



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

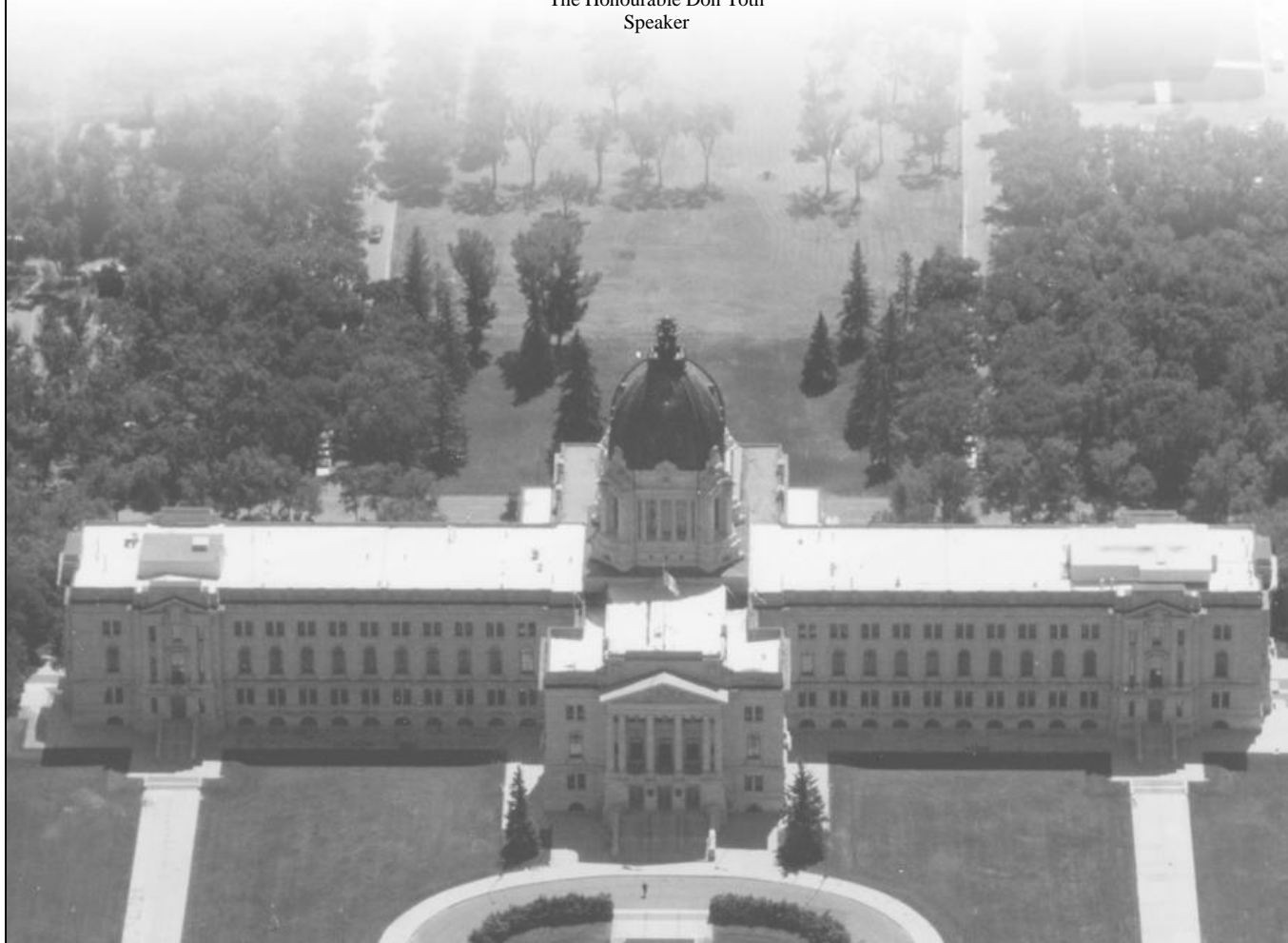
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
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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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
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
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Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
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Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
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Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
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Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
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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 Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to report to the House today that we have heroes in your gallery, and I'd ask for leave for an extended introduction of these three young men.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked for leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's truly an honour and a pleasure to introduce three young men to this Legislative Assembly, as well as a friend of theirs and members of their family. Joining us today in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Brett Opikokew, age 18, an auto service technician at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] who will graduate at the end of May. Also Devin Knot, he is 19 years of age. He is learning how to be a welder. And Josh Lasas, age 19. He is pursuing carpentry.

As well Brett's mother, Isabelle, is joining her son and his friends here with us this morning. She works for the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Mr. Speaker, I think in the financing and controlling end of things in that fine organization. And also joining us today is Brett's sister, Cassandra — she is going to be graduating this year from the University of Regina with a Bachelor of Arts in journalism — and Cassandra's partner, Nickolas Crighton. He is going to be graduating with a degree in kinesiology. He will convocate in fact this fall.

Mr. Speaker, on the night of April 11, Brett, Devin, and Josh were travelling near Meadow Lake. They stopped by the side of the road to take a break. And moments after they had stopped, a mother travelling with three kids — three small children ages 1, 3, and 8 — hit some water that had come onto the highway, began to hydroplane, and then hit a much larger pool of water adjacent to the highway. The car and the family inside quickly began to sink, and these three brave young men, without thought for themselves, sprung into action. They came to their rescue.

One news report, actually the report, an excellent story in the *Meadow Lake Progress* that I commend to all members of this Assembly — I think it's available online — described the scene and actually quoted individuals describing the scene, like something like out of the movie *Titanic*: it was completely dark, the water was freezing, and all you could hear was screaming, said one observer.

Mr. Speaker, just a few quotes from this same article gives you

a sense of just how serious this accident was, and how serious it could have been were it not for these three young men:

Wendy added that April heard her son's cries and realized she had to do something.

"She thought her baby was dead," she said.

"Her son said 'Mommy, I'm still here' and then she snapped out of it and [she] got him out."

Amanda said if it wasn't for the three boys who jumped into the water, April and the children would not have survived.

"We owe them so much . . .

"They saved our family. With no hesitation. April said these guys were just there. There are angels out there."

Mr. Speaker, when asked about what they did — and I had a chance to do that this morning when I had the honour to visit with them a little bit and talk about the event and a bunch of other stuff — when asked about the event, they just defer. They just said, well we didn't really think we were heroes. We were in the right place at the right time, said Brett, and Josh and Devin agreed with that sentiment.

We know better than that today, Mr. Speaker. We know from reading this incident and from listening to the family that they are heroes — heroes in our province, heroes in our country. And so, Mr. Speaker, I've taken the step of writing to the Governor General to nominate these three for the Medal of Bravery that our nation bestows on those who are deserving. And maybe, Mr. Speaker, if you don't mind, I will use this forum, through this Assembly and through all of the members and my colleagues here, to encourage Saskatchewan people to join in that letter writing effort to encourage the Governor General to bestow on these three the Medal of Bravery for our country.

Mr. Speaker, if we're not parents in this Assembly, we are brothers or sisters or sons and daughters. And you cannot read the account of this story without putting yourself in the place of the family that was in the vehicle, or even more desperately, not knowing what was going on perhaps for their extended family members who were unaware of the calamity and of the danger, only to find out that they were saved by these three young men. It is hard to read the article without considering that.

And then to meet them, to meet these three men is quite a thing. They have a great sense of humour. They have a modesty about them. They told stories, even to me, of the actual event where, you know, they were able to — in a moment of a lot of stress — use the proper technological description for things like flotation devices. Brett was running around the incident saying, we need a flotation device, and he was trying to think of something in the car that they would have to help. They also were encouraging, in very forceful words to the mom, who was the last one to be rescued, that she could help them help her by taking some steps towards safety. These are extraordinary young men truly, Mr. Speaker.

And so, a little bit later on we'll have a chance to present them with a copy of the letter that we have signed to the Governor General nominating them for the Medal of Bravery. And there's been a few other things we've been able to exchange. But I just want to say here today, on behalf of a very grateful province, in addition to that family, thank you. We are very proud to be your fellow citizens. Welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I simply want to join with the Premier on behalf of the official opposition in welcoming those three young men and those who are with them today to the Chamber.

You did seize the attention of a province. Many of us have read the accounts in the local press. We heard the accounts of course in provincial-wide media and national media, and I appreciate that the Premier has made this opportunity possible for this legislature to speak to you and express the gratitude of this legislature on behalf of all of those whom we represent. And you can rest assured the sentiments of every member will be for full support for the Premier's initiative to contact the Governor General of Canada.

We welcome you and we thank you. And we all, I believe, have understood that no matter how we walk through this life, there are those who have aided all of us — perhaps in less dramatic fashion — but we've all known the support of others. That family will forever be in gratitude to you. And we thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce six people in your gallery. Five of them are from Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Regina*. And we have Commander Haydn Edmundson is the commanding officer of HMCS *Regina*. Lieutenant Commander Andy Muir is executive officer. Lieutenant Lorraine Sammut is a combat officer. Lieutenant Greg Oikle is the air control officer. Chief Petty Officer Second Class Shane Holwell is the supply chief. And accompanying them is the executive officer of HMCS Queen here in Regina is Malcolm French.

Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan are extremely proud of our military, and I would ask all members of the Assembly to please join me in welcoming the members of HMCS *Regina* to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce three guests from Saskatoon seated in your gallery. From my

left to right is Shavkat Khudayberganov, Liz McTaggart, and Deborah McConkey. Deborah is a librarian in Saskatoon. Liz is a long-time friend and mentor for many years. And Shavkat is a new resident to Saskatchewan; he's from Uzbekistan. And while I'm sure there's been some Uzbeks in our Assembly over the years, it's certainly not something that happens every day. Shavkat's been here for a year working and hopes to stay long term. And I would ask all members to welcome this group to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour today to introduce from the west gallery we have 28 students from the Colonsay School. They're grades 7, 8, and 9. And accompanying them their teachers, Brian Cowen and Amy Parkinson, as well as chaperones, Joanne Helmkay, Jillian Cowen, and Charlene Lang. So I hope they enjoy their day in the legislature and their day in Regina. And I would ask all the members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — If I could ask of members as well to extend a welcome to Mr. Kevin Fenwick, our Provincial Ombudsman, who's joined us this morning.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my honour to present a petition in support of changes to *The Highway Traffic Act* to be referred to as the Gallenger amendment. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to enact changes to *The Highway Traffic Act*, to be referred to as the Gallenger amendment, which would require all vehicle traffic to slow to 60 kilometres per hour when passing a snowplow with their warning lights activated on Saskatchewan roadways.

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are from Fort Qu'Appelle, Vibank, White City, Edgeley, Regina, and Fort Qu'Appelle and other towns in that area. It's my honour to present these petitions today.

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 our CBO [community-based organization] workers. And we know that many of the workers who work for community-based organizations in Saskatchewan have traditionally been underpaid and many continue to earn poverty-level wages. I'd like to read the prayer:

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

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

And many of these folks are from Moosomin, Fleming, and Watson. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand once again today and present a petition in support of fairness for Saskatchewan students through the necessary 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 Saskatchewan as well as the University of Regina. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition concerning the need for infrastructure for the community of Pelican Narrows and the great First Nation of Peter Ballantyne. It concerns Highway 135 and the upgrading of this road. The prayer reads:

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

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

This petition is signed by a number of individuals from Pelican Narrows. And surveying the names, Mr. Speaker, I see that it's got a great representation from right through the community of Pelican Narrows. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of a new long-term care facility in La Ronge. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately invest in planning and construction of long-term care beds in La Ronge.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by the good people of La Ronge and area. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Prince Albert Toppers Volleyball Club

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand in the House today to talk about the recent success of the Prince Albert Toppers volleyball club. The provincial girls' 14 and under, tier 1 club finals took place in Saskatoon just last weekend.

As a father of one of the players, I had the opportunity to attend all the games. Fourteen teams came from across the province for the tournament. Representing the Toppers were four teams: En Fuego, Wei, Chaos, and Storm. I am pleased to say the Toppers fared extremely well in the tournament. On Sunday En Fuego won the gold medal in tier 1, division 1 by beating Saskatoon Crush in two sets. Wei won the gold medal in tier 1, division 2 by beating Regina Voltage in two sets to bring home the gold. Remarkably the bronze medal final for tier one, division one had an all-P.A. [Prince Albert] Toppers matchup with Chaos beating Storm, to bring home yet another provincial medal.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that my youngest daughter — all 4 feet, 11 inches tall of her — plays power side on the Toppers' Wei team, and she can clear the net and spike the ball harder than her father ever could.

[10:15]

Next weekend I'm lucky enough to watch even more volleyball when my oldest daughter plays in the 15 and under provincials. Keeping my fingers crossed that P.A. brings home another gold.

The girls work incredibly hard all season long. I'd like to offer my congratulations and thanks to the coaches of the P.A. Toppers program. I congratulate the P.A. Toppers, En Fuego, and Wei for winning gold in the under 14 provincial girls volleyball championships.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Union of Nurses Celebrates 35th Anniversary

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I attended the AGM [annual general meeting] of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, SUN. SUN is celebrating its 35th anniversary, and as part of the celebration honoured its past presidents at the banquet last night. Mary Parchewsky, SUN's first president, spoke to the hundreds of nurses attending about the early days of forming a nurses' union. Pat Stuart and Paul Kuling shared their thoughts and memories. June Blau and Jill Jones were unable to attend, and sadly Joan Fockler has passed away.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of being SUN president from 1993 to 1998 — a tumultuous time of mergers, transfers, downsizing, and conversions. But there were significant happy achievements also. In 1996, SUN joined the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the first nurse union in the country to join its provincial federation of labour. In 1998, SUN joined the Canadian Labour Congress, again the first nurse union to do so in the country. Also the beginnings of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, joining all nurse unions in the country into a national organization, had its roots during that time.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to be part of SUN, this strong social force, working for the betterment of not only nurses, but all working people and indeed the whole province. Congratulations to SUN's board, members, and staff, and in particular its current and longest serving president Rosalee Longmoore. And thank you for a very good evening last night.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

2009 National Elks Curling Championship

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to address the House today regarding a championship men's curling team from Hanley. On March 15 to 21, the 2009 National Elks Curling Championship was held at the Granite Curling Club in Saskatoon.

The Hanley Elks Lodge team, skipped by Dean Grindheim, defeated Alberta's Justin Fowler in the final. In addition to skip Dean Grindheim, the 2009 national championships included third Merlin Lee, second Lawrence Sarich, and lead Mark Burgess.

The curling fans gathered at the Granite in Saskatoon were treated to some excellent curling in the round robin with several games decided by one point in the last end. In the playoffs, the Justin Fowler rink from Alberta received the bye to the final, while the Grindheim rink played Alberta's Ken Lengyel in the semifinal. At that point, nothing could stop the Grindheim rink from Saskatchewan. They soundly defeated the Lengyel rink 7-3 and then went on to beat the Fowler rink 7-2 to become the

2009 National Elks Curling Championships.

The Hanley Elks team now earns a berth at next year's Elks National Championships. For the Grindheim rink, this is the third time that Dean, Merlin, and Mark have won championships; they also won in 2006 and 2005. And for Lawrence, this is his second; he also won in 2006. So these gentlemen definitely have what it takes to curl at the national level. Indeed the profile of curling competition across Canada and around the world is on the rise, and in Saskatchewan it's clear that the Elks are approaching a professional calibre of curling that we all enjoy.

I would ask that all members join me in congratulating the 2009 National Elks Curling Championships from Hanley on bringing home the trophy for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Northern Athlete

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Codie Pedersen is a very special 22-year-old hockey player from Buffalo Narrows. When he turned five, Codie and his brothers were given rollerblades and all three boys learned to skate on rollerblades in the basement of their house, Mr. Speaker. Later Codie began skating at the rink and his mother, Tina, said it was like he was born on ice.

At the age of 20, Codie finished an outstanding year with the La Ronge Ice Wolves of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League and had already played in two SJHL all-star games. With a promising hockey career ahead of him, Codie suffered spinal and knee injuries in a very serious car accident. He had to move to Saskatoon alone and away from family to undergo therapy. In a surprisingly short time, Codie fought back and overcame his injuries to play for the Ice Wolves in the following season, and he only missed five games.

Touched by Codie's perseverance, the people of Buffalo Narrows raised money for Codie to travel to Michigan to try out for the Muskegon Lumberjacks. Codie, set back by injuries, did not make the cut, but he played with spirit and received encouragement from hockey scouts.

Today Codie lives with the sport he was born to play. He works hard for the adult hockey team to help him recover his strength so that he might yet achieve his hockey dream. Codie Pedersen is an athlete from the North with character and talent. I'm so very proud of him and I'm proud to represent him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Indian Head Blooms

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indian Head has become well known across the province and beyond its

borders for its Communities in Bloom involvement. Particularly noted for the numerous hanging baskets and floral displays throughout the town, the town of Indian Head received first place in the 2008 provincial competition, which prompted the national Communities in Bloom's organization to invite the town to compete nationally this year, in 2009.

The community received a five-bloom rating combined with achieving the sufficient points needed. The rating system requires a community to be environmentally friendly in everything from town maintenance to disposal of their garbage, along with ensuring a high level of cleanliness throughout the town.

The community of Indian Head made the decision early in January to accept the invitation and, as a result is full speed ahead, ready to compete in the national competition. The whole community will be fully active during the next few months, preparing for the national judging which will take place in late July.

The building of the historic Bell Barn, and *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, shooting their second season of filming in Indian Head, has led to an excitement that has filled the town throughout.

Mr. Speaker, we are very fortunate that we have citizens in the province who work together to keep communities like Indian Head so attractive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

World Renowned Pianist Performs in Saskatoon

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, a Saskatoon audience was delighted recently with a piano recital by world renowned concert pianist Catherine Vickers performing at Grace-Westminster Church in Saskatoon Nutana.

A native of Regina, Ms. Vickers was quickly recognized as a young musical prodigy. She studied piano under Marguerite Buck, a well-known Regina music teacher, and also attended the Lyell Gustin Summer School in Saskatoon for many years.

In her youth, she performed with the Regina Symphony, participated in provincial music festivals and toured the province giving concerts with other musicians for the Junior Concert Society. In 1965 she was one of several students guided by Lyell Gustin and supported by the Saskatchewan Arts Board to take part in a week of musical events in New York City. Following further piano studies in Edmonton, Catherine received a Canada Council grant to study in Germany where she continues to live.

Today, Ms. Vickers is a professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Frankfurt. She is a frequent guest at international musical events, is artistic director of a piano music festival in Germany, has given master classes throughout Europe and Asia, and often serves as a jury member at international piano and chamber music competitions.

Her April 19 performance in Saskatoon was part of a series of musical recitals honouring Dr. Lyell Gustin presented by the Gustin/Trounce Heritage Committee Inc. The recital received support from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and of course Grace-Westminster United Church in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, this was a concert to cherish for those who were in attendance. And I would ask all members to congratulate Ms. Vickers in her return to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Climate Change Targets

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, a year ago the NDP [New Democratic Party] abandoned their climate change targets, but they now want us to implement their original targets.

Well, Mr. Speaker, higher targets come with a cost. Higher targets mean higher SaskPower rates — this at a time when the NDP are demanding holding the line on rate increases. What is hypocritical is that the NDP were happy to pass on the cost of their original climate change targets to SaskPower customers. The former NDP Environment minister said that people would happily pay more. They had no concern for the SaskPower customers when it came to the cost of their climate change targets.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP cannot have it both ways. They cannot demand status quo on electrical rates while demanding harsher climate change targets. The NDP cannot feign concern for SaskPower ratepayers. Their whole plan is to pass a burden of higher targets onto these same customers.

So which is it for the NDP? Which is it, Mr. Speaker — reasonable SaskPower rates or higher climate change targets? The NDP cannot — I repeat, they cannot — have it both ways. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Forest Management

Mr. Vermette: — A couple of weeks ago the minister made an announcement which finally gave the other forestry companies and First Nations access to the timber in the Prince Albert FMA [forest management agreement], but he offered few details — not surprisingly since the announcement was probably to rush and distract people from the member from P.A. Carlton's admission that the pulp mill will never reopen under the Sask Party.

To the minister: how many of the 1,500 workers who have lost their jobs will benefit from this announcement?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of course this is an important issue. We have spoken to the forestry companies, both large, small, independent producers with respect to the forest management agreement at P.A. We've reached an agreement with Domtar and with Weyerhaeuser with respect to that management plan.

The companies are all welcoming the plan very much. They are saying this is something that is long overdue in terms of the forest management agreement of the past that the former administration signed. So this is something that the companies have asked for. We've accommodated them with respect to this, and I believe fully that the forestry companies will be utilizing the resource much more than they have in the past.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert FMA with Weyerhaeuser stated that if the facilities attached to the FMA close for more than 24 months, the government was entitled to find them in default of the FMA. That default occurred in April 2008.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial forest belongs to the people of Saskatchewan, and they are entitled to receive the maximum possible benefit of those resources. But the Sask Party waited a year to announce changes.

To the minister: why did it take the Sask Party a whole year to provide access to timber in the Prince Albert FMA to other forestry companies and First Nations?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member's question is illustrative of how the NDP ran government. The way that they ran government, Mr. Speaker, was to use the heavy hand of government to punish people, punish companies when they didn't get the kind of results that they liked.

Our approach is much different. We've entered into a consultation process with the companies first of all, where we entered into a consultation process with the First Nations and Métis people with respect to the FMA as well. And then through a co-operative effort with them, through a consultation effort with them, through negotiation with them, we've come up with a plan that they fully support.

And I would ask the member opposite, does he support the plan that we have come forward with that the companies associated with forestry in Saskatchewan fully endorse and support?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the people in Hudson Bay and Carrot River are tired of seeing raw logs being shipped out of province while the mills in their communities sit quiet. The Weyerhaeuser Pasquia/Porcupine FMA stated that mill closures which last longer than 12 months will result in default of the FMA. Weyerhaeuser soon will be in default of this agreement.

To the minister: if the facilities in Hudson Bay and Carrot River haven't reopened by July, what will the Sask Party do? Will they allow raw logs to be shipped out of province, or will they ensure the Saskatchewan people receive the full benefit of our timber resources?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. I would say to the member opposite, stayed tuned. We are talking again with further companies with respect to that.

Well I mean, you can say anything you like over there. You will see in due course that the companies will be making announcements with respect to these kinds of things before very long. We're encouraged by the discussions that we are having with the companies to this point.

It's a very, very difficult file — no question about it — given the fact that your former administration wanted to write a company a \$100 million cheque on the taxpayers' tab with respect to that. And that's what you want to do now. The member at the other end of the House over here, he says that that's not something that he would be agreeing with. So which way is it? Do you want to go with your plan to give up taxpayers' dollars, or do you want to go with the bookend at the other end that says that they shouldn't?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before I recognize the next question, I just want to remind ministers to place their responses through the Chair. The member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to complain about the past forestry deals, but it wasn't the NDP who signed over control of a big part of our forest to Weyerhaeuser and made it impossible for Saskatchewan people to benefit from our timber resources even when Weyerhaeuser wasn't using them.

[10:30]

The NDP government believed that Saskatchewan people need to have control of our wood supply so that we can maximize job creation and other benefits. But we have no idea what the Sask Party believes. The minister keeps hinting that there are deals in the works, but we don't yet know what he is cooking up.

To the minister: will he promise that any deal he makes will

allow Saskatchewan people to keep control of our timber resources, or is he getting ready to sell us out for a photo op?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Our approach to the forest management agreement has been this, Mr. Speaker. The forest management agreement ran out. We decided at that point the important thing to do was to sit down with the companies themselves — both large, small, independent producers, First Nations and Métis people — arrive at a decision, and negotiate a decision that we've worked with them on.

If you look through the public record, you will see that company after company after company officials have said that this is something that they totally agree with completely, that they are supportive of it. It will provide for an opportunity for them to look at forestry opportunities in the future. And I fully expect that they will be doing exactly as they have committed to the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Cost of Living

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, the evidence is mounting that Saskatchewan people pay more under the Saskatchewan Party government. A recent study reported that Saskatoon is now one of the least affordable cities in Canada — 27th out of 34 cities in Canada, 184th out of 265 international cities. The recent provincial budget confirmed that Saskatoon's rank among Canadian cities is slipping.

Now the city of Saskatoon has announced that ratepayers will be paying 2.8 per cent more on the municipal portion of their property taxes.

To the minister: why are families in Saskatoon paying more to live in their homes under the Sask Party government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how crabby they are on the opposition side of the House. Here on the government side of the House we are having a great Saskatchewan day in the province with the best economy in the country of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — If property taxes are going up in the fair city of Saskatoon, it's not because of what we're doing; it's because of what you didn't do.

You didn't fix revenue sharing. You didn't provide infrastructure. We provided historic increases to revenue sharing beyond your wildest dreams. We've also provided new infrastructure money through the municipal economic enhancement program, SIGI [Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative], and provincial contributions to the Building Canada fund. That's what we're doing to make life more affordable for people in Saskatoon and everywhere here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party government talks a good game, but homeowners and working families cannot keep up with the rising cost of living.

To the minister: how did Saskatoon lose its affordability advantage so quickly? Why is the Sask Party making life less affordable for Saskatoon families?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, I'll speak louder because perhaps the member is hard of hearing. We have provided historic increases for the folks in Saskatoon and everywhere in this great province for municipal revenue sharing and also for infrastructure — the things which the former government just didn't get around to. I'm sure if you ask them, they had the best of intentions, but they never really got around to it.

Tax rebates and increased benefits for Saskatchewan people are saving a family of four with \$35,000 in income, \$2,648; a family of four with \$50,000 in income, \$1,945; a family of four with \$60,000 or higher income, \$1,718; a single person with \$25,000 in income, \$583; single seniors with \$15,000 in income, \$1,308. And it goes on and on and on. Please ask another question; we have more time for more facts.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SaskPower Rates

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, property tax increases in Saskatoon aren't the only problem for Saskatoon and for the rest of the province. We're just days away from a 13 per cent increase in SaskPower rates, and yesterday the Minister Responsible for the Crown Corporations confirmed that families should expect power increases next year and the year after that and the year after that and the year after that.

The one-trick-pony tax cuts are already long spent, Mr. Speaker. Families can no longer count on that to keep their lights on. They'll have to find the money elsewhere in their

budget, and for many the money simply is not there.

To the minister: why is the Sask Party so determined to make life so difficult for Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, it's funny. The NDP can't have it both ways. You have the member for Walsh Acres saying that she wants more stringent carbon reduction targets. On the other hand, we have the member from Coronation Park saying that SaskPower rates should never go up, that we should bring back gimmicks like the bundles and the lowest cost bundle that they have.

On top of that, SaskPower is dealing with a . . .

The Speaker: — Order. At times it's becoming difficult to hear the question and the response. I ask members to be mindful of the right of the individuals who are recognized to respond or to ask the question. I recognize the Minister of Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On top of that, SaskPower is dealing with significant infrastructure deficit left behind by that former NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP want more stringent carbon guidelines, that will indeed drive power rates up even more, Mr. Speaker. What we will do is provide safe, reliable, economical, and affordable power for the people of Saskatchewan, for the businesses of Saskatchewan. That's what they want and that's what they'll get.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, they break their promise on keeping carbon emissions lower. They break that promise and they raise our power rates all in the same breath. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan families enjoyed the lowest cost of utilities in all of Canada under the NDP. The Sask Party took away that lowest cost utility bundle program — one of the very first acts they made when they formed government.

The Sask Party is now increasing power rates by 13 per cent in a very few days and it's promising more increases next year and the year after that and the year after that.

To the minister: will the Sask Party reconsider their decision and bring back the NDP's lowest cost utility bundle guarantee?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, what was very

apparent when we became government is that there was an infrastructure deficit, not only in highways, not only in hospitals, not only with schools, but yes indeed, within the Crown Corporations, no more so than within SaskPower. They did not fund it necessary. They were more interested in just keeping the lights on. They had no plan for growth — no two-year plan, no four-year plan, no 10-year plan — no plan whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

What we will do is plan for the future. We will ensure that a growing economy, the fastest growing economy in the country, will have the power necessary to ensure that it continues.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Support for Low-Income Citizens

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well we know the financial pressure on some families has pushed them to their breaking point. Last week Saskatoon Food Bank executive director, Paul Merriman, announced there's been a 40 per cent increase in the number of clients since March 2008. He also confirmed that many of the food bank's clients are students and the working poor. This increase has happened on this minister's watch.

Obviously the Sask Party's one-trick-pony tax cuts aren't working. To the minister: the rising number of food bank users is an indictment of our government's failure to reduce poverty. The question is simple. What is she going to do about it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Our first consideration as a government is and will continue to be children and poverty among children so the major increases that we have put in place for working families through my ministry is for that. It's for families. So therefore we increased the income threshold of who applied and we increased the Saskatchewan employment supplement to help those that have a family. And 70 per cent of the clients, Mr. Speaker, are single parents.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we increased the rental supplement which families also qualify for, and at the beginning of the month we're going to be seeing a significant increase in minimum wage. So that when everything takes place and the minimum wage is implemented and the tax cuts are all realized, Mr. Speaker, we will then reassess the situation and see where we are at at that time. But we have taken significant steps to address what is deemed to be the working poor.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, these steps just aren't

working. The government's own figures show that Saskatchewan is becoming a less affordable place to live compared with other provinces, and now even working families are going to the food banks.

Mr. Speaker, this province needs a comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty, complete with targets, timelines, and accountability measures. That strategy might include the indexing of minimum wage to the poverty line or restoring the health benefits for low-income workers that this government cut in its last budget.

To the minister: will she commit to a comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty in this province that includes the working poor?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question came up in estimates and the member was a little impatient to hear the answer because there are so many things that this government has done.

The low-income working people, as I said in the previous answer, will qualify for the Saskatchewan employment supplement if they have a family. They will qualify for the rental supplement if they have a family. We are the ones that included children in the new health benefit. And they were going to have a health plan, a prescription drug plan that did not include children, and children have to be our number one priority. They still qualify for a discount bus pass, Mr. Speaker, so there are many things that we are doing as well as increasing minimum wage in a few short days.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we did have quite a discussion in committee the other night in estimates, and we know that this minister doesn't like what she calls blue sky thinking. But the facts are, the number of food banks users is going up, and even people with jobs can't make ends meet. Life is growing less and less affordable under the Sask Party.

What this minister's doing isn't working. Many of the measures she's undertaken may be good in isolation, but they need to be part of a comprehensive strategy.

To the minister: will she swallow her pride, admit that she needs to do more, and work with communities to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The hypocrisy of that member just continues to go on and on day after day. There is no one that

has met with communities more than this minister. We held a series of CBO summits, and you know what many of the CBO members and workers and board members said to me? We've never met a minister before. This is the first time we've met with a minister.

I have met with front-line workers in social services in each and every region in this province. And do you know what I was told, Mr. Speaker? I was told by so many, we have never met a minister before. We have never been asked for what our opinion is. We've been never asked what would be helpful.

So, Mr. Speaker, I find it astounding that that member would sit there and have criticism about whether or not I'm meeting with communities, meeting with front-line workers, meeting with the organizations that are actually doing very great work on the front line. Because I have spent a great deal of time there, Mr. Speaker.

If that member would just look at everything that's being done and not call it ad hoc, he'd realize it is not just income programs. It is health care. It is addictions. It is education. All of these things have to be put together . . .

The Speaker: — The minister's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Study of Energy Options

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, now in a matter of days and weeks this government is asking the people of Saskatchewan to come forward and express their opinions on the future of our electrical generating needs in the province, to ask their specific opinion on a nuclear reactor.

Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, we proposed that the people of Saskatchewan be given information so that this may be a reasonable, informed discussion. We propose, Mr. Speaker, through an energy development partnership, that a partnership of experts, a panel of experts, be assembled and funded by this government to look first of all at renewable options, alternate energy options.

My question to the Premier is a very specific question this morning: will he and his government provide the funding and the means by which an expert panel, a panel of experts, can be brought together to report to the people of Saskatchewan on renewable and alternate sources of energy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for the question. There is a lot of merit in what the NDP proposed earlier this week in terms of looking at the issue of energy, electrical generation in our province going forward into the future. In fact, it's perhaps one

of the most important issues that we need to be dealing with here in this legislature and as a government.

The one default or perhaps omission in their plan was that if this completely replaced what we want to do with the Uranium Development Partnership, there would be no chance for the public to participate in a consultation and a discussion about small reactor technology development or about enrichment or refinement or, Mr. Speaker, about nuclear medicine or the potential of medical isotopes. Because the Uranium Development Partnership is about more than energy, as important as that is.

So I think we've taken the best parts of the NDP plan with our own proposal for an all-party committee of this legislature, resourced as it needs to be, to get the answers and provide for a consultation process with Saskatchewan people on the very important issue of our need for safe, sustainable energy for our growing economy in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, at the very heart of the proposal of this opposition was the proposal to provide a solid base of information — a solid base of information in terms of alternate options that we as a people of Saskatchewan may look at to meet our future electrical needs. To do that, Mr. Speaker, we need the information.

Again I ask a very specific question to the Premier: will he and his government provide the funding and the resources to a panel of experts who can report to the people of Saskatchewan on the realistic options that may be available to us through alternate or renewable sources of energy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little surprised at the question from the hon. member because it was his administration, quite rightly, that engaged this province in wind generation activity in our province, first through a partnership with a private company. Unfortunately they sent the wrong message to the private sector by basically taking over all of wind generation and deciding it had to be done in-house only.

But still, Mr. Speaker, still, Mr. Speaker, the net result is that there is expertise at SaskPower with respect to wind generation. In fact, that hon. member will know — and again more good news for Saskatchewan — is that we're in a bit of a sweet spot when it comes to wind generation in North America. And that means that we have higher efficiency rates than other wind generation farms — near 40 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That expertise is in SaskPower.

There's no need to hire, to spend taxpayers' money to find out about these answers when they are at SaskPower. The same is true for hydro, Mr. Speaker. The same is true for clean coal. We're leaders in that. We can provide that information. The

same will be true for biomass as we look at that, Mr. Speaker.

We need to have this discussion. We need all members, all parties to be involved. Will that member support an all-party committee effort to find the answers for Saskatchewan going forward using our very best asset in this regard, SaskPower?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the question before the people of Saskatchewan is, how will we meet our future electrical needs? We are a province blessed with options, from all of the renewables to a large carbon-based resource to the uranium resource, Mr. Speaker.

This government took \$3 million of the taxpayers to fund a study into the uranium industry. We're asking for precisely the same kind of commitment, not only to renewables and alternate sources, but to demand-side management, to looking at the potentials of export into the province from hydro in Manitoba, to look, Mr. Speaker, at all of the options, not just those which we have some experience with, but all of the options. And to bring to Saskatchewan expertise that exists not only in our own province, but in our nation, across this continent, across the globe.

Will the government commit either through the Crown Corporations Committee process or by some other process to provide the same level of financial resources to this investigation so that the people of Saskatchewan can be fully informed?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, maybe it was the practice of those members opposite when they were in government to spend taxpayers' money needlessly, but that is not the position of our government. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because under that government they took positive steps towards wind generation to make Saskatchewan one of the leaders in Canada. I think we have an expertise there we can draw on from SaskPower, and they'll be able to provide that without any extra charge to taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. The same is true on the issue of importing power, perhaps, as SaskPower's had discussions and the minister's had discussions with Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is more about politics for members opposite than it is about finding the important answer to sustainable energy for a growing economy. And it is important, Mr. Speaker, that issue, so that we can continue to see reports like the Canada West Foundation earlier this week when they said this: "The rest of Canada should get used to the idea of being led by such a low-key, unassuming champion as Saskatchewan."

Mr. Speaker, that's what the country, that's what the world is saying about our province. In order to continue that momentum, we need an energy strategy for our province, Mr. Speaker. It will be achieved by good policy, not by NDP politics.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I lay on the table the 34th annual report of the Provincial Ombudsman for the year 2008.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — And also before orders of the day, I am prepared to rule on the point of order that was raised by the Opposition House Leader yesterday.

I have had an opportunity to review the exchange that occurred on Monday, April 20, '09 during question period between the Minister of Advanced Education, Labour and Employment and the member from Saskatoon Massey Place. At the time, I was in the Chair so it is appropriate that I rule on the matter.

During the course of his comments the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour stated on page 2768 of *Hansard*, “I’m happy to talk about the lack of integrity regarding those questions.”

Parliamentary practice provides some guidance in determining whether unparliamentary language has been used. I refer all hon. members to a summary in Marleau and Montpetit’s *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, on page 525 as follows:

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscene language or words are not in order.

Integrity has a number of dictionary meanings. The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defines the word integrity variously as moral uprightness, honest; wholeness, completeness; and, soundness, unimpaired or uncorrupted condition. The question for the Speaker is whether the words of the minister were meant as a reflection on the member or were they meant to characterize the soundness of the questions. The tone, manner, and intention of the member must be considered.

In this regard I have two points to make. I find that the two-day delay in bringing the grievance to the attention of the Speaker and the lack of disorder in the Chamber following the remarks must be considered in my decision. I took note of the comment at the time it was said and although it caught my attention, I did not believe the comment was directed at the member personally. Therefore I find the point of order not well taken. However, I do have a caution for the minister.

Members passionately and forcefully present their positions, especially during question period. I do wish to caution members — in this case, the Minister of Advanced Education, Labour and Employment because his words are the subject of the point of order — to be mindful about their choice of language.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answer to questions 345 through 353.

The Speaker: — Questions 345 to 353 are tabled.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Proposal for Study of Energy Options

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m certainly pleased to enter into the debate today and to move a motion respecting the opposition instructing the government to undertake a comprehensive energy development partnership program that would examine future energy needs in Saskatchewan.

So more to the heart of the motion, Mr. Speaker, is the process that led us to this position now. I want to talk about what led us to this moment in time. We’re debating this on the floor of the legislature.

The Speaker: — Order. I find it somewhat difficult to hear the member from Prince Albert Northcote. So if members, if they have issues they want to discuss with other members, if they’d gather behind the bar to allow the member from Prince Albert Northcote to speak to the motion.

Mr. Furber: — I would like to say that this certainly could have been avoided from the start. We took a very reasonable position as an Assembly. We all voted in favour of adding value to the resource of uranium. So it’s not that we don’t have agreement in terms of adding value to uranium. It’s the disagreement that we’ve got in terms of the process by this government to manufacture consent.

And so I want to talk about, I’ll highlight some of the points I want to touch on in terms of how they stacked the UDP [Uranium Development Partnership] to start the process, their continued flip-flopping in terms of government funding. In fact they’re flip-flopping on so many items here, it’s hard to believe every major point that I make has a flip-flop on it. In fact they’ve flip-flopped more times than a pair of 20-year-old beach sandals.

They’ve flip-flopped on the timeline for a decision. They’ve flip-flopped on waste management. They’ve flip-flopped on the consultation process. They’ve flip-flopped on secrecy and accountability, which is not at all surprising. And so I’ll touch on each of those in my notes here today.

Now that the UDP was stacked right from the start is no longer up for debate in this legislature. The member from Prince Albert Carlton himself said that, you bet we stacked the deck, “. . . and we wouldn’t have it any other way.”

So that they stack the deck is no longer up for debate in this legislature, but it's strange that they do that on such an important decision for the people of Saskatchewan. You'd think you'd want a balanced approach so that people can make an informed decision, but it's clear that that's not what they wanted from the start.

Did they want a real assessment of how to proceed? No. In fact the member for Thunder Creek at their own convention said that it wasn't a matter of whether or not they should proceed but how, in terms of nuclear energy. So they stack the deck, and that is obvious and not up for debate any longer. They've had unbelievable flip-flops on whether or not government funding should be a part of the process. And we're talking about a 10 to \$20 billion project, and they can't get it straight whether or not the government should fund it in any way, shape, or form.

On June 17, '08, and I'll quote Minister Stewart, the member for Thunder Creek says this in response to a reporter, "The people of the province, zero. This is not going to be built with taxpayers' dollars or SaskPower fees. This is going to be built with private funds." That's June 17, '08.

November 27, '08 a reporter asked this question: "In Ontario there's been an agreement that is allowing cost overruns on the Bruce Power project there to be partly paid by the taxpayer." And the response from the minister is:

We're certainly not considering anything like that, at least at this point. And I guess the options are all on the table. If indeed a power station is built, it could be solely built, owned, and operated by Bruce Power. It could be a partnership between SaskPower and Bruce Power. It could be a partnership between SaskPower and the province of Saskatchewan and Bruce Power, any number of possibilities — other private sector partners, even. So we're not quite there yet.

So again government involvement in terms of finances are back on the table. So then we go to December 1, a short four days later. "What's your sense [asks the reporter] of the public's support for having public money going into nuclear power?" And the minister again says, "It's too early. We don't know." So once it's on the table, then it's off the table, then it's on the table.

The reporter goes on to ask, "So you think once the public is informed about the risks, the support won't be there?" The Minister for Enterprise and Innovation replies, "I wouldn't say that the support won't be there for the project. But the support won't be there for doing it with taxpayers' money." So he seems to flip-flop again now that money's off the table again.

[11:00]

December 12, the short 11 days later, a reporter asks, "How about the nuclear industry, which is an established industry? How about putting money into a nuclear power plant?" The minister replies, "All scenarios or all possibilities are on the table as far as financing."

So there come the beach sandals, Mr. Speaker; he should use them. And perhaps the Finance minister wants to use them for

next year's budget instead of the boots he used this year. They've done nothing but flip-flop, and it continues.

In terms of a timeline for a decision, the minister has said . . . Well first the Premier said that the decision must be made by the end of this year. We have to have a decision on this by the end of the year in order to move forward. Then I asked specific questions regarding that in committee, and the minister says that no decision will be made for years, perhaps several years. Now to contradict the Premier in terms of a timeline seems a strange thing to do, but I think it speaks to the fact that they have no idea what they're doing. The CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] minister, the Enterprise Saskatchewan minister, and the Premier are all on a different page all throughout this process.

And it's especially true when it comes to the next item. We're talking about waste, nuclear waste. And the Premier says unequivocally that we have a moral and ethical obligation — that's a quote from the Premier — to store nuclear waste. He says that we are going to have, he's going to, if elected Premier he's going to charge the universities with the responsibility of looking into how we can store nuclear waste in Saskatchewan — and not because it would be a benefit to the economy, not because he feels that it would benefit the people of Saskatchewan in any way, but that we have a moral and ethical responsibility.

So I guess the question is, then where are his morals and what are his ethics when it comes to that? Because certainly if he thinks we have a responsibility, and he's the Premier of this province, certainly we will be doing it. Where else does he have to go? And so we've got the Premier saying, certainly we're going to be storing waste. We have a moral and ethical responsibility to do that.

Then I asked a direct question of the minister in committee. And how does the minister respond? The member from Thunder Creek says, no possible way will we be storing waste. And you know how they made this decision, Mr. Speaker? They made this decision because of polling.

And so I asked them to table the poll, because certainly if they're going to base a decision as large as this on polling, the people of Saskatchewan should know what that polling is and what it says and exactly the question that was asked. And so has he produced the polling? No. He said he won't produce it. So not only do they flip-flop, they're also secretive.

So that was one flip-flop on waste. And then just this week in this Assembly we asked the CIC minister whether or not they would store waste, and he says that it's on the table. So we've got a moral and ethical responsibility; there's no possibility we're going to store waste; and now we're going to store waste. And in fact, apparently one of the breakout sessions in their consultation process, their mock consultation process, is going to be about waste. So obviously it's still on the table or we wouldn't waste the people of Saskatchewan's time in those sessions.

In terms of the consultation process itself — a huge sham perpetrated on the people — nine communities, which means nine days of personal contact on this issue. And in fact it's so

bad that the leader of the Métis Nation in Saskatchewan said, “You can talk all you want, but you have to accommodate the interests of Métis people, and that’s the thing I don’t see or hear from the province right now.” A direct quote from Mr. Robert Doucette.

So the Métis Nation feels that they haven’t been properly consulted and won’t be. And you know what the minister responsible, the member for Thunder Creek, you know what his answer was to that? Well it’s one more day than everybody else gets. I don’t understand that, Mr. Speaker. I don’t understand. Well perhaps I do understand where that comes from, but I do find it very unfortunate.

Now additionally they’re extremely secretive about the whole process, and we’ve had members of the public make requests for information from this government on this file. And they’ve been denied, summarily denied, and so we’ve got . . . And I’ll quote from some writing from the author:

The Brad Wall government is ramping up secrecy around the Uranium Development Partnership’s deliberations.

In mid-February an access to information request was submitted to CIC for copies of the complete agenda package and minutes to any UDP meetings . . .

And it goes on to say that section 17 was used to block this, and it says:

Furthermore, CIC appears to have [and I’m quoting directly, appears to have] violated the Act by not applying section 8 which is mandatory stating: “Where a record contains information to which an applicant is refused access, the head shall give access to as much of the record as can reasonably be severed without disclosing the information to which the applicant is refused access.”

So secrecy reigns, Mr. Speaker. Again to continue:

The CIC’s actions represent a complete 180 degree turn from those it displayed Feb. 19, 2009, when it partially released the agenda and minutes from the UDP . . .

So there’s a huge contradiction in the way that they go about this. To continue a quote:

Among the four reasons given for doing so was that disclosure of the record “could reasonably be expected to result in disclosure of a pending policy decision or budgetary item.”

And I’m continuing to quote:

The Wall government maintains that no decision has been made on nuclear power in Saskatchewan, but the secrecy it displays seems to betray that at every turn. Just recently the CIC withheld critical information concerning Bruce Power’s feasibility study and a meeting was held between the company . . .

So, Mr. Speaker, there’s a pending policy decision or budgetary item that prohibits the release of information. So they’ve

already made up their mind; that’s what that says. Unbelievable.

And so if I could, Mr. Speaker, I’d like to examine now . . . Those are just some of the reasons. And I wish I had an hour and a half or 3 hours or 10 hours to go through the litany of mistakes and missteps that they’ve made on this file. Unfortunately I’m going to have to sum it up.

But I will say that those are some of the reasons — only some, there are many more — of the reasons that we proposed the EDP [energy development partnership]. Now, our EDP is comprehensive and you know what it’s based on, Mr. Speaker? This is a strange thing to the members opposite. It’s based on public input: calls to our offices, conversations that you have every day where people are saying, you know what? We don’t feel properly informed. And polls bear it out.

So what are they saying that they want? They want an apples-to-apples comparison. They want the ability to compare all the different energy sources that are possible for this great province, and they want to do it at the same time. They don’t want it isolated. They don’t want favouritism given to one power source, potential power source. They want a balanced process. And what they’re doing isn’t . . . they’re not getting that.

And so we proposed that SaskPower start the process by determining future demand, infrastructure needs, and possible rate increases for those needs. We proposed a nuclear option that the UDP go back and provide some of the work that they’ve done, but also provide information regarding export markets, cost per kilowatt hour, cost for storage, and the ultimate cost for decommissioning.

We also proposed a carbon option which would look at carbon technologies including the role of natural gas, polygen, and clean coal. We also proposed a renewable energy development partnership which looks at conservation and all the different forms of renewable energy including wind, solar, hydro, cogen, geothermal, and biomass.

So, Mr. Speaker, I’d like to move the motion at this time:

That this Assembly instructs the government to undertake a comprehensive energy development partnership program which would examine the future energy needs of Saskatchewan, recommend the most effective way to meet those needs, and engage the public in meaningful consultation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved:

That this Assembly instructs the government to undertake a comprehensive energy development partnership program which would examine the future energy needs of Saskatchewan, recommend the most effective way to meet those needs, and engage the public in meaningful consultation.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member

from Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP motion has some merits, surprisingly. I say surprisingly because past NDP motions have sometimes been — how shall we call it — a little suspect in the intellect department. This one, however, though dealing with a very important issue, our future energy needs . . .

The Speaker: — I would just like to remind the member from Rosetown-Elrose that earlier this afternoon I was asked to make a ruling on a comment made the other day, and I asked members to be mindful and thoughtful of how they express their comments and how the comments are directed, especially if they may reflect on members. So I bring that to the member's attention. The member from Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important issue — investigating the future energy needs for our province across the whole gamut, from nuclear to wind power to clean coal. There is some merit in the NDP motion.

However there is a more appropriate vehicle that could be used for it. It just makes sense to use the existing committee, the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. The committee exists. If we use that committee, we can ensure that all the resources that are required are available . . .

An Hon. Member: — Bi-partisan.

Mr. Reiter: — Bi-partisan. I thank my colleague from Saskatoon for the comment.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote part of a press release from yesterday referring to the motion that the Crown Corporations minister tabled yesterday. And part of the press release says:

The motion directs the committee to “conduct an inquiry to determine how the province can best meet the growing demand for electricity in a manner that is safe, reliable, environmentally-sustainable and affordable for Saskatchewan residents.”

“Saskatchewan people already benefit from a diverse mixture of electrical power sources, including natural gas, wind, hydro, co-generation and coal,” Cheveldayoff said. [This is a quote, Mr. Speaker.] “However, Sask Power is going to have to increase its power generation capacity in order to meet the needs of a growing province.

“The question going forward is — how do we develop future sources of safe and reliable electricity in a manner which achieves the best balance between affordability and environmental sustainability?

“The public has an important role to play in determining how we achieve that goal and public hearings will offer that opportunity for Saskatchewan residents to be informed and consulted.”

Mr. Speaker, I sit on that committee, the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. And I for one, and I know my colleagues on this side of the House feel the same, we look

forward to that opportunity to consult with Saskatchewan people on this very, very important issue about our future.

There would be a side bonus to this, Mr. Speaker, as well for the members opposite. It would give them the opportunity to get out and see the rest of the province. For instance, the member from Regina Rosemont would have the opportunity to see the communities of Rosetown and Biggar, which he frequently gets mixed up on.

This is not a new idea to have committees do this kind of consultation. All-party committees in the past have done this. There's been examples under the previous NDP government. On December 9, 1999, on a motion from a member from the former NDP government, Legislative Assembly created an all-party special committee on tobacco control. The special committee undertook investigation of a number of issues, including the impact of tobacco use especially on children and youth, the need for and content of provincial tobacco control legislation protecting children and youth, and also strategies to protect the public from the health risks of second-hand smoke. An all-party committee, Mr. Speaker, members from both sides.

[11:15]

Also in 1999, another special committee was constituted to address and to make recommendations on the issue of the abuse and exploitation of children through the sex trade. Those are just two examples, Mr. Speaker, of all-party committees doing consultation hearings around the province.

On the whole issue of future energy needs, lately, Mr. Speaker, the NDP are trying to have it both ways. They're opposed to nuclear development. Yet in 2005 the current Leader of the Opposition, who was then premier, had a very different approach. It was reported in the *Leader-Post*, and I quote, “Calvert said the province would consider any business case to establish a reactor or nuclear waste storage facility in the province . . .”

But where was his consultation process? The NDP, they're constantly criticizing — not enough consultation, too much consultation. They're in favour of carbon capture; they aren't in favour of carbon capture.

Talking about trying to have it on both sides, Mr. Speaker, on flip-flopping, my learned colleague from Carrot River Valley this morning, just a few minutes ago in his member statement made some very, very valid points on this topic that I'd like to quote. I hold the member — regardless of the heckling from this side of the House, Mr. Speaker — I hold my learned friend in high esteem.

He referred to a year ago when the NDP abandoned their climate change targets, but they now want to implement their original targets. But those targets come with a cost. Higher targets mean higher SaskPower rates — this at a time when the NDP are also demanding that we hold the line on rate increases.

And I'm quoting the learned member from Carrot River Valley this morning.

The former NDP Environment minister said that people

would happily pay more. They had no concern for the SaskPower customers when it came to the cost of their climate change targets.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP cannot have it both ways. They cannot demand status quo on electrical rates while demanding harsher climate change targets.

I think that summarizes the whole topic very neatly, Mr. Speaker.

There's also been a significant number of other examples of the NDP changing their opinion on the whole future energy change issue. Another quote, Mr. Speaker, from November 2005 as reported in the *Leader-Post*. It says, "Calvert said the province would consider any business case to establish a reactor or nuclear waste storage facility . . ."

And yet now we hear the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow saying exactly the opposite. They're all over the place on this, Mr. Speaker. A *StarPhoenix* article, December 4, 2008:

Faced with the need to meet rising energy needs in Saskatchewan at a time of widespread concern about the global warming impact of conventional fossil-fuel fired generating plants, the former NDP government led by Lorne Calvert began to consider the nuclear option, even though Mr. Calvert has disparaged it as a "dirty" source of power. However, the nuclear option is still embraced by the party's sole leadership contender at this point, Dwain Lingenfelter.

That's a quote from December 2008, Mr. Speaker.

Again with the back and forth on the opinion, a quote from the *Whitehorse Star* from January 2003, and it says:

The notion that you could build a reactor that's economic is a very, very questionable assumption. And this isn't a clean source of power. It's probably the dirtiest given what comes out the tailpipe, nuclear waste . . . Lorne Calvert.

That again is a quote, Mr. Speaker. And yet after having said that, July 12, 2006, from the *Leader-Post*:

NDP Premier Lorne Calvert and Industry and Resources Minister Eric Cline travelled to France two weeks ago to meet with the head of nuclear giant Areva to sell the province as a site for a uranium refinery.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to see how, depending on the mood of the day, the members opposite can take both sides of the situation. The NDP leadership candidate, Dwain Lingenfelter, at one point in time was solidly in the pro-nuclear camp and yet lately has been speaking opposite. Probably my favourite quote him was, "If Tommy Douglas were here, it would be exactly what he would be doing," said Lingenfelter. That's a quote from *Leader-Post*, October 2005. Yet now he speaks opposite.

To wrap up, Mr. Speaker, just want to reiterate something I said a few minutes ago, and that's a quote from my learned colleague, the member from Carrot River Valley. The NDP are

trying to cover both sides of this issue. They're talking about the need for higher targets, and yet as he said, the NDP cannot have it both ways. They cannot demand status quo on rates while demanding climate change targets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to speak to the motion put forward by the member for Prince Albert Northcote. And a good motion it is because what it calls for, Mr. Speaker, is a comprehensive energy development program that looks at the future energy requirements of Saskatchewan, and it looks at how we can best fill those energy needs, utilizing a basket — if I can describe it that way — a whole basketful of energy resources that are at the disposal of Saskatchewan.

There is no corner of the world, I'll argue, more blessed with resources than is Saskatchewan. We have not an unlimited quantity, but we have resources from a whole host of things. Our hydro is limited in the terms of the traditional hydro — the big-scale dams — but there's still a huge untapped resource in in-stream, small-scale hydro.

Mr. Speaker, this consultation process is one that really should happen. And it's interesting that government members on the range of nuclear issues say we should have very, very few weeks of consultation, public consultation.

And yet, and yet earlier today, the hon. member for Kindersley said with respect to the forest management lease agreement, well you know, we've been discussing for more than 18 months now that they've been in government, we've been discussing and consulting for more than 18 months on that. How can we have a situation where on forestry, which is very important, you can have what seems like not quite endless but seems certainly to be ongoing consultation? We've got all kinds of time for meaningful consultation with the companies, as the member said.

And yet when it comes to a fundamental shift in how we provide our electricity in Saskatchewan, we've got a timeline that is only a very few short weeks. How can that be? How can it be that we would have an administration that would commit Saskatchewan people to expenditures that, clearly if we go down the route of a nuclear power plant, we're talking \$10 billion? How can we just do that without pausing and looking and saying, well I wonder what options there might be?

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, what we would get if we spent \$10 billion on demand side on energy conservation. How much electricity would Saskatchewan people save? And how much would our power bills therefore go down because what you're not using, you don't have to pay for through the meter?

The same goes with energy. How much would, like with our natural gas, how much would the savings be if we spent . . . I mean \$10 billion is . . . I'm not sure we could spend that much

money on our housing and our buildings and our vehicle fleets, but I suppose we could. But the savings would be enormous, particularly in the buildings.

How much could we save in terms of energy if we spent \$10 billion on solar photovoltaic electricity, which is admittedly a very high cost form of electricity today, but \$10 billion will buy you an awful lot of megawatts of solar electricity; \$10 billion will buy you an awful lot more wind than there is existing in all of Canada today.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we're saying is we need to have a meaningful consultation program. We think that the people of Saskatchewan have many good ideas. I know many have spoken to me directly about their ideas. People know what works for themselves. They know what works in their community. I know, Mr. Speaker, that there would be interest, for example, in a co-operative wind farm set-up. You could have it where communities banded together and built a wind farm and benefited as a community and that electricity be fed into the SaskPower grid.

We have the reversible meters right now, but there's a few more steps that could be taken to help facilitate that, and really help communities to participate in the energy needs and the energy future of Saskatchewan. The same could be done . . . Pick your form of energy — almost any form of energy and certainly including energy conservation.

Mr. Speaker, there are opportunities galore in Saskatchewan, just unlimited opportunities. I haven't even touched on waste heat from industry, from refineries, and other forms of industry. And we could look at, and we could in fact move to capture that waste heat to heat buildings. Because where is the upgrader and refinery? Well one in Lloydminster, one in Regina. And it seems to me what both have in common is significant population very nearby, so that waste heat that is currently just going up into the atmosphere could be captured.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that they spent a huge effort on doing that in Scandinavian countries. It's not like we'd be inventing the technology in this case. It would just be a case of valuing that waste heat and using it and it could be captured and resold in a real win-win situation. There are people in Saskatchewan that propose this sort of innovative initiative. We need to have a blue chip consultation process with the people of Saskatchewan so that we can weigh what it is that this waste heat I just spoke of might benefit and what it might cost.

We need to have this blue chip panel to look at the whole energy needs to determine what it is that wind power might cost and what the benefit would be. We need a panel to look at and recommend photovoltaic and identify the cost and the drawback. Clearly a drawback of solar photovoltaic electricity is the sun doesn't shine for significant hours, but surprise, surprise — my grandparents had batteries on the farm. I'm not proposing that we go exactly that way, but they've made huge developments in batteries and I think that with today's technology we could copy what they're doing in California and use huge batteries to store that electricity that we could generate either when the sun is shining, in the case of solar photovoltaic energy, or when the wind is blowing in the case of wind.

Mr. Speaker, we have an interesting problem in the province right now in that with the nuclear issue, nuclear power and that whole nuclear issue, the government has said we need this group, this committee, to look at it and yet with all else, well we'll just shuffle that off. That's what it feels like. That's what it feels like. And I want to have one group, if I can describe it, challenged and tasked with putting the whole pieces together and making recommendations. We have an all too rare opportunity right now in Saskatchewan to look at the entire picture and then to make the most sensible decisions to go on into the future. And the decisions that we're making this year, next year, are the decisions that are going to lead us way far into the future.

[11:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about the broadening of consultation. I just want it to be, as we're suggesting, let's put it in one umbrella and get it so we can actually compare all of the forms of electrical generation, all of the forms of energy conservation, so that we can put it all together. And the people of Saskatchewan, let's have a little trust in the people of Saskatchewan. I know that collectively we can all make the proper decisions that will benefit all of Saskatchewan now and well into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to enter into this 75-minute debate.

Mr. Speaker, today is a bit of, in my mind, a bit of a historic occasion in that it's not often in this Assembly, particularly in these type of debates, where we find that both sides of the House agree on a particular issue. But I think we have before us today an issue that there is general agreement on both sides of the House.

I listened quite carefully to the comments made by the member from Regina Coronation Park, and I must say that there isn't a lot that I could disagree with. I certainly agree, and I think we on this side of the House agree, that there needs to be this broad consultation dealing with this very important issue of the future energy supplies of this province. It is something that is vitally important to this province, but I think it extends beyond Saskatchewan. It extends to the rest of Canada, to the rest of North America. And I think that the eyes of the world, with the recent emergence of Saskatchewan on the national level, that there are people from around the world looking to see what is happening here in Saskatchewan.

And it presents this province with a unique opportunity to show leadership that we have shown in the past, and that we are able to step forward on the national and international stage because of this hugely important issue. And Saskatchewan with all its resources in the energy sector, amongst many other sectors, can contribute to this very important issue.

What we need to ensure when we move forward in plans for future energy production is that it needs to be safe. Certainly I

think the people of the province would demand that. It certainly needs to be affordable and also it needs to be sustainable. That's a huge challenge. And it has to be environmentally friendly.

But the people of this province have risen to the challenges on other issues, and one of the issues that comes to mind, Mr. Speaker, is back in the '80s. One of the problems that we had here in Saskatchewan and across Western Canada was the very serious issue of soil erosion and degradation due to the current technologies used in agriculture. So if we look at what happened in that area and use that as the model to see what the potential of the people of this province has in dealing with the issues, we will see that we can feel confident that we will find the solutions to those very tough questions.

Because what happened in agriculture, the entrepreneurs of this province said, look we can do things in a better way. We don't have to have our skies filled with dust every spring. We don't have to lose that very precious resource of fertile soil which feeds the people of the world. And they came up with the technology. And it required an investment by the industry, the manufacturers, the producers, but they invested. And today we don't see that massive soil erosion that we saw in the past.

And I'm confident if we give the people of this province a chance and bring them into the discussion, that we will see that same innovation. It's already happening. It's already happening in SaskPower where SaskPower is moving forward, and members opposite should know that. It hasn't been that long since they've been government and they should know the innovation and the developments within SaskPower, whether it be with wind energy, hydro. We're moving forward in the clean coal area, which is hugely important.

If we can solve that technological puzzle, it will have untold benefits not only to Saskatchewan and Canada but across the world. Because coal is still, is currently and will be a major source of energy production. And there are countries around the world that are looking at this issue and we are moving forward and are a leader in that area.

Tied in with the clean coal initiative is the whole area of sequestering carbon from the emissions. It's all part of the piece. And that's another area that countries around the world . . . I was recently in Europe, in Great Britain, and they are looking very seriously at these issues — and they are looking towards Saskatchewan. They are aware of what is happening here, and they are moving forward on that.

So what the motion that we are dealing with here today is, as I'd said earlier, it's in the right direction. What our Minister of Crown Corporations has proposed, the Premier's talked about it, is that we in this legislature set up an all-party committee, the Crown's committee chaired by our very capable member from Weyburn, to look at this issue. And members opposite will be part of that.

I heard the member from Regina Coronation Park said that we have to do this in a non-partisan way. Well as Deputy Chair of that committee, he will be involved in developing the mandate as to how this undertaking will move forward. And so I feel confident that if we move this issue towards the Crown Corporations Committee, a standing committee of this

legislature, and give them the broad mandate that's required, they will consult with the people of the province and bring back what they heard. And I know they will have heard great things and great ideas because it's already out there.

As I mentioned, SaskPower's doing great things, but there's great things happening in the private sector. And there's a couple of things that I'd like to touch on. We have young entrepreneurs who have set up companies in this province to manufacture and install small wind turbines on farms as a result of the net metering policy that SaskPower has in place. Farmers are actively looking at it. It needs to be tweaked a little bit to make it somewhat more affordable.

We have First Nations who are looking very seriously at wind generation. In fact I'm proud to say that one of the First Nations in my constituency, the Gordon First Nation, has partnered with the Cowessess First Nation and set up the All Nations Energy Development Corporation. And they've already looked at feasibility studies done and identified sites of wind farms. They are in discussions with a private sector company to develop a partnership. They are looking to SaskPower, who will be coming forward shortly with their plans as to where wind power fits in in the overall generation plans of the corporation. So those things are out there.

There are people, entrepreneurs who are looking at solar generation. And if we send the right messages, we put the right policies in place, we need to gather the information as legislators so that we fully understand the potential out there, understand the intricate problems that are associated with this because it is a very complex issue. But I'm confident that we will be able to find the solutions.

And I know members opposite, they get hung up on the UDP process, and they feel that that's all that we on this side of the House are looking at. That's only part of the overall picture of energy production in this province. Geothermal is another area that helps in reduction of greenhouse gases and alternate ways of heating homes and reducing the energy consumption.

All those things are already happening out there but what we need to do — and I believe it will be a very productive and useful process — is to bring all that information together. We can consult the experts that are needed. If the committee feels it needs expertise, I believe they will have the mandate. It's in the mandate already set by the rules of this legislature that they can go forward and get that expertise and have those experts present before the committee.

As I said when I first started, Mr. Speaker, this is a unique situation here today in this House, where we find that both sides of the House seem to have a fair bit of common ground on this issue. It's a matter of semantics whether we do it with an independent committee or we use one of the vehicles of the House to accomplish the goal. And that's the important thing is we need to take a very serious look at this issue and lay out the plans for our future generations, Mr. Speaker.

And so I really can't see any problems with supporting the general intent of this motion, and let's move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to the motion put forward by my New Democrat colleague, the member for P.A. Northcote, which instructs the Sask Party government to put the biased nuclear development process on hold while providing Saskatchewan people with an alternative, transparent process to determine Saskatchewan's energy future.

Saskatchewan people have a promising natural heritage on which we have built the relatively prosperous province we have today. It is an inheritance at risk as Saskatchewan faces the challenge of climate change. We are not alone in facing this challenge. Climate change is a task that falls on every member of the human family everywhere on earth.

Saskatchewan people know that the natural ground on which we have built our province is becoming more unstable and at risk as a result of greenhouse gases, and we know that the future health of our planet rests with the decisions that we make today, Mr. Speaker.

The presence of challenge has never deterred Saskatchewan or Saskatchewan people. In times of struggle, we come together. In times of relative prosperity, we have a renewed sense of what is possible when we work together and a sense of responsibility for the future. Yet Saskatchewan people are being left out of their right to decide the future of their province by the Sask Party government.

Our decision about energy is not just about our economy, but also about the health of our environment. Climate change reminds us that the tired orthodoxy that accepts the black and white division of the economy and the environment is blind to the economy of the 21st century. We need to see the economy in full colour and the interconnected decisions of how our society impacts our home, our natural world.

The Sask Party government has narrowed the debate on Saskatchewan's energy future. They paid millions for a closed-door, rubber-stamp board to determine not if, but how Saskatchewan should adopt one source of power — nuclear.

Promising a short two-week consultation period with a biased report on nuclear power, the Sask Party government is steering towards an energy future without all the information, without all the energy options on the table, and without adequate time for Saskatchewan people to have a fair say. Card players would call it a stacked deck with the Sask Party government dealing.

The daily phone calls, the stuffed inbox, and the numerous letters that I receive from residents of Saskatchewan all say the same thing, Mr. Speaker: Saskatchewan people are under no illusion that the Sask Party government is not playing fair.

A Prince Albert resident writes about her frustration with the Sask Party government's rushed nuclear process. "I have been particularly disturbed by the apparent enthusiasm on the part of some decision makers . . . to push forward nuclear power

generation without credible consultation with concerned Saskatchewan citizens."

A Saskatoon resident sends an email about the Sask Party's narrow focus on only one energy option. "I urge you to respect the democratic process by ensuring an open and accountable discussion on this very important decision."

And a Regina resident sends my office a copy of what he wrote to the Premier. "On an issue as important as the future energy path of our province, we owe future generations a wide-ranging, long-term public discourse on decisions that will bestow our legacy on them."

Saskatchewan people are clear, Mr. Speaker. More than one choice exists for Saskatchewan's future. To make our future about one choice only — nuclear or no nuclear — squanders the promise of our province and leaves our democracy worn and damaged.

[11:45]

New Democrats stand with these concerned individuals in demanding a credible, meaningful, and open debate about the future energy decisions of our province, and New Democrats offer an alternative approach. The New Democrat alternative seeks to take out the stacked deck for nuclear power, and instead places all the cards on the table for Saskatchewan people to determine how best to proceed with electricity generation in the future.

New Democrats have before the elected members of this House a motion that would seek to examine the future energy needs of Saskatchewan, recommend the most effective way to meet those needs, and engage in meaningful consultations.

The proposed process, called the energy development partnership, would seek to postpone the biased flawed approach of the Sask Party in favour of a transparent process, meaningful dialogue, and credible public consultation process for considering our energy future.

First we must truly understand our energy needs. SaskPower would be charged with providing the best estimates for future demand growth, the infrastructure to meet those predicted needs, and the rate increase that would be required to meet the future capital costs.

Next, three partnership panels would be created. One panel would seek to complete the Uranium Development Partnership report that has left too many questions unanswered, work left undone. The basic questions surrounding electrical costs per kilowatt, the proposed costs and strategy to deal with nuclear waste, the projected costs of the ultimate decommissioning of a nuclear reactor, and more detailed information about potential export markets would have to be answered.

We need to finish the government's homework. After fixing the incomplete report of the Sask Party's near \$3 million UDP, New Democrats would look at carbon-based options like polygeneration, currently proposed by the Belle Plaine project, and renewable energy options like wind, solar, hydro, cogeneration, geothermal, and biomass sources of energy

already abundantly available in Saskatchewan. Let's be clear, a debate about our province's energy future without looking at renewable energy is simply not credible.

The former New Democratic government is proud to have made the first historic investment in wind power in Saskatchewan, moving Saskatchewan from no capacity to generate power from the wind to placing Saskatchewan in a leadership role. Our province has renewable energy and Saskatchewan people should be able to weigh this option against all others in a decision about our future energy needs.

With the New Democrats' energy development partnerships, Saskatchewan's future electrical needs will be evaluated, with all the options receiving the same resources as the Sask Party's UDP.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the proposed energy development partnership would ensure that the work of each of the three panels — nuclear, carbon-based, and renewable — along with the initial report of SaskPower would be gathered into one comprehensive document prepared by a third party, independent consultant. This independently compiled report would then be the subject of extensive public meetings and dialogue for a near four-month period from mid-February 2010 to May 31, 2010.

Whereas the nine sites chosen by the Sask Party government for their biased, rushed consultation on nuclear is simply not accessible to the Saskatchewan population, the New Democrats' energy development partnership would ensure that the majority of Saskatchewan residents would be within 30 minutes driving distance from a consultation forum. From La Ronge to La Loche, Lloydminster to Swift Current, Humboldt to Cumberland House, Saskatchewan people would have a real opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue about their future.

The way forward for Saskatchewan meeting its energy needs are clear. We need transparency. We need credible, wide-ranging information, and we need meaningful and extensive public dialogue. The New Democrats' energy development partnership will allow Saskatchewan people to decide how we move forward on energy in a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable manner.

The Sask Party government's politics of secrecy and spin over government documents and information in its narrow enthusiasm over one energy source, and the Sask Party's sloppy homework with its incomplete UDP report renders the current energy debate flawed and misguided.

With the New Democrats' energy development partnership proposed today, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people can once again work together to face the challenges of building a greener and more prosperous province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to enter in this debate. I think it's a fundamental debate

for the people of Saskatchewan to have.

For the last 16 years, for a long period of time Saskatchewan's been in a position where the increasing power needs in this province haven't been there. The NDP were able to allow the system to deteriorate, allow the infrastructure to dwindle, and there wasn't a big demand for new capacity, Mr. Speaker.

So at this point in our province's history, where we see industry flooding into Saskatchewan, where people are coming home, young people that have left our province for decades are now coming home. They're buying houses. They want to turn the lights on. We hear from SaskPower that our energy needs are going to rise and rise dramatically in the short future. And this, this is a very valid conversation, and I applaud the members for their interest in it. I would like to point out though, Mr. Speaker, that they're somewhat confusing and overlapping two separate issues.

These issues certainly intersect but they are not the same issue. Now the UDP looked at the value chain of uranium, and that goes right from prospecting new mines, mining, enrichment. It looks at all the way down the chain it goes through; through power generation, but it also goes to medical isotopes, it goes to research reactors. One of those has to do with power generation. The rest are all in the value chain and are all a resource in Saskatchewan that we have to look at. And the UDP had set out a structured format for this.

Now what the member for Prince Albert Northcote has proposed is again a very valid discussion for the people of Saskatchewan and it is power generation. — again a long string of coal, clean coal, natural gas, solar, wind, and many more, Mr. Speaker, including nuclear. So on the nuclear energy production those two processes intersect, but in no way are they looking at the same problem from the same point of view. They're intersecting issues and both very valid, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to point that out at the outset.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I read the motion put forward by the member from Prince Albert Northcote, it is to instruct the government to undertake the EDP. So obviously those members have asked our government, they've looked across the floor and said, would you undertake this process? Now I applaud them for their initiative. I applaud our minister in charge of SaskEnergy. He reached back across the floor, Mr. Speaker, and he said, I think a bipartisan solution is something that would be appropriate here.

He has extended the olive branch and I hope that those members grasp on to that, Mr. Speaker, because this is far too important. I think that there's good ideas on this side of the floor. I hope there's good ideas on that side of the floor. And at the end of the day I think it's important we have this discussion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward in this process we have a couple of things that we know: we're going to need more electricity; we're going to need to find new options. We know that there are constraints when it comes to carbon. Costs, all of these issues need to be considered as we move forward and make these decisions, Mr. Speaker.

But with contributions, and valuable contributions from those members, valuable contributions from this side, and the ability of the two sides to work together to bring in expertise and to listen to the people of Saskatchewan . . . The people of Saskatchewan have really impressed me, Mr. Speaker, recently. Last week I did a series of town hall meetings in my constituency talking about all sorts of issues from the budget right through roads, highways. But the energy needs of Saskatchewan was something that I discussed at every single meeting. And I think that the people of Saskatchewan would be pleased to put forward their opinions on this topic and I think it's important that we work together as a committee, and I think the Crown Corporations Committee is the obvious right choice. We have a certain amount of expertise. We deal with the officials.

SaskPower is of course going to be a major resource for us, as they have experts in the fields of wind, because we currently rely very heavily on wind, in a Canadian sense. We are up around 5 per cent of our energy mix comes from electricity, and that is the highest in Canada. And there is a lot of potential for more wind. We hear from SaskPower there is an upper threshold of how much of a component wind energy can put on our system, but I think that we need to explore that and all other options, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say that coming from the other side, if we are going to work in this bipartisan way — and I certainly hope that we do, I will say again — there has to be a certain amount, there has to be an expectation of reasonable expectations. Every day we hear from the other side, often in the same question period, the member for Regina Coronation Park will stand up and ask very loaded questions almost demanding that the price of electricity does not rise, doesn't rise regardless of any other consideration.

Under his government, they didn't have to build capacity because we were losing population. Industry wasn't ramping up. They had a model where you could draw down on your infrastructure, maintain your costs, not have to build capacity, and that was the price of electricity.

We currently don't find that situation here because we see people coming home and the demand going up. So in the same question period where the member from Coronation Park is arguing you cannot raise electricity rates even though you have all these greater needs, we're hearing from the former minister of the Environment, the member for Regina Coronation Park, saying that in fact you have to decrease your greenhouse gas emissions. You have to set targets which are . . . And I don't disagree with either member. I think both have a valid concern, but I think that maybe they could talk before question period to decide what are the priorities of their government.

If we go to a very stringent, and I mean a very stringent anti-carbon, there are, financially, costs. I think everyone would agree that burning coal, what I would call not clean coal, is the cheapest, least expensive form of electricity in any jurisdiction, and we have a great coalfield — 300 years, Mr. Speaker.

So if the member for Regina Coronation Park would like to just build more coal facilities and pump carbon into the atmosphere at a ridiculous rate, maybe that's an option and maybe that's

something we can discuss in this bipartisan committee. If the member for Regina Walsh Acres is very concerned about carbon and cost is no issue, Mr. Speaker, there is some . . . And our government is currently moving forward with clean coal. We have a large wind component but there are costs associated with that.

So I think that those two members could talk before question period and decide — you know, so we don't contradict each other in the same question period and maybe look foolish — which way are we going to lean today. Or better yet, which way do we lean in general? And my hope is that this bipartisan committee will cut through some of that, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to also say that I do find a little bit of contradictory statements coming out of the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow. She said in the newspaper, Mr. Speaker, that she would have voted with . . . Now I go back and I'll talk about the UDP and the motion put forward by the member from Meadow Lake, that the Legislative Assembly consider all options in the value chain of uranium.

The members opposite, we didn't know if they'd be split, against it, for it. Unanimously the members stood on both sides of the House and supported it. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow was quoted in the newspaper — and I don't have the exact quote — that she would have voted with her members even though she was against the issue. Now, Mr. Speaker, is that the kind of leadership on an issue like this, that I don't believe in this but I would have done it that way? I'm hoping that when we're working together as a bipartisan committee that that doesn't rear its ugly head, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of leadership candidates, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lingenfelter, Mr. Lingenfelter, Mr. Speaker, has been flirting, flirting with the nationalization of our oil and gas industries, Mr. Speaker. If he wants to nationalize our natural gas industry, maybe, maybe, maybe building gas-fired turbines, Mr. Speaker, is the future for Saskatchewan. If his plan is that we can utilize our resources in a nationalized way to produce gas for . . . I would hope there be a price on it, but if he thinks that we can get it for free, maybe that is the least expensive way to move forward.

I think it is reasonable that we recognize that natural gas is still a major carbon emitter. It's about a third what coal is. But if we're considering greenhouse gases and if we're going to take our contribution seriously, I think natural gas is — and it will be — potentially one piece in the pie as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

In my last couple of seconds, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would just like to reiterate: the olive branch has reached across. I hope that the member for Regina Coronation Park reaches out and he would play a major part in this process, Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Chair of the Crowns committee. He would be involved in coordinating how we would move forward and what process would be used. I look forward to this discussion and I look forward to coming up with some bipartisan decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed in the 65-minute debate. We'll now take questions. I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

[12:00]

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Reading a headline from Monday, April 6, '09, it says, "Métis steamed over lack of consultation on uranium development." And so in that article, the president of the Métis nation, Robert Doucette, says this, and I quote, "You can talk all you want but you have to accommodate the interests of Métis people and that's the thing that I don't see or hear from the province right now."

And so he doesn't believe that there's proper time allowed for consultation, to which the minister responsible's answer was to say this and that is, they got one day; that's one more than everybody else got. So I guess my question to the member for Lloydminster is: who's right, the minister or Robert Doucette?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. As I said in my speech, Mr. Speaker, there's two issues here. They intersect. The Uranium Development Partnership is a long process right from searching for new mines through mining enrichment all the way through power production, medical isotopes. And that is a discussion Saskatchewan has to have.

It's going to be a broad consultation. We've brought in a Chair of this consultation process which has announced yesterday that he feels comfortable and he'll be moving forward. And I am very confident that he will mould this process in a manner that the people of Saskatchewan are clearly heard and will have their say. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is moving forward and looking to have a frank and open discussion on the future of the uranium industry in our province, as well as looking into what our future mix of power generation will look like.

Under the NDP, we saw years of reports being hidden and a complete lack of public consultation. And I do realize, Mr. Speaker, that public consultation is a novel concept to the party opposite. But to the member from Regina Walsh Acres: do you support our party's fresh approach to being transparent in these issues while inviting public input? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I support an approach that is going to be all-inclusive of all the participants in Saskatchewan that want to take part in the process. And I support a process that provides expert information in that process so that the people that are participating in that process have access to all of the expert knowledge that they need.

And I support a process, Mr. Speaker, that encompasses all the energy options that Saskatchewan has to offer so that the true process decisions can be made in the most viable fashion properly, and not in a biased fashion like the Sask Party government is offering on that side of the House in terms of a pro-nuclear, willy-nilly, no matter what it costs and no matter what the implications are, type of process that they're projecting, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the member for Lloydminster who spoke of the UDP and how all-encompassing it is on uranium issues and matters around that. And it's interesting that the government seems to trust one committee to do broad consultation on that but then chops it off there.

Why is it that the government doesn't broaden the mandate so that we can look at all forms of energy? Why is it that the government doesn't want people to have access to information and then, if that happened, why wouldn't the government then trust people to make informed decisions? That's my question. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you. Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, the UDP was tasked with the value chain of uranium. One aspect of that is electricity generation as a potential. Now, Mr. Speaker, the UDP was tasked solely with that. It wasn't with other forms.

What the members opposite put forward today was to instruct the government to undertake a comprehensive energy development partnership. Their motion had nothing to do with the UDP, yet I find it interesting many of their questions are directed at it. I think that maybe their motion could have been rewritten to more appropriately correspond with their interest.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think that our government, by supporting this conversation and reaching out to ask them to join with us to have a bipartisan committee to move forward on this, I think is a positive thing and I hope that they grasp that olive branch and we can have this conversation together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under our government, we have started the extensive public consultation process of the UDP report, looking at the future of the uranium industry in Saskatchewan. The NDP however want to delay this for months, preventing the public from having an immediate say in the process. Our party believes in the consultative process and offers to expand this by having public hearings through an all-party committee to look at the issue of power generation.

To the member from Regina Coronation Park: do they support the all-party consultation process?

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from Biggar for the question. What we support is the people of Saskatchewan being informed on energy choices — all of the energy choices. If the people of Saskatchewan had that information, then we could have the broad public consultation that is required.

As I said in my speech, we have a rare opportunity to look at all of the information and then trust the people of Saskatchewan with that information. I think they'll make the best from an environmental perspective, they'll make the best choices from a cost perspective, and they'll certainly make the best choices for themselves. I just don't understand why the government seems to not trust the people of Saskatchewan with that broad information.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. An important debate here we're having, but of course we've seen the quality of reports over the last several months coming forth from this government.

And I just want to ask the side opposite, in terms of how much support will they have for the quality of reports. We've seen reports that have just . . . why for example, the member from Batoche, what happened to his report? The member from Rosetown, we have yet to see his full report. And some we see just white pages; some we see black pages. I want to know from the member from Rosetown, will he make sure that this committee is supported fully with the funds of \$3 million to make sure they can get their work done? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member opposite for the question. And the member opposite will be very interested to know that my top secret report is available on the website. It was available as of budget day just as the Minister of Education, our Deputy Premier, promised. So I welcome that member to review the report, which I'm very proud of.

Our all-committee, the standing committee on Crowns and . . .

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

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I welcome the hon. member opposite to read my top secret report which has been on the website since budget day, as our Deputy Premier had promised.

Mr. Speaker, as far as resources, the all-party committee, the

standing committee on Crowns and agencies, we'll certainly assure the member opposite it will have significant resources. That's one of the reasons that we feel that this is the appropriate vehicle that should be used for this, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP has sent conflicting messages to consumers about their plans for power generation in Saskatchewan. They have called on our government to provide rebates to ratepayers, but are now advocating for higher climate change targets even though their government took no action on climate change. Well as I and the member from Rosetown said earlier, you cannot have it both ways. Higher targets are passed on to consumers as higher rates.

My question is to the member from Regina Coronation Park: does he support lower rates for consumers or higher targets which have to come at a higher price?

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for Carrot River Valley. It's interesting that he says New Democrats did nothing. We went from zero wind electricity in our term to having more wind generated per person in Saskatchewan than any other jurisdiction in all of Canada. That's what we did.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — We put in place a \$300 million fund for energy conservation that was cut by that government, one of the very first acts they made when they came into power. That was an opportunity for Saskatchewan people to really benefit from energy conservation, and unfortunately . . .

The Speaker: — . . . the 10-minute question period. Private members' . . . Order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Support for Low-Income Citizens

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise today and speak on the private member's motion and I want to, right from the beginning, Mr. Speaker, read the motion into the record:

That this Assembly supports the actions of this government and recognizes that our government has done more to help low-income people fight poverty in 16 months than the previous NDP government did in 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, that's the wording of the motion that I am moving today.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of places I want to begin, but as

always or as it usually happens, Mr. Speaker, something in a previous debate really provides me with a starting point for this debate. And the first issue I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is this back and forth talk about what reports were made public and the secret Reiter report that is on government websites and was available on budget day, Mr. Speaker.

But it's interesting. The member for Saskatoon Centre, I believe, that was questioning whether or not the report was made public, and then something about another member of the government and a report, whether or not it's public.

I do recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that prior to the election, just prior to the election, there was a little bit of confusion in the NDP ranks whether or not there was a housing issue, a housing problem in Saskatchewan. And the member from Dewdney said there wasn't a problem. And I believe it was the member for Saskatoon, the Health critic, Saskatoon Eastview, who then later, a couple of days later contradicted the member from Dewdney.

And the NDP at the time, in the summer of 2007, conducted a housing task force, Mr. Speaker, and I don't believe the recommendations were ever made public, Mr. Speaker. So that member really doesn't have any legs to stand on when he's questioning whether or not members of the government are forthcoming with reports and recommendations. And that is nothing to say of the work that was commissioned by SaskPower under the NDP and reports that were never put forward to the public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I just wanted to put that on the record before I got into the main part of my comments this afternoon. Before I begin, and I probably don't do this enough, but I do want to thank the staff in our caucus office for helping me prepare for today, particularly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Cole Schulz who's now on our research staff. And he did an excellent job.

And I also want to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to make special mention of the resources that we do have here at the legislature, particularly at the Legislative Library. And I will be talking about some things that I came across in the library, and I want to thank the staff in the library for all their help that they give, not only to me but to all members of this legislature that use their services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very serious topic in the province of Saskatchewan. The rate of poverty in our province, the reliance on assistance and on food banks, is something that I think that all members should be concerned about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I do want to first put on to the record some of the things that we as members of not only government but of this legislature and of this province, some things that we have to, that we really have to grapple with, some really tough issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[12:15]

I'm using a report that was done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives back in August of last year and using the census numbers from 2006, so it's a little dated based on the census numbers. But it still tells frankly a pretty sad record in

this province that the overall poverty rate according to the 2006 census, Mr. Speaker, is 15 per cent higher than the overall Canada poverty rate. For children in Saskatchewan under the age of 18, the poverty rate stands at almost 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker — nearly 5 per cent higher than the national average. In fact at the time of these statistics, Saskatchewan had the second highest rate of child poverty, Mr. Speaker. So certainly something that, regardless of where you sit in this Assembly, something that we all need to take note of because certainly there's always more work to be done on this front, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the course of the morning and early afternoon here, I want to talk about, obviously, as the motion says, I want to talk about what this government has done in 16 months of government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also will be touching on what was done — or perhaps better stated what wasn't done — over the last 16-year tenure of the government of the New Democrats and what's going to be . . . I thought is interesting when I was compiling the information for today, some of the things that we're hearing today from the NDP on what government should be doing. You know, they were in government for 16 years but now all of a sudden there's a problem and something needs to be done.

So not only is it going to be a telling story of what the NDP did or didn't do in those 16 years, and also what they are now saying 16 months into being in opposition, but I also want to touch on — and as it works out it's about 16 months before they became government in 1991 — some of the things that they were talking about. So that's the general direction that I want to discuss this afternoon.

I do want to begin by talking about what we've done as a government. And I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's perhaps an impression or a feeling that the left wing socialist — if you want to call them — government would be the party and the government that would look after those that are having difficulties, that are low-income people, and that a party that isn't a left wing socialist government would certainly . . . Members opposite could probably fill in some adjectives and some descriptive words of what they believe that our concern is on this issue.

But we, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think have a very good record 16 months into government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that certainly what groups across the province have been saying about this government and the actions that we've taken so far . . . And there's certainly more work to be done, but I'm confident that we have the people on this side of the House to make it happen.

And I want to point out, I do want to point out that there's been members, whether they've been cabinet members, and I want to touch on the work of the Education minister. And I want to talk about a little bit of what the Minister for Advanced Education has done, but also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, private members.

Certainly my close colleague from Saskatoon Northwest who has been a staunch champion of those who need assistance from government, those who are vulnerable in our society; my good friend, the member for Saskatoon Sutherland, who speaks passionately on this issue every time that she takes to the floor

of the Assembly. So there's a number of people and a number of different areas that people on this side of the House have put a great deal of time into.

But I do want to say, and I want to single out our Minister for Social Services, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't be more pleased and proud to be associated with a Minister of Social Services who, for example, makes an announcement in this building and when she walks in the room the stakeholders give her a standing ovation. She hasn't even made the announcement yet, Mr. Speaker, and they are recognizing her.

And I think the minister, the member for Humboldt, the Minister for Social Services, has been a tireless worker in this government on these important issues. She's certainly very passionate. I've had dealings with her office, and her staff have been tremendous to work with, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I just can't say enough about the work that she has done on behalf of this government, Mr. Speaker.

And I do want to touch on some of the initiatives that she has brought forward but the place I want to begin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is . . . And I know members opposite aren't, you know, they kind of deride the record, for whatever reason, the record income tax cuts that we did as a government as what was announced by the Premier in October, and some that apparently they're not too in favour of. And certainly they put forward an argument that you can't just do tax cuts and that's going to fix the world, and we're not saying that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But it's certainly been an important part of what we are doing on this entire file.

The announcement that was made in October of the largest single-year income tax reduction in Saskatchewan history is a tremendous change for the people of this province, particularly when you look at for the longest time in this province . . . And this goes back even when the NDP were in opposition in the 1980s, but in fact the record got a little bit worse at the beginning of their term. But, Mr. Speaker, the lowest income people in this province were the highest taxed out of any jurisdiction in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

With the changes that we've made, for example, a working family in Saskatchewan with two children now can earn up to \$41,300 before they pay any provincial income tax, Mr. Speaker. And to put this in perspective, that is the highest level of any province. And I think it's another reason why Saskatchewan is continuing to see population growth, why we are continuing to see people move into Saskatchewan and few of our people leaving the province, as was the record under the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the basic personal exemption and the spousal exemptions will increase by \$4,000 while the child tax credit will be increased by \$2,000 per child. That means that a tax saving of \$440 per year for an individual or \$1,300 per year for a working family with two children, Mr. Speaker. This is significant.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the most significant parts of this . . . and my good friend from Saskatoon Northwest, I could hear him. It's hard not to hear him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I could hear him say that this has taken 80,000 low-income

taxpayers off the tax rolls altogether, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And to put this in perspective there was a time — and I will get into this a little bit later — but there was a time when the number of people, the percentage of people in Saskatchewan that live in poverty was at a certain percentage towards the late 1980s, early 1990s. And when the NDP took over in 1991, the percentage actually increased, Mr. Speaker. And then there were some years of a reduction towards the late 1990s. And last night I came across a news release, and I believe the minister was Glenn Hagel at the time, and he said that one of the reasons, one of the big reasons why there is a slight reduction in poverty in Saskatchewan — this was in the late 1990s — was that income tax changes were going to take, I believe the number was about 35,000 people off the tax rolls.

So, Mr. Speaker, if at that time it was going to take 35,000, imagine a province where 80,000 people — because of the things that we are doing — 80,000 people will no longer pay, be off the tax rolls altogether, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also want to talk a little bit about just the fact that the maximum tax credits for eligible families with children will be increased to \$600 per year. That's more than, or it is double what it was under the NDP. And this will provide tax savings for 300,000 lower income provincial residents, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And one of the other things that I do want to touch on — because I think that it is important, and it maybe gets lost in the bigger numbers of 80,000 people being off the tax rolls or 300,000 lower income people benefitting from the increasing, the doubling of the tax credits — is the fact that we are eliminating tax refunds from the income calculations for programs such as SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] and TEA [transitional employment allowance] and the new income support for programs for people with disabilities, Mr. Speaker.

And that, I think that's an important point — that if people are going to get a tax refund, lower income people are going to get a tax refund, they shouldn't see that clawed back on their calculations for other programs like it was under the NDP.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a little more that I do want to talk about on the income tax. I know that the members opposite will criticize the government that all we think that you need to do is cut income taxes and everything's rosy. And we certainly believe that income taxes should be low so that people of Saskatchewan are competitive with other jurisdictions.

But nobody on this side is going to say that all we need to do is cut income taxes and everything is going to be great and everybody is going to have more money in their pockets. They certainly will, but there's other things that need to be done to help lower income people and those that are struggling with poverty and those working families, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are just looking to be able to continue with their jobs and have appropriate and safe child care in the province. And I do want to touch on that in a moment.

But I do, before I leave on the income tax piece, I do want to commend the government, our government, for the further tax savings of \$22 million in 2009. And as the personal income tax

brackets and personal tax credits are indexed to the national rate of inflation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so this is all very positive news.

Now I do want to now move into another area. And I find it a little bit, I'm not going to use the word hypocritical, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although certainly people can make that argument. But passing strange is maybe a better way of saying it, where the member for Saskatoon, I believe Saskatoon Centre, for a number of days in this session — I don't know if he's done it every day; I don't know if he's got petitions every day, but certainly on a lot of days — and this was just yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and he introduced a petition calling for wage equity for CBOs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And he says, as we know, the research demonstrates that CBOs are paid . . . And he goes on.

Now the interesting thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that under our government, in 16 months, we have increased funding for CBOs by 13.3 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was originally 2.9 per cent, I believe, in the first budget, then there was a lift of another 7 per cent, which was 9.3 after the first year. And then this year's budget was 3 per cent.

An Hon. Member: — Good news.

Mr. Duncan: — Thirteen point three per cent. Certainly good news.

And this goes back to the point on our Social Services minister, how she possibly is the most popular Social Services minister in recent history, certainly in my lifetime, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it doesn't, you know, it's funny the places where people stop you that are associated with CBOs — it happens in my constituency — and just how delighted they are.

Because here's the record that the member opposite, who wants us to do more for CBOs — and certainly there's more that needs to be done on different areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker — but their record from 2004 to the end of their term was 8 per cent over four years. There was a 1 per cent lift, a 1 per cent, a 3 per cent, and a 3 per cent. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we certainly have done a lot better in that regard.

And I'm not quite finished; in fact I can go on and on. I was a little worried I wouldn't have enough to talk about. And as I see the time going pretty fast, there's going to be so much to talk about in this motion that demonstrates how we are really doing what the motion says, doing more in 16 months than the NDP did in 16 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to talk about shelter rate increases. And I think this is something that's really key, especially in a growing economy. We are in a province right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is . . . Certainly we are not immune to what is going on in the rest of the world and the rest of Canada, but I think I can safely speak for, not only members on this side of the House but I think for everybody in the province, that I'd much rather be in Saskatchewan than anywhere else.

[12:30]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — And frankly, Mr. Speaker, I feel that way about our province in the worst of times — meaning an NDP government. So certainly in the best of times, as we've seen in the last couple of years, there's no better place to be.

But this means that there's going to be pressures on rent are increasing. And I certainly know that that's happening in the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, because we're seeing an influx of new families. So I think it was important that the shelter allowances increased in Saskatchewan to help those most affected by escalating housing costs. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is essential to a growing economy to help low-income people meet the rising cost of affordable housing.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was an increase by the NDP. There were two increases in the shelter allowance — one in 1992 and one in 2005, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In a 16-year span, they increased it twice. What we are going to do is we will be — and this came out of the housing task force which, unlike the NDP housing task force, our recommendations were made public. Ted Merriman and former MLA Bob Pringle did a tremendous amount of work. Bipartisan commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hopefully the members opposite will use that as an example on what we want to do on energy. But a bipartisan committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they did some great work.

Their recommendations were made public, unlike the NDP housing task force in the dying days of their government which, I don't think, I'm not even sure it's seen the light of day. Frankly I'm not even sure it's on paper, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How would we know, though? Nobody's ever seen it.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker on the shelter rates, the other thing that we are going to do on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the province will now look at changing those rates twice a year, indexing those rates twice a year, based on the rental market data compiled for those individual communities. So the NDP record over 16 years is two increases. Period. Ours is going to be two every year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now I was doing a little bit of . . . When I find some time, I like to spend some time in the Legislative Library. There's lots of good information, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And one of the things that I came across was a report — and I will give credit to the NDP because this was one of the reports that they did do that they did make public and it's certainly open for members of the public — and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report was entitled *Hunger and poverty: something can be done*. This was published by the NDP caucus in November 1989, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This was authored by Roy Romanow, Leader of the Opposition; Peter Prebble, Social Services critic — who I'll have a little more to say on a little bit, hopefully I get time to get to that — Herman Rolfes, the Advanced Education critic; Louise Simard, Health critic; Anne Smart, seniors and housing critic; Bob Pringle, family issues critic, who we've already talked about this afternoon; Glenn Hagel, Labour and Environment critic; and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDPs Education critic at the time in 1989, the member for Saskatoon Nutana, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now one of the things that they . . . There's a lot of recommendations in this report, most that they, I don't believe, got to in 16 years. They didn't get around to it. It's interesting the member for Saskatoon Centre wonders where the plan is for this government on poverty, on low-income issues. Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP had a plan; they just didn't follow it apparently, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And one of the recommendations which is interesting, that I found was interesting, was that the shelter allowance rates — which we're talking about, which I just talked about earlier — be increased. And it didn't say on a six-month basis or an annual basis, but at least they talked about an increase, but it be increased to reflect the real housing costs in each of those communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, apparently the NDP didn't get around to it in 16 years. The Minister for Social Services on this side of the House, on this Saskatchewan Party government, has put this into place, and it's something I'm very proud to say that we're going to do and we're going to do twice a year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So one of the things that they just didn't get around to, even though they wrote a report . . . I mean if you're going to write a report, surely you're going to try to follow it, try to, you know . . . You're telling the people . . . This was two years before the provincial election, so you're trying to show the people what you're going to do if you form government, but one of the things that they just didn't get to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — You probably need a drink of water.

Mr. Duncan: — I do. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so one of the other things I do want to talk about — and this is certainly something that has been very important in my constituency, particularly in the city of Weyburn — we have a great, a fairly high number of seniors in the city of Weyburn and in other parts of the constituency. But I live in Weyburn and so that's where I would know that from, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So we've expanded the seniors' income plan to include over double the number of seniors who were previously eligible to receive assistance. That number is now 18,000 people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can't think of a better, you know, a better way to thank our seniors for what they've done for our province, for building our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP, when they were in government, one of the ways that they honoured seniors was to put in place what was called the gold plan. That was for free park entry, free angling licence, a discount on STC, and a free photo ID and also a gold pin, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we've decided that perhaps we need to look at the senior income plan, and have not only doubled the number of seniors that are eligible, but we've also made changes to the income that they can report to be eligible for it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The other thing, what this does with increasing the numbers is it also increases the number of seniors that qualify for free eye exam, free chiropractic services, a reduced deductible on their drugs, a home care subsidy, and several other initiatives that I think are positive, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to talk about a few other things before I move into talking a little bit more about the record of the NDP.

We've improved and increased the mileage rates for Social Services clients for travel such as to medical appointments to, I believe it is now 22 cents a kilometre, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from a low of 10 kilometres in the early days of the NDP. They did make some increases but we have had to increase that further, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also want to talk about something that our Social Services minister has done that is, I think, one of those stories — and I'm certainly going to try to make sure that my constituents know more about it because the more that people know about it, you know, frankly the more that it shows that this government is doing good things for people that need some help from the government — and that is the rates for the food allowance in group homes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last time the NDP touched the food allowance for group homes was in 2000, so roughly the last seven years of their government they didn't see fit to increase it. And I think that was probably at a time when, in those seven years, costs were going up, food costs were . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Sure, I think that that is true.

So what we see now, not only the fact that we've raised it after a seven-year window where the NDP didn't raise it, but when you put into context, how much we've actually raised it. For a group home for adults with intellectual disabilities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rate when the NDP left government was \$4.85 per person per day. That rate is now \$9 because of the work by our Social Services minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, group homes for youth, the rate under the NDP when they left government was \$5 per person per day. It is now \$9 per person per day, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — Certainly I want to again give a tremendous amount of credit to our Minister for Social Services for addressing this issue after years and years and years of neglect, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's things . . . I could talk about increasing the rates for those on the social assistance plan or the transitional employment assistance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's also increasing for the people, shelter aid for people on the provincial training allowance have gone up. I've already spoken about the group home allowance that has increased and the CBO funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the list goes on and on of areas that I can talk about, and perhaps if I run a little short, I'll come back to these. But I do want to move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One of the things . . . And I want to commend, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Lloydminster in a previous debate in this House who really did a great job of talking about the affordability issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And he did an excellent job of making sure that people look at the affordability issue, not just in the cost of what you need to spend, whether it's food or shelter or clothing, but affordability is also the ability to pay for what you need.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I want to refer to is the fact that in Saskatchewan the average weekly earnings are up over January by 6.3 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The average weekly earnings are over \$800 in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the second-largest growth in wages in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is the third-highest average weekly earnings on a total basis — not as a percentage, but on a total basis. We're number three.

So when you look at the issue of affordability, people in Saskatchewan are . . . And certainly we're not saying that there's no issues out there. Certainly there's people that are still dealing with issues of low income and of poverty, but incomes are rising in Saskatchewan faster than almost anywhere in Canada. The number of jobs are increasing, I think, more than anywhere in the entire country. Certainly you wouldn't want to be living in any other province if you're looking for work, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that's an important point. We have the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now I want to refer back to that paper that was done by the NDP in 1989, the paper was *Hunger and poverty: something can be done*. Now, Mr. Speaker, I agree something can be done. The NDP just didn't do it. They didn't get to it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the clear . . . And I want to quote from the document. This is on page 4. It wasn't a very lengthy document, but page 4, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is, and this is a quote, "The one clear solution put forward by participants . . ." And this is in terms of reducing hunger and poverty. They travelled around the province to four communities or something like that, but, "The one clear solution put forward by participants was achieving full employment." So the NDP solution, one of the solutions for reducing poverty was full employment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[12:45]

Certainly I'm not certain whether we can ever say that there is full employment. I don't believe that you can say that there is never going to be anybody that is receiving some sort of assistance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But certainly this government can point to our record of job growth, of leading the nation in the low unemployment rate, leading the nation in the increasing wages. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we are certainly doing a good job in that regard ensuring that even in a time of economic uncertainty that people are still working in Saskatchewan and have opportunities to work, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that the government website — I'm not sure what the most up-to-date number is — but there are still jobs available in Saskatchewan . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of my colleagues, I believe the member from Yorkton, says it's around 6,000 right now.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly we agree with what the NDP were saying in 1989 that you need to move people into employment. Now the record over those 16 years was driving people out of the province. So I'm not sure if that was a part of getting to full employment, that, you know, you just get rid of those extra people that you have, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm not sure of that. But now we all are also seeing good news when it comes to the number of women that are employed in the province growing by 3.8 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this

last year . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And I believe it's the highest ever as members are helping me out, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So that's great news for people in the province. More work to be done. We know that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But whether you talk about the increasing number of women that are working in the province or increasing number of First Nations and Métis people that are working in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly we're committed to ensuring that our economy — despite what's happening in the economy, in the world economy and the North American economy — that we have an economy that is still strong and still producing jobs and enticing people back to Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now I do want to talk a little bit about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to talk a little bit about some of the things that members opposite have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they were in opposition or leading into becoming the government. And one of the things that this report — and they talked a lot about it — but the report that they produced in 1989 was, essentially was their blueprint for ending poverty in the province of Saskatchewan which . . . It's certainly a laudable goal. I mean, I don't think there's a person in this province that would say that that's not a good idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So certainly, you can't fault them for putting forward a belief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we need to end poverty.

Now as the record of the NDP has turned out, it's a little more difficult than just putting together a report and saying that you're going to end poverty and you're going to have full employment.

An Hon. Member: — No. You got to do something.

Mr. Duncan: — Yes. It's a little more difficult than that. I mean, that's about as easy as saying that by a snap of the finger, you're going to end poverty, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean, certainly it's going to take a lot of work to raise people out of a vulnerable situation, to raise them out of poverty, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now one of the things that they talked about, one of the recommendations was a timeline by their government, once they formed government, to establish yearly targets to meet the goal of full employment. Well I don't think that lasted very long, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They certainly realized that that wasn't going to happen and so quickly abandoned that goal.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to quote from page 4 again, quote: "Our goal is to build a province in which there are no hungry children or adults and therefore no need for food banks or meal programs in our schools," Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now 1989, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was about 10 years old, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I certainly don't remember members opposite and their goals. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly the benefit of *Hansard* and the Legislative Library bring a lot back to us.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it wasn't just in opposition. And I know that this has been mentioned often, or a few times in the last couple of years, but the Leader of the Opposition when he was a member of, in fact when he was a new member of

government — he was elected I believe in 1986 and became a government member in 1991 — and, Mr. Speaker, this is what he had to say in the House on December 11, 1991 as a member of the new government that:

And how can we forget for even a moment in this House, Mr. Speaker, particularly on a day when we have recognized the UN declaration for the child, how for a moment in this House can we forget that in northern Saskatchewan we have children living in conditions that are not unlike third world conditions? How can we for a moment forget that just blocks from this legislature, blocks from these marble steps, there are children who go to school hungry on a daily basis?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now certainly he recognized that there was a problem, Mr. Speaker. And he went on to say, and I want to put this into the record:

Mr. Speaker, we dream. We in this government dream of a province where at the turn of the 21st century, like the soup kitchens of the 1930s, the food banks of the 1980s and '90s will be a thing of the past. Mr. Speaker, we dream of an end to poverty in this province and we say why not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now certainly the record hasn't been favourable to the dreams of that member. And I don't want to, certainly don't want to in a personal way disparage the career of the member for Saskatoon Riversdale. He's certainly served this province for a long number of years and has achieved the highest elected office in this province. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's one thing to talk about words; it's another to follow through with actions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they had 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now whether or not we could even say that 16 years was enough to totally end poverty, that's one thing. Perhaps it wasn't. But even to put a dent into it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the numbers didn't bear out. In 2005 Saskatchewan had the highest number of children using food banks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just a terrible, terrible record, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were other members. There was a former member of the NDP, former member of the NDP, Peter Prebble, who I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get into what his remarks were, regardless of what you feel of Mr. Prebble's politics, in the short time that we served in the Chamber together I have to say that I on a personal basis really enjoyed speaking with Mr. Prebble, regardless of our differences. I think he was a person that, before he became a politician, before he was elected, his time in government, and after he left, he was fairly consistent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I give him that much, unlike members that I think we can name, but we won't, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we don't have the time.

But in the final remaining moments he talked about ending an eight-year freeze in some of the income supports that were put in place by the government of the day in the 1980s, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which certainly that's a very good point, a debatable point whether or not, you know certainly things change in eight years so shouldn't we see an end to a freeze in eight years. But

as I've already shown, Mr. Speaker, and as the Minister for Social Services has shown on a number of occasions, the shelter rate wasn't touched save for two occasions for 16 years — 1992 and I believe 2005 — wasn't touched. There was another program that I talked about, in seven years. I think it was the food allowance for group homes wasn't touched for seven years.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's certainly difficult for members opposite. And they even tried it today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in some of the question period they tried it today to say, well that's your record; you're the government. And certainly we accept the responsibility. We want to be on this side of the House because we know that there are issues, a lot of them that were left over by the government opposite, and we want to deal with those issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But for the members opposite to have this, you know this attitude like as my mother would say . . . And by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, happy birthday to my mother. It was her birthday yesterday so I want to say that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as my mother would say, this holier-than-thou attitude, Mr. Speaker, that everything that they did was just in keeping with the social progress and the social principles of the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation], Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think one of the proofs that that isn't the case is look at their membership numbers. Look at their membership numbers.

In the face of a leadership campaign with four candidates, the first one for the NDP in I think seven or eight years and the numbers are, I mean they're not really there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They've gone up a bit but they're not that great, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's interesting when we get into the House and the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow who, rumour has it she's running for the leadership for the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You wouldn't really notice it from kind of what's going on out there. But she talks about questions of equality and in terms of wages between men and women. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they had 16 years. They talked about it.

I have here the member from Saskatoon Nutana on April 2, 1990, Mr. Deputy Speaker, complaining about the government freezing assistance for five and six and seven years. No different than their record when they were in government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have her on the record, the member from Nutana, April 2, 1990 talking about making sure that there are employment opportunities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Which we're doing as a government, Mr. Speaker, making sure that the economy is producing jobs, unlike the record of the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the great ones from that member from 1990 is criticizing the government that they didn't put money into poverty in the 1980s because they were giving money to Cargill and they were giving money to different businesses. Little bit hard today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, based on their record of losing money all across the world. And the member from Wood River can certainly go an hour just on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So as I get to the end of my time, I was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a

little bit worried that I wasn't going to have an opportunity to get to all of my comments, and I haven't. But I do want to move:

That this Assembly supports the actions of this government and recognizes that our government has done more to help low-income people fight poverty in 16 months than the previous NDP government did in 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — The member for Weyburn-Big Muddy has moved:

That this Assembly supports the actions of this government and recognizes that our government has done more to help low-income people fight poverty in 16 months than the previous NDP government did in 16 years.

It now being past the hour of 1 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:01.]

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Hon. Bill Boyd
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