



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

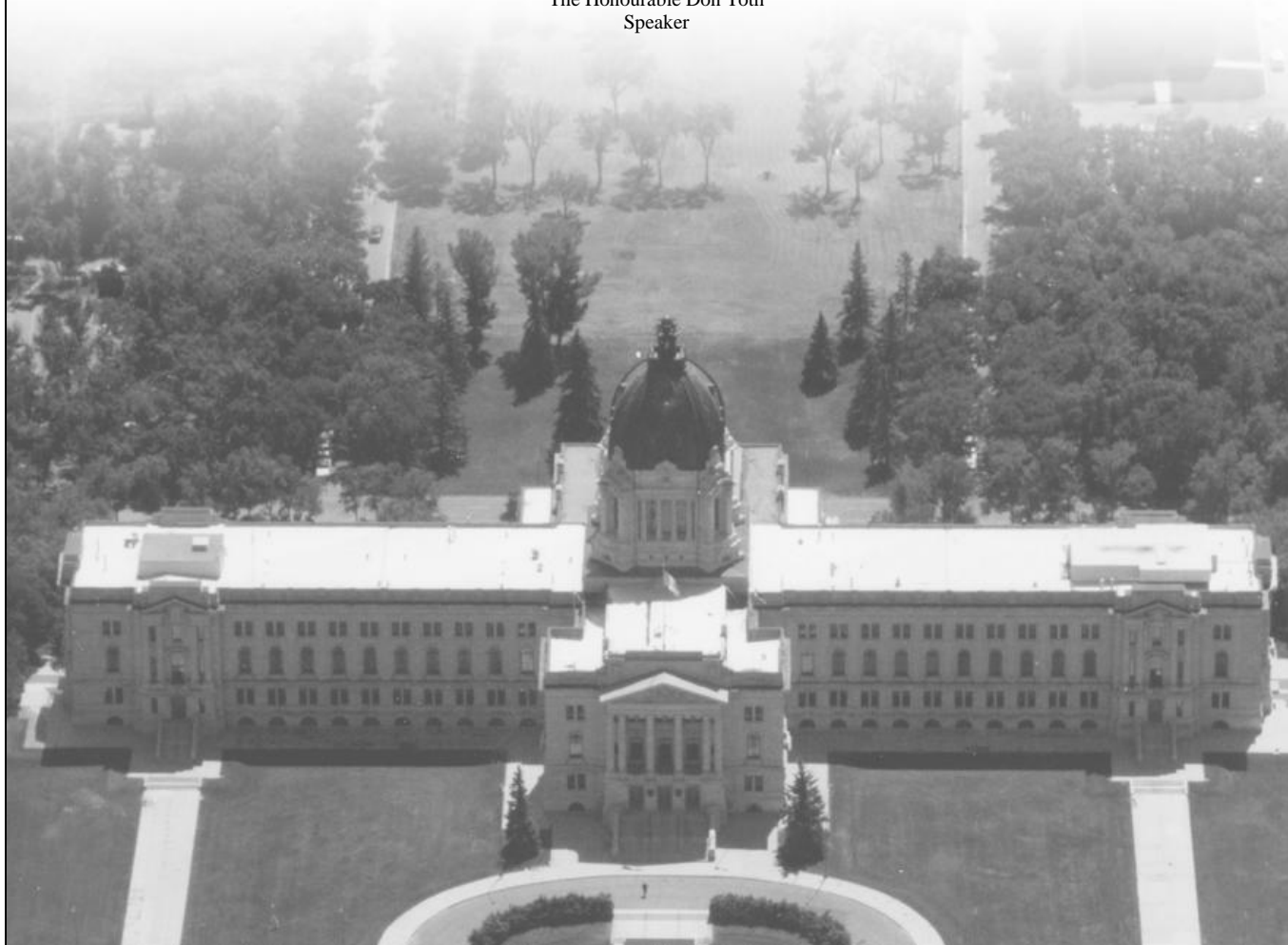
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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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 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, and seated in your gallery is a group of students and chaperones from Senator Myles Venne School. There's 10 students, grade 8 and 9. They're accompanied by their teacher, Devin Bernatchez; Kenny Ratt, La Ronge band councillor; and also by another chaperone and, I think, a parent, Agnes Charles.

I just want to take this opportunity. It's nice to have . . . When we have community members come in from so far and from the North, and to learn the process that's going on. And as a teacher, Devin has been working with these young students in his class making sure they understand the, I guess, the role that the provincial government plays, the federal government plays. And he's spending a lot of time making sure they're getting involved in the political process to understand it as best they can. And I commend what he's doing and that he did a lot of fundraising to get these students here and show them.

He's committed to education for First Nations, and I commend. He's a NORTEP [northern teacher education program] grad, one of our programs up North we're very proud of, and he is a graduate. And he is truly a leader. So at this point I would just like to ask all members of the Assembly to welcome to their Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Schriemer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you, I would like to introduce Terry-Lynn Quadri. She's the vice-president of strategy and business development for Ag-West Bio, which is a non-profit group on Research Drive and Innovation Place. There's a lot of movement in this industry right now, and she would like to thank us for the support and looks forward to what's happening in the industry in the future.

Welcome to her Assembly. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. LeClerc:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you in your gallery, I'd like to introduce a friend of mine, Fred Wesolowski, a retired police officer from Corman Park. I've always had in my lifetime as you know, Mr. Speaker, a yin and yang relationship with police. Thankfully this day and era, it's the yang.

Fred is also on the Catholic School Board; he's been there for 21 years. He's down here for the conference and a member of my constituency and a good friend. And I'd like to welcome him to his Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition that speaks to the housing market and changes that have translated into challenges for many renters, including senior citizens, and that more affordable housing options would significantly help Saskatchewan seniors cope with the cost of living increases, and especially for those that live on fixed incomes. And the prayer reads:

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

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the fine community of Pelican Narrows — the First Nations and the residents of Pelican Narrows. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition has been signed by many community members of Pelican Narrows who have been waiting for the approval of their road for many, many months. And I so present, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**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 these workers and community-based organizations in Saskatchewan have traditionally been underpaid and many continue to earn

poverty level wages. I'll 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these petitioners come from the following communities: Moosomin, Maryfield, Regina, Yorkton, and Saskatoon. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind when it comes to providing safe and affordable water. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to 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.

These petitions are signed, Mr. Speaker, by the good residents of Duck Lake and Rosthern.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to present a petition in support of affordable housing for The Battlefords.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners note that the cost of rental accommodation in The Battlefords is increasing while the number of apartment units available for rent is decreasing. The petitioners ask that:

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners all come from The Battlefords and surrounding area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to 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 as well as students from the University of Saskatchewan as well as a number of health care providers who hold graduate degrees, who are working here in the province. 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. 123 that goes through the community of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. This petition is signed by the leadership and community members of the Village of Cumberland House and the Cumberland House First Nations. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to stop denying the money that was allocated to this highway and commit to immediately providing the repairs to this highway that the people of northeast Saskatchewan were promised.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by the good people of the entire area of Cumberland House. I so present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Remembering Doris Sitter

**Mr. Michelson:** — Mr. Speaker, today many people are mourning the loss of one of Moose Jaw's most distinguished citizens. I'd like to offer sincere condolences to the family and friends of Doris Sitter. I hope they may find solace in the pleasant memories of this truly special person.

As many citizens of Moose Jaw could tell you, Doris Sitter led a full and rich life. To most in our community she might be remembered for her passion and dedication to the art of dance. The Doris Sitter School of Dance literally taught generations of students throughout her career. It was only very recently, at the age of 88, that Ms. Sitter decided to retire.

Doris Sitter was also an avid painter and had her work on display at the Moose Jaw Cultural Centre. She was the recipient of many awards, including the American Biographical Institute's American Hall of Fame honour, an award recognizing individuals with diverse experiences. Her list of awards and honours is far too many to name in this limited time. However, her contributions to Moose Jaw didn't go unnoticed by the members of the community and in 2007, Doris Sitter was named Moose Jaw's Citizen of the Year.

The people of Moose Jaw will fondly recall Doris Sitter's accomplishments over the many years. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I offer condolences to the family, the friends, the students, and the colleagues of Doris Sitter. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Earth Hour

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, March 28, people around the world will be participating in Earth Hour, an initiative organized by the World Wildlife Federation to turn off all unnecessary lights for one hour starting at 8:30 p.m. Mr. Speaker, Earth Hour is a symbolic event. Turning off our lights for an hour won't stop climate change, but it does demonstrate that our individual action is important and collectivity makes a big difference.

The intent of this event is to send a very powerful message to government that people want policies and regulations put in place that can achieve meaningful emission reduction to help fight climate change.

Mr. Speaker, globally there are more than 2,700 cities from 83 countries participating in Earth Hour activities. The communities in Saskatchewan that have signed up to participate are Kamsack, Weyburn, Regina, Frontier, Beechy, Conquest, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.

Climate change is a global problem and requires global co-operation to solve. However, Earth Hour is an important statement about changing behaviours to help our planet — thinking globally, but acting locally. We can participate with the rest of the world in Earth Hour and prove that we can make life better with simple everyday actions to minimize our footprint.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all Saskatchewan residents who have committed to participating in Earth Hour and encourage everyone else to do the same. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Epilepsy Month

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, March is Epilepsy Month in Canada. Every day throughout our country

about 42 people discover they have epilepsy. That's over 15,000 a year. Epilepsy is a physical condition that often suddenly and dramatically changes the way the brain functions. It's a neurological disorder rather than a disease and is evident in the form of seizures.

Throughout history, those with epilepsy have often been stigmatized by their peers due to a misunderstanding of both its cause and effect. Although we are better able to understand epilepsy today, this does not mean that we have been able to fully put aside these prejudices. Epilepsy touches people across all age groups and income level. My dad had epilepsy, so I do have first-hand knowledge and experience of this condition.

Mr. Speaker, today, on March 26, we mark Purple Day, founded in 2008 by a little girl from Nova Scotia named Cassidy Megan. This special young person began Purple Day to raise awareness throughout the world about epilepsy and chose the colour purple because lavender is an international colour of epilepsy. Cassidy Megan understood and undertook this initiative to help us all know that over 50 million people worldwide are affected by this disorder.

It's important that we work towards more understanding of this disorder and hopefully see that, one day soon, epilepsy will be a thing of the past. I would encourage all to wear purple on March 26. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Awards

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening I, along with the members from Saskatoon Southeast and Lloydminster, had the pleasure of attending the Junior Achievement 2009 Business Hall of Fame in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, our province is at its best when we recognize, grow, and celebrate the potential of our youth. No one knows this better than JA [Junior Achievement].

I've seen first-hand its important role through volunteering at Bedford Road Collegiate and leading the Economics of Staying in School program with students. And last night's award supper was another reminder of JA's success.

While this brief statement does not allow me to recognize every accomplished Junior Achiever, I would like to announce to this Assembly the most prestigious award of the evening — Company of the Year sponsored by Deloitte. This year's winning company was Diamond Rush sponsored by Freedom 55.

Diamond Rush company members are: Bianca Banh, Brendon Barr, Katie Bleakney, Morgan Boutin, Dean Dangas, Christy Dangas, Cody Diedrichs, Emily Fillo, Jasmine Godoy, Sunjita Kapoor, Aljun Lagria, Chelsea Laprairie, Spencer Schaan, Linda Shen, Addison Voldeng, Bryan Wan, and Anna Young. The company's advisors are CJ Freer, Cory Kinchen, Ryan Smith, and Nick Sorba.

In addition to the Junior Achievers, two adults were recognized last evening. Tom McClocklin, president of Colliers McClocklin, was inducted into the Business Hall of Fame, and Charlene Hudym, a constituent of Saskatoon Massey Place, was awarded volunteer of the year.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in thanking the board and staff of JA in hosting such a successful evening and extend our congratulations to all the 2009 Junior Achievers. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Saskatchewan Population Increase

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today with another good news story. Statistics Canada is reporting that in 2008 Saskatchewan's population increased by more than 15,000 people.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

**Mr. Chisholm:** — As of January 1, 2009, there were 1,023,810 living in Saskatchewan, the highest level since 1988.

Interprovincial migration plays a major role in population change in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Our net interprovincial gain in 2008 was more than 5,500 people, with over 85 per cent of that gain coming from just two provinces — Alberta and Ontario. This shows, Mr. Speaker, our government was on the right track when a delegation from this province, including our Premier and Saskatchewan employers, travelled to Toronto National Job Fair last year to tell the Saskatchewan story.

Next week, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, along with the mayors of Saskatoon and Regina and many Saskatchewan employers, are returning to that national job fair. They will once again tell the Saskatchewan story. Mr. Speaker, more and more people are looking to Saskatchewan as a great place to build a career and build a life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Learning Disabilities Association Tea

**Ms. Atkinson:** — On Sunday, March 15, over 350 people attended a tea and fashion show for the Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan at TCU Place in Saskatoon. During the event I, along with a number of colleagues, were pleased to act as celebrity tea pourer for the attending guests.

A non-profit association, the association has been active in our province since 1971 to advance education, employment opportunities, social growth, legal rights, and the general well-being of people with learning disabilities and ADHD

[attention deficit hyperactivity disorder]. The association has three branches in the province: the provincial office in Saskatoon, a Regina branch, and a P.A. [Prince Albert] branch.

People living with learning disabilities have a lifelong neurological disability. A person with a learning disability will have strengths in some areas but may experience difficulty in language and communication or math skills. With assessment and intervention strategies, people can enrich their potential and achieve their goals.

A few notable people who have lived with learning disabilities include Hans Christian Anderson, Beethoven, John Lennon, John F. Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Mozart, Stevie Wonder, and Walt Disney.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I were pleased to be part of this event to show support for this organization and the valuable work it does to promote greater understanding of people living with learning disabilities and to provide services to people who have ADHD and learning disabilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Awards

**Mr. McMillan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Massey Place in congratulating the winners of last night's Junior Achievement Business Awards. Mr. Speaker, last night we had the pleasure of attending the 32nd Annual Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Awards. The ceremony was held at TCU Place in Saskatoon and was also attended by the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, the awards were a great night and honoured the entrepreneurial spirit in Saskatchewan. They are a time to encourage the next generation of business leaders and innovators that will lead our economy. I would like to thank the executive director Darren Hill and the entire board of directors for their work in organizing this event to honour the enterprising youth of Saskatchewan.

As our provincial economy continues to lead the nation, it's important that our young entrepreneurs are given the support they need to help them build the future for this province. Since the election, our government has taken several steps to encourage and support this innovation, including implementing the most aggressive graduate retention program in Canada, the largest single-year income tax cut in Saskatchewan's history, and reducing the education property tax burden on business as well as residents.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join me in congratulating all the winners and nominees from last night's event, and may we continue to encourage our young entrepreneurs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## QUESTION PERIOD

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

**Effect of Budget on Education**

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party promised in the last election that they would, I quote, “. . . work with school boards and consult with Saskatchewan people . . .” to ensure that K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education is properly funded. But it’s clear that the Sask Party didn’t consult with school boards before taking away their historic access to the property tax base. This minister shamefully legislates first and consults later.

To the minister: why were school boards taken by surprise? Why are secrecy and spin more important to the Sask Party than transparency and due process?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, as I’ve indicated in this Assembly before, and I’ve indicated it to boards of education when I’ve been at their various meetings, there’s been a consultation procedure in this province for decades.

The grant system that was introduced in 1974 is now 35 years old. I’m hearing from boards of education that it does not meet the current needs. There was a consultation procedure that was developed by the member from Rosetown as he went across the province to ensure that there was input into his report. There was opportunity for all boards. The member made it clear that any board member, any individual board member, any board that wanted to meet with him, he made himself available, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite does not think that that is consultation . . . I know what he’s asking, Mr. Speaker. He’s asking that to ensure that the plan that would be put forward had to have unanimous support of 1 million people in the province. That’s the procedure that the NDP [New Democratic Party] followed and they did nothing for 35 years.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, I think that that member right there, that minister can explain this to the school boards at their spring assembly that starts here today. He has some explaining to do there. This minister can spin this any way he wants, but boards made it clear in meetings with that member and that minister that they expected and had importance for continued access to the property tax base. No one on that side of the House, not the minister or anyone else, gave any indication that school boards would lose the financial flexibility to respond to local needs.

To the minister: why did he assure boards that their access to

the property tax base was not on the table? Why wasn’t that minister clear with the education sector?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, in the last Saskatchewan School Boards Association newsletter I saw a picture of the member standing with the members of the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] and I’m wondering what he told them, Mr. Speaker. I’m wondering what he told them.

Because, Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear at a meeting with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and I said, the current level of funding is about 51 per cent. And we’re going to change that. And maybe the goal will be 100 per cent. Now, Mr. Speaker, 100 per cent funding by the province of Saskatchewan means that the school boards don’t have access to the property tax. That’s the conclusion, Mr. Speaker. And I know the member has not been able to draw that conclusion, but I’ll explain it to him again.

If the province funds 100 per cent of school boards’ costs, the taxpayer at the board level does not have any commitment to that. That is the explanation, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, that minister can be as patronizing as he wants to this member, but you know what? He’ll have to explain why school boards are shocked, at today’s assembly. Mr. Speaker, we need to work towards common goals such as higher levels of literacy and academic achievement in our schools. We need to ensure that all students have equal access to opportunities. And we won’t get there by treating all students or all schools the same.

At this time, local boards have lost the financial flexibility to respond to local needs. To the minister: will he commit here today to funding all those important local programs with provincial dollars?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of weeks the Minister of Finance and I have made a number of commitments. The first commitment that I made, I think about a month ago, that I would be attending the spring council tomorrow afternoon, here in Regina. I made that commitment a month ago, Mr. Speaker.

So for the member to stand and say oh gee, did I know that there was a spring council — of course, Mr. Speaker, and I’m going to be speaking to them. That’s the first commitment. The second commitment, Mr. Speaker, the second commitment is that we have added \$241 million to funding education.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, members opposite in their last two budgets had a capital budget of 18 million and 21 million respectively, Mr. Speaker. This government — with the announcement that I made yesterday of two different schools here in the province of Saskatchewan — indicated that our 61 million that we're committing to capital this year, added to the 141 million that we announced in our booster shot, added to 117 million that we announced a year ago, is \$320 million for capital infrastructure.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, Catholic schools are constitutionally protected under *The Saskatchewan Act*. The Saskatchewan Party's plan does not give Catholic school boards an independent ability to set mill rates since boards that levy higher property taxes will have their provincial grants clawed back. We know that there have been court . . .

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I can understand why this is a touchy subject for the members . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I just ask the member to move forward with his question.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — We know that there have been court challenges in other provinces that have made changes to this system. To the minister: was there an independent, third party analysis of the changes conducted to ensure that the constitutional rights of Catholic education have been honoured? If so, will he table it here today?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, the opposition asked a written question that says was there a Justice opinion on this position. The answer was yes. He knows that. He's already received that answer. Mr. Speaker, we've also looked at the situation with Alberta because Alberta, Alberta and Saskatchewan are very similar, Mr. Speaker.

The legislative changes that were made in Alberta versus the ones in Saskatchewan are different because we recognize that there is a constitutional right for minority boards to have access to the tax base. So, Mr. Speaker, to avoid court challenges, we have in fact placed that in legislation to ensure that the minority faith board has the access to the property tax base.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Support for Westside Clinic

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is an HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] crisis in the province and that minister has known about it since last fall when the Saskatoon Community Clinic submitted their proposal for funding expansion for west side services.

Patrick Lapointe, the community clinic administrator, says, "We're just hopeful that with this new information about the tremendous pressures of health that the inner city is experiencing around HIV-AIDS, that they [meaning the government] relook at their decision-making."

Mr. Speaker, the clinic is currently treating more than 85 HIV-positive patients. To the minister: will he give the Westside Clinic the 3.5 million they need to expand their services?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in last year's budget we increased the budget for the Westside Clinic by \$313,000. Yes, the Westside Clinic put a proposal in as we get proposals in from a number of organizations to increase their funding, and not everyone has their funding increased.

I find it very hypocritical however, Mr. Speaker, that that member opposite would be questioning our government now about increasing funding to the Westside Clinic when they had two separate proposals to increase funding, one in 1997 and one as recently as 2006. After meeting with all Saskatoon MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], they were rejected by that former government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Stephen Helliard, a Saskatoon physician and front-line worker who practises at the Westside Clinic, says there are more HIV cases out there that are currently not being treated. He said, "We're trying to get some more resources into the inner city because we're really struggling. This is really scary stuff that's going on out there."

To the minister: why is he sending the member from Saskatoon Sutherland to Quebec to research the problem, when he has front-line workers right in Saskatoon inner city telling him what's happening? Why is he not listening to the front-line workers and providing immediate funding to the Westside community clinic?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, we're very aware of the situation, not only in Saskatoon, but in any of our major centres,



with the influx of HIV or the increase of HIV. And it's a serious problem and that's why I have asked the ministry — through the chief medical officer, Dr. Moira McKinnon — to strike a committee to start dealing with this situation as soon as possible. And they will be dealing with the problem.

The problem didn't start in the last six months or the last year. The problem has been there for many years. It has been increasing in numbers. Yes, we have to start taking steps. That's why we funded, on a permanent position now, \$350,000 to go to a mobile bus. Many of these clients do not present in whether it's the City Hospital, St. Paul's Hospital, or even Westside Clinic but they are presenting in a mobile bus which is located in their community.

Mr. Speaker, we're acting. There's more to do, but we're acting already.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to talk about the quick action he took in setting up a review process in response to the HIV crisis. I'll tell him what a quick response would be. He could write a cheque for the \$3.5 million and have it in the mail to the Westside community clinic today — before question period's over. That would be a quick response.

To the minister: will he commit today to providing the 3.5 million to the Westside community clinic that they need for their expansion services right now?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that that member wants me to write a cheque at the end of question period. For 16 years that government didn't write a big enough cheque to the Westside Clinic. When asked for more money, they were flatly rejected.

Mr. Speaker, we increased funding last year to the Westside Clinic. We put \$350,000 into a primary mobile bus who . . . The only criticism from that side was it was run through MD Ambulance, Mr. Speaker. So I would ask the member opposite: is she in favour of the mobile bus that's dealing with people on the street, in the community, Mr. Speaker, or should we cut the funding on that like they cut, that they reduced funding on the Westside Clinic?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Selection of Auction Contractors

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister told us that

using a private company to do an online auction was somehow better than using a government website to do an online auction. Mr. Speaker, the government auction process was advertised to newspapers across the province and has been used to sell literally hundreds of government vehicles.

To the minister: was Hodgins auctions selected because Grant Hodgins is a former Devine Conservative cabinet minister and a friend of the Premier?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an RFP [request for proposal] was put out by Government Services asking for submissions to do some different things than was previously done, to do online auctions and to do live auctions. There was seven respondents, Mr. Speaker, to that RFP. There was clear criteria in place. And while the member from Moose Jaw may not be interested, I hope the other members are, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this was conducted as every other government service RFP is conducted, Mr. Speaker. It was a fair, open, and accountable process. And the two best submissions — Hodgins auctions from Melfort and Adesa auctions from Saskatoon — were awarded the pilot projects, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, when asked yesterday, the minister said, and I quote, “. . . you want to use the best people possible.” Mr. Speaker, the principal figure in this company is a Devine Conservative cabinet minister who was convicted of crimes against Saskatchewan people. This company has had trading of their shares suspended from the TSX [Toronto Stock Exchange] because of the actions of Grant Hodgins.

To the minister: with dozens of other auction firms in Saskatchewan to choose from, why did he select this firm for his private project?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that may have been the way that the previous administration, the NDP, did government projects, Mr. Speaker. The way we're doing it is an open RFP. Seven different companies responded to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Government Services made the decision as to which companies met the criteria. They chose the two best companies, Mr. Speaker, one for the online auction, one for a live auction, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Government Services chose the best people for the job regardless of their political affiliations. Perhaps that's different from the NDP.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, we have a new theme — back to the '80s. Mr. Speaker, it is clear there is only one reason why Grant Hodgins's company was chosen to run this project . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I can take away from the opposition, but if the government continues, we'll have extra questions. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, it is clear there is only one reason why Grant Hodgins's company was chosen to run this project. He is a friend of the Sask Party. The member from Batoche worked for this company for nine years.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister just admit that this was payback for being a Sask Party campaign donor and party insider?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite — because Hodgins auctions is not able to defend themselves on the floor of this Assembly — I would invite him to make those accusations outside of the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Government Services . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Minister Responsible for Government Services.

**Hon. Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process used for the RFP was exactly the process that was in place when we formed government on November 7, 2007 — not in September 2007. Mr. Speaker, the very same process in fact is, it's the same people working in that department, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this was an open and accountable process with seven companies making submissions and the two best responses were chosen, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, this is the way this government operates. They close the tender, but they don't post the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I ask the government members to come to order . . . Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, this is the way this government operates. They close the tender, but they don't post the results — which is the normal way governments conduct business. What were they hiding? Were they hiding giving a lucrative contract to a convicted Conservative cabinet minister and Sask

Party insider? Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what were you hiding?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is describing perhaps how they used to do things when they were in government for 16 years, giving the contracts to their friends, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not how it works today.

Mr. Speaker, we use an open and accountable RFP process that was in place while they were government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the two best . . .

**The Speaker:** — The Minister Responsible for Government Services.

**Hon. Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The two best companies were awarded the contracts. The member opposite talked about going back to the '80s. Mr. Speaker, that's the party that wants to go back to the 1970s, with Mr. Lingenfelter.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Yates:** — We know that the Government of Saskatchewan has successfully been doing online auctions for years. Now we have a company run by a Sask Party insider that gets to profit from the sale of taxpayer-purchased vehicles. We know that Mr. Hodgins had trouble with the Toronto Stock Exchange. We know that the member for Batoche worked for this company for nine years. We know that Grant Hodgins and the Premier are friends.

To the minister: will he act in the interest of Saskatchewan people and cancel this contract today, or will he continue with his political cronyism?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the accusations made by the member opposite are absolutely ludicrous. There were two winners, Mr. Speaker, in this RFP. Hodgins was one and Adesa auctioneers from Saskatoon was the other. To cast the aspersions, Mr. Speaker, that that member opposite is casting, is to cast those aspersions on all of the people and the companies that submitted to the RFP, and to the people that were selected: Adesa auctions from Saskatoon and the Hodgins auctions from Melfort, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely wrong. That may be the way they did things, but it's not the way we do things.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Government's Performance

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier likes to talk about keeping promises. I want to refer to the Sask Party platform document in which the Sask Party and the Premier made the following promise from the platform of the Sask Party: "A Saskatchewan Party Government will provide Saskatchewan people with more transparency and accountability than any other previous government . . ."

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Calvert:** — Well today, Mr. Speaker, in this question period we have seen how a review of the property tax and education funding relationship was conducted, but not made public before the budget. We have discussed this morning how decisions were made that have neutered the duly elected school trustees of Saskatchewan from their ability to tax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, would not a transparent, accountable government have at least shared that discussion with the duly elected trustees before they made it a budget announcement in this legislature?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the reason that the NDP only ever promised action on education property tax relief, and never actually delivered, Mr. Speaker, is perhaps, perhaps we're seeing it today, is that they maybe sought unanimity on the part of all partners involved in the delivery of education and the funding of education. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, when you provide, when a government moves to provide sustainable and meaningful education property tax relief, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of stakeholders involved and some will be in favour of the changes and some will maybe have concerns.

This process allowed all those stakeholders to provide input to this government through the member for Rosetown. This minister has been meeting with all the stakeholders in terms of the decision the government made. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, is this: when it came down to a decision, a challenging decision, this government made it, made it in the interest of students and education tax payers. And we'll take their side every single time, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, there will be much opportunity in this legislature to debate the decision. The question has to do with transparency and accountability. I remind the Premier again, he and his party promised the people of Saskatchewan ". . . transparency and [more] accountability than any other previous government . . ."

Well they fundamentally changed the role of the school trustee in this province. They don't bother being accountable to those very trustees. We've learned today and over the course of this week, they have fundamentally changed how we will dispose of government property, whether we take this property to a fair process or we give it, the property, to one of their friends to auction. Mr. Speaker, the question is transparency and accountability.

They issue a news release on everything going. Why was there no news release issued on the question of how we're now going to dispose of government property?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite, a individual for whom I have a high degree of respect and regard, I hope that he will talk to the member for Dewdney, or perhaps consider himself later this day, outside in the rotunda when media typically ask members questions, I hope he will think very carefully on the line of questioning that the NDP pursued today. Because they cast aspersions, Mr. Speaker, on companies operating in the province, including Adesa, the other successful bidder in the this very open RFP process, a process that was inherited from the previous administration, a process that was followed meticulously by the same officials that worked for them when they were in office. The same kind of a process that identified two winners — one was Hodgins; the other is Adesa.

Will he apologize to Adesa because . . .

**The Speaker:** — The Premier may complete his response.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, apparently when they cast aspersions on the Hodgins auction people, they are also casting aspersions on Adesa, who are also successful.

What are the reasons that they received a tender from the government, Mr. Speaker? Is it that member's assertion and that member's assertion that all the auction companies in the province are best friends of the Government of Saskatchewan? It wouldn't surprise me, Mr. Speaker. This government has friends all across the province. It is the people of the province, the businesses of the province who are enjoying a growing Saskatchewan for . . .

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I've put together a short list — not an inclusive list, but a short list. This government put in place essential services legislation — that's now creating grief in the health care sector — without consultation of workers. They've put together a P3 [public-private partnership] secretariat without informing the public. They didn't talk to the Privacy Commissioner before this ill-fated attempt to provide the enhanced driver's licence. They signed a labour mobility agreement in Ottawa without displaying the agreement to the people of Saskatchewan.

They will not, they will not reveal what they expect to be the increase in power rates for SaskPower customers. They've outsourced services in SaskTel without telling the people of Saskatchewan. They have fundamentally taken away the right of our duly elected trustees to manage the education system. They refused yesterday to disclose a report on forestry. The list goes on and on. When will the Premier, when will this government keep its promise to the people of Saskatchewan for a more open and accountable and transparent government?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the premise of my hon. friend's question is simply wrong. In fact, he points to the national labour mobility agreement. He started negotiating that when he was the premier of the province, number one. Number two, Mr. Speaker, the P3 office that we have, they had a P3 office in the Crown Investments Corporation — told absolutely nobody about. Mr. Speaker, and with respect to outsourcing, we're continuing a practice started by his government when they were in office over here.

But here's some other things that should be on that member's list on the day that we will vote on the budget. What should be on that list, Mr. Speaker, are the 100 campaign promises we've already kept in 16 months. What should be on that member's list, Mr. Speaker, are historic income tax cuts last fall that dropped 80,000 Saskatchewan people from the rolls. What should be on that list is historic property tax relief for the province, a reduction in the debt by 40 per cent in our first year. And what should be at the top of his list today, Mr. Speaker, 15,000 new residents in the province of Saskatchewan — a growing population in Canada's hottest economy, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

#### Expanded Coverage for Cancer Drugs

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, fellow members of the Assembly, I am very pleased to call your attention to more good news regarding cancer treatment in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency has proved the coverage of aromatase inhibitor for post-menopausal women who have early stages of breast cancer. Aromatase inhibitor includes three drugs that are capable of slowing or stopping the growth of cancer cells. They significantly decrease the chances of a reoccurrence of breast cancer.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency already covers the use of these drugs for advanced breast cancer, but now will fully cover them for early stages of breast cancer as well.

This expansion of coverage for cancer drugs supports our government's commitment to improving cancer care for

Saskatchewan people. It will help to ensure that post-menopausal women have another viable treatment option in their battle against breast cancer and a better chance of avoiding reoccurrence.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan already has one of the most comprehensive drug coverage plans in Canada for cancer patients. We will continue to build on that reputation. The 2009-2010 provincial budget provides the agency with \$42.4 million for cancer drugs alone, an increase of 19 per cent or \$6.7 million. We will continue to provide the necessary resources to ensure that cancer patients receive the high-quality care they need and deserve.

I am pleased that the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is actively identifying and championing new cancer treatments that offer patients a better quality of life and a better chance of survival. I congratulate the agency and its many dedicated staff for their efforts in meeting the needs of their patients and providing the best cancer care in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the minister for providing me a copy of his announcement. I am, too, pleased to hear that the post-menopausal women will have — in early-stage breast cancer — will have more options for complete recovery with the addition of aromatase inhibitors.

I too congratulate the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and its staff for its dedication and care to all people in Saskatchewan who have cancer. And we welcome this addition for more options for post-menopausal women in their struggle with breast cancer.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### SPECIAL ORDER

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. 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 Estevan.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I ask you just to bear with me because I do have somewhat of a cold today. But before I make my comments regarding the budget, Mr. Speaker, there are some acknowledgements I would like to make.

First of all, I'd like to thank my family — my son Terry and his wife Marnell, my daughter Trisha and her partner Terry, and also my five grandchildren, Beau, Brooke, Bailee, Shelby, and Tristan, and in fact my entire family, Mr. Speaker — for the love and support that they have shown me.

To the people of the Estevan constituency, I thank them for the honour of representing them. And to my constituency assistant, Rosalie Story, and my casual assistant, Donita Bjorndalen, for their dedication and loyalty. And also, Mr. Speaker, to my colleagues, who during this past year have filled in for me and attended meetings, I say thank you to you all.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to specifically mention one of my colleagues. That is my colleague and my friend, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. Mr. Speaker, as that member stated in his speech when he replied to the budget, the town of Radville will be getting a new health care facility to replace the aging Marian health care centre. And, Mr. Speaker, I did lobby for that facility but I cannot take full credit for it. I must share that with the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, as he lobbied right alongside with me; and when I couldn't be there, he was. So thank you to him.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak in favour of this budget. As members know, Mr. Speaker, this budget is a balanced budget, a surplus budget. And it follows the historical initiatives announced last fall, namely raising the basic personal tax exemption, putting one and one-half billion dollars into infrastructure, and paying down the debt. Since this government has been in power, Mr. Speaker, the debt of this province has been reduced by 40 per cent. That's 40 per cent in 16 months.

This budget represents the largest education property tax cut in a single year in this province's history, something that has been talked about for years, yet nothing was ever done. In fact the members opposite, their idol Tommy spoke about the unfairness of that education property tax. And when the members opposite sat on the government benches, they talked about it. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it was just talk. They commissioned the Boughen report, then they cherry-picked. They raised the PST by one point but failed to institute the reduction of the education portion of property tax. They said once school district amalgamations took place, they would be able to do something. Well again it never happened.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, in 2004 when RM [rural municipality] councillors and farmers came to the legislature protesting the treatment they received from their government. I will refresh memories on the above issues, and I'm taking this from *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, June 10, 2004. And it was during oral questions when the then leader of the opposition, the member from Swift Current, was questioning the then premier. And I will quote:

Mr. Speaker, so they came here . . . from the government. What did they get . . . for their trip? Well they got stood up by the Premier, who didn't bother to meet with them. And then, Mr. Speaker, they were threatened by the minister of Municipal Government, who told them, keep it up, he said; keep it up, and the Premier isn't going to continue to talk to you about this issue any more. That's what that minister said to those people who came to this Legislative

Assembly and talk about this property tax issue. He said, keep it up.

And, Mr. Speaker, in response the then premier, the member from Riversdale said:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Government Relations has already — both to the executive of SARM and to the public through the press — made apologies for some unfortunate comment that may have been made on the platform this morning.

And I remind people, Mr. Speaker, that that minister of Government Relations is today the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Speaker, also regarding the property tax issue is another quote from that same day. It happened during question period. And this is taken from *Hansard*, June 10, 2004. And it was when the then leader of the opposition was questioning the then premier, and the following is a quote from the leader of the opposition at that time:

The Premier didn't promise in the campaign to eventually get around to providing relief in rural and urban Saskatchewan on this issue. He made direct promises. I ask him again to stand in the Assembly and explain, why is he not keeping those promises?

And the then premier, the member from Riversdale, said, and I quote, "Mr. Speaker, we are going to address this issue over the course of this mandate — mark my words." And, Mr. Speaker, that was from June 10, 2004. So we just know how, you know, how we could take him at his word and how trustworthy he was in regards to that situation.

Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of, a lot of response to the member from North Battleford's comments. And Murray Mandryk did an editorial on that issue, and I'm going to quote. It's from the *Leader-Post*, June 11, 2004. And here is a quote from Murray Mandryk's column:

Frankly, Taylor's nasty shot at the SARM crowd was nothing short of bizarre. He was not really even being heckled (although perhaps there was a bit of chuckling at the condescending nature of his speech that spewed rhetoric about how fervently he believes in the right of democratic protest) when he, himself, raised the issue of the crowd not believing that the NDP was making good on its property tax promise. This was perhaps the politest protest crowd that the steps of the legislature has seen in years.

Given the absolute contempt this NDP government has demonstrated for this rural Saskatchewan issue for the past couple of days, it's really hard to take Taylor or the government seriously.

Mr. Speaker, just a reminder also that the platform of the NDP in the 2007 election completely left agricultural land exempt from any tax exemption in the property avenue. And that's their legacy when it comes to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, last year after the budget, the member from Regina Douglas Park moved an amendment to the budget and basically . . . Well he was condemning the government for stockpiling a \$1.3 billion surplus without addressing the most pressing needs of the Saskatchewan people, and in particular property tax relief, skills training, the environment, and the ongoing housing crisis.

And in fact the NDP caucus office put out a press release, and of course the Finance critic he, you know, went on about some tourist T-shirts. My dad went to Florida and all I got was this lousy T-shirt. And you know, perhaps Saskatchewan taxpayers need a T-shirt that says, my Finance minister has an extra \$1.3 billion in the bank, and all I got was a measly \$22 in property tax relief.

And you know, in their amendment they made some changes about doubling the property tax relief and double new training seats so that the economy can fire on all cylinders and to get young people off waiting lists and into the classroom and to make an additional \$20 million investment into affordable housing initiatives and invest more in green initiatives to help Saskatchewan meet its climate change targets.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I am proud that those changes that the member mentioned at that time have all been accomplished. And I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that last year they amended the motion because they said we didn't spend enough. Now they're amending the motion because they claim we spend too much. And every day they petition that they want us to spend more, so you know, I really don't know what's going on over there, but just go figure. I don't think they know either.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of this government, and I congratulate the Minister of Finance and all my colleagues in cabinet for this budget and the awesome job they have done on it, also to the Minister of Education and the member from Rosetown-Elrose for their tireless work on the property tax issue.

You know, my other colleagues have talked about the other important parts of this budget: the \$200 million over two years for the new children's hospital in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, this is welcome news as I believe Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island are the only provinces without a children's hospital. And as my colleague, the member from Yorkton said, you know, when you have family going through difficulties and you can get the care they need right in this province, no one knows how much that means to you until you live through it.

Other highlights, Mr. Speaker, the \$108.1 million in additional funding for the farm income stabilization program and \$25.2 million in additional funding for crop insurance. And, you know, no matter where I go in my constituency, people are telling how wonderful it is to have an Agriculture minister that truly understands that file.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[11:00]

**Ms. Eagles:** — You know, for 16 years, we had a government

that . . . Well I mean, where are their Agriculture ministers? They were dumped quite quickly in the next election. And, you know, Saskatchewan always had a leadership role when it came to designing agriculture programs, and it's time that we were sitting at the table when these programs are being designed again, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very proud and so are my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, as well the investments in education, skills training, and safer communities, long overdue — 16 years of neglect by the members opposite. And, you know, I can't help but notice how they get up in question period and kind of with a righteous attitude. And you would almost swear that they were all new members over there and, you know, developed amnesia or something because they don't even know what their own history is.

Mr. Speaker, the new municipal operating grants program that is going to replace the former revenue-sharing program has been welcomed by municipalities across this province. Ninety per cent of one point of PST [provincial sales tax] in '09-10 and in 2010 and '11, and subsequent years, the equivalent of 100 per cent of one point of PST will be provided.

And, Mr. Speaker, if I may, in the March 20 edition of *Lifestyles* newspaper — it's a little, local paper that is out of Estevan — I would just like to read the following article. Its headline, "St. Onge excited with new formula." And I will just quote parts of that:

Estevan Mayor Gary St. Onge is lauding a new system that distributes revenues from the provincial government to Saskatchewan's municipalities.

"It's great because it's tied with the PST," said St. Onge. "As more things are sold . . . we get more money. That's what we've been looking for all along, so as far as I'm concerned, it's a great day in that regard . . ."

St. Onge was also pleased that the provincial government has moved to reduce the education portion of property tax, calling it a "great step."

So that's been echoed by, I think, pretty well every municipal leader across this province, Mr. Speaker. I've heard the mayor; I've just, you know, heard so many positive remarks regarding that specific, that specific part of the budget.

And in general, it doesn't matter where I go. People are just commenting on it. They're leaving text messages on my phone. The other day in my apartment, in the elevator, an older gentleman came up to me and just said what a terrific job this government was doing and asked me to extend my congratulations to my colleagues on his behalf.

So it was a great day for Saskatchewan, and it continues to be a great day for Saskatchewan, without the doom and gloom from the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and just optimism.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know there's a few more speakers to follow me, but before I take my place, I have to clarify something that was stated, I believe it was yesterday or the day before. It was when the member from Saskatoon Eastview was

up speaking, and she was praising the NDP for building St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan. And, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth.

The grand opening of that hospital was November 21, 1991. The NDP assumed power on October 21, 1991 so if that was their initiative, that's the fastest they've ever moved on anything good in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Ms. Eagles:** — That was done by the former administration. So that member should get her facts straight before she gets up and say anything about that. But you know, it's ironic that they do like to take credit for things that other administrations have done.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will in closing say that I am so proud to support the budget that the Minister of Finance presented the other day. And I will not support the amendment. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to echo my colleague who just took her seat, that I too am proud to be part of the government that delivered an exciting, an innovative and a growth agenda balanced budget at a time of economic uncertainty, globally and across our nation. I'm extremely proud of my colleagues and our government, of our leader. I'm proud to be part of the Treasury Board that helped write the budget. I am very, very, very proud of my colleague, the Finance minister, who kept us all on the Treasury Board strong and steady.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have already before me talked at length about what we've accomplished in 16 months. We have the largest debt reduction that this province has ever seen of 40 per cent. We have the largest personal tax cuts, removing 80,000 people from the tax roll, the largest low-income tax credits, which is, those two combined, Mr. Speaker, are a direct attack of poverty in our province; to help reduce poverty.

It's very interesting that the member from Nutana had stood at one point in the question period and referenced page no. 55 in the budget document, and I too want to reference that page. She suggested that a single individual who lives in Saskatoon would be paying more. What she didn't want to clarify and she didn't want the public to know was, the increase in Saskatoon that would create a higher cost for the individual in Saskatoon was housing. Housing, Mr. Speaker, is not government controlled. We do not own all the houses. We do not control the housing market. It was a sign of a growing housing market within Saskatoon.

What she didn't want to tell the public was that the provincial income tax that that individual would be paying — from the time that the NDP were in government to the time that the Sask Party have formed government — was just about \$500 less. The personal income tax for that individual went significantly down. But the member from Nutana didn't want to mention that.

What the government has been able to control, Mr. Speaker, we have reduced, putting more money in individuals' pockets.

My colleagues have also spent some time, they've talked in length about the largest ever education property tax cut within a balanced budget. We've talked about the largest ever revenue sharing with municipalities within a balanced budget. We've talked about the largest ever highways budget within a balanced budget, the largest ever agriculture budget within a balanced budget, and the largest ever investment in infrastructure within a balanced budget.

But I would like to talk further . . . is the social programs that we have within this budget. We have a Finance critic that has said we spend too much. Well I'm interested, in all those members, what would they like cut within the over \$100 million increase that is in the Social Services budget? What program would they like cut out of the Social Services budget if we are spending too much money?

We're continuing our commitment to the Saskatchewan employment supplement, which is an increased amount that they'll receive, as well as we increased the income threshold for those that qualify.

Again, the member from Nutana wanted to mention how hard done by single parents were, and we agree and recognize that. It is very difficult as a single parent. Well, Mr. Speaker, 70 per cent of the clients who received the Saskatchewan employment supplement, that we increased, are single parents. We recognize that they are struggling and we stepped up to the plate to help them out.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about shelter rates. We increased shelter rates so that they are now 70 per cent of the average market in any given community, along with rental supplements which are 30 per cent of the average market, which means that an individual and a family that is struggling will receive 100 per cent of the average cost of shelter within the community that they live in.

But we didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. What we did was we said we would index it and we would visit it every six months. So what have low-income families and individuals seen within this province? Well they have seen two very significant increases to the shelter rates in a very short period of time. What did the NDP do? Well they ignored shelter rates for 12 consecutive years. They did absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the disability funding that we announced and that is contained in this budget. The NDP talked a lot. They talked an awful lot about how they addressed needs for the most vulnerable within our society. The problem is they didn't put a lot of money or action behind their words. They had a lot of strategies. They had a lot of plans. They had a lot of ideas, but ideas die at the kitchen table if you put no action behind them. And the NDP allowed the waiting list for individuals with disabilities to grow to 440 individuals, which is totally unacceptable. This government recognized that when we put the largest increase into supports, both for living and for programming, for individuals with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk for a minute about CBOs and the

hypocrisy of the NDP, and in particular the hypocrisy of the critic of Social Services. He stands in his seat, reads petition after petition of how appalling it is that CBOs have fallen behind in being able to pay high wages, and we agreed. But why did they fall behind, Mr. Speaker? Who was it that neglected them year over year over year over year? And he should stand in his place and say that it was him. While he sat at the cabinet table, he did not address this issue.

In the last four years the NDP were government, added together — not just the last year but the four years added together — the increase that CBOs received was 8 per cent. In 16 short months, this government increased CBO funding 12.3 per cent — 16 months, 12.3 per cent. The NDP in four years only increased it 8 per cent. Who allowed the wages to go behind other sectors? It was the NDP, and they should stand in their place and admit to it.

Let's talk about the seniors' income plan for a minute, Mr. Speaker. We have the seniors that had absolutely no increase for 16 years. They were ignored. And what did the Saskatchewan Party government do? Well we increased the seniors' income plan by 110 per cent. Now we have the member opposite who said, but you didn't index it. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we would have done the calculation with indexing of each of the 16 years that they absolutely ignored seniors, they would have received a 40 per cent increase. We decided that was not enough and we increased the income plan for seniors by 110 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I would love to know, of any of those programs that I just listed, which ones would the Finance critic like cut? If we're spending too much, which would he like cut? Student housing perhaps? Student housing has been absolutely ignored over all the entire time of the NDP government, and we committed \$15 million for student housing alone. It was absolutely ignored.

So the critic for Social Services is saying that's not true. So, well how many student housing units did his government build? And I will love to have the answer to that. How many student housing units at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] did the NDP build while they were in government? He has a lot to say from his chair, and I'd love to hear his answers.

You know, Mr. Speaker, what I do want to point out is all of the initiatives that we have in this particular budget that have to do with caring for children. Brynn Boback-Lane, the president and CEO of the Children's Health & Hospital Foundation, said it very, very well. She said, and I quote:

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

Now she of course is talking about the children's hospital, again something the NDP would like to take credit for. But words and announcements are meaningless if you're not going to put action behind them. And this government decided to put action and dollars to make this dream a reality — something sadly neglected in our province.

But the initiatives that we have for the children within our province go beyond the children's hospital, as important as it is. Within education, we are seeing the largest capital spending for the schools within this province that this province has ever seen. Finally, we're going to have schools built. Finally, we're going to have schools repaired. And we're going to have leaks fixed. And we're going to have a lot of work done for the schools across our province for our children. What else is in education for our children?

[11:15]

Well, Mr. Speaker, a 27.7 per cent increase for early learning and child care. You know what that increase includes, Mr. Speaker? Well, it includes increases for early childhood development; it includes increases for early childhood education; includes increases for KidsFirst programs; and, Mr. Speaker, it includes increases for child care spaces by a thousand.

So you know, when the NDP were in government, we were sitting at 990 spaces. Let's compare that for a minute of how sadly they neglected that file. Manitoba has 28,000 spaces. Alberta has 78,000 spaces. Where was Saskatchewan under the NDP? Well we're at 990.

It's as unacceptable as the waiting list for disabilities. Have we been able to increase it to those levels in one year? No we haven't, Mr. Speaker, but we're working very hard. So at the end of this budget, we'll have 11,400 spaces thanks to the Education minister.

Mr. Speaker, child and family services division falls within my ministry. And I am very proud to say, from taking government, we have increased the funding for child and family services within our province by 40 per cent — 40 per cent for the children in our province. We have committed to an electronic case-management system for the children in our province, something that was promised time and time again. I have quotes from Ms. Crofford. I hope the members remember when she was the Social Services minister, where she said, we're going to do it. It's done. It's done. But they never kept the promise.

This is the only province in all of Canada that is managing the children in our province — the most vulnerable, the most important source in our province — in a paper system. I can't even imagine the frustration of trying to deal with paper files when we're dealing with our children.

This year we have a number of initiatives to again increase our child welfare system. We have 9.2 million in new capital funding for capacity spaces. We're going to dedicate 15.7 million to support child welfare programs. We're going to give a 3 per cent increase in child rates provided to foster families and extended family caregivers. And we also have an array of recruitment and retention initiatives to provide better and safer capacity for the kids within our province.

So with that and with the time considered, Mr. Speaker, I would just have this one question. The NDP have said numerous times that we're spending way too much money — fair enough. What do they want cut? Should we cut all of those programs that we have expanded for low-income families? Should we cut what



we've done for seniors, a sector in our society totally ignored under the NDP? How about the individuals with disabilities, Mr. Speaker? Should we cut that? Should we just let the waiting list go on and on and on, and never bother to give them the support or the dignity that they deserve in our province?

Better yet, student housing. Let's just cut the student housing. I mean really, they want something cut. Is that what they want to cut? Mr. Speaker, what about the children? All of the programs for children that we've expanded — 40 per cent increase since the NDP were in government — do they want that cut? I would love for them to answer that question. Because I have no doubt they will stand in this House and they will vote against a budget because we're spending too much money, according to their amendment.

I want them to tell us all today: what do you want cut? Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will be supporting the main motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to be able to enter into the debate on what is the second budget of the Sask Party government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin with a short quote from the editorial of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, an editorial that was written the day after the provincial budget. And I think, Mr. Speaker, it is a quote that even the most partisan of Sask Party members opposite, it is a quote they would have to agree with.

Mr. Speaker, the day after the budget the editors of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* said, and I quote, "This is the second budget of one of the luckiest new governments anywhere." One of the luckiest new governments anywhere. Now, Mr. Speaker, the new might be a bit debatable, but surely the lucky is not.

Upon coming into office, this government inherited the largest budgetary surplus of any new government in the history of Saskatchewan. This government inherited a stronger economy than any other new government has ever inherited. This government inherited a growing population. This government inherited a fiscal and taxation framework that encouraged growth. This government inherited a diversified economy and a host of solid social programs.

Then, Mr. Speaker, they came into the extra good fortune of skyrocketing resource prices that have fuelled the coffers of our province to record levels. Surely even the most partisan of members opposite, Mr. Speaker, cannot deny this. This is one of the luckiest new governments anywhere.

Now you know, Mr. Speaker, on the day of the budget, I was asked by one of the journalists if I had budget envy. Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe the answer is, just a little. I have sometimes wondered what we might have done in government in 1991 or in 2001 or, for that matter, this year had we enjoyed the good fortunes and good luck that this government has enjoyed. And you know, Mr. Speaker, perhaps some of the things we might have done are some of the very things that we're debating in

this budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, envy is short-lived because the good fortune of this government, the good fortune that this government has received, is good fortune for the whole people of Saskatchewan. It is good fortune for a people who deserve that good fortune. And it is a good fortune that we worked hard to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, the test of government is not whether you win good fortune or experience bad fortune but how you manage the fortunes that you are handed. And that will be the test of this government — how will they manage the fortunes they've been handed? And every budget, Mr. Speaker, every budget stands alone as a test of the management of the good fortune.

Now I've concluded, Mr. Speaker, after having watched budgets come and go in this legislature for 20 and more years, that the only real difference between a provincial budget and a household budget — or for that matter, the budget of a small business or farm, the budget of a church or a college — the only real difference is in the number of zeros attached behind the numbers. The fundamentals of budgeting are the same, whether we deal in hundreds and thousands of dollars or whether we deal in millions and billions of dollars.

And the fundamentals are pretty simple. A budget is a future plan. It is a projection. It is a projection of future expenditures, a projection of future revenues — trying to make the two balance — all toward achieving certain goals. With the task of setting future expenditures, comes the challenge of setting priorities, of determining what it is that is desired and what can and cannot be achieved.

In the projection of revenues, the best of our judgement must be applied since the entire house of expenditure rests on the foundation of the revenues. And the best house is only as good as the foundation upon which it stands. If there are any cracks in the foundation, the entire house of expenditures is apt to come apart. So on these fundamentals, Mr. Speaker, let us objectively analyze this second budget of the luckiest new government anywhere.

On the expenditure side, this budget is very, very generous, Mr. Speaker. In this budget alone, expenditures are rising at over 12 per cent. A similar increase in spending last budget, last year, means an almost 24 per cent increase in spending in just two years. And parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, as I read the budget, I note there is only an increase of about 3 per cent for health spending this year in this budget, which is just about inflation.

And I do not see, Mr. Speaker, within this budget, provision for contract negotiations, those being the largest operational expenses of government. And so there is some chance, Mr. Speaker, that demands will cause the 12 per cent lift in spending to have to grow to an even higher level, Mr. Speaker.

Now a 12 per cent increase or higher, a 24 per cent increase in two years, Mr. Speaker, is simply not sustainable. It's not sustainable for even the luckiest new government anywhere. The Premier has recognized this. The Premier has said very publicly that something is going to have to give.

Well the question then for Saskatchewan taxpayers becomes

twofold. Does this government have the political will or the courage to reign in their own spending? Only time will tell, Mr. Speaker; only time will tell. And if as the Premier says, something is going to have to give, Mr. Speaker, what is it that will give? Well, Mr. Speaker, it won't be the tax cuts. They won't give. More likely, Mr. Speaker, if something has to give, it will be programs for people. Only time will tell.

But, Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain. The generosity of this budget cannot be sustained. What is uncertain is how this government — who has yet really to have to make a hard decision — how will they get us out of the cycle of spending they have now created. But even, Mr. Speaker, within their current generosity, they have had to make choices. And they have clearly given priority to their own promises, and other things have been left aside.

Mr. Speaker, the most damning review of this budget has not come from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. The most damning review of this budget has not come from the media. The most damning review of this budget has come from the First Nations and Métis peoples of Saskatchewan. They have said they've been left out. They have said they sense they have been betrayed.

Mr. Speaker, I remember, I remember well being at a table in Kelowna, BC [British Columbia] with the Aboriginal leadership from Saskatchewan, with Aboriginal leadership from right across Canada, with the premiers of every province and territory, and the Prime Minister of Canada. And at that table, Mr. Speaker, we agreed and signed — each of us — what became known as the Kelowna accord, an agreement that would have provided substantial, substantial resources to the health and education of Aboriginal people across Canada, substantial resources to Aboriginal peoples in our own province.

It was an historic moment. It was a once-in-a-decade's opportunity. And those of us — some of us at least — who sat at that table were extremely disappointed when Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative government in Ottawa tore up the Kelowna accord and have not, and have not replaced it with any substantive action. It was a once-in-a-decade opportunity, perhaps once in a century, and it is lost.

Mr. Speaker, I will argue with our First Nations and Métis leadership in this province that this government had a once-in-a-decade's — if not once-in-a-century — opportunity, with the resources available to them, to take a dramatic and substantive step in dealing with the issues facing our First Nations and Métis peoples in this province.

They chose different priorities. They chose the priorities of their promises — fair enough.

They chose essentially to do a major shift of property tax. Well, Mr. Speaker, while this property tax change will be welcomed in many, many quarters in our province . . . In fact virtually all of we middle-income — outside the city of Saskatoon, that is — will see substantive property tax decreases. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, a property tax cut is not going to help the First Nation family on-reserve. A property tax cut is not going to solve the circle of addiction that goes on in the rental houses in my own constituency of Riversdale. A property

tax cut is not going to provide a home, a fixed address, for a child in our province who has no fixed address.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, on the expenditure side of this budget, even with this generosity, I believe government has missed a once, perhaps in a century, opportunity. And I fear, Mr. Speaker, I fear that their generosity may not meet the single most pressing social challenge for the province of Saskatchewan. And I equally fear, Mr. Speaker, that this spending on their priorities they may not now have the capacity to stop. It is not sustainable, Mr. Speaker. It is not sustainable. And I fear that this government, politically, may not have the capacity now to stop.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this may be a budget where the house of expenditure looks quite attractive, but can we afford it in the long run? And secondly, Mr. Speaker, this house of expenditure, as attractive as it may look, is it built on a solid foundation? Which takes us, Mr. Speaker, to the revenue side of this budget.

Now everyone is aware — and I note the Minister of Finance is travelling about the province defending this — everyone is aware that 20 per cent of the revenues of this budget are based on potash. One-fifth of our entire budget is now based on one resource commodity.

Now, Mr. Speaker, despite what government is saying, the verdict is still out. The verdict is still out on the Asian markets, Mr. Speaker. The verdict is still out among independent analysis about the price of potash. The verdict is still out, but we have a budget predicated, predicated on an assumption that 20 per cent of our revenues will now come from that one resource in a volatile, a volatile international market.

Mr. Speaker, everyone is well aware — who will have paid attention to debates in this House — that the prediction of the Sask Party government for the Saskatchewan economy in the current budget year exceeds 2 per cent. Larger than 2 per cent, Mr. Speaker — that is three times, three times the projections being made to the private sector.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we should only hope that the government is right, but the fact of the matter is there are troubling signs. We may, Mr. Speaker, yet be ahead of the pack in terms of Canadian provinces or jurisdictions but, Mr. Speaker, the SaskJobs website today is posting only half the number of jobs that were posted when government changed in this province a year and a half ago — half.

We hear concerns now being raised, as recently as yesterday, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in our province who provide all members, I believe, with the statistics which point to the fact that where a year ago we were leading, our small-business community was leading the nation in its optimism. Well now we've slipped to third. We hear our small-business community talking about the increase in product costs, increase in energy costs. Mr. Speaker, these are coming from our own small-business people.

Surely we are all aware in this House of those who have been

laid off from their jobs in our economy, our economy as strong as it is. We are aware of those who are being laid off in the potash industry, in the oil patch, Mr. Speaker; very quiet in the oil patch. We hear steelworkers being laid off. We hear of the uranium, people working in the uranium industry being laid off.

Mr. Speaker, this is not some kind of doom and gloom, this is simply reality. And yet we have a government that is saying, the private sector's wrong, don't believe what you're reading and seeing, trust us that this economy is going to grow more than two and a half per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this: I hope they're right. I hope for the people of Saskatchewan and this great province, I hope they're right. Mr. Speaker, my point is this: if the foundation for a house of expenditure is shaky, the entire budget is shaky.

Mr. Speaker, this will be the last budget I debate in this House. And that causes me, Mr. Speaker, before I take my place, to reminisce on the first budget that I debated in this House. 1986, Mr. Speaker, and there are some parallels. That too was a budget with a high degree of generosity and expenditure. That too was a budget that was very optimistic in its assumptions.

And I think we all know that when the books were closed on that 1986 budget, we found ourselves \$1.2 billion in debt, in deficit on that budget alone, Mr. Speaker. And I believe a fair and objective reading of history will show that that was the budget that began to trigger the real fiscal collapse of the government in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the test of a government, the test of a government is how you manage the fortunes you are provided, whether those fortunes be bad or whether those fortunes be good. Mr. Speaker, this is the luckiest new government anywhere. They have been provided a good fortune that we do not envy or resent because it is good fortune for the people of Saskatchewan. How they manage this good fortune, Mr. Speaker, will be the test.

History, history causes me to fear the ability of this Saskatchewan Party, springing as it does from the Conservative Party in this province. I fear their ability to manage their own expenditures. I fear their ability to accurately — and small “c” conservatively — estimate their revenues because I've seen this movie before, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I hope I'm wrong. I hope for the people of Saskatchewan, they're right. Time will tell, Mr. Speaker, only time will tell.

But I can predict this today, Mr. Speaker. I can predict this. The day will come — perhaps sooner rather than later — where the people of Saskatchewan will again turn to the New Democratic Party for the New Democratic Party to clean up, rebuild one more time. And I tell you what, Mr. Speaker, when that day comes — and it's likely will be in 2011 — the New Democratic Party will be ready for the challenge.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for the amendment. I will not be voting for the budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know I'll have plenty of opportunity to be able to pass on some comments of tribute to the previous speaker, to the hon. member for Riversdale and the former premier of the province. But as he highlighted, this day is occasioned by his last entry into a budget debate.

And I think it should be noted by this House and by all members of this Assembly that the former premier has contributed obviously in significant ways to the province of Saskatchewan, has dedicated much of his life to making the province a better place. And while we disagree on the techniques to best achieve that or the ideas to best achieve that, there can be no disagreement with respect to his dedication and his commitment to the city of Moose Jaw where he originally began in politics, to his seat in Riversdale and to the province of Saskatchewan. And I pay tribute to him today, and we'll have a chance to do that in the months ahead.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, budgets are more than just numbers. They're more than just charts, although there are a lot of both of those things in any budget, especially a budget of a provincial government. Budgets also I think tell a story for the people who will take the time to read them.

Budgets, by definition, at least on this side of the House, budgets now by definition have a projection, a four- to five-year projection about what we think is going to happen to the economy, to the revenues of the province. It was a practice that was stopped, that was broken by the previous administration at the very end of their government when they became a little bit concerned, I think, about their own fiscal responsibility, their own stewardship, and refused to show what the out years might hold for Saskatchewan under their plan. So they stopped providing that glimpse of the future.

Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on a different approach. We campaigned on transparency. We did campaign on ensuring that people would know at least what the projections we believed to be the case for the province's revenues. So budgets, then, tell a story about the future to the extent that those projections are going to be accurate, obviously. They tell a story about the present because the budget highlights things the government's going to be doing on behalf of the people of the province, the initiatives that the government intends to take in this next budget year.

And, Mr. Speaker, you don't have to actually read between the lines of a budget to see they also tell a story about the past. And this budget, this budget, strong and steady 2009, tells that kind of a story — one that speaks to the past; the recent past; the historical past of our province; the present, Mr. Speaker, with all of the optimism that is in the province, notwithstanding the global recession; and the future.

And if you'd permit me, Mr. Speaker, that's the context for my intervention here in this budget debate, just before the Minister

of Finance takes to his feet to wrap up what has been a spirited budget debate this year.

In the not-too-recent history of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I think members in this House would be surprised to read the kinds of reports that were coming from Saskatchewan from an economic standpoint just a very, very short time ago. Because things are so comparatively healthy economically in our province today, I think we sometimes forget where we've been. I think we sometimes forget the change that has occurred even with respect to the vision that the government holds for the future of Saskatchewan. Because it wasn't very long ago when we were on that side of the House, the Saskatchewan Party, and the New Democrats were on this side of the House.

And so if you consider what was being espoused, what was being proclaimed by the then members of the New Democratic government in terms of a vision for Saskatchewan not too long ago, you can get a sense for the history of Saskatchewan, the recent history and the longer term history.

It wasn't very long ago that the then premier of Saskatchewan would refer to our province as a wee province when he'd come back from a First Ministers' Conference. That wasn't very long ago. It wasn't very long ago when the former premier would say things like this province can expect to be in and out of equalization, that we can expect to be have and have not, that we're going to just bounce around. And aspirants to permanent have status shouldn't really be thinking that way in terms of the province of Saskatchewan.

I remember those comments and they didn't, Mr. Speaker, to me reflect . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the hon. member from Nutana is questioning, Mr. Speaker, whether or not this comparison of the two different approaches, two different visions for the province's future, has anything to do with grace. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that that member from Riversdale, the seatmate of the member who's chirping from her seat, has contributed greatly to the province of Saskatchewan. I happen to fundamentally disagree with the mediocre vision that he and his colleagues, the member from Nutana, had for the future of my province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — And we waged an election on it, Mr. Speaker. We fought an election on the question which party has a plan to keep the momentum of this province going. Which party has the vision to see Saskatchewan, with all of its resources, leading the country not just temporarily, not in and out of equalization, but permanently a have province, a North Star reference point for economic growth in this country.

And if she's saying we now can't have this debate, if she's saying we can't simply disagree on that, well I disagree with her, Mr. Speaker, because that is, that is the vision of this government. You don't have to go very far back down the history of the province, you don't have to go very far back to note that duly elected members of the New Democrats in government, when they were faced with our vision for our province's population that would grow at least at 1 per cent . . . That was our objective — that our population in Saskatchewan

should grow at least by 1 per cent. That was the national average. That in 10 years we should have 100,000 people added to our population rolls. When we made that case, members opposite said that we're statistically impossible.

The former member for Regina Wascana, now replaced by the current member for Regina Wascana, said on the record — it's in the, I think, the Davidson newspaper — said on the record that it was statistically impossible for this province to grow at the national average of 1 per cent. That was the mindset. That was the vision. That's our recent past, Mr. Speaker.

And budgets from previous governments, budgets from previous governments, Mr. Speaker, tell that same story. Because if your government believes, if the Government of Saskatchewan believes that this province is not going to grow, if the Government of Saskatchewan believes it's statistically impossible to grow, what are they going to do with respect to investing in education infrastructure? What will they do with respect to investing in any infrastructure at all?

[11:45]

The likelihood is, of course, they will plan for decline. They will hold back on infrastructure investments. They will write rural Saskatchewan off almost completely and stop the infrastructure investments that could go into the parts of the economy, by the way, that have all the natural resources that we benefit from every year in the budget. That's what a budget would look like if the government believes that the province really can't grow, that we can't even achieve the national average of growth. You're going to plan for decline. And that's exactly what happened, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly the history of the province of Saskatchewan.

It's interesting also to note what was being written not just very long ago, even in March 15, 2007. It's only two years ago, Mr. Speaker. Consider how far we've come when the editorial of *The StarPhoenix* said:

Saskatchewan and perennial basket-case Newfoundland were the only provinces to record a drop in population between . . . 2001 and 2006 . . . [according to] Statistics Canada."

The quote goes on from just two years ago:

Saskatchewan's population loss simply wasn't a matter of the gravitational pull of bigger cities, higher-paying jobs [and] bright lights closer to the mountains. The numbers in this week's Statistics Canada report are an indictment of how poorly prepared . . .

Now wait a minute, this is why the member from Nutana doesn't like this part:

The numbers in this week's Statistics Canada report are an indictment of how poorly prepared Saskatchewan was for the challenges it faces and its ineptitude in adjusting even to years of bounty."

That's only two years ago, Mr. Speaker. That was, I think, the consensus view of punditry and others in the province who

watched their government, wholly unprepared for opportunity, unwilling to embrace the fact that this province could lead, that this province could grow, Mr. Speaker. Well, that has changed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because members of the New Democratic Party, stalwarts in the New Democratic Party, are also worried about the look in the rear-view mirror that members are constantly . . . their constant view is the rear-view mirror.

Consider, Mr. Speaker, what John Conway said not very long ago, just February 26 in the *prairie dog*. He was talking about the NDP leadership campaign, but more importantly he was talking about just the NDP today, Mr. Speaker, and here's what he said. He said, with respect to the potential, or the presumptive favourite for leadership and the NDP, he says, "How many times can you re-embalm and prettify a political corpse . . ." We're not saying this, Mr. Speaker. I didn't say that. John Conway, a New Democrat supporter said that. And it bears repeating:

How many times can you re-embalm and prettify a political corpse [I'm assuming he's referring to the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker] before it crumbles into dust and must be swept into the dumpster of political history?

Now, as we debate the budget today, Mr. Speaker, and consider the future, members opposite are also considering their future and stalwarts within the NDP are identifying a problem. And the problem is that while Saskatchewan has moved on, the new Saskatchewan has changed, the new Saskatchewan believes in a bright future, leading the country in many economic categories; there are members of this legislature, there are people in the province — not very many — but there are a few people left who have not changed, who have not got the memo from the rest of Saskatchewan people, who continue to plan for decline, who continue to purvey gloom and doom, who continue to set the bar very, very low in terms of what might be possible for our province.

And I've heard it from budget speech after budget speech from members opposite. The foundation, the premise of all of those speeches was very similar. It was the premise of 2007. It was the premise of 1976, '75. It was the premise of decades ago. That was the premise of their speeches which was that we ought not to expect to lead the country permanently; that I don't think we're going to be able to continue to grow. I don't think we can achieve things, notwithstanding all of the evidence to the contrary from chartered banks, from economists, from anyone else that they might care to listen to, Mr. Speaker. That it was okay to be mediocre and, with respect to their budget speech entries, they would all say the same thing, including the member from Riversdale who just spoke, which was, we ought not to be aspirants to something bigger. We ought not to believe in what is right before our eyes today. We ought not to believe that Saskatchewan is leading today and we can lead tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

So that's the yesterday. That's where Saskatchewan has been. That's where Saskatchewan was, you know. And I don't think it

was ever the people of the province of Saskatchewan that didn't believe in the latent potential, the amazing potential that remained untapped in our province. I think people in Saskatchewan always knew. I think intuitively they understood that we could be outperforming to the potential that was being realized at the time. I think they understood that we could lead, Mr. Speaker.

But the government of the day did not. And the policies we've inherited from that government highlight that. In file after file the Minister of Education will report to the caucus and cabinet. Here was the level of infrastructure investment they were prepared to make, because they were planning for decline. The Minister of Highways will say, here were their plans for highways and infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan at woefully low levels given the growth that was going on because they were planning to decline. And then the Minister of Health will say, here is the woeful infrastructure deficit we have inherited in the province of Saskatchewan including the neglect of long-term care in rural and urban Saskatchewan because the previous government was planning for decline. File after file, that was the message, Mr. Speaker.

Well those days have changed, those days have changed. Our first budget was a "Ready for Growth" initiative, Mr. Speaker. That was the centrepiece of the Minister of Finance's budget. One billion dollar record infrastructure investment that was \$400 million higher than the biggest amount ever spent by members opposite when they had the chance to form the government.

We added a half a billion dollar booster shot, an injection earlier this year, and in the last budget year . . . or the current budget year, I should say, Mr. Speaker, and another \$1 billion "Ready for Growth" initiative here because members on this side of the House representing people in urban Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan understand that we've got work to do. That we intend — especially after the economy comes out of this malaise — we intend to continue to set records. We intend to continue to attract people to the province, to create jobs. And in order to do that, we need a budget that doesn't plan for decline, but plans to lead.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — So what's going on today in Saskatchewan? Because if you hear members opposite, man, every once in awhile they'll wedge into their speech that, you know, there's some good news happening economically. But mostly they're focusing on the negative.

Let's consider what's happening in the economy that is positive knowing that every member in this House understands that there have been job losses in Saskatchewan — there have been layoffs; knowing that every member understands we're not immune to what's going on around the world. But let's also focus on some of the positive attributes, some of the positive facts of Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that global worldwide recession.

Mr. Speaker, just this morning we learned from Statistics Canada, that year over year, in the last year, the province of Saskatchewan in the face of global recession has grown 15,000

people, about the size of the city of Swift Current — though I can't say that any more because Swift Current's growing too, Mr. Speaker — but 15,000 people in the last year.

Mr. Speaker, in the last quarter alone, right about the time that our temporarily hobbled Minister of Advanced Education was in Toronto, along with myself, promoting Saskatchewan as a place to be, in just the last quarter alone the largest source of growth for the province — and this might be counterintuitive even for members opposite; I'm sure it surprised them — was the province of Ontario. That was our greatest source for people. In fact 920 net, about that number, came from Ontario alone. That was bigger than the number that came from Alberta on a net basis, or any other province — from Ontario. Because, Mr. Speaker, as this budget lays out, we not only have a vision for a growing province and a growing economy, we also have a plan. We plan to execute that, and that means going to Toronto to job fairs. That means investing in things like the graduate retention program. So we go with tools. We go well armed and we can say, you ought to come to Saskatchewan because it is a place that's growing and it has great potential.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think by any reasonable assessment, I know that it isn't just government obviously that has contributed to this population growth. But we're doing the right things. Not with perfection. There's mistakes that are made by any organization, including government. But, Mr. Speaker, the record shows, the numbers show, and more importantly, the families who are moving here and bringing vibrancy to Saskatchewan show that we are on the right track, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to stay there with the budget we currently debate in the Legislative Assembly today.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — We had 2,415 people from Ontario; 2,312 people came from the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, in any other category . . . And then we have the chartered banks slashing their growth forecast to be sure, but saying Saskatchewan's going to lead. The Conference Board of Canada says Saskatchewan's going to lead, Mr. Speaker.

CNN.com, CNN.com couldn't resist telling this amazingly unique story of Saskatchewan within North American. I was in Washington at the time, and people in Washington who had CNN [Cable News Network] saved on their favourites were asking me about what was going on. Because this article basically highlighted the fact that there was a bit of a unique island, so to speak — though we know we're not an island; this was the premise of the article — there was an island in North America of opportunity and of job creation, where people were coming and finding a chance to build a future in the midst of what has been economic despair, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, I could tell you this. We've got a question from the opposition about, well how much money did the government pay to get that coverage? Did you hire a consultant, they asked, Mr. Speaker. Even in the question, even in the question that they asked of us about that CNN.com story, even in that question, we could see what their vision is for the province. They just assume that that kind of coverage can't just happen to Saskatchewan where we plan for decline, where we're in and out of equalization, where we ought not to aspire to greatness or

to economic leadership. That article, that kind of coverage can't just happen. Well, Mr. Speaker, yes it can just happen.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — We retained nobody. We hired nobody. You know what? What the opposition members got to realize is that Saskatchewan's story is telling itself. It's our job to help that out and we will, Mr. Speaker. We'll shout it from every mountaintop we can about what's going on here. We've been doing that for the last 16 months.

But, you know, our story, the compelling story that is our province, that I assume we all love, doesn't need any help today — witness what happened on the CNN.com website. And then the record number of hits to saskjobs.ca as Americans tuned in to this website and thought, where is this place that I can't spell or pronounce? I'm going to go find out about it. And 60,000-plus people clicked on saskjobs.ca to find out a little bit about Saskatchewan hope, to find out a little bit about this unique story that's been happening in our country, and I admit, beginning at the end of the previous government's term but really has picked up steam since the election. They clicked in to find, when they needed it most, a little bit of hope. A story of positive news that a place that was still growing, a place that provided some opportunity that was struggling itself, to be sure, with the global recession — more so than it had been the year before — but a place that was offering a bit of hope. And that, Mr. Speaker, is Saskatchewan today. Today . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, today in Saskatchewan we've got more nurses working because we've been working hard on nurse recruitment and retention, and that's been a part of the budget.

Today in Saskatchewan, the infrastructure deficit's getting repaired. Highways are getting fixed. Today in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, there's a government that stands with cattle producers when they're in the midst of a crisis, that fixes the crop insurance program that's long needed it. Today in Saskatchewan, property taxes are about to be lowered in a historic way for everyone in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Today in Saskatchewan, income taxes are lower, Mr. Speaker. Today in Saskatchewan, 80,000 fewer people in the . . . 80,000 people are no longer paying income tax at all because of the measures we took this fall, Mr. Speaker. Today in Saskatchewan, the provincial debt is 40 per cent lower than it was 16 months ago when this government took office, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — And today in Saskatchewan, those families who have sick kids, who are tired of travelling to Stollery or to Toronto, have hope. It won't happen right away because it takes a long time to build a hospital. But today in Saskatchewan, the hope, the dream of a children's hospital has been realized by this government and this budget and the people in Saskatoon

and across the province who had a vision for something better for pediatrics care in our province, for a very long time, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — But there's more work to be done. We have things to do in this province to continue this momentum. And so there's a lot of hope about what's next. Because, Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the past, there is one thing better than today in Saskatchewan, and that's tomorrow in Saskatchewan. And that's what this budget is all about.

This budget continues to lay the foundation and the framework for a growing province. This budget continues to lay the foundation — and the hon. member for Riversdale used this analogy — the foundation for not just a strong and steady, stable house but a house where you have to add some rooms, where you need some renovations, where you've got to add a bedroom because more people are coming over all the time. They want to be in that house, Mr. Speaker. That's what this budget is about. It's about continuing our efforts to fix the infrastructure deficit we inherited.

[12:00]

This budget is about meaningful, sustainable property tax relief, Mr. Speaker. On this issue I can you tell you that there's two choices a government can make on education property tax, especially in this province where people like Tommy Douglas decades ago was saying, we've got to deal with this issue. You can make promises about it, Mr. Speaker. You can give speeches about it, Mr. Speaker. You can include some commitment in a campaign, but none of it matters if you're not prepared to do something, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — And that's what this budget represents and sets the stage for tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, I've listened carefully to the member from Riversdale and the member from . . . What's his seat over there? Your critic — what's the seat?

**An Hon. Member:** — Regina Rosemont.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Regina Rosemont. I've heard his questions. And you know, they're raising some questions about the consultation process. Mr. Speaker, they did so today. I want to tell you . . . and publicly thank the member for Rosetown for the work that he did to lay the foundation for the consultation.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — His was a comprehensive process of consultation, and he was very candid with stakeholders in education about what was coming. You know how I know that, Mr. Speaker? Because I had trustees come up to me and say, don't do what Alberta did; don't limit our ability to be able to tax. There was a consultation. By the way, we just disagree on that point with those trustees. We disagree. And the Minister of Education has announced a plan that does curtail that, that lowers property taxes.

But the fact of the matter is, we were listening and we heard. No, we didn't agree with everyone, Mr. Speaker, all the stakeholders that were engaged in the process that the member for Rosetown began. And, Mr. Speaker, maybe that's why no other government's been actually able to do something about the issue — because they're paralyzed by the fact that stakeholders are going to have a different view and so the job never gets done.

And all SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] ever gets are promises and all families ever get, who wants some relief, are promises. Well that has also changed today in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the members of this House have gone through the various third parties that have talked about what this budget lays out for the future.

One other issue I'll touch on, without going over the endorsements that we've received from the municipal sector, is revenue sharing, municipal revenue sharing, because it also speaks to tomorrow in Saskatchewan. If we're going to grow in the province, if we're going to ensure that we keep up with the challenges of growth, we have to treat our municipal partners with the respect that has not been accorded them, I do not believe, by governments in the past.

We have to say to them, when we have a booster shot of about \$100 million, take it. You don't have partisan politics at your council. You've had balanced budget requirements longer than any provincial government in the history of the country. We trust you to do the right thing, go out and build Saskatchewan. And they welcomed that trust, Mr. Speaker.

And in this budget we took another step. We said, you know, it's been promised for a long time, including from the previous government, that we should have revenue sharing tied, own-source revenue-sharing money that's shared with the municipalities, tied to revenues in the province of Saskatchewan. Again it's not an easy thing to figure out because even once you figure out the formula, then you've got to apportion it between the urban sector and the towns and the villages. And what about SARM?

It's not an easy thing to do, Mr. Speaker. But once again in this budget today, laying the groundwork for a bright future tomorrow, we have delivered on that municipal revenue-sharing plan. We've taken that first step towards a permanent solution that was only ever talked about, that was only ever promised. Well that has also changed today in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the future, there's one other very important part of the budget. And that is the fact that when all is said and done — when the investments are made, when the tax relief has been given to the people of Saskatchewan — there is going to be, at the end of the day, about a 1.2-plus billion dollar balance in the Growth and Financial Security Fund.

And now we've heard members opposite say in their speeches that this budget drains away the fund. I remember that, watching the speech from the member for Wood River, when he made the very salient and important point that if a drained bank account means a balance of \$1.2 billion, sign me up for that, Mr. Speaker. Sign me up for that. That is the balance here. It is the rock. It is the insurance. We've heard members say, well it was going to be \$2 billion in the third quarter projections.

Remember what we said when we made that announcement, Mr. Speaker, on the roughly \$2 billion, at that time, we believed the balance to be? We said, this is the balance. It is an insurance policy. It is a rock on which we'll build our future because if we need it to guard against recessionary pressures, if we need it to provide an infusion into the economy, a stimulus into the economy — as everyone was talking about — it would be there. That is precisely the point of *The Growth and Financial Security Act*, one of the first Bills that we passed as a government.

And, Mr. Speaker, not surprisingly, we said that in the fall. And we did that. We have been consistent with respect to commitments and financial planning in this province. And notwithstanding the concerns from members opposite, I think it's pointed out some inconsistencies in their position that I think are important to get on the record with respect to the Growth and Financial Security Fund.

Here is what the members opposite said about the balance in that fund not too many months ago. Here's the member from The Battlefords: "The government is now sitting on a mountain of money with . . . new ideas and no plans on how to invest it' . . ." July 31, 2008.

Here is a quote from the Canadian Press story, and I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker, "NDP Leader Lorne Calvert also said the \$1.9 billion . . . was 'a very substantial amount of money' to hold when there are issues to be dealt with." When there are issues to be dealt with. I think he was probably talking about housing. I think he was probably talking about meaningful tax relief that's sustainable. I think he was probably talking about infrastructure, as meaningful issues to be dealt with.

So what did the government do? We dealt with it, Mr. Speaker. We made those investments, and when we did, then the member says, no you can't spend any of that money in the Growth and Financial Security Fund.

Mr. Speaker, we were all in opposition for a time on this side of the House, and I guess if oppositions choose, if they choose, they can be that inconsistent just over a matter of months. That's their option. But I would say this, when they are that inconsistent just on something as important as the Growth and Financial Security Fund, just in a matter of months, I think they should expect one thing. I think they'll be expecting to hone their skills in opposition for a very long time, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm mindful of the fact that the Minister of Finance has been waiting to enter this debate as he has talked to people across this province about the budget.

But we have laid the framework for a bright and bold future for Saskatchewan. We believe in the strength of our economy. And most importantly we believe in the character and the quality of Saskatchewan people who have all gone through a bit of a change, I think, as we have since as recently as 2007, who are feeling pretty good about the future, mindful of the fact that we're not immune to what's going on, still a little bit worried, I'm sure, as everybody's watching the markets. But overall, more confident perhaps than anyone else in our great country of Canada.

They believe in this province of Saskatchewan. They believe that '09 will be, can be strong and steady, that it will pave the way for a future the likes of which maybe we've only ever given ourselves the licence to dream of, Mr. Speaker. That's how people are feeling today in Saskatchewan.

And if we continue to get things right, if we continue to invest in infrastructure, if we continue to pay down the debt of this province, if we continue growth-friendly policies, if we continue to make sure we are looking after those who are most vulnerable among us along this path to success and journey, Mr. Speaker, we are going to get it right. There will be more CNN.com stories on Saskatchewan. There will be more *Fortune* magazine coverage of the province. There will be more heads turning in central Canada as to what exactly is going on with that prairie tiger that's called Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

That is an objective of this government. That's the goal that we have for the province. And even with the negativity that we see from members opposite, Mr. Speaker, we are going to persevere in this province. We're going to emerge from the other side of this economic malaise stronger than we have ever, ever been, Mr. Speaker — stronger than we have ever been.

So it's my pleasure to say for the record that I've carefully considered the amendment the members opposite put forward. I have given it due consideration, Mr. Speaker. And you know, on behalf of almost everybody in the province who just simply wouldn't agree with that amendment, I think I'm going to vote against it. I will be voting, Mr. Speaker, in favour of the budget.

And let me just say this. Maybe there are some members over there that also believe it's been a long time coming — this property tax relief. That it's been a long time coming — this children's hospital in the city of Saskatoon. That it's been a long time coming — this government with a forward-looking vision and a plan to deal with infrastructure. That it's been a long time coming that this province would turn heads in the nation. And this budget helps that. And so maybe there's just a few of them that are going to stand up with us and say, we're going to vote for the province of Saskatchewan, for the province of Saskatchewan that it is today and that it will be tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Before I recognize the Minister of Finance, I just bring to members' attention that the minister is exercising his right to close debate, and therefore if any other member wishes to speak, they should stand in their place now. I recognize the Minister of Finance.



**Hon. Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there's any number of members in this Chamber who would gladly trade places with me and try to follow the presentation of the Premier in this House. I'm feeling a little lonely in this endeavour, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to express some thank yous. Certainly one of the challenges that exists when you have a task as formidable as presenting a budget is you don't get home to your constituency as much or as often as you'd like to, and I would like to thank my constituents for their support and understanding and their advice as this whole budget process has unfolded. And in particular, I'd like to acknowledge my constituency assistants, Fred Fedosoff and Laurie Hookway, and all the support they've given me in this endeavour.

As well, I'd like to acknowledge the individuals in my office here in Regina — under the chief of staff leadership of Dick Carter — Kim Jalbert and Krista Baker who have also made the time required that I needed to present this budget possible.

But most importantly I think — as important as any of these other thank yous — I want to thank the Premier, my cabinet colleagues, and caucus colleagues who've supported the endeavours of putting together this budget. It is not my document, Mr. Speaker; it's our document on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. I'm very proud of it.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of comments that have been raised by members opposite and colleagues on this side of the House. They've been very thoughtful comments and very legitimate comments, and I'm not going to rebut or discuss all of them individually. I would like to acknowledge the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in his windup speech on the budget in terms of talking about the general framework and the foundation on which budgets are created and what they exist for, and all of those issues in terms of looking at forecasts and estimates and all those related topics in regard to spending. And many members opposite have indicated that they feel that we've been perhaps even irresponsible in terms of our revenue projections. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch a little bit on that area of the budget at this opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is very important in terms of the responsibilities of the Minister of Finance is to provide solid advice and solid legitimate forecasts in the presentation of a budget. Mr. Speaker, there is no task, given the volatility of the commodity markets, given the volatility of the economy, that is more challenging than that exact responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, you know, when I think of last year and we predicted oil to be something in the \$70 range, and we no sooner made the prediction and the ink was not hardly dry on the budget documents and oil started heading for \$147. At the first quarter we made some projections that these prices would stay up above the \$100 level. And we no sooner made that

commitment or that expectation, and it started heading down to \$30. And so how difficult is it to actually have forecasts that are sustainable and responsible in the kind of volatility that's going on?

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to state that in these predictions we've used the very best professionals that we could draw upon. We've used the very most professional public servants that work for the province of Saskatchewan, most of whom, if not all of whom, worked for the previous administration and certainly were held in high regard by that administration, and who are doing the work today diligently on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Speaker, we didn't just take these numbers out of the air without any thought or consideration as to the fundamental validity of the underpinning of those numbers. Mr. Speaker, let me talk about a few of them this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, we said that oil was going to likely be 48.75 a barrel. Now that's a cautious, prudent estimation. You can get estimations out there anywhere from \$25 a barrel to \$150 a barrel. We felt that 48.75 was very prudent and very cautious, and we used those numbers to base our forecast going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm encouraged that oil is currently trading in the low \$50 range. That's good news, and it's a positive indication that perhaps the worldwide recession is beginning to slowly move out of recession into a positive growth rate. That's good for Saskatchewan. That's good for the people of Saskatchewan, and I don't apologize for using cautious and prudent numbers. And we certainly didn't use them deliberately to misrepresent the potential of the province, but to be cautious and to be prudent.

[12:15]

Mr. Speaker, we used 85 cents as the exchange rate of the Canadian dollar against the American currency. Currently the dollar is trading in the low 80s, and so there is some possibility that it will actually reach the forecast number that we projected. And that gives us some opportunity to be cushioned against volatile exchange rates. Certainly when we posted the numbers, the rate was something under 80 cents to the dollar. And so we were prudent by saying we didn't want to under forecast the exchange rate. And I think that's responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the professionals over at the Ministry of Finance have put together their best estimate for GDP [gross domestic product] numbers at 2.1 per cent. And I know in his address, the opposition Finance critic took great umbrage with the fact we were using numbers that were significantly higher than other forecasters. Well, Mr. Speaker, over the course of my tenure as Finance minister, I've come to believe that if you want five economic forecasts, ask four economists, because you're going to get forecasts all over the map.

And I have a great deal of faith, and I would have thought that members opposite would have had a great deal of faith, in the professionalism and the knowledge of the people in the Finance ministry because they're the same people who have well served

this administration, who served that administration. And they build their economic model based on a great deal of knowledge and interest in Saskatchewan economic variables, and I believe that I will certainly accept their advice before all others.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also point out, it isn't just our internal forecasters that are optimistic about the future and the strength of the Saskatchewan economy. BMO [Bank of Montreal] for example says, and I quote, "... the Saskatchewan economy remains the best sheltered in Canada. Strong population growth, fiscal stimulus and a diverse resource mix are helping to buffer the downturn."

That's pretty positive confirmation of our optimism in the future of the province. The Scotia says for example, and I quote, "The GRF revenue forecast is conservative." And again they say, "... potash revenue could offer some upside surprise."

And finally the TD [Toronto-Dominion] says — who has a reputation of being fairly conservative in their estimation — says this: "... the government's efforts to pay down its debt and to set aside more than \$1 billion in a rainy day fund has put its coffers in good shape to weather any unanticipated economic weakening."

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Gantfoer:** — And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan and members opposite I am very much convinced that we're using cautious, prudent numbers in the presentation of this budget.

But I would like to talk about one commodity in particular. I mentioned oil and I mentioned the exchange rate and other commodities in this province. What about the wonderful story, the incredible story of potash? You know as we travel around the province, most of us have driven by potash mines. We see them on the horizon. We see them some distance from the highway, and we pretty much have taken them for granted. But what a story for potash. And it's been an incredible story of economic growth and a future of success for our province.

Mr. Speaker, potash prices have strengthened dramatically over the course of the year. And you know it is sort of something that was new to me to understand the macroeconomics of the potash cycle, if you like.

And when I was told by officials, the first comment where they started from is they said, Minister, do you realize that China had a bumper crop last year? And I'm a town kid and I kind of was going to say, so? What does this mean? Well what it means is, is that China has farmed its soil for thousands of years. There's no natural fertility left in the soil. The only fertility that's in the soil of China is what you put there, and you get it there by putting fertilizer in the soil. And potash is one of the fundamental products of fertilizer. And so like it or not, China simply has to face the reality that in order to feed their population, they're going to have to increase the fertility of their soil. They're going to have to put fertilizer in the soil. They're going to have to buy Saskatchewan potash.

And you can argue and you can debate if there really is any

choice. And there isn't. As the crop was good last year, it needed to feed the population of China. They need to repeat that year after year after year because the demand does not go away. Eating is not a luxury that people sort of engage in at whim. They fundamentally need to have a reliable and steady source of food if you're going to have a stable and consistent government in any of these countries. So in China or India or a Third World or Brazil or anywhere where there's huge population growth, there has to be food. Mr. Speaker, the other reality is that in the population basically there's 75 million more people each and every year, many of them in fact — perhaps arguably most of them — in the Third World, and they also have expectations of a reasonable diet.

And so, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan finds itself in the enviable position of being the vast depository of the potash of the world. We have more and better and accessible potash than virtually anywhere in the world. And, Mr. Speaker, the industry is very optimistic and enthusiastic about its future. You know, it's encouraging for me to be able to meet with the industry and to listen to their plans of financial commitment that they're bringing forward to improve their mines and improve their resources.

Several billions of dollars are being committed, \$8 billion by the existing producers in improving their industry because they believe in the profit margins, they believe in the future, because those fundamentals of food do not change, going forward.

New companies want to come into Saskatchewan and start greenfield production, one of them very close to my constituency hopefully, in BHP Billiton. And these are not small players. It's the biggest mining company in the world. And they're bringing to bear four billion of their own dollars in order to consider the start of a mine in my constituency. And I know my colleagues are sort of saying, no, it's closer to mine, but actually the shaft, I hope, will be on my side of the border. But what they also have said, that they can go several numbers of miles out in all directions — not as far as Kindersley, mind you.

And so, Mr. Speaker, you're right if you say that we are optimistic in a prudent and guarded way about the future of this province. Mr. Speaker, we are confident of the future of Saskatchewan. We have a diverse economy, and we have wonderful opportunities in our province. I won't repeat the objectives of the expenditures that we made, but suffice it to say, Mr. Speaker, it was a very prideful thing to present the budget last week that really realized the promises that we made to the people of Saskatchewan when they chose our administration in the fall of 2007.

We also did it in a timely manner. We didn't wait and drag it out in a cynical political move to get re-elected. We're doing the job that's given to us, and that's meeting the challenges that we're facing every day in this province, and that's what's going to get it going.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker, people have asked me in the trips around the province in these last ... week I guess. I think I've made almost 15 presentations since the budget was

tabled. And right across this province people have come to me and said thank you. They've said thank you to the government for its vision and optimism and enthusiasm because it's a vision that the people are expressing. The negativity that we hear in this Chamber is not coming from the people; it's coming from the NDP opposition.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Gantfoer:** — The people of this province are more optimistic than any other place, and I think it is a measure of how out of touch that NDP opposition are with the real people of this province.

You know, I'm old enough, Mr. Speaker, that I can remember when Saskatchewan's economy was largely based on agriculture. Our future rose and fell with the profit and loss in the agricultural sector of the country. And now, arguably, we may well be defined as being in a commodity-based economy — and that's changing and it's more diverse — agriculture being an important of that commodity-based economy.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is government needs to do and what this government is doing is looking to the future and trying to determine what the next economy of Saskatchewan is going to be based on. I'd like to think it's going to be based on the strength of Saskatchewan people — a knowledge-based economy, an economy of optimism and promise, an economy that realizes our resources of a highly educated population, an economy that deals with the realities of the environment — carbon capture and storage and clean coal technology — on the opportunities that there's going to be in the nuclear industry for Saskatchewan because we, as well as being the custodian of the vast amount of potash, we also are the same of uranium. And, Mr. Speaker, the future energy needs of the world could largely rest on the shoulders of Saskatchewan's nuclear industry. And those are opportunities.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Gantfoer:** — Those are opportunities, Mr. Speaker, going forward. And we believe that the people of Saskatchewan are facing those opportunities with enthusiasm and promise. Mr. Speaker, this budget was trying to provide the fundamentals of what's needed for this growing economy. If we're going to have increased activity, we need to support that activity with infrastructure investments. And I'm very proud that we've committed \$2.5 billion of infrastructure investment over these two years on improving the economy and helping Saskatchewan grow.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that many people have said, what's it like to be the Finance minister of the province of Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, over and above it being a great honour, it's wonderful.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the amendment presented by the member from Regina Douglas Park:

That all the words after “that the Assembly” be deleted

and the following be added:

condemn this government for the return to poor fiscal management in the budget process and increasing the debt of the province.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — No.

**The Speaker:** — All those in favour please rise. Oh right, pardon me. Sorry about that. My apologies. Please say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

**The Speaker:** — All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Nay.

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

[The division bells rang from 12:28 until 12:30.]

**The Speaker:** — Those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 17]

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

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

[Nays — 36]

Wall	Stewart	Elhard
Bjornerud	Draude	Krawetz
Boyd	Eagles	McMorris
D'Autremont	Hickie	Hepner
Tell	Gantfoer	Harpauer
Norris	Morgan	Hutchinson
Huyghebaert	Brkich	Hart
Kirsch	Schriemer	Allchurch
Weekes	Chisholm	Wilson
Duncan	Michelson	LeClerc
Ottobreit	Ross	Reiter
Bradshaw	Harrison	McMillan

**Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel:** — Mr. Speaker, the results are as follows: yes 17, no 37.

**The Speaker:** — The amendment is defeated.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The motion before the Assembly is a motion presented by the Minister of Finance:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary

policy of the government.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — No.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Nay.

**The Speaker:** — Standing vote. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 12:34 until 12:35.]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I would ask members that, as we take the vote this time, that members listen and pay attention and allow the vote to proceed quietly. Those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 36]

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

**The Speaker:** — All those opposed to the motion please stand.

[Nays — 17]

Calvert	Harper	Trew
Van Mulligen	Atkinson	

**The Speaker:** — Order, order.

Nilson	Yates	Belanger
Furber	Forbes	Morin
Taylor	Quennell	Brotten
McCall	Wotherspoon	Vermette

**Clerk:** — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 36; those opposed, 17.

**The Speaker:** — Motion carried.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has moved this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:38.]

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# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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**Hon. Brad Wall**  
Premier

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Minister of Finance

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Minister of Social Services

**Hon. Nancy Heppner**  
Minister of Environment

**Hon. Darryl Hickie**  
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

**Hon. Bill Hutchinson**  
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**Hon. Don Morgan**  
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Minister Responsible for Immigration  
Minister Responsible for the Workers'  
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**Hon. Christine Tell**  
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport  
Minister Responsible for Capital City Commission