund] grant that Hepburn put forward.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are committed to working with communities to help them meeting their infrastructure needs. And one of those needs, Mr. Speaker, is roads and we see road improvements going on across this province. In my constituency we are seeing an acceleration of twinning of Highway 11 past Hague and Rosthern towards Prince Albert. This government understands the need for improvement and we are taking steps to do this as quickly as we possibly can.

For my constituents what is by far the biggest piece of good news in this budget is the education property tax reduction. Due to the reassessment that was taking place this year, my constituents in the fastest growing communities north of Saskatoon were about to experience a massive increase in property taxes. Martensville mayor, Giles Saulnier, led an information campaign during the last couple of months to alert people to the situation facing them and what the consequences would be if their government did not take action. In a press release dated January 14 the town of Martensville estimated that if the status quo remained, Martensville residents could be facing up to a 39 per cent increase on the education portion of their property taxes.

You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, that my constituents weren't real happy with the thought of a 39 per cent increase and certainly let me know through letters and emails and telephone calls. I've never received more emails or phone calls on any other topic, Mr. Speaker, and as their government MLA I was certainly their number one target. But, Mr. Speaker, I welcomed this. I ran two elections actually making promises on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party that what we would do for the constituents if they put their trust in us, and fixing the property tax issue was one of those. And I told everybody I talked to to definitely, yes, hold us to account. We made you a promise, and we will keep that promise. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud that our government kept that promise this year.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, I actually campaigned on this issue twice — in 2007 during the Martensville by-election and then again in the general election later that fall. When asked about the property tax issue during the by-election, the NDP candidate, John Tzupa, actually responded in a local newspaper that he said, it wasn't an issue, that nobody had ever mentioned it to him.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I thought that was a little bit odd considering it was the number one issue that I heard at the door. I don't know how the NDP candidate could have spent any time in my constituency without hearing about education property taxes. I'm thinking perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the problem was that he just wasn't listening. Shortly after he made that statement, the NDP received the single worst election result in any constituency in any election in 60 years, with just 10 per cent of the vote.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we hear the member for Douglas Park and others on the other side of the House say that they would have gotten around to the same kind of property tax reduction that this government undertook, I have a very hard time believing that. I have a hard time believing it because when they were in power, they were in power for 16 years and didn't get around to it. I have a hard time believing it because they said in my constituency, while looking for by-election votes, that they weren't concerned about it.

Mr. Speaker, there's another quote I'd like to mention. I know that a couple of my colleagues have already brought this up, but I think it's worth saying again. And I quote: "We are pledged to do away with education tax as soon as we get new sources of revenue to take the place of the revenue now realized from that tax."

Mr. Speaker, that's Tommy Douglas in 1944. That's 65 years ago. I don't believe that a single person in this Chamber is actually old enough to remember him saying those things. Mr. Speaker, my parents were in diapers when he said this. My mother is now retired, my father is no longer with us. Entire lifetimes have been lived by Saskatchewan people without seeing this promise fulfilled by successive NDP governments.

Tommy Douglas didn't do it. Woodrow Lloyd didn't do it. Allan Blakeney didn't do it. Roy Romanow didn't do it. Then along comes the present member for Saskatoon Riversdale who thought he would dust off that promise again, and in 2003 at a SARM convention, he told them that ". . . the status quo is not on." He then proceeded to govern this province with a status quo.

So it's going to be very interesting to see how the opposition members vote on this budget, Mr. Speaker. Are they going to support the property tax cuts that we are proposing? Mr. Speaker, if they're not willing to support the budget for their own constituents, could they please at least support it for Tommy?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, delivering a balanced budget in these difficult economic times is quite exceptional. All during the fall session, the NDP demanded that more and more money be spent on more and more programs. Then at budget time, they complain about spending.

They can't have it both ways. If the NDP truly believed there is too much spending in this budget, I would challenge them to tell us what they want us to cut. And, Mr. Speaker, the NDP Finance critic is on record as supporting two key initiatives: education property taxes and municipal revenue sharing. If the



NDP agree with these programs, I look forward to seeing them voting with us on the budget because, Mr. Speaker, if they vote against it, they are voting against municipal revenue sharing. They are voting against education property tax reform. They are voting against a children's hospital. They are voting against unprecedented infrastructure funding. And the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, one of the best things that can be said of any government is this: they did what they said they would do. With this budget we have kept even more promises — well over 100 of them in 16 months. Mr. Speaker, we are doing what we said we would do. We will continue to keep our promises. And for all of these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the NDP's amendment, but am proud to support my government's second budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I would like to thank Kelly, my constituency assistant, for all her hard work and support. But I would also like to thank the residents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley for their support and their great encouragement.

The 2009-2010 budget is entitled *Saskatchewan: Strong and Steady*. Now this title embodies what we as a government have strived for. We believe that to govern responsibly in this time of economic uncertainty we must be good stewards. And we must also manage to create the economic climate that will benefit the majority of Saskatchewan residents. The economic challenges that so many countries around the world are facing is devastating for most businesses and families. Here in Saskatchewan we are not immune to this economic turmoil happening elsewhere, but we are better positioned than most to meet the challenges ahead. We are optimistic and we are cautious.

However, we are in a unique position with the budget that was just presented — our budget, a Saskatchewan Party government's budget — that is maybe the only one in Canada that is balanced. In fact we may be the only one in all of North America that is balanced. This is truly a unique budget. It is a good budget. Our economy is strong. The job of our government, a Saskatchewan Party government, is to make sure that it stays that way. The job of this budget is to make sure that the framework is in place for a strong economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the world economy was melting this fall, our government took action to prepare, to help cushion Saskatchewan's economy from being as adversely affected as possible. We were taking action. We cut taxes. We invested in infrastructure. And we provided economic stimulus and funded projects that would put money into our economy by providing jobs.

Last spring we announced the \$1 billion ready-for-growth initiative, the largest investment in infrastructure in Saskatchewan's history. This past fall, we announced we would increase our investment to 1.5 billion in 2009. \$500 million of this investment was unveiled last month in our economic

booster shot.

This means better schools for our children, better long-term care facilities for our seniors, better municipal infrastructure for our communities, safer highways for all our drivers, more affordable housing for those of lower incomes. The record tax cuts for Saskatchewan people and the record investment in our ready-for-growth initiatives are helping to keep our economy strong and steady.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government made significant investments in infrastructure projects. We made these commitments because the people of Saskatchewan deserved better than what had happened in the past. In the past, lots of announcements and promises, but the follow-through was not there. This spring when the ground thaws, we're going to see the start of projects across this whole province.

Now I know some people are getting tired of hearing the term, shovel ready. Well get used to it, because we're going to hear it over and over again. Because in this province, people are rolling up their sleeves and they're getting ready to get to work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have maintained a balanced budget and we delivered on major commitments we made to people of Saskatchewan. When we went door to door during the 2007 campaign, the residents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley told us they wanted to see some changes. They wanted to see these changes to the educational portion of their property taxes. The property taxes of Saskatchewan have funded a high share of education costs for far too long. We made a promise of seeking a long-term solution to this problem. This budget has kept that promise.

The member for Rosetown-Elrose, who serves as the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education, property tax initiatives, has dedicated 16 months, consulting with stakeholders and meeting with residents across Saskatchewan. And the member has put forward a progressive idea that has been incorporated into this budget. This represents the largest education property tax in a single year in our province's history. The vast majority of Saskatchewan property owners will pay less education tax under the new system. The constituents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley thank the member from Rosetown for his hard work and dedication.

Now Lee Harding of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation states, and I quote:

It's welcome to see that after so many years we've finally got to have some education property tax relief. It has been our number one issue for a long time. Last year we were sitting here saying where is the income tax relief, where is the debt reduction, where is the school property tax relief. And by now we have all three, which is fantastic.

During the 2007 campaign, we made important commitments to Saskatchewan municipalities. We said that our government would look at a revenue-sharing deal with our municipalities, tied to the province's own source of revenue. In this budget, we have kept that promise. This is what municipal leaders wanted to tap into — a predictable revenue source. And we have delivered.

The mayor of Regina states, and I quote:

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 Allan Earle in the SUMA news release stated, "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' . . ."

Our government will invest in our infrastructure system and in our people. Our government's balanced budget will also support and enhance key priorities.

Now our government is building on our promise for a better life for all Saskatchewan's children. We are creating 1,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan for children of parents who work outside the home. The YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], with a new licensed child care facility in my constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, will be opening this spring near the Sherwood Village Mall. The provincial government provided \$225 for this facility which will have 75 spaces. Over \$12 million is added funding that will go toward space expansion, training programs, and increased pay for early learning and child care workers. And our government is delivering on our promise to provide \$18 million to active family benefits. These are promises we made, promises we are keeping.

[16:30]

Our government will launch a multi-million dollar, \$25 million strategy to address needs in the child welfare system. A Saskatchewan Party government will deliver on our promises for a new children's hospital in Saskatoon. Two hundred million dollars over two years will be provided for the construction of this much-needed facility dedicated to the health and well-being of our province's youngest citizens.

And this has been quoted in the past, but I think it's so important that I will repeat it. Brynn Boback-Lane, president and CEO of the Children's Health Hospital Foundation of Saskatchewan stated on budget day, and I quote,

We are grateful and feel privileged to be part of such a momentous time for the next generation of this province; families, children, and a hospital for their unique needs is what the Children's Health & Hospital Foundation of Saskatchewan has represented since 1992.

Really today is about and dedicated to the children that have challenged and lost and the children that are challenged and winning their fight with illness or injury. This is a day for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we care about our kids.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are building on our province to keep our economy strong. This budget delivers on our promise to

dedicate millions towards improving our roads and our highways across the whole province of Saskatchewan. In my constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, a new bypass road to connect highways No. 1 and No. 11 will be constructed on the west side of the city of Regina. This will support the development for the global transportation hub. This is progress.

Our government is building on a promise of a greener Saskatchewan by supporting innovation of capture and storage of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We'll commit over \$17 million towards these and other go-green initiatives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are working hard to keep life affordable in our province. Our government will begin to renovate government subsidised rental housing. Millions of dollars of funding will help adjust shelter rates for income assisted programs. And we are helping senior citizens by increasing monthly support to seniors to help them cover their costs of the rising living expenses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are building on our promise to invest in education and skills training. We are going to invest in Aboriginal workforce development fund. This program highlights new employment opportunities for those First Nations and Métis heritage.

This budget will also increase apprentice training seats to 1,100, an additional apprentice training support for their allowance. We will also commit over \$23 million to enable universities to limit tuition increases to an average of 3 per cent.

Our government made commitment for training seats expansion for doctors and nurses. We will provide \$23 million this year on a comprehensive plan to attract more nurses and hard-to-recruit health care professionals to Saskatchewan and keep them here. This budget will also provide more funding to recruit more physicians to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, for 16 months I've served as a Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, nurse recruitment and retention, travelling across our province, our country, and overseas to learn best practices, and inviting nurses to work in our province. I've learned that in our province, nurses are assuming leadership roles and developing innovative ideas and made-in-Saskatchewan solutions to deal with the impact of the nursing shortage. I've had the opportunity to talk to nurses and health care professionals across the whole province. And during this time of consultation process, we have talked to over 3,000 nurses who have shared their thoughts and concerns about our health care system here in Saskatchewan.

This past January I joined with the workforce planning branch of Saskatchewan Health to hold the celebratory and collaborative nursing symposium in Saskatoon. We wanted to showcase the innovative ideas we have heard from the nurses throughout this province. This symposium provided an opportunity to bring our nurses together to showcase mentorship programs, new hospital working models, and hear a panel on successful recruitment of internationally educated nurses in our province. This day was well received by all who had the opportunity to attend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government understands the

importance of recruitment, and we also value the importance of retention of our health care employees. Keeping and attracting key health providers is a top priority of our government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government, a Saskatchewan Party government has set the course for a strong and steady Saskatchewan. This budget has put forward the largest education property tax in our province's history. Our province will stay strong and steady through these significant tax reductions. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our province will remain strong and steady through the much-needed infrastructure projects. We will keep Saskatchewan residents working and our economy moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is strong, and the job of this budget is to make sure that the economy stays that way. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into this budget debate here in the year 2009. It's a special pleasure for me on this day, March 24, 2009, as it is my daughter Solveig's 20th birthday.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nilson:** — I think all of us who are in this legislature are here because we want to do things for our children and our grandchildren and for the coming generations. And that's I think a special reason why budget debates are so important because they are that one time a year when you can evaluate what things that you've done that will build for the future. And I'm, with my colleagues, acknowledging a number of the very positive parts of this particular budget that use the resources of the people of Saskatchewan in ways that will benefit all of us.

But my concern is that there's a very good budget, but there are many people who are uneasy. Why are these people so uneasy? And it seems to be a bit of a strange situation where all of the good news that's out there comes with this underside or underbelly of uneasiness.

So I started to look through the document and tried to figure out what the reason for this uneasiness is. And I thought, well maybe it's some groups are left out. And we've heard from Indian, First Nation, and Métis people that maybe they've been left out. Some of the funding for arts and some of those areas are fairly well flatlined. There are not major increase there. We've heard about the decreases or the changes at a place like Government House that affect a lot of individuals, but more importantly they affect the sense of well-being in the community.

As a former Health minister, I have many questions which I hope will be answered as we move over the next number of weeks about the Health budget because there doesn't appear to be sufficient funds in that budget to deal with all of the challenges and the requirements of making sure that the Health

budget continues in a positive way.

The Minister of Environment seemed to think there was lots in her budget for environment, but I would have to say that, looking at it with an experienced eye, I would say that there are quite a number of areas where there aren't sufficient funds. And we will be quite interested to hear the explanation of some of the choices that have been made.

Clearly the students know that this year they're going to be paying more tuition because there aren't sufficient funds to hold the line on tuition as it relates to the post-secondary budget.

And one area, Mr. Speaker, whether it's in agriculture or in some of the other areas that seems to have had the brakes put on it a bit, is the whole area of research. And that ties in with our post-secondary institutions as well. So there's a number of people that are kind of left out probably, and they're feeling somewhat uneasy. But I don't know if that's why in general people are uneasy about this budget.

Another group of people are quite torn by this, and that I think includes the school boards. The school boards in the province have received lots of money, but they've changed quite dramatically how the democratic process works for the school boards. And so there's uneasiness there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's uneasiness — and why? Well maybe it's because of the type of, quote, consultation that happened, or didn't happen. Or maybe it's just this whole process of change, and it may be that 2009 was the year that this kind of change should take place in Saskatchewan.

But there's another group that actually got lots of money in this budget, but I think there's also some uneasiness there, and that's the rural municipalities. Because this template of reorganization of the school boards is very transferable from school divisions over to rural municipalities. And so the question comes in many of those places: are they next? Is that the next target of this particular government? So there's uneasiness there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There's also uneasiness by many people who are observers of our economic situation, of the financial markets, as it relates to the assumptions that have been made in building this budget. And the potash one is, I guess, a bold kind of bet, which is what sometimes budgets are. But it may be bolder than what we as Saskatchewan residents can stand. And we're all with the risk and hope kind of perspective on this one. We hope that it works but unfortunately it creates another level of uneasiness, underlying uneasiness, about this budget.

Same thing happens with the other resource aspects. I think there's been some careful work to try to get the best choices around what the prices are going to be in the coming year. But I think that unfortunately in this particular whole area of the economy, the information that showed up immediately — that the assumptions by the provincial government of economic growth being at 2.1 per cent and almost three times, or more than three times as high as the average of all the other economic predictors, including banks and bonding companies and such — well that creates a whole sense of uneasiness among those people who know that particular field.

And we could see it on budget day. Many of the businessmen in this room were uneasy when some of these things were laid out, and that was brought out in conversations later. It's been the kind of information I've received when I've talked to people when I was in Saskatoon on the weekend or in my constituency or in other places. There's also some fairly clear assumptions about the amount of income tax that's going to be received by the province and curiously, this is I think the first time that both the corporate and personal income tax received pursuant to this budget will be less than the anticipated revenues from potash. And that's another reason to be anxious about what's happening here.

[16:45]

Now when there's good news in a budget like this one — 12.3 per cent increase in the expenditures, first provincial budget over \$10 billion — there are a number of people including me who ask questions. And we're uneasy because the question comes: who's going to pay for this? How are we going to pay for this? Now the budget, as I said before, has made some very clear bets on things like potash prices, oil and gas prices, some of those kinds of things. But we're still raising a lot of concerns about how is this going to be paid for.

One of the other aspects of this budget that concerns me is the way that it appears that overall provincial debt is going to be transferred from the General Revenue Fund into the Crowns. And this is done in a few different ways which were identified earlier today, but basically what happens is, if you don't have sufficient dollars to do the long-term capital plans that have been laid out for the Crowns, you have to get that money to make sure that the jobs are done, whether it's new power lines or new gas lines or more services provided or just basically providing for the staff to do the kinds of work that's there. But ultimately, it's these capital plans that are the most capital intensive.

And I know that in the retooling of the various hummers or the big power plants in SaskPower, over the last many years, there were large amounts of capital set aside. And that's what we've heard again this week, that that's going to happen. And there are methods and ways of budgeting to have that money available.

But what I heard in the last few days was that the dividend to the General Revenue Fund was going to be kept by the Crown corporation, that they were going to borrow more money. And that was just to deal with some of the capital plans that were laid out in the long-term capital plan for SaskPower. It doesn't deal with possible amounts around the whole area of the clean coal project.

It doesn't deal with any of the kinds of provincial participation that we hopefully are going to hear about in the next month or so as it relates to any discussion of nuclear power. All these things we know are very, very expensive. So once again the uneasiness — who's going to pay for all of this?

What we know is, in 1992 when our dear friend Mr. Eddy Tchorzewski was the Finance minister, his biggest worry and ultimately the biggest problem that he had to deal with was to take the Crown debt out of the Crown corporations again and

put it back into the General Revenue Fund so that the Crown corporations could survive. And there are many of us who lived through that experience, as customers or taxpayers or shareholders or whatever you want to call us, that we don't want to see that happen again.

So there's great uneasiness about the kinds of money that's being spent, the debts that are going to be created, and this lack of clarity of how it's being dealt with between the Crowns and the General Revenue Fund.

So to pay back this money, we're going to probably have higher utility rates. That seems to be a given. I'm not sure if there'll have to be an increase in income taxes to cover this once they finally figure out how much it costs. Maybe we'll have to take another look at sales tax, and that's a possibility, or there may be some new Sask Party tax that we haven't heard about yet. But all of those kinds of discussions create an uneasiness in the community.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with such a good budget, why are people so uneasy? I'm not sure what the answer to that is, but it's been compounded by some of the ways that this budget has been communicated.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that listening to the public descriptions of the budget and, more pointedly, a number of the speeches in this Chamber, that we have a whole revisionist history of what happened in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, we have people talking about how we got to this place where we actually have resources to do some of the things that we want to do in a way that is so distorted from reality that it makes you wonder why this has happened. And I think, in fact, that type of communication is what has also created a great deal of the uneasiness that we hear about this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from a book called, *Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die . . . Made to Stick* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath. And in there they say a secondary effect of being angry, which was recently discovered by researchers, is that we become more certain of our judgment:

When we're angry, we know we're right, as anyone who has been in a relationship can attest.

Mr. Speaker, I get the impression that there are quite a number of angry people who are giving the speeches in this Chamber from the government side. That are drafting and developing the communication strategy for the budget. And that anger comes out in a way that seems to say that they're convinced that . . . Well it sounds as if they are convinced that they're right even though any calm listener to what they say would say it's not accurate.

And, Mr. Speaker, that anger shows up whether it's in the speeches or whether it's in some of the communication documents or other places. I think that Saskatchewan public in general know that it was all of the people of Saskatchewan working together who dealt with the severe debt problems, the almost bankruptcy of the province in the early '90s. And the NDP were in government. They had lots of difficult things to do. But they didn't do all of the work that was necessary, alone. They did it together with all of the people.

And I think that the communications that we've had around this budget and around the funds that are here in this province, come from some very angry people who are so convinced that they're right, that they forget that this is something that we've all done together. We've done this as Saskatchewan people, and we've done it in a way that allows us to build for the future. And, Mr. Speaker, when they start spouting off things about 16 years of this and 16 months of that, people out there, they turn off because it sounds like a bully in a sandbox. And it sounds not very logical. Another quote that I always loved from Mark Twain is, and this is quote, a lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can even get its boots on.

Mr. Speaker, when you say things that you know are wrong in a way of, and in anger, you end up distorting how the whole community deals with this. This should be a budget and a time when we're all celebrating together about all the hard work that we've done as Saskatchewan citizens, as Saskatchewan governments, plural — both NDP and Sask Party, Conservative, Liberal, all the mix that's there — and we should be saying yes, we've worked hard. We've been careful. We're now in a situation where there's lots of challenges coming from around the world, but we've got a solid base to work from. And that should have been the message about this budget, which is a budget of celebration.

But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the way it's been laid out, the way it's been communicated, the way it's been described by the people opposite in this legislature, seems to come out of a deep-seated anger that then distorts the whole thing and it makes it such a thing that people are very, very uneasy.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that uneasiness is there because people are concerned not so much about Saskatchewan but about the world around us. And to not have a calm, steady hand . . . I think it's quite telling, the title of this particular budget, because I think quite often when you think you're not strong and steady, that's when you say it. It's when you show it and when you feel it and when you are strong and steady, you don't have to have yourself telling yourself that you're that way. And I thought that was a very telling description of this whole budget when I saw that particular title.

I think what people are doing right now, they're taking some advice that came from an interesting source. I don't know how many people remember the 1979 presidential election in the United States, when Ronald Reagan was running against Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter was the incumbent. And it didn't matter whatever they talked about, they always came back to this point and this was the one sentence, "Before you vote, ask yourself if you are better off today than you were four years ago." And it's basically a question of, are you confident or are you uneasy about what's going on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think people are asking the same question right now. They're saying, are we better off today than we were 16 months ago.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nilson:** — And unfortunately I think for the people of Saskatchewan, the answer to that is we're not certain. We don't know. We can't tell.

And this kind of arrogant response, which comes I think out of a deep-seated anger, proves my point. It proves the point that this budget should be a celebration for all Saskatchewan people but unfortunately it's become a partisan document that's not going to do the things that needs to be done.

So I will be voting in favour of the amendment and I will be voting against the motion because, Mr. Speaker, I think what we need is to have people who are leaders in this province, who go forward with confidence and provide leadership, not ones who yell and yell and yell and basically get everybody upset. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It being 5 p.m., this House stands in recess until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]



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