



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

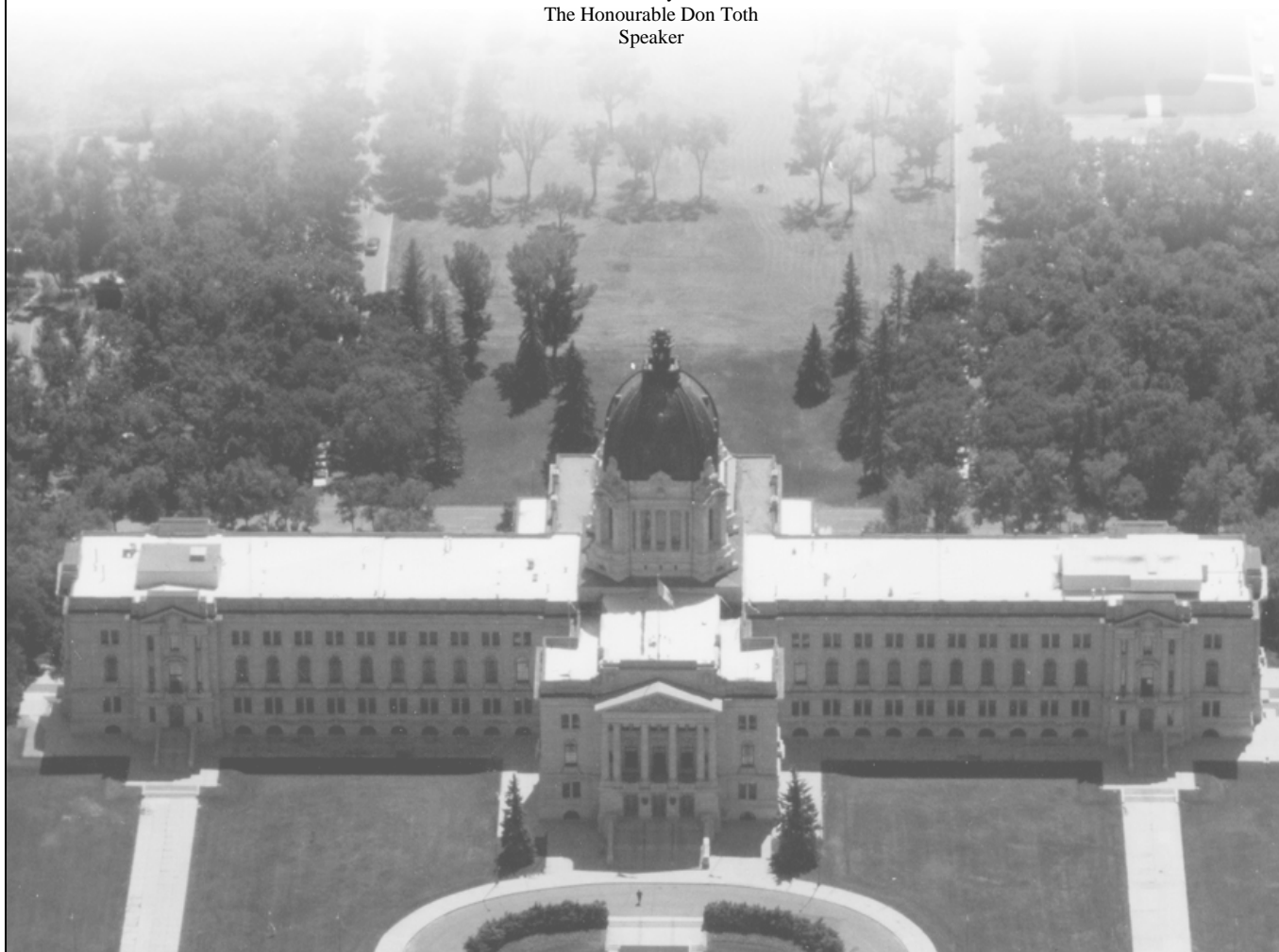
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Dwain Lingenfelter

| 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 |
| Brotten, Cam | NDP | Saskatoon Massey Place |
| Chartier, Danielle | NDP | Saskatoon Riversdale |
| Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken | SP | Saskatoon Silver Springs |
| Chisholm, Michael | SP | Cut Knife-Turtleford |
| D'Autremont, Dan | SP | Cannington |
| Draude, Hon. June | SP | Kelvington-Wadena |
| Duncan, Hon. Dustin | SP | Weyburn-Big Muddy |
| Eagles, Doreen | SP | Estevan |
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| Furber, Darcy | NDP | Prince Albert Northcote |
| Gantfoer, Hon. Rod | SP | Melfort |
| Harpauer, Hon. Donna | SP | Humboldt |
| Harper, Ron | NDP | Regina Northeast |
| Harrison, Hon. Jeremy | SP | Meadow Lake |
| Hart, Glen | SP | Last Mountain-Touchwood |
| Heppner, Hon. Nancy | SP | Martensville |
| Hickie, Darryl | SP | Prince Albert Carlton |
| Higgins, Deb | NDP | Moose Jaw Wakamow |
| Hutchinson, Hon. Bill | SP | Regina South |
| Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi) | SP | Wood River |
| Iwanchuk, Andy | NDP | Saskatoon Fairview |
| Junor, Judy | NDP | Saskatoon Eastview |
| Kirsch, Delbert | SP | Batoche |
| Krawetz, Hon. Ken | SP | Canora-Pelly |
| LeClerc, Serge | SP | Saskatoon Northwest |
| Lingenfelter, Dwain | NDP | Regina Douglas Park |
| McCall, Warren | NDP | Regina Elphinstone-Centre |
| McMillan, Tim | SP | Lloydminster |
| McMorris, Hon. Don | SP | Indian Head-Milestone |
| Michelson, Warren | SP | Moose Jaw North |
| Morgan, Hon. Don | SP | Saskatoon Southeast |
| Morin, Sandra | NDP | Regina Walsh Acres |
| Nilson, John | NDP | Regina Lakeview |
| Norris, Hon. Rob | SP | Saskatoon Greystone |
| Ottenbreit, Greg | SP | Yorkton |
| Quennell, Frank | NDP | Saskatoon Meewasin |
| Reiter, Hon. Jim | SP | Rosetown-Elrose |
| Ross, Laura | SP | Regina Qu'Appelle Valley |
| Schriemer, Joceline | SP | Saskatoon Sutherland |
| Stewart, Lyle | SP | Thunder Creek |
| Taylor, Len | NDP | The Battlefords |
| Tell, Hon. Christine | SP | Regina Wascana Plains |
| Toth, Hon. Don | SP | Moosomin |
| Trew, Kim | NDP | Regina Coronation Park |
| Vermette, Doyle | NDP | Cumberland |
| Wall, Hon. Brad | SP | Swift Current |
| Weekes, Randy | SP | Biggar |
| Wilson, Nadine | SP | Saskatchewan Rivers |
| Wotherspoon, Trent | NDP | Regina Rosemont |
| Yates, Kevin | NDP | Regina Dewdney |

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly some great people that are in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, this is Foster Family Week in Saskatchewan. It's a week where we recognize and express our thank you and appreciation to those exceptional individuals and families who quietly go about taking care of and nurturing the children who are unable to live at home.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to the House the following individuals and families from Regina and area who have opened up their homes and their hearts to children by becoming foster families. With us today we have Alan and Lydia Schiffner, Diane Thomas, Debra Pele, Liz Pelletier, Larry and Kim Skidmore, Farhad and Colleen Nikbakht, Lisa Peterson, Lisa Deans, Sarah LeClaire, and Amy Roberts.

As well, joining them from the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association is the executive director, Deb Davies, and the SFFA family support worker, Paul Bunz. Could everyone please join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join in with the minister in welcoming her special guests to the House. This is, as she mentioned, Foster Family Awareness Week, and it's a very important week. Throughout the year, these folks provide such an important service to the vulnerable families and children in our communities, and their work is so important to having healthy, strong communities. And I too would like to make special note of all the families and of the executive director, Deb Davies, and the good work that they've been doing. So on behalf of the opposition, I too would like to would like to welcome you to the House. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to raise a petition calling for wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. This is an important issue that we need to address. We know that workers in community-based organizations in Saskatchewan have traditionally been underpaid, and many continue to work and receive poverty level wages.

And these folks that signed this petition are from Moose Jaw, Caronport, and even from the city of Swift Current. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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 honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately invest in the planning and construction of long-term care beds in La Ronge.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another session and grad students are still left out in the cold. I'd like to present the petition. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable 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 here in Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, another session and here we are rising today again to present yet another petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind with respect to providing safe and affordable water and who have yet no commitment of assistance. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

I so present.

The Speaker: — Before I recognize the next member, I would ask members to allow individual members to be able to present their petitions without a lot of interference. I know it impacts on

your ability to hear and to make your own statement, so if members could accommodate that and we'd appreciate it. I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to present a petition in support of affordable rents and housing for The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners note that residents of some Battlefords area apartments have been given notice of rent increases of 40 per cent and that the vacancy rate for rental accommodation in The Battlefords is very low. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to develop an affordable housing program that will result in a greater number of quality and affordable rental units to be made available to a greater number of people throughout The Battlefords and that will implement a process of rent review or rent control to better protect tenants in a non-competitive housing environment.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are all from streets in various parts of North Battleford.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents of Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented financial mismanagement of this government. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to start managing our provincial finances responsibly and prudently to ensure that it does not continue its trend of massive budgetary shortfalls, runaway and unsustainable spending, equity stripping from our Crowns, and irresponsible revenue setting.

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

These petitions are signed by good folks of Regina and Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Good Times in Saskatchewan

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite what the opposition members may have you believe, times are good in Saskatchewan. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Saskatoon and Regina have the lowest unemployment among major Canadian cities. Our government has lowered property and income taxes to make life more affordable here in Saskatchewan. And last but not least, we have made a 2.7 billion payment to reduce the provincial debt by 40 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our record. However we still have work to do, and we're going to continue to move forward. Speaking of moving forward, did you know that Saskatchewan's population jumped by 16,509 people between July 1, 2008, and July 1, 2009? That's the largest population increase in any 12-month period for a very long time. Now there are 16,509 new residents that think times are good here too.

We know that there are challenges that come with growth. Our government created the task force on housing affordability. We created this task force to ensure that housing affordability keeps pace with our growing economy. In today's reality, many seniors are on a fixed income. When prices go up, their incomes do not follow suit. We also doubled the number of seniors that qualified for the seniors' income plan.

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

The People's Verdict

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, just over a month ago, Saskatchewan people went to the polls in Regina Douglas Park and Saskatoon Riversdale. The government said they would run on their record, while the opposition said we would run on the government's record as well. And the people's verdict in both by-elections was clear, Mr. Speaker — two NDP candidates elected with an absolute majority of the popular vote.

People told us they were concerned with the rising cost of living: rent, utilities, car insurance, camping fees, and prescription drugs. They told us they wanted the government to focus on making life more affordable, on providing a better quality of life for our seniors, on building the future by investing in renewable energy. They asked us how the government could have blown the biggest surplus in history and how families could get so little for it. They told us they wanted strong voices for families like theirs, for people like themselves. And, Mr. Speaker, they chose MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] who they knew would be those strong voices for them in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to invite all members to join me in welcoming the Leader of the Opposition and the new member for Saskatoon Riversdale to this Assembly. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Foster Family Week

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to bring to the attention of this House that this is Foster Family Week in Saskatchewan. Every day families across the province open their hearts and homes to children who are unable to be cared for within their own families . . .

[Interjections]

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes and values the outstanding contribution made every day by our province's foster families both in their communities and to the children they care for.

On Tuesday evening my colleague, the Minister of Social Services, attended the Regina Foster Parent Appreciation Night where she presented the Montgomery Award for Excellence in Fostering and had the opportunity to personally thank foster parents for their caring, for providing safe, nurturing homes, and for investing in the future of our great province.

We have dedicated nearly 25 million in additional funding this year to improve the province's child welfare system. Along with other initiatives, this means the development of nearly 100 new homes, new spaces . . . [inaudible] . . . It means funding for the Saskatchewan Foster Family Association of nearly \$867,000, the largest annual grant ever provided by this province to this organization. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Autism Awareness Month

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October is Autism Awareness Month. Autism spectrum disorder or ADS is a neurological disorder which causes developmental disability. Autism affects the way the brain functions, resulting in difficulties with communication and social interaction, and unusual patterns of behaviour, activities, and interest. ADS occurs in approximately one in 200 people. It's four times more common in boys and usually appears in the first three years of life.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the hard, cold facts about ADS, but each person with ADS is unique and has different abilities. The children suffering from ADS are real. Their parents and families supporting these children have real concerns about the care options for their children. They want early diagnosis, appropriate scientifically validated treatment, and support for families both financial and emotional.

Mr. Speaker, Autism Awareness Month helps us learn more about ADS and share information with all Canadians. However understanding alone will not improve the lives of these children and families. We need to invest in their diagnosis, treatment, and support. I want to thank the Autism Society of Canada and the Sask Families for Effective Autism Treatment or SASKFEAT for their continued fight to help Canadians living with ADS reach their full potential. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

A State of Mind

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public and the members on this side of the House can't help but notice all the frowns from the members opposite. And it's undeniable that the member for Regina Douglas Park seems a bit edgy these days, a bit irritated, a little grumpy. Yes, that's the word — grumpy — Mr. Speaker. And how do we know that? Well

according to the Snow White personality test, a grumpy tends to sit opposite the leader, often disagrees or says no, may sit with their arms crossed, Mr. Speaker, backs away from the table, looks annoyed, and is negatively critical and judgmental, even argumentative.

[10:15]

Mr. Speaker, as we look into the magic mirror, you will see that Saskatchewan is not grumpy these days. In fact Saskatchewan, in fact, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I can tell that members are looking forward to this session. I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — In fact, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is one of the fairest in the land even though the member from Regina Douglas Park once said, nobody ever said it was going to be fair. Perhaps that's why the member opposite is not happy. This is not the Saskatchewan he remembers. He remembers driving off west in a cloud of dust. He does not remember the success and optimism we now have in this growing province.

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

Throne Speech Promises

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard a brand new batch of promises from this government. But before anyone gets too worked up about yesterday's promises, I'd like to look back a year ago when they made a whole bunch of promises in their last Throne Speech. Let's see how that went.

They said they would have \$2 billion in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and it would be "the rock" on which we build Saskatchewan's future. Today, not so much. They said that "Saskatchewan no longer has a job shortage." Today, not so much. They said that they would have "better protection for renters facing a rent increase." Today, not so much. They said they would increase "the supply of locally trained physicians." Today, not so much.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is beginning to remind me of an old water pump out at a cabin at the lake — makes an awful lot of noise but all it does is spit up a lot of hot air.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Youth Entrepreneurial Day

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Entrepreneurial Day in Saskatchewan. The *Leader-Post* sums up the change in entrepreneurial attitudes in Saskatchewan in a column from October 19: "We've gone from worst to first in . . . about four years', says Marilyn Braun-Pollon," vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. That sums up Saskatchewan perfectly.

For two years in a row, a Saskatchewan city has topped the CFIB's [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] list of

best cities for business. It is also the second year in a row that five cities from Saskatchewan are in the top 10 of the same list. And, Mr. Speaker, my hometown of Lloydminster is one of those five.

Last year for the first time we celebrated Youth Entrepreneurship Day in our province. It is nice to see in Saskatchewan that there is a need to celebrate young people doing well. For far too long the former government neglected young people.

In the '90s, young people left Saskatchewan in droves. They knew that their skills and abilities would not flourish under the former government. Now, Mr. Speaker, an entrepreneurial spirit is growing in Saskatchewan, and this is convincing more young people to stay right here in Saskatchewan.

Our Saskatchewan Party government is proud that we can celebrate young people choosing to live, work, and raise their family right here at home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Saskatchewan People

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, the member from Swift Current. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say how pleased I am to be back in the Assembly. And I also wanted to say that in the past year, travelling the province, going to many different communities, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that one theme is clear. Many people are asking, how is it that this new government with this new Premier has blown the \$2.3 billion they were left after the last election? How did that happen?

And, Mr. Speaker, they're also asking and wanted me to ask the Premier this question — while rents are going up in this province by 20 or 30 per cent, the Premier has not lifted a finger to help them. My question to the Premier is this: when will you get on with the job of what you promised in the last Throne Speech of helping the renters in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I get into the answers to the questions from the hon. member, let me just say that we want to welcome him to this Legislative Assembly. We especially want to welcome as well the new member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

It's been a while since the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and myself have had a chance to talk. The last time we talked for any length of time is when he phoned me at my home before the '04 election to give me advice on how to beat the former leader of the NDP. That was the last time. You know, he said, here's what we did in the 1980s and here's what you should do to the current Premier, the then leader of the NDP.

Now I don't know why he did that, Mr. Speaker. Maybe he was trying to be helpful. Maybe it was because he was a

Conservative with Conservative lawn signs in Alberta, or maybe he was dreaming of the job of leading the NDP for a long time, Mr. Speaker. I want to welcome him back to this new Saskatchewan where you can come from Alberta and get the job you always dreamed of, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, new question to the Premier, the member from Swift Current. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that he never mentions that for a number of years he worked in Ottawa for the Mulroney government and left and went to work for the Conservative Party in Ottawa and now pretends he's not a Conservative. And there are many others over there pretending that they're not Conservatives.

But my question to you, Mr. Premier, is this. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is this: with utility rates going up by record amounts — SaskEnergy up in the double digits, SaskPower up by 8.9 per cent, and a promise by the Premier to increase rates by 100 per cent — when will you deal with the issue of the whole cost of living that the people of this province are facing? When will you deal with that, Mr. Premier?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, just to set the record straight, I worked right out of university for the federal Conservative government for nine months. Now he lived in Alberta and had Progressive Conservative lawn signs for I think about 10 years, so ironically enough, I think he's been a Conservative longer than I have, Mr. Speaker.

But let me just say this, Mr. Speaker. It was this government that set out to make sure that everyone in Saskatchewan would benefit from economic growth in terms of affordability. It was this government that dropped 80,000 low-income people off the tax rolls, Mr. Speaker. It was this government that doubled the seniors' income benefit after 16 years of neglect under the NDP. It's been under this government that we have indexed rental supplements, that we've indexed help to those who need it the most, Mr. Speaker. And there will be more of that as we continue to grow this economy and as we continue to ensure that everyone benefits from that prosperity.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier deals with another issue that was raised many times as I travelled the constituency of Riversdale and Douglas Park. Many people were saying, when it comes to health care one of the issues is the drug plan and the fact that many families cannot pay for the medications needed for their teenagers and students. And I want to ask the Premier if at this time he can make a commitment to extend the drug plan to cover all students in the province, or is it true that he's blown the \$2.3 billion and there's no money left for the rainy day that starts today now that we're in a deficit?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the hon. member would assume that, just because it's his first day in the

legislature, that it's a rainy day in Saskatchewan. I still think it's a very sunny day in the province. There's much to be hopeful for, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say this. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition has been saying this for some time. He's been asking the rhetorical question, where has the money went?

Well, Mr. Speaker, these are the investments this government has made: \$2.5 billion record investment in infrastructure in the province of Saskatchewan; the largest income tax relief for Saskatchewan families — 80,000 fewer people on the tax rolls; the largest property tax relief in the history of the province of Saskatchewan; 500 new nurses, Mr. Speaker; infrastructure upgrades in schools and in hospitals, Mr. Speaker; and \$800 million in cash in the bank. That sounds pretty good to me, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — To the Premier: Mr. Premier, we know that families in this province are hurting — people who can't afford their rent, people who can't afford their utilities, people who can't afford medication for family members who are sick. And this Premier laughs and chuckles about that fact.

I came here today from one year of campaigning, having listened to thousands of families who are grumpy with him. The people are grumpy and they told me to ask these questions and, Mr. Speaker, I'm appalled at the humour and laughter these members show. My question is, when are you going to get serious, put down the pompoms, go to work, and help with these issues?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Since the election in 2007 when that member would have watched from the province of Alberta, this government, this government has kept over 100 of its election promises. You want to talk about work on behalf of the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. This government has introduced record income tax relief, record property tax relief, Mr. Speaker. We have supported rural Saskatchewan, supported the cattle industry when we needed it. We've invested in crop insurance, Mr. Speaker. We've rebuilt the highways of the province and we've . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. There are some members that are taking up a lot of other members' time, and I'd appreciate if the members would respect the right of the members asking the question and the ministers responding to be heard. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we have paid off over \$2 billion of debt in this province, reduced the debt of this province by 40 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. The hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, poses a question. He

says that this side of the House isn't answering the questions. He might want to get control of his members over there so we can actually have this discussion.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the Premier to move to the answer, please.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of families who need the help most, we have, as you know, provided income tax relief, increased benefits to families who need it. A family of four with a \$50,000 income is saving \$1,945. A family of four at \$35,000 — \$2,640, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on — \$2,100 for a senior couple that's earning 25,000. That's the investment we've given back to those people, those families who need it the most.

There's more work to be done with respect to affordability. But I want to tell you this. In two years, this side of the House has achieved more than that government did in 16 years in growing the economy and making sure the people of the province benefit, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Citizens and Olympic Spending

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, we just heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about the rising cost of living.

During the Saskatoon Riversdale by-election, I had the opportunity to knock on thousands of doors. And rarely, rarely . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. It's been a long-standing tradition to respect the right of especially new members to be able to pose a question or respond without interference. So I'd ask members to respect that right. The member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — I had the opportunity to knock on thousands of doors over several months, and rarely a day went by without someone telling me how the rising cost of living was making it harder and harder for them to make ends meet.

People also told me they wondered about this government's priorities. At a time when too many families, particularly in my constituency, are making a choice between paying rent and buying groceries, this government has more than \$7 million to spend on photo opportunities at the Olympics.

To the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, my question is simply this: why don't you share the people's priorities? Why is it that this government has \$7 million to spend on cheerleading and photo opportunities at the Olympics rather than on the real needs of people in Saskatoon Riversdale and in the rest of this province?

[10:30]

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite that we have heard the same thing on doorsteps — that she has heard it and we've heard it immediately following the election. And that is why within our first two years that we struck the task force on housing and we addressed the affordability immediately.

We increased the shelter allowance, we indexed it, and we revisit it every six months to ensure that it is reacting to the market.

And Saskatoon is experiencing a rising market, and it is a concern. That is also why we're investing over \$8 million in that particular member's riding for new housing. That is why we're investing in a brand new school in that member's riding, because we have heard these issues and we reacted very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose the same question to the same minister. I want to know about the photo opportunities and pompoms and cheerleading in Vancouver, rather than on the things that matter to people in Saskatoon Riversdale like being able to buy groceries.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's not either-or, quite frankly. We addressed the issues that she is speaking of very, very quickly. We increased the Saskatchewan employment supplement, of which 70 per cent of the clients are single parents.

Mr. Speaker, we increased the Saskatchewan . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, we also recognized that seniors have been neglected for 16 years in this province by the previous government, so we increased their income plan by 110 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we addressed housing, we addressed employment supplement, we addressed the low-income tax credit. We introduced the low-income tax credit and it is double the amount that the previous sales tax credit was. So yes, we are putting all of those issues as a priority.

Should we ignore all other issues within our province? No. Mr. Speaker, we have a balanced approach and we'll continue to do so.

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

Employment Issues

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard from the Leader of the Opposition as well as the new member from Saskatoon Riversdale. We've heard about, for many families in Saskatchewan, how it's more and more difficult to make ends meet. While the Saskatchewan Party would like us to believe that the economy is still booming and everything is just peachy, Mr. Speaker, we know from Stats Canada that last month there were fewer people working in Saskatchewan than a year ago — 700 fewer to be exact, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Minister of Employment is, how are these individuals who are out of work supposed to pay the bills?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to that question. Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we know we're not immune from what's going on around us, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, we know that we're also making some significant progress. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about last month.

Year over year, we have seen some declines. But what we've seen is 2,100 new jobs month over month, Mr. Speaker, and that includes 6,800 full-time jobs. So, Mr. Speaker, we know that when we look at a city like Saskatoon, for example, year over year, 7,700 new jobs; month over month, up over 800.

We can see that sectors like transportation and warehousing, we're making progress. Construction, we're making progress, Mr. Speaker. That speaks directly to the booster shot and the infrastructure investment as well as a number of other initiatives that we've taken within this province to ensure that again. We know we're not immune from what's going on around us but we're doing our best to ensure that we sustain the growth and share the benefits of this growth with the people of the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is good to be back in the Assembly. I've missed many of my colleagues, and truth be told I've missed some of the members opposite but, Mr. Speaker, the fluff answers I did not miss, no.

Mr. Speaker, we see in Saskatchewan an opposite trend to what is happening in Canada. In Canada we've seen an increase in full-time jobs, full-time employment, but in Saskatchewan we've seen a decrease. Last month, Mr. Speaker, a decrease of 10,000 full-time jobs alone. These are the jobs, Mr. Speaker, that provide stability to families through good wages and a stable living situation, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatchewan we've

seen this huge increase in part-time employment while we've seen the full-time jobs decrease.

My question to the minister: we know that the Premier has provided all members with a sparkly pair of pompoms. We know all the members like these pompoms a great deal. But my question to the minister: when will he put down the pompoms and get in the game?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, it's a wonderful opportunity to respond to the member. I missed him as well.

Mr. Speaker, he made reference to some of the recent numbers, Mr. Speaker. Again, we know we're not immune from what's going on around us, but let me be clear. Full-time jobs in Saskatchewan, up month over month — 6,800, Mr. Speaker.

We know that we're not immune from what's going on around us. That's one of the reasons we put forward the rapid response teams, Mr. Speaker. That way we can work very closely with the federal government, with employers, with employees, with unions, and so far we've been able to help over 1,000 people keep their jobs, Mr. Speaker.

These are some of the initiatives that we have, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that once again that we're sustaining the growth in Saskatchewan. By the way, we need to mention 4.6 per cent unemployment rate, Mr. Speaker, the lowest in the county, Mr. Speaker. More to do, but we're certainly continuing on the path of ensuring we're sharing the benefits of this growth with the people of the province.

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

Management of Provincial Economy

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So, Mr. Speaker, we get more cheerleading from the Sask Party, we get stories of the real economy from the opposition. What that story is, is massive job losses, masses layoffs in this province, and a huge decline, sector after sector. Even if that minister wants to cherry-pick a couple, we have huge decline in retail sales, huge decline in consumer spending, huge decline in international trade, huge decline in housing starts and manufacturing. Everyone knows that there's a recession — everyone, that is, but the Minister of Finance, who I quote on October 14th, "We sort of largely bypassed the recession."

To the Minister of Finance: why is he, the Premier, the entire Saskatchewan Party, the only people in Saskatchewan who don't know that there's a recession going on?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to get up in the House and answer questions posed by the critic, the new member that has that responsibility. And I would like to say is that this province has had an incredible, an incredible two years under this government.

Mr. Speaker, while the rest of the country was facing a very, very serious recession, Saskatchewan was largely exempted from that, and you see that every day as you go around this province and you talk to people in the retail trade; you talk to people that are building houses; you talk to people that are buying sales.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, you compare the numbers in Saskatchewan to virtually any jurisdiction, not only in Canada but in North America and perhaps the world, and we are doing very, very well in comparison. Mr. Speaker, we've had a significant problem with the potash industry and we are coping with that change and our reality very, very well.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to provide the support and the leadership for this economy and the Saskatchewan people who do believe in the economy much more than the members opposite do.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, points to housing and to retail sales. Both of these are down hugely — plummeting housing starts. And I'll remind him that a recession, the definition of a recession is two quarters, consecutive quarters without growth. The statistics back this up.

But it's not just recessions that this minister gets wrong. After filing and putting on the table one of the most error-filled budgets this province has ever seen in March, from the *Leader-Post* on August 15th, I quote, "... the province can't afford another miscalculation like potash."

And, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are paying for this minister's incompetence. From the *Leader-Post* on August 26th, I quote, "This happens to be the biggest miscalculation since PC finance minister Gary Lane's 1986 budget."

To the Minister of Finance: honestly, how could he have gotten it so wrong?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, when we prepared our budget in the spring of this year, we took the advice of the people in the industry and the people in the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Energy and Resources. We took all of these things into account and we came up what we believed at the time was a very prudent and measured response to potash revenues. We had believed, given the fact that the industry was quoting potash prices at \$1,000 a tonne at the time — there were actually Canpotex sales at the \$750 level — that \$550 was prudent.

We believed that 10.3 million . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — We believed that 10.3 million tonnes of potash was a reasonable number given that those were the

numbers that had happened over the past four years.

Mr. Speaker, we used the best advice we could get. And the forecasts that we put together, the forecasts that we were given were subsequently proven — and I acknowledge — are wrong. There is no doubt about it.

Mr. Speaker, so it leaves us to ask the simple question: what number would the opposition have used? Would you use one and a half billion dollars? One billion dollars? Five hundred million dollars? There is virtually no one in the world that would have predicted what has happened in the potash industry.

An Hon. Member: — We did.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — And particularly the members opposite, despite what they're saying. We are doing very well. We are having a challenge, but we're going to meet it going forward.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I listened to interest to the Finance minister explain or try to explain how they made a mistake of \$1.3 billion on one line in the budget. I think that's a Canadian record and one that I think the Premier is not likely proud of.

But my question is to the Premier. You said about those numbers, and I quote, "I think it's prudent to budget at a modest price projection which I believe we will," referring to the estimate on potash. Now my question is this. At the time we did the budget and they introduced the number, there was a recession on worldwide. Potash was going to China and India, and everyone exporting to those countries — whether it was oil or steel or potash — knew that the prices in commodities were going down. Why did the Premier think this was a modest approach to the budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to thank the member for the question. There was a number of areas of caution built into the budget, including a surplus, a forecast surplus, including the fact that we had forecast the price for oil at, well getting to be nearly half of where it is even today, Mr. Speaker.

I would also say this. When we set the price of the forecast of potash in the budget on the advice of Finance, we did so at about \$550 a tonne. The spot price at the time was over \$700 a tonne. Our price we put in the budget was less than what potash was selling for at the time. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? The price we had in the budget for potash is about what the spot price is today. What was absolutely unforeseen — including by the industry — was volume, Mr. Speaker.

Now if only the hon. member opposite and all of them opposite had been on hand to advise Bill Doyle and the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan or Mosaic or Agrium or Canpotex, the marketing arm for the companies. If only they would have been available for them with their crystal ball and magic wand to predict near zero sales when no one in the industry was predicting that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, we know and the world knew that we were going into a recession. The world was already well into a recession. I think that many people have blamed the Minister of Finance for the big mistake and the Premier is now trying to blame the process and the Finance and the people in Finance. But there's a quote that I want to repeat and a idea that the Premier had one Saturday afternoon when he got on the phone and phoned his minister — and he admitted this — asked him to transfer \$600 million on the spur of the moment. You remember that quote, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Premier this. How often have you phoned the Finance minister and, against the will of the specialists and professionals in the department and against the will of the Finance minister, forced him to move money, use estimates that are wrong? And isn't this why the budget is off is because of your continual meddling on Saturday afternoons? Why don't you leave your phone off and continue to watch your football game?

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think I caught the last part. Is he still grumpy about the whole football thing? I can't believe that.

Mr. Speaker, I think what the hon. member is referring to, I think what he's referring to is the discussion we had just before we introduced the largest income tax relief for Saskatchewan families where we dropped 80,000 people off the tax rolls, and we were contemplating actually paying more off on the debt than we did. That's what we were contemplating.

I talked to the Minister of Finance on the weekend and said, you know, we would like to pay off even more than the 40 per cent of debt but maybe it's prudent that we keep some in a fund . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Members. I ask the members to allow the Premier to respond. Final warning.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the decision was made that we would hold some money in cash and now we have \$800 million in that fund in addition to the 40 per cent debt . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of where Saskatchewan is today, I think these are the healthiest financial books in . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Regina Rosemont has been continually attempting to enter the debate when

another member's on his feet. I asked earlier for members to be mindful of the right of members to ask the questions and respond. The Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Compared to almost every other jurisdiction in North America, we are the envy in terms of the financial health of the province, in terms of the cash on hand, in terms of the debt reduction. And moreover, Mr. Speaker, our population's growing like never before, Mr. Speaker. We've got the lowest unemployment rate in all of the country.

And I would also offer this to hon. members so that they can be just a little bit less grumpy. They can have blessed assurance of this: notwithstanding what happens with potash forecast, we will not do what the NDP did when they made mistakes in budgeting. Their first choice was to increase taxes, Mr. Speaker. The people of the province deserve better; they have better; and they will get better in the future.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Before orders of the day, I request leave of the Assembly to make the following motion:

That the hon. member for Cypress Hills, the member Wayne Elhard, be appointed to preside as the Deputy Chair of committees of this Assembly.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Premier.

MOTIONS

Appointment of Deputy Chair of Committees

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I would now formally move that, by leave of this Assembly:

That the member of the constituency of Cypress Hills be appointed to preside Deputy Chair of committees of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Premier has moved, by leave:

That the member, Wayne Elhard, the member of the constituency of Cypress Hills, be appointed to preside as Deputy Chair of committees of this Assembly.

Is the Assembly agreed with the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. And having that motion just to officially recognize the resignation of the former deputy Chair, I want to inform the members that the member of Lloydminster resigned from the position of Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole on June 15, 2009, which necessitated

an election of another member to fill the position in accordance with rule 113(2).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership of the Board of Internal Economy

The Speaker: — Also before orders of the day, pursuant to section 67 of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007*, I hereby inform the Assembly of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy, effective May 29, 2009. The Hon. Don Toth, Chair, Speaker; Hon. Don Morgan; Hon. Jeremy Harrison; the member from Cannington, Dan D'Autremont; the member from Estevan, Ms. Doreen Eagles; the member from The Battlefords, Mr. Len Taylor; and the member from Regina Dewdney, Mr. Kevin Yates.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker: — As well, pursuant to rules 23 and 22, I will be tabling the audited statements of both caucuses as well as the audited statements of the members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a true honour to rise in the House today and to start the debate for the Speech from the Throne, a very good Speech from the Throne.

Before I get into the major comments that I want to deliver regarding the Speech from the Throne, I do want to welcome the new member into this Legislative Assembly. I hope her time here is productive. I think she'll have many years on the opposition benches to certainly carry the message for Saskatoon Riversdale.

I'd also like to welcome the Leader of the Opposition, certainly not a new member here, been here for many years before, quite a long time ago. As a matter of fact, I was elected in 1999, and I believe he served for about one session, and then he decided that this place wasn't for him, decided to pack his car and go west and seemed to fit in quite comfortably in conservative Alberta, fit in very comfortably.

But I certainly welcome him back to the Assembly today, and I think that he'll have an opportunity to spend two years for sure as the Opposition Leader. And this is my prediction, my prediction — two years in opposition and then maybe six months more as the leader of the NDP. But I'm predicting no more than two and a half years that he'll be spending in Saskatchewan and then he'll be moving back to Alberta, is my prediction.

I want to also, before I get into the text of most of the remarks regarding the Speech from the Throne, I do want to say how honoured I am to stand in my place and speak on behalf of

constituents in the great constituency of Indian Head-Milestone that I've had the honour of representing for the last ten years.

They are hard-working, sincere people, very caring people, whether it's from the Qu'Appelle Valley — the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley that is really developed around tourism around the lakes, the Fishing Lakes, in the summertime, ice fishing in the wintertime, the ski hill in the wintertime — to the rest of the constituency which is really focussed on agriculture.

And I know there's a lot of people watching the skies these days. There's a lot of crop out in my constituency. It's extremely good crop, a very good crop, one of the better crops we've had. But unfortunately it's been two weeks ago yesterday, I believe, since a combine has really turned a wheel in the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone. There's a little bit starting up now, but there's an awful lot of crop left out there. It's a valuable crop, and so we're sure hoping that the weather turns around and lets the farmers get at it and get the crop off.

The other thing I just wanted to bring to the Assembly's attention is the growth that has been happening in the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone. So many of the communities have seen record amount of housing starts. You know, when I go past Kronau for example out to my farm, I'm amazed at the new houses being built at Kronau. I know in Milestone, I think there was more houses built in the last year than there had been in the last 15 years combined.

So certainly growth is prevalent throughout the constituency, perhaps no place greater than the community of Balgonie is expanding. There's pressures on schooling there because of the extra families moving to the area. It is really a good time for the constituents and the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone to experience the growth, growth like it's never seen for many, many, many years. So, Mr. Speaker, it is, as I said, a privilege to stand and represent the people of Indian Head-Milestone.

This is the first opportunity that I've had to move the motion for the Speech from the Throne. Of course quite a few years, I was on the opposition side, so I could have — what? — maybe moved an amendment. But now on the government side, this is the first opportunity that I've had to. And it really sets out the direction — for the next year and even longer, the next two, three, and even four years — the direction that our government wants to move.

Certainly health care is a major focus, probably the number one priority in the Speech from the Throne. And I want to say that I find it passingly curious that last session, the last session I think there was about 600 questions asked. I had 16 questions asked of me on health care. Forty-three per cent of the budget, only 16 questions asked of health care. I found it very interesting today that, just after the Speech from the Throne where the major focus is health care, that there wouldn't be one question out of 25 minutes regarding health care. They didn't question once, not one question regarding health care, and I find that really, really quite curious. But I kind of think, I certainly have some reasons why I think they didn't go into the whole issue of health care. Perhaps that will happen later on in the session, but I find it very curious.

One of the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I heard the member say something about a miserable record as Minister of Health, as the Minister of Health. I would like to talk a little bit about the past two years before I want to go on to the future, of what we are going to be tackling in the future, because over the last two years, we have accomplished a great deal within the Ministry of Health and throughout the health regions. And it's all started with something called a target. We have set targets in many different areas, and some of them have been in health care.

Now I know the opposition members are immune to targets. They don't want to talk about targets. In fact I remember the former minister of Health, the member from North Battleford, talked about whether we should set targets. And his exact words were, we wouldn't want to set a target because we probably couldn't meet it. Quite a defeatist attitude.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government, the Saskatchewan Party government is not afraid of setting targets, is not afraid of setting bold targets and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Prince Albert says, are you any good at meeting them? Let's review the record in two years. In the four-year period, we said we were going to increase the number of nurses working in our health care systems by 800. As of today, there are 582, I believe, 582 more nurses working in the health care system today than what were working in the system two years ago. That's 75 per cent of the way to the goal in the first year and a half. Mr. Speaker, we've got two and a half more years, two more years to go to reach the other 25 per cent, and I'm quite positive we are going to do it.

Now of course the opposition would not know anything about setting a target because they just were scared of it. Other targets that we've set were issues around the number of medical seats within the College of Medicine in Saskatoon, around the residency seats out of the College of Medicine. We went from 60 medical seats, we're up to about 84, well on our way to 100 medical seats.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker . . . Certainly the physician issue in Saskatchewan is a major issue. We don't have enough doctors. We don't have enough specialists. We are short of physicians in our province. Can you imagine if the former government had the foresight to increase the number of medical seats from 60 to even 80? Over the last 10 years, that would have been 200 more Canadian-trained doctors, Saskatchewan-trained doctors working in our system. But they kept the number at 60. They had no plan on increasing the number of medical seats. They kept it at 60, and as a result, our province is suffering significantly from a physician shortage.

And we're starting to address that. But how you start to address it is by setting targets, setting bold goals like increasing the number of medical seats up to 100, the number of residency positions up to 120. And we're well on our way of meeting those goals, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the other issues that we have accomplished . . . Now you know, this is, I guess, not only for all the members' sake on the opposition side but for the Leader of the Opposition who hasn't been here for the last two years. So I would like to get him up to speed on what we have done over the last two years

in health care.

We have put \$154 million into long-term care facilities throughout the province, 13 new long-term care facilities that were badly needed. And, Mr. Speaker, these facilities are being scoped right now. They're being designed right now, and construction will certainly start in the very near future on a number of them, Mr. Speaker. It's an issue that had gone unaddressed for many, many years under the former government.

[11:00]

Another area that I was very proud of — and you know, there's not a lot of media quotes or pictures regarding it — but it was \$100 million that we put into repairing a number of our facilities that were in bad need of repair.

I remember just before the '07 election, back in the summer of '07 — very hot, humid summer — where our tertiary care centres, our hospitals in Regina and Saskatoon literally had to stop the operating rooms, close down the operating rooms because the chillers weren't able to keep up. They hadn't repaired the facilities in order to carry on with the normal course of business that these facilities do. It was certainly a great day when we put \$100 million into repairing so many of these facilities that had gone badly abused, badly neglected for many, many years under the opposition . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Prince Albert has got an awful lot to say already. He's talking about the children's hospital, a \$200 million commitment to the children's hospital that that government, that former government would never have followed through on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the children's hospital is being planned as we speak, Mr. Speaker. Five million dollars is going into the planning right now. And, Mr. Speaker, the rest of the money — when it's being built — will be there absolutely. It's a commitment our government made.

And if there is one thing that the people of Saskatchewan have learned about this government — things that we say that we're going to do, we actually do, Mr. Speaker, unlike the opposition, Mr. Speaker, in their many years of governing where people really had a lot of self doubt. I can remember the example of whether it was Humboldt hospital where they had seven consecutive years of announcing a new hospital. Preeceville is another one, Mr. Speaker. When we've announced that we're going to put money towards the facility, Mr. Speaker, that money will be there, and that facility will be built. And the children's hospital is definitely one of them.

So there are many different accomplishments over the last two years. Absolutely. I could spend my 20 minutes or 25 minutes talking about the accomplishments over the last two years, but what I am most proud of is when we set targets, when our government sets a target — which a lot of governments won't do and that government never did — when our government sets a target, Mr. Speaker, we follow through and we meet that target, Mr. Speaker. And I think you heard yesterday in the Speech from the Throne a very bold target.

Before I talk about the wait time, I do want to touch on a report

that was just completed last week, the patient-first report done by Tony Dagnone, the commissioner who really . . . I want to thank Tony for the excellent work that he's done. Tony is a very intelligent, classy man that has put together an excellent report after hearing from thousands of people around the province, after talking to the most important person within the system. And it wasn't the doctor and it wasn't the nurses and it isn't other service providers. It's the people that the system is supposed to supply service to — the patients themselves.

This is a very unique . . . It's never been done before in Canada where the system is looked at through the patient's eyes. I can tell you that when I first became the Minister of Health, I had a number of professional organizations talk to me. And whether it was the nurses or whether it would be the doctors, they'd always say we speak for the patient, and they do. They have a lot of, you know, certainly a close connection with the patient, but they aren't the patient themselves. And that's why this report is different than any other because it comes from the most important person, the patient themselves.

I also not only want to thank Tony, but I also want to thank the Ministry of Health for the work that they've done in helping support Tony, Pauline Rousseau, and all the others in the Ministry of Health, for the excellent job that they have done over the past year putting together this patient-first review or as it's entitled *For Patients' Sake*.

And it really is a bit of a blueprint, a bit of a guide for where the health care system needs to go. There are a number of recommendations. We plan on following through with all the recommendations over time as we can get to each recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, when I was presented with the . . . I was the second person to receive this report. The report was presented to of course a patient, an advocate for patient safety, and it was very appropriate that they would receive the first report. When I received my report, I received it on a stick, and I think the whole point was the whole issue around e-health and how important getting up to speed with the electronic health records, and to think that, you know, this report would be on something this small and how important it would be to have all of our health records on a stick or electronically kept, Mr. Speaker. So it was very, very fitting.

The interesting part regarding the Patient First Review are a number of the recommendations. But the one that I certainly heard when I was in opposition, I've heard lots since I've been the minister, is the whole issue around wait times. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it will be a very interesting debate as we move forward, around the issue on wait times, because it is definitely the issue that I think most people talk about when they talk about health care. There are many other issues of course. There is, you know, long-term care and there are a number of issues that we need to deal with certainly regarding health care. But generally I would think, and it was certainly borne out in the Patient First Review, *For Patients' Sake*, is the issue around the waiting time.

We have about 27,000 people waiting on lists right now, Mr. Speaker. We've taken the long waits from about 9,000 under the NDP down to 4,000. That's still not acceptable. We have,

some people would call it a bulge in the system, that people are coming in and then they have to wait anywhere up to two years before they get their surgery. And that just is unacceptable.

What we're finding is the capacity in the system right now is meeting the intake. So as many people are coming in for example for a surgical procedure, we're putting through. It's that bulge in the middle, that wait list in the middle that we really have to focus our attention. And that's certainly what we will be doing over the next four years.

It's a bold goal, absolutely. It's a bold goal that over the next four years nobody should wait longer than three months for their surgical procedure. And I've had some people say to me, oh man, that's an awfully aggressive target; do you think you can meet it? I've had other people that have questioned me and said, we have to wait four years till you get to that point? So I think we're positioned pretty well. Some people think it's too aggressive. Some people think we're going to take too long.

I haven't heard the opposition yet as to whether they think it's too long or whether it's too bold, Mr. Speaker. I really haven't heard, and I'll be looking forward to their responses as to whether they think the target can be met. I guess it'll be interesting because, as I said before, they're immune to setting targets. We've set the target, and we believe that through a focused, hugely focused attention that we'll be able to meet this target.

We believe that there is capacity within the system right now, within the public system. We have the three tertiary care hospitals in Saskatchewan, three in Saskatoon, two in Regina, that we're going to have to look at seeing if we can get more capacity out of those. There are regional hospitals throughout the province that we know that there is more capacity within those facilities, whether it's in Swift Current, whether it's in Yorkton — any of the regional hospitals — North Battleford, whether there's more capacity certainly in those facilities, whether the district hospitals such as Melfort can do more procedures within its facilities, within the operating rooms that are provided there. We think there is capacity within the system that we have, Mr. Speaker, but we are not immune to looking at every possible option.

Other countries have tackled the same issue. I know in Great Britain they had extremely long wait-lists and they focused their attention, and they looked at best practices from around the world, and they've brought their waiting lists down to an acceptable level, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're planning to do right here in Saskatchewan because quite frankly, the people, that's their biggest issue. That's what they want to have us address.

So we need to look at all possible options within a publicly funded system, one payer — that's the Government of Saskatchewan — within a publicly funded system, Mr. Speaker. There is no queue jumping; there's none of that. It will be done within a publicly funded system with one payer, and that's the Government of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, the delivery model is where people will start to question. And I heard the opposition go there a little bit yesterday. They start to question the delivery model. And

they'll start saying, oh here we go down the privatization road. And I always find it very interesting when they start talking about the privatization road because, Mr. Speaker, private delivery within a public system is not a new concept. Private delivery within a public system is here, alive and well right here in Saskatchewan.

There's many different examples. And I've used the example many times, and I could use it for Regina, Saskatoon. Or in my constituency, I could use it for the communities of Fort Qu'Appelle and Indian Head, that if I'm in an accident and I need the services of an ambulance, I want to make sure it gets there quick. What I want is the staff to be professional and well trained and get me to the hospital as quickly as possible if that's what needs to happen.

Mr. Speaker, when that ambulance drives up to the accident scene, my first question isn't, is it privately owned or is it publicly owned. I don't really care at that point. I want service. In Indian Head it would be publicly owned. In Fort Qu'Appelle it would be privately owned. In Saskatoon it would be privately owned, and in Regina it would be publicly owned. It doesn't matter to me who the owner is as much as the service is there; the delivery is there, Mr. Speaker.

I was looking at some of the different clippings from people that responded to the Speech from the Throne and what they had to say. And I think one of the most fitting comments I heard was from the president of the Canadian Medical Association who happens to be from Saskatchewan. It's a real honour. Dr. Anne Doig from Saskatoon is now the president of the Canadian Medical Association. And I thought her words were very fitting. She says that "the philosophical argument over public/private health care is hollow." Is absolutely hollow. And I know that's going to be the area that I think the opposition's going to go down, is that it's private delivery and we can't have it. But quite frankly, that argument is hollow.

I couldn't agree more with the president of the Canadian Medical Association from Saskatchewan here. She goes on to say that:

[It's] hollow since more than 90 per cent of doctors are already "private" practitioners paying their own staff, office and equipment costs. Many other services, including . . . [lab testing], are also provided by the private sector.

And even the former NDP government had no problem with the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board sending injured clients to private clinics in Alberta for diagnostic tests because the . . . [waits] were too long here.

According to Anne Doig. I mean, it couldn't be said better.

So it's not so much whether private delivery within a public system is here or not, because I think there wouldn't be a person that would say it isn't if they have any idea of a health care system. We have lab tests. We have ultrasounds. We have X-rays. We have physicians. We have ambulances. And there are others that are all private delivery within a single-payer system through the medicare system, Mr. Speaker.

So the delivery model, I don't think the general public are as worried about. They want to make sure that they get timely care. So if we have looked at all the capacity and tried to get as much capacity out of the system that we have, out of the facilities that we have, and we have to top that up with a private provider within a public system, Mr. Speaker, that's what we'll be doing.

This is a full-court press on surgical wait times because that is an issue that is by far, is by far the most important issue, I think, facing our citizens in Saskatchewan, are some of the long waits, so however we have to do it. We'll look at other jurisdictions. We'll look at other countries and what they've done. We'll look at our neighbouring provinces to see if there's capacity there.

Our first solution, our first initiative is to get capacity out of the system that we have and then top it up if we need to top it up. And I will be looking forward to hearing — while the member from Dewdney is hollering from the seat — I'll be looking forward to seeing the time where if it was a surgery that he needed, whether he would say no to a private clinic. Would he say absolutely no to a private deliverer within a public system? I don't think they would, Mr. Speaker, because what we need is services.

Mr. Speaker, also the president-elect from the Saskatchewan Medical Association, Dr. Sridhar, who is as I said president-elect from the medical association, also had some pretty good words to say. He said that patients, he says patients should get proper care as soon as possible even if they needed to be sent out of province if that had to happen. Now our preference absolutely is to care for them in the province. But, Mr. Speaker, what we have to do is focus on the patient first and ensure they get the timely health care that they can. And if that's surgical procedure, then that's what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one other comment from the president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association, this is what Dr. Miller said, from Moose Jaw who is the president of the medical association. He called the wait time targets "ambitious and laudable":

"We're dissatisfied by the fact that we don't think there is a total good use of the system overall. I think we can [do more] get more bang for our buck in many different ways."

Mr. Speaker, so far what I have heard is all positive comments regarding the target, regarding the wait times. The only negative that we've heard is from the opposition. Mr. Speaker, I was surprised they didn't ask questions about it today, but certainly I guess maybe what they're trying to do is determine their position because their position yesterday was that they wouldn't ever allow for private delivery within the health care system when, under their government and under their watch, they've already done it.

[11:15]

One of the classic examples of private delivery within a publicly funded system started in about 2000, so under the NDP watch. We had a shortage and we still have to do more work on the shortage of health care professionals. But in Saskatoon in

the emergency room, they had a specific need for more personnel. They didn't have enough personnel to properly manage the emergency room procedures, and so what they ended up doing and one of the solutions was to bring in paramedics from MD Ambulance. These paramedics are paid by MD Ambulance. The health region contracted MD Ambulance to use some of their personnel. So you've got a private company, MD Ambulance, employees of MD Ambulance working in an acute care centre.

Now I would think that they could probably point to that as private delivery within a public system, but they can't because they're the ones that initiated it. So it will be very interesting as we go through the debate as to what their comments are regarding especially the wait times.

Other areas of the Fyke report and areas of the Speech from the Throne especially were issues around doctor position recruitment and retention. That is by far one of the biggest subjects facing rural Saskatchewan — not only rural, in some of the larger centres too. The new city of Meadow Lake has issues around the physician recruitment and retention. Certainly smaller communities and even in the cities of Regina and Saskatoon, it is an issue.

Mr. Speaker, we have started down the road of a physician recruitment strategy, and there will be more announcements as we move on, Mr. Speaker. But this is an area that we absolutely have to do more work on. We've increased the number of medical seats in Saskatoon. We've increased the number of residency seats, Mr. Speaker. What we need to do now is do a better job of retaining those graduates.

We at one point had the worst retention record in Canada for our nurses. We had the worst retention record of any province in Canada regarding our graduating nurses. Mr. Speaker, under our government, we've been able to turn that around, and we have one of the best retention rates now of our nurses, around 95 per cent of the graduating class. Nurses stay in Saskatchewan and work in Saskatchewan.

We need those numbers to reflect that regarding physician recruitment because we're nowhere close to that 95 per cent. We need to do a lot more work on, number one, retaining our own graduates, whether they're from the College of Medicine, and through the residency to keep them here in Saskatchewan.

Other areas that we've certainly relied heavily on — IMG [International Medical Graduate Institute], international medical grads who have done a great service for our province, they have been excellent in our province. We need to work on what would retain them.

We often attract physicians, but they don't stay, and it kind of becomes a revolving door. So we're working with the Saskatchewan Medical Association. We're working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the medical association, and a number of other organizations to look at how we can better retain the physicians that we do recruit in from other countries.

One other area we need to look at is the number of countries that we accept credentials from. There's a number of things,

initiatives that we can move forward on, that you're going to be hearing over the next couple of months as to what we can do to create a better complement of physicians throughout Saskatchewan because certainly that is an issue that we have been struggling with.

My time is almost up here. The other area I do want to talk about though, and I briefly mentioned it, was the electronic health record and how important that was. I was kind of wondering, through the work that Commissioner Dagnone did, through the Patient First Review, whether that would come to the forefront. Do people realize, do patients or the general public realize where we're at as far as our electronic record and how important that is?

But it was interesting how many people commented on the fact that they have to give all their information here, and then later on in the day, they have to give their information again — whether it's their name and address and all of that — when it could be on one record, one electronic health record.

And it did come out. It did certainly come out in the Patient First Review. It certainly talked about it, and it's an area that we need to continue moving on. There's been a lot of work done over the last number of years but there is still more work to do. And it's an area that I think would bring great efficiency within the system.

You know, it certainly is a lot of money to put out for electronic health records, but I believe the saving is there just in human . . . in time, the time that it takes to do it all manually.

There are some real leaders in Saskatchewan regarding electronic health records. And I talked about Dr. Sridhar already, as the president or the president-elect of the Saskatchewan Medical Association; Milo Fink here in Regina as well, are really leading on this front. And we need to continue on; we have to continue on through the Ministry of Health to keep supporting the electronic health record because it really is the way that . . .

You know, it's also a bit of a retention and recruitment issue. Physicians that are coming out of, doctors that are coming out of med school and out of residencies expect to have that type of technology, so we need to keep up with that type of technology, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, the Speech from the Throne highlighted a number of areas and a number of issues in a number of areas, but I believe the priority certainly is on the health care file which is certainly good for, I think, the citizens of our province. The targets that we've set, that we're going to be working on over the next four years, for example wait times, over the next year or two as far as physician recruitment is, Mr. Speaker, I think being received very, very well by the general public. So it certainly is a privilege to be voting for the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I move the motion, seconded by the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley:

That a humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address us with at the opening of the session.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health, seconded by the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley:

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Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour and a great opportunity for me to reply to our government's Throne Speech. I'm also honoured to be able to second this motion.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech lays out the government's plans to move forward. This province is moving forward. Our government has spent considerable effort in the past year maintaining and enhancing Saskatchewan's economic advantage through lower property taxes, income tax, and a massive reduction in the provincial debt, plus a record investment in infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the one area I would like to discuss is our seniors. Mr. Speaker, our government is so proud and honoured with the role that seniors have played in building our great province. As Winston Churchill said, and I quote, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Our grandmothers, our grandfathers, our mothers and our fathers have given so much as builders of this great province.

While the previous government talked about a plan for seniors, our government is actually developing a plan for our seniors. Mr. Speaker, the Premier provided the Minister of Health with a mandate letter outlining a number of priorities, and one of those priorities was the creation of the seniors' care strategy. The seniors' care strategy will identify and address gaps in the current continuum of care provided through home care, community care, and long-term care. This strategy will focus on developing an intermediate- and long-term care plan that

addresses the care needs of our aging population, improving the coordination of long-term care beds to allow seniors and senior couples to stay together, supporting non-profit agencies that provide long-term care.

We are also working with the federal government to increase long-term care capacity on First Nations reserves, undertaking a pilot project to provide the government funding for level 3 and level 4 beds in personal care homes to reduce the waiting times for long-term care beds. And we're also introducing legislation to protect whistle-blowers who report abuse and require the minister to investigate reported cases of abuse and take disciplinary action when warranted.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working with regional health authorities, community-based agencies, and senior organizations to create the seniors' care strategy for Saskatchewan.

As part of the government strategy, Mr. Speaker, I was appointed Legislative Secretary for long-term care initiatives. I have been asked to lead the development of this initiative to inform the development of this province's seniors' care strategy. Now this strategy will ensure that Saskatchewan seniors have the necessary access to health care programs and services, today and in the years to come. Our mothers, our fathers, our grandmothers, and our grandfathers — they deserve the best care that we can provide.

Now my work relates to the long-term care initiative and it includes research and consultations to identify the needs of our seniors. Mr. Speaker, in order to be able to meet and listen to as many seniors and interested individuals and organizations, we conducted consultations across this whole province. During the months of September and October, consultations were held in 12 communities with a few further two more consultations to be conducted.

Mr. Speaker, as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, I've had the privilege to travel across this wonderful province. Now we've travelled from Weyburn in the south to Pinehouse Lake in the north, from North Battleford on the west side of the province to Yorkton on the east. This truly is an amazing and beautiful province, and we should all consider ourselves blessed to be able to live in this wonderful place.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has 49.1 per cent of our seniors living outside of urban settings, so it was imperative that we went out and met with seniors, interested individuals, and organizations throughout Saskatchewan, establishing a meaningful dialogue in their own hometowns, in their senior centres, in their community halls, and in the hospital meeting rooms. Mr. Speaker, seniors travelled a fair distance — many of them drove one and a half hours to two hours — to be able to come and share with us their ideas and their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with you some of my experiences in this consultation. In the northern community of Pinehouse Lake, with a population of approximately 1,400 people, we had 45 elders and the mayor, Mike Natomagan, and many other community leaders attend our consultation. With the help of three Cree interpreters we were able to capture the elders' suggestions and concerns.

Mr. Speaker, the elders thanked us for coming to listen. They told us no one had ever come to listen. Others had come to talk, but no one had ever come to listen to what they had to say, Mr. Speaker. This has been such a rewarding experience.

Mr. Speaker, we also attended a consultation in Rosetown. And I would like to read from the *Rosetown Eagle*, dated October the fifth. "The session impressed [Ms.] Storey." She was a participant.

"The people that were there shared [their ideas,] their personal experiences . . . [they came up with] some very good ideas, I thought."

She said they'd given more rural-based ideas, compared to what Ross might hear in the larger centres she's visiting. They expressed a desire that when they have to . . . [be able to come and talk about] long-term care, they want to do so in their own home communities, rather than [say example] Saskatoon . . .

A gap exists here in rural areas for people who need some support but not so much they should [have to] go into a nursing home, Storey . . . [concluded.]

That was in the *Rosetown Eagle*, their local paper.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, in my mandate letter from the Minister of Health, I've been asked to examine five key issues: elder abuse, fall prevention, accessibility to personal care homes, home care support, and then the feasibility of establishing a seniors secretariat.

Mr. Speaker, the first issue that was discussed is elder abuse or abuse of older adults. Mr. Speaker, according to the Government of Canada, one in five Canadians believe they know of a senior who might be experiencing some form of abuse. Seniors from all walks of life are vulnerable to elder abuse. It is happening in our communities across Canada and across Saskatchewan.

Elder abuse is an action taken by someone in a relationship of trust that results in harm or distress to an older person. Mr. Speaker, commonly recognized types of elder abuse include physical, psychological, and financial abuse. Often more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time. Abuse can be a single incident or a repeated pattern of behaviour.

How many seniors feel ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone that they are being abused by someone that they trust, Mr. Speaker? I thought this would be a very hard issue to talk about, and I was pleased to hear an open and honest discussion that took place in the consultations. Now many may fear retaliation or punishment; that they may have concerns about having to move from within their communities. Raising awareness among seniors about their right to live safely and securely is an important issue for our government.

Another issue we discussed was fall preventions. Mr. Speaker, falls by seniors are one of the most frequently cause of injury. This is a growing problem and the number of falls and

fall-related injuries will increase as our population gets older.

I also have a quote from the Rosetown newspaper. And Crystal Storey is a Heartland Health Region employee, and she:

... told the gathering what staff had learned regarding falls and preventing them, she said. She works with the region's health promotion division. The Health Ministry spends \$56 million a year dealing with the after-effects of falls, she said.

People fall for a variety of reasons, including poor balance, not wearing proper footwear or from the side effects of their medications . . .

"Sometimes it's due to the mobility and flexibility of the individual," Storey said. "We try to promote being active . . ."

And that means having to be able to do exercises every day. We are going to walk. We're going for stretches. We're doing all sorts of things to build up their mobility.

"She said that one in three seniors is likely to fall once per year . . ." And as I stated before, \$56 million a year is spent on requiring health care for people who have undergone a fall.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, most falls occur in seniors' homes while doing daily activity. Falls usually happen because of the combined effects of a number of factors such as the loss of balance, side effects of medication, impaired mobility or vision, or environmental hazards. Seniors may develop a fear of falling, causing them to restrict their activities, which can increase their risk of falling due to weakness of muscles and stiff joints.

There are several ways to help prevent falls. If we prevent falls, we will ensure that our seniors continue to live healthy lives in their own homes. Mr. Speaker, most of the seniors who attended the consultation told us they would like to be able to stay in their own homes, maintaining a degree of independence.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that the minister has asked me to examine was the accessibility of personal care homes. Personal care homes are not nursing homes. If an occupant needs specialized care such as insulin injections, the occupant has to arrange for someone to come in and help them with that, and that's home care. While personal care homes usually accommodate individuals with lighter care needs, some homes do provide care to persons with heavier care needs such as palliative care. Mr. Speaker, personal care homes are an important part of the continuum of health care.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that I was asked to examine was home care supports. Mr. Speaker, care encompasses a wide range of health services at home — to recovery, disability, chronically terminally ill persons in need of specific care. Its purpose is to ensure persons who need care receive high-quality treatment at home in their own community, in supportive housing or in long-term care facilities.

In Saskatchewan the service is provided on a basis of assessed needs and is intended to help people who need acute, palliative, and supportive care remain independent in their homes. Mr.

Speaker, on numerous occasions throughout the consultation, residents in Saskatchewan told us they would like to stay within their own communities, within a safe environment, within their own homes. Mr. Speaker, our government believes home care for seniors is important, and we'll help them maintain a more independent lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, the fifth issue that we were to examine was the feasibility of establishing a seniors' secretariat. Mr. Speaker, many jurisdictions across Canada have a seniors' secretariat or a separate government organization devoted specifically to seniors. Some secretariats deliver a range of programs and services that are specific to seniors, while others deal with the broad policy issues such as health, aging, and elder abuse.

In my consultation, I have been asking seniors three very important questions. The first, would a seniors' secretariat be something useful to have in Saskatchewan? The second, if so, what type of function do you see a seniors' secretariat performing? And the third, if Saskatchewan were to have a seniors' secretariat, which ministry or organization would it best fit in? Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is listening to seniors through these consultations. Seniors' voices are being heard, and for many of them, it is the first time their voice has been heard.

Mr. Speaker, our government is looking forward to building a better life for everyone in Saskatchewan. We are working to reduce wait times, recruit more health care providers, retain more graduates, and improve long-term care facilities. As our province moves forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our seniors are going to enjoy a better life.

Our government recognizes that low-income seniors are facing challenges of higher cost of living. To help them meet these challenges, we expanded our senior income plan to include over double the amount of our seniors who were previously able to receive this assistance. The number of eligible seniors is now over 18,000. Prior to this change, \$14,993.64 was the maximum income for a single senior to be eligible to receive benefits. Now the new maximum under our government is \$16,313.64. For a couple, the previous maximum was \$24,356.64. Now the new maximum is \$26,468.64. This is a significant difference.

We have also doubled the amount that seniors can now receive in financial benefits from the plan to the maximum of \$190 per month for a single senior and \$155 per month for a couple.

Seniors who qualify for the seniors' income plan also now receive one free eye exam per year, free chiropractic services, reduced deductibility on prescription drugs, home care subsidy, supplementary health benefits for those in special care homes, and loans on some low-cost devices through Sask Abilities. And we were told over and over again in our consultation process that this was so important for them to be able to have the ability to access these much needed aids. We're glad to assist those who have done so much to help build our province.

The previous government did not increase seniors' income plan program benefit for 16 years. And as a result, a number of seniors receiving the benefit declined nearly by 10,000.

Our government is ensuring that our seniors have access to safe

and secure long-term care facilities. Now in many cases, the condition of our long-term care facilities is not up to the standards that our seniors deserve. In order to bring the seniors care they deserve, last winter our minister announced the construction of 13 new long-term care facilities. Now these facilities will be up-to-date and meet today's building standards. And it's incredibly important to ensure the safety and the comfort of the residents of these long-term care facilities.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at affordable housing, we see an area where the previous government ignored the problem for years and we had to act. Mr. Speaker, we created the task force on housing affordability to ensure housing affordability keeps pace with our economy. When the government came out, our . . . When the report came out, our government responded by providing 12.4 million to adjust shelter rates in the income assistance program and to index shelter allowances and supplements.

This enhancements immediately benefitted over 6,000 households across our wonderful province. Our government has provided funding to a number of affordable housing complexes across the province — including right here in Regina. Our government is expanding Maple Leaf Estates to create an additional 53 units. Our government has invested 12 million to renovate the 140-unit Milton Heights apartment building in the south central area of Regina. And our government has invested 10 million in new funding for affordable housing for seniors, low-income families, and those most vulnerable within our province. This funding will be used to deliver a total of 20 quality, affordable home ownership units in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, and in Lloydminster.

Mr. Speaker, our government has invested 3.8 million to develop new 40-unit affordable housing units. This project is going to be very beneficial for low-income persons. Thirty-two units will serve people with serious mental illness, with the remaining eight units serving people with intellectual challenges. The project is sponsored by Ranch Ehrlo community services in collaboration with the Phoenix Residential Society. These projects, especially here in Regina, are an excellent opportunity for our government to join with community partnership in delivering quality, affordable rental housing to those most in need.

Two point nine million through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to help fund Juniper Manor in Saskatoon, this three-storey, senior residential building features 43 new rental units. Over 1.7 million through the Saskatchewan Housing Corp. to help fund Columbia manor in Saskatoon, a 51-unit residential unit for low-income seniors. And 34.1 million last year through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to help fund safe, affordable rental accommodations for 36 low-income families, many of them Aboriginal who have members attending SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Woodland Campus in Prince Albert. Support for a new home in Wynyard for people with intellectual disabilities with an annual commitment by our government of a further 300,000 in funding. Our government is committed to ensuring that life in Saskatchewan remains affordable for everyone.

Here in Regina our government provided 225,000 in capital

funding for the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] of Regina. Now this money will be used to develop new child care centre, and this centre will have 75 new spaces for families in need of child care and preschool children. Mr. Speaker, this funding will help licensed child care facilities with the cost of new construction or renovations when they are developing these new spaces. The YMCA new facility will be located in my riding on Rochdale Boulevard. Mr. Speaker, the Rochdale Y is an excellent facility. It's a great place for kids to learn, but it's also a great place for them to have fun.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, shelter allowances have been increased across Saskatchewan as our government continues to help those most affected by the escalating housing costs. And these increases will take effect on February the first. To keep shelter allowances current, our government now indexes twice a year, based on rental market data compiled available from CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation]. And this is on our Saskatchewan communities. Indexing of shelter allowance is essential in a growing economy to help low-income people meet the rising cost of affordable housing.

Now our government remains committed to ensuring that all Saskatchewan residents benefit from the opportunities and prosperity that we all are experiencing. This will increase with low-income student housing and rising costs, enable them to focus their attention on their studies and achieving their educational goal. Shelter rate indexing was one of the recommendations put forward by the provincial task force on housing authority.

Maximum supplements for families under the SRHS [Saskatchewan rental housing supplement] will increase by as much as \$18 per month in Regina, Saskatoon, and Lloydminster. Maximum supplements for people with disabilities in those communities will also increase by \$24 per month.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 our government has taken significant steps to move our province forward and will continue to do so. Mr. Speaker, we are focused on the future. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am honoured to be seconding this motion. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say how very, very pleased I am to rise in the Assembly for the first time in almost 10 years, and I beg the indulgence of the House to be patient because I'm rusty. And I would like to apologize if I don't get everything quite straight today. So be patient with me and a little bit tolerant.

I do want to congratulate the new member from Riversdale. I was amazed to watch her campaign, and not only the member campaign but her family. And it's an interesting family. And if the member doesn't mind, I just want to say a couple of words of congratulation to them — to her mom and dad and most of all to Blair, her husband, who had the great opportunity to spend a couple of months at home with Ophelia and the

children to look after and allow for the member to go out and campaign. And I thought it was a very, very well-run operation. Congratulations to the team, to the executive. And I say this. For the member to achieve virtually the same percentage as Lorne Calvert, who was a brilliant politician and had a great career in politics, absolutely amazing. And I say again, congratulations to you. Absolutely.

I want to talk too and thank my executive in Douglas Park who did, I thought, an excellent job with a candidate who was new to the constituency. I had been back in Saskatchewan for about a year, but I was new in Douglas Park. But in order to make that happen, one Harry Van Mulligen, who many of you know as a colleague and a friend, not only made the sacrifice to open the seat up so the Leader of the New Democratic Party could take a seat in the Assembly. Harry was with me every day of the week except Saturday and Sunday to campaign. And he came out and knocked on doors, and he talked to people who had difficulty in the Broders Annex and in other parts of the constituency. And there too I want to say a big thanks to Harry and Judy and his family for the work they did for the people of Saskatchewan and for the residents of the constituency. And I think the House should give Harry a big round of applause for the work that he did.

A thank you to my executive. I mentioned earlier we have a very strong executive. To the member from Moose Jaw, my desk mate, her membership may be a bit higher than mine at the moment, but that's not going to be for long because we're working very hard to build the strongest organization in the province. And I just want to thank my very strong executive and the hundreds of members in the riding for all the work that they did.

I think we met new heights in things like sign locations. The member from Elphinstone will know that we had about 650 signs up. It was a great campaign and I think it bodes well for the kind of campaign that we will run in 2011. It will be strong. The campaign will be province-wide. We will run strong candidates in every riding. I'm very curious about my hometown, farming hometown where I grew up in Cypress Hills — and I know the member represents that area very well, but we're going to build a strong organization there and we will see how that goes.

But we're targeting all the ridings in the province. And when I came to the province a year ago and I was asked by many people in the NDP caucus and the party to come and run, I believed there were three things the party had to do to renew itself. And I made the commitment that I had three goals.

One was to reorganize and restructure the party, especially at the constituent level, to rebuild the membership.

Secondly, to mentor and work with new, exciting young candidates and MLAs. And we're doing that, and people saw it today in question period. Not that those who have experience aren't important. They are, and they'll be a big part of it. But I want to make sure that new young women and men learn and understand the structure of politics within the New Democratic Party, formerly the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation], with great leaders.

And I'm humbled to stand in this seat where Allan Blakeney used to be my desk mate when we were in opposition, and even to have an opportunity to talk like this and talk about rebuilding the party and having the opportunity to lead such a great political movement. Because it is an honour, and I respect the values that all of my members have brought. Those who worked for the leadership, the member from Moose Jaw who worked hard and should be congratulated for her effort, but is a proud member of the New Democratic Party and brings strong strength. But we need to develop young, new workers, constituency presidents, MLAs, candidates. And that is our second strategy.

So the first, to reorganize; secondly to mentor and train new people; and third, be in a position by 2011, November 7th, to run the most credible campaign we've seen in the party in a long time. And if we do the first two right, have the opportunity — if we have the right policy and talk to people in the right tone and the right language — win back government for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my family — first, my extended family. Obviously I grew up in a large family, with six sisters and two brothers, and they've been with me through thick and thin. I want to thank them. My dad who's 92 November 10th, in a few days. So those of you who think I'm leaving soon, I've got some good genetics and I plan to be around for quite a while, God willing, inshallah. I plan to work with the New Democratic Party for as long as I am capable and as long as you'll tolerate me.

So I want to thank my father, my family. But I also want to talk for a moment about my wonderful daughter Sacha who is an addiction counsellor here, in Regina with one of the school divisions, doing a great job. She got her master's degree a couple of years ago, but works hard helping families.

My son Matthew, who was here for the leadership and for the by-election night. Matthew went to school at Luther College. Matthew has had an interesting life experience because he became involved in what many people, young people, do which is an addiction.

And together we went on an interesting journey while we were in Calgary because Matthew came to me one day and told me that he was addicted to cocaine. And it came as a great surprise to me because, as fathers and mothers all over the place, it's something you dread all your life. And we had talked a lot about it, and I assumed that he was doing very well. His marks were relatively good in school. But there were signs that he was depressed, and one of the tell-tale signs, of course, of this disease — especially with teens — is depression.

And we went to a rigorous program. And some of you will know the AARC [Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre] program in Calgary. Controversial. It's run by a good friend, Dr. Dean Vause, from Swift Current. His father, Clarence Vause, a very popular lawyer in that area. Dean himself was a junior hockey player, and he knows and understands how to do it.

Matthew has been fully recovered for about five or six years. He's a top student at Mount Royal University in Calgary, and gives back to other teens in the city of Calgary, and works as a

senior counsellor at the addiction centre in Calgary. And truly I'm very, very proud of Matthew. And the journey we went on was something to be believed, because only families who have been through this understand the disappointment, the shame.

If your child gets cancer, everybody rallies around and gives you . . . When you have a family member who is addicted, you don't tell anybody. You pretend that it isn't happening for a while. But there's a great joy that comes with recovery, and it's one day at a time. But I wanted to say and put on the record that I'm extremely proud of my son Matthew, and he is doing very well.

Travis, our middle son, is at university in Saskatoon and will graduate — touch wood — after the next semester. And Travis is a brilliant political strategist. And the member from Meadow Lake will know that while . . . He's tested various political parties, but while he was living in northern Saskatchewan, he worked with and for the member from Meadow Lake when he campaigned for the Member of Parliament. And together, with a much larger team of course, they won that election. I think both of them were the youngest people to be elected and Travis was one of the youngest people to work and help a young Member of Parliament get elected.

And to that member's credit, when he was elected, he hired Travis to work on the Hill in Ottawa. And I believe at that moment in time Travis was 17. And he would send notes to me about going to the home of the Leader of the Opposition, who is now Prime Minister Harper. And I couldn't believe that, first of all, that my son wasn't NDP. That was difficult to believe, but secondly, that a 17-year-old could achieve that kind of credibility in politics at that young age.

But soon he became disillusioned — not with the member, but with the Conservative Party. And I thought, well okay, now is my chance as a father to get him back into the fold. But he came back to Saskatchewan and joined the Liberal Party and worked for David Karwacki, then leader, while he was 18 and 19.

Now the end of the story is, to his credibility he tested the other political parties and has now chosen to come and work in the NDP to get his father elected as premier.

[12:00]

I want to say as well our youngest son, Sahid, he's 14. He's at Massey School. Very proud of him. He needs to work a little harder at school, but he's a great guitar player. He imitates Johnny Cash like anybody and someday you'll all see him.

And then my beautiful daughter, Hanna, our youngest one, is a brilliant skater and if you go on YouTube and watch her figure skate, at the age of eight she is one of the star figure skaters. And I don't say this just as a proud father but she can skate better than any other eight-year-old I've ever seen. Now she's going to turn 13 one of these days and then we don't know.

And finally to my beautiful wife, Rubiela, who is with us here today, thank you very much for coming on this journey with me because it's true, we were comfortable living in another home in another part of Canada.

And I'll talk about that later. I make no apology about it. Many of the members on the opposite side have experienced life in other provinces and worked in other provinces. The Minister of Labour is nodding and I know he worked out of the province. And if you haven't worked out of the province . . . And I know the member from I believe Rosthern has worked — Martensville — has worked out.

It's a great experience and I would urge my children and I would urge you to urge your children, not that they should leave the province, but they should have experience in other parts of the world. It doesn't have to be in Toronto or Calgary or Vancouver. Try Shanghai or try Oslo or London, but there's a true experience that comes with living and working in other parts of the world.

And I just want to say that Rubiela has come like a soldier, like a princess to come and live in our hometown here in Regina. And while she was leery when she first moved, she now says that living in our condo in Douglas Park is better than living in Calgary. She tells me that every day. She's happier, she has many friends, and I thank you for coming with me and being part of our life and our community here in the New Democratic Party.

Now just for a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about so people understand because there are . . . In fact today in question period the Premier was saying, well you can be a Conservative, you could . . . The truth of the matter is I grew up in a Liberal family in Shaunavon. My mom was Irish Catholic, so what hope did I have but to be a Liberal? And until I went to university here in Regina, I thought I was a Catholic Liberal until I got involved in the student movement and talked about politics and at some point in time was asked to run as a candidate in the Shaunavon constituency.

Now when we were growing up, our title was Liberal, but really we shopped at the co-op and we banked at the credit union and we supported SaskTel and SaskPower and the Crown corporations. And almost like all rural people, we were social democrats, not because we wanted to be, but that's just how we lived.

When the power company was built, it wasn't philosophical. They didn't say, well we like government-owned Crown corporations better than we like private sector. When Tommy built the power company and rural electrification came in, it was because there was nobody else to do it. And that's what we decided to do.

Same with the co-op movement. After the Great Depression and banks foreclosed on farms, many farmers said, well we're not going to do it that way any more. We're going to set up our own lending institutions for banking. And it wasn't based on, well we don't like big business; it was just a practical thing to do — the same with SaskTel; the same with many things, including medicare.

Tommy, who is now known . . . His birthday was on the 20th of this month. He would have been 105 years old. He set up medicare because it was a practical thing to do. And the member from Swift Current and Cypress will know that that plan for medicare, really the incubator, happened during the

1930s when Health Region No. 1 got together to hire a doctor. Socialized medicine.

The RMs [rural municipality] levied a small fee in order to hire a doctor. Why? Because there was no medical service in the area and people couldn't afford to go to a doctor and pay even \$10. So they hired a doctor. They didn't say, we want socialized medicine. They just hired a doctor. And from that grew the health plan under Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd, that then became a Canadian program that actually is the key to why Tommy Douglas is the most favoured and most famous Canadian. And our party and province should be very proud of him.

I then went to university in Saskatoon, and luckily we had a community and a province that supported tuition — because with nine children and a half section of land, there wasn't a lot of money around. I never could've afforded to go if I wouldn't have had a public school system and university that had low tuition fees. But because that was in place, I went to university. I got my degree and I'm very thankful for that.

Ran for politics in Shaunavon. Was successful twice, defeated. Ran in Allan Blakeney's riding of Elphinstone, was elected there a number of times. Had proud moments in government and in opposition. Most proud day was when I took that seat right at the back by the door in 1978, and Al Blakeney was sitting in that seat. And he was a great leader. He taught me a lot of things, and later he gave me the opportunity to sit in his cabinet as minister of Social Services. And I was very proud the day that he asked me to implement the home care program.

And what I relish the thought of — and over the years I've been proud of the fact that I've had my name on that program — but the fact that my dad, who's 92, lives in his own little house. It's not a very pretty house. It's kind of run down. It's about 700 square feet in Shaunavon, but it's his home and he can live there because somebody comes every day to change his catheter and look after him. He doesn't need much help, but can you imagine the difference between having that independence for your father or your mother or family member as opposed to having to go to a nursing home?

And if I think about my career in politics, the most outstanding moment was the day that I was given the honour to implement that program and set up the 45 boards and travel the province and amalgamate programs that were in place into a province-wide home care program.

There were other moments. When we stopped the privatization of SaskEnergy, and some of the members who are here will remember that day, when we stopped in the tracks the privatization of SaskEnergy by the Devine government. And after we won the election in 1991, Premier Romanow gave me the responsibility of setting up SaskEnergy as a Crown corporation because it had been stripped out of SaskPower but had no legislation. And writing the Bill to establish that Crown corporation was a great honour for me, and I remember it and I hope someday we can do more of that, and we'll talk about that later.

In 2000 I decided to leave politics and go work in the private sector, and a number of companies were of interest to me, but

Canadian Occidental Petroleum offered me a job that was headquartered in Calgary but was very different than living in Calgary. It was the vice-president of government relations international, and it gave me the opportunity to work with governments and state-owned oil companies around the world.

Many people don't know this, but 29 of the top 50 oil companies in the world are not privately owned but are owned by government or state — 29 out of 50. They are Saudi Aramco which is the largest oil company in the world. They produce about 10 million barrels of oil a day. They have tens of thousands of employees. You have Petrobras which is one of the leading drillers in the world. They drill offshore in some of the deepest water in the world. Ecopetrol in Colombia. Nexen had a partnership with Petrobras in Colombia with their state-owned entity, and the list goes on and on. And what there is in the world of energy is a blending of independent oil companies and NOCs [national oil companies].

And at the World Petroleum Congress last year, where I got to speak in Spain and Madrid, I gave a speech on the role of . . . I was invited to speak on the role of NOCs and independent oil companies and how they fit together to create an energy structure for the world because, if you look around the world, you will find countries like Norway with StatHydro working with private sector companies. And the companies line up — the independent oil companies — line up to come in and work with them. They don't run away as some people in this Assembly have said would happen if you had a state-owned or a partially state-owned oil company. I notice the Premier's making notes. This is no secret. I've given speeches about this. And all oil companies nationally know this. Talisman does, deals with state-owned oil companies. That may come as a surprise to the Premier, but it's a fact.

The role of energy in the world and how you get your energy strategies straight will be key to the success of any jurisdiction in the world. The United States, that has left it totally up to the private sector up till now, is struggling to find out how to create an energy structure so they don't have to import 8 million barrels of oil a day. Can you imagine the drain on an economy with oil at \$100 a barrel if you're importing 8 million — not 800,000. But 8 million barrels of oil a day flows into the United States and has to be paid for. Today the price of oil, \$81 a barrel. Do the numbers and figure out the drain on the US [United States] economy.

Now the reason that that's happening . . . Because in some jurisdictions like Norway and Brazil, they say there's got to be a plan, a strategy, an energy strategy that we base our economy on for the next 5, 10, 15, and 20 years. And they combine the strength and effort of independent oil companies and state-owned oil companies to plan that strategy.

In the United States they have said, we'll leave it up to Exxon and Chevron and let them plan our energy future. Well the sad part is the boards of directors of those companies, that's not their mandate. They're not bad people. They're good people, but their responsibility is to their shareholders, not to the energy structure of that community. The role of government is to manage and direct and set policy and regulation that the energy policy of the country is good for the people. That's the role of government. The role of a board of directors of a corporation is

to plan for shareholder interest and do it an environmental way.

And so my job was to work with countries and governments all over the world. And to give you a short list of where I worked, I spent very little time in Calgary because when I flew back to Calgary, I went directly to my farm. Because the other thing that 10 years being out of politics allowed is for me to expand my farm. And many of you have been there.

We had a wonderful picnic at my old home on the farm. And it allowed me to build the farm. I know Lorna Standingready was there, a couple of our friends from First Nations did prayers on the ranch where there still are teepee rings. And it's a wonderful place. And I refer to Cypress View as a state of mind in my life. I have to go there to refresh and get new.

And the 10 years out of politics allowed me to do two things — expand my farm and build it here in Saskatchewan, and travel the world and gain experience in many ways. I did projects in Madagascar, flew to Antananarivo a number of times out of Paris, late at night, getting into the city, having meetings the next morning dealing with the President and his Minister of Energy — opportunities that few people will ever get.

And I've been very blessed to have a career in politics, to be a farmer, and also to have this wonderful experience in the private sector. We did projects in Equatorial Guinea. We achieved . . . Nexen got Block K. We drilled two wells. We drilled a couple of wells off shore Rio in Brazil. We drilled a number of wells in Colombia and have an office as I mentioned to you earlier.

And my wife, Rubiela, worked at Nexen for nine years, was our treasurer. She's a lawyer. And I'm also blessed for working at Nexen because if I hadn't worked there, I never would have met my wife, Rubiela. So that's the third reason that I'm very proud to have had that.

And we did many projects. Our main production was in a country called Yemen. We produced at the peak 220,000 barrels of oil a day. And at one time, Canadian Occidental and Nexen, that company, were about 30 per cent of the GDP [gross domestic product] of the country of Yemen. If you can imagine, the influence that a company and the responsibility that you have because you're dealing directly with the government. There was no partner. Our shareholder was the Government of Yemen. And we had, with the company and the Government of Yemen, meetings on a daily basis. Not that I was at any or even most of them, but I would travel to Yemen three or four times a year.

[12:15]

We had a scholarship program. We brought 10 students from Yemen every year to Calgary. I did the selection with a committee, and we paid for all the tuition, the living costs, the flights over. At any one time we had 40 students going to university or going to technical school in Calgary, and part of the mandate of government relations was to look after the students. And Rubiela got along with the students so well. They spent many hours at our home.

And the other thing was, Yemen being a Muslim country, the

initial committee didn't want to send young females. And we had very hard discussions about the fact that we had to choose the students who were in the top 10, whether they were female or male. And believe it or not, I think almost 30 per cent of the students in that program ended up being female because they were the brightest and best from the country.

So I just wanted to say that because my experience away, I think, in some ways has — and I hope — helped me to be not only a better human being but also helped me to be a better politician and leader.

And if ever given the opportunity to be premier, I think my experience internationally, my experience on my farm — being an active farmer and rancher — I think will add to my ability to help lead the province. And I'm very, very proud to have such a wonderful team supporting me here in the Assembly and going into the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members opposite thought I would never get around to talking about the Throne Speech. But I do want to talk for a few moments because as we have, I mentioned in question period, travelled the province and campaigned for leadership, and then as a candidate in Douglas Park and on our summer tour where all the MLAs went out and travelled the province — we have heard from people many different issues that they wanted us to bring to the Assembly.

And questions like, are the finances okay? Are you sure the Premier and the members of the Sask Party know how to handle the affairs? Questions about, are they following in the steps of their predecessor where many of them worked historically. Some of them were members of the Devine administration. There's a worry. I can guarantee you there's a worry in Saskatchewan that things are not all well in the Government of Saskatchewan.

It's true, we had a booming economy. And if I look at the main statistics in the province in '07, and I look at the statistics now, there's a story to be told.

Housing starts between '07 and today are down by 50 per cent. Potash production is down by 69 per cent. Auto sales are down by 10 per cent. The beef herd . . . Well the members laugh when I mention the beef herd, but they will laugh at their own . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . yes. Yes. It's 69 per cent . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes well you would know. The member from Swift Current would know about potash; he would know. He's the brilliant man who came up with the numbers for the last budget. So yes, you did a good job. Thank you very much.

Do you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I didn't hear one Saskatchewan person tell me that the Premier was doing a good job in potash — that didn't happen — as I toured around. But all these indicators — hog production is down by more than 30 per cent — all the indicators that I as a farmer or a business person would say, there's trouble on the horizon, are there. There's trouble on the horizon.

And the member from Regina South says I'm grumpy. No. The public's grumpy with you. And you can go do a jig at the next event you go to and jig around, but that doesn't impress people.

It doesn't. It doesn't impress people, not a bit. Well the member continues to holler from his seat, but, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that you need more than cheerleading and jiggling. You're going to have to do more than that. You're going to have to get the numbers right.

And the press are telling me, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier says that I had Conservative signs up on my lawn. Why would he say that when it's not true? Why would you say that? Why would you say that? Why would you say that? Now why would you do that if you're the Premier of the province, Premier of the province? Well he turns red and turns his seat. Well I don't wonder why. But I'll tell you this, that when you get your numbers wrong in all these categories, in all these categories, believe me, you're in big trouble, big trouble with the people of this province. Big trouble.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of health care, I said yesterday the Premier now has a new plan, brand new plan. Mr. Speaker, he says, my old plan, the one with the children's hospital, and we were going to have surgical clinics, and we were going to do many things on waiting lists — in two years, nothing. That plan is crashed on the ground, smouldering. And the Premier says, I've got another plan. I can only cheerlead for two years on any one topic, and then they quit listening to me and I need a new plan. And now he's going to cheerlead this one.

But you know what? This plan isn't for two years. He said I want the report card to come in after the next election, after the next election. Well they're not going to buy it. They're not going to buy it. We're going to make a report card on you in 2011, November 7th. I'm talking to you. I'm talking to you. I'm talking to you. You're going to get a report card. The member from Swift Current will get a report card before he wants it. And he will have to deliver the goods in health care earlier than 2013 which is what he would like.

Now I want to say as well that, on health care, there are many people who are saying that the following of Ed Stelmach for your policy, which is written up in the latest report that he's now peddling around the province, now he's going to follow Ed Stelmach and only have one board, one board . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, Ed wasn't my guy. Believe me, he wasn't my guy. You got that right.

He's your guy. He's your guy. He's your guy. He's your guy. That's right. The member from Meadow Lake said Ed Stelmach wasn't my guy. He's right. He's your guy. You got that one. You got that one.

Now do you know what's going to happen though, Mr. Speaker? Do you know what's going to happen, Mr. Speaker? They're going to find fault with Ed Stelmach pretty soon and they're going to run over to the alliance. You watch. Mark my word. Mark my word.

This guy is a cheerleader and runs to whatever he thinks is the most popular flavour of the day. That's why, that's why the member from Souris-Cannington isn't there any more. He's not the flavour of the month. And the member from Cypress is not the flavour of the month. He's going to run somewhere else.

And believe me, pretty soon they're going to dump old Ed

Stelmach. That's what he's going to do. He's not going to be their best friend any more. He's going to say, I'm not going to be like Ed Stelmach. And he'll be saying, I never knew him; I didn't know who he was; I never went to his meetings and I never met . . . And do you know what? The Premier of BC [British Columbia] pretty soon isn't going to be his friend as he drops in the polls and he tries to harmonize the tax.

The member from Swift Current saying, I never knew the guy, never knew him, never knew him, didn't know who the heck he was. I don't know Ed Stelmach. I don't know . . . I'm going to go and meet Mr. Selinger in Manitoba here pretty soon. That's what he'll do because that's the kind of guy he is. That's the kind of guy he is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, but you wouldn't meet with him before. Before, you wanted to meet with Ed Stelmach. And yes, that's right. You wouldn't meet with Mr. Doer, yes.

So, Mr. Speaker, this member, we've got to watch him because as we go through this — health plan, privatizing, watching Ed Stelmach, get rid of the boards.

I had an email from one of the board members in one part of the province this morning. He said, look we're working hard on our boards. We're getting our things together. We're doing the best we can. And for the Premier to come out and say that he's going to get rid of all these local boards and go to one board like Ed Stelmach is a disgrace to the province. So I just wanted to pass that along to you, that that's what I'm getting from the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about energy for a moment because the member is now again on to another topic. For the last couple years, he's been talking about Bruce Power. When's the last time you heard him talk about that? When's the last time? Anybody remember? It's so long ago now, can't remember, but he was going to build two nuclear reactors and he had members of his caucus, former members, out doing site locations for them. Where are they now? Where did they go?

And, Mr. Speaker, what the irony is in this Throne Speech, what is he talking about? Now he's talking about wind. What happened to your other strategy? Where's it at? It too is on the ground crashed, smouldering. Mr. Speaker, this is a government that every plan they had . . . When's the last time you heard about the domed stadium from the Premier? When's the last time . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What did you say? And you said what?

An Hon. Member: — I said you were opposed to it.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Oh, yes. No, I'm not opposed to it. I'm not opposed to it. When's the last time you heard the Premier mention a domed stadium? Oh he's on to another plan. This one too is crashed and burning on the ground but they have new plans, brand new plans.

This Premier, other than spending the \$2.3 billion that he was left, has nothing to talk about — nothing. He's like the guy that finds a wallet on the road. It's full of money, and he can't wait to spend it all. And he believes he made the money. He believes he made the money.

They never did anything. He didn't change the oil royalty policy. They're the same. I was in Calgary last week meeting with oil companies and I said, well what's it like to do business in Saskatchewan under the new Sask Party? They said it's exactly the same because they haven't changed anything that Lorne Calvert and Roy Romanow had in place — not one thing. And so I say to the member that that's what they said. That's what they said.

And on the wells drilled in the province, does anyone know how they've managed the number of wells drilled in the province between '07 and today? Well you took credit when it was good. It must be your fault now that it's bad. Wasn't that logic? How does that work? Must be. What's the deal? What's the deal? Is the deal that a government takes credit for everything that's going good and when it goes bad, you say it's somebody else's fault? That's not grown-up. That's childlike and that's a cheerleader. A real leader will stand up and explain why you make mistakes, and take the credit, Mr. Speaker. That's what would happen. This Premier will not do that, will not do it.

Do you know how many wells are drilled this year compared to '07? Does anyone know? Half, half as many as under Lorne Calvert. Now the speeches that the member from Swift Current gave going into the '07 election was the reason that the wells drilled weren't higher, because they didn't like the NDP and they would love the Sask Party. Well I guess the corollary is that they now don't like the member from Swift Current. They don't like him any more. Or maybe it's the member from Kindersley. But for sure, if they didn't like Lorne Calvert, they sure as heck don't like these guys. They don't like them.

And I say to the member opposite, people are measuring the statistics. They're measuring all of these statistics: auto sales, housing starts, wells drilled, potash production. And every one of these indicators is down significantly.

Now any economist knows that the job numbers will stay and stay. And in the last two months, permanent jobs have dropped by 4,500 per month, replaced by part-time jobs. And the chickens are coming home to roost. Because if you don't have housing starts and you don't have potash production and you don't have oil wells drilled and you don't have cattle production and you don't have pork production, what's going to happen with jobs? Like this is not by magic. It's not smoke and mirrors. It's not how many pompoms you can wave in the air at any one time. It's not if you've got rose-coloured glasses.

[12:30]

Mr. Speaker, one guy told me the other day . . . This was a press person from one of the constituencies they hold. I said, but the member from Swift Current said he checked the numbers on potash three and four times. The reporter said, lucky he didn't check them six times or we would have been out \$2 billion. That's what they said. That's what they said. That's what they said.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier does not know how to run business. That's the problem. Now he can laugh at me for getting business experience in Calgary and learning how to run corporations, but I would urge him to get some training in how

to run the economy of the province. His expiry date in cheerleading is about two years on any projects he's ever done, about two years. And we're at the two-year anniversary just about now.

And when he hires people to get him good press about going to Ottawa to be leader of the Conservative Party, hires people to do that, that's because his two years is up and he'd like to change the channel. He'd like to go somewhere else because it's getting tough here. He's got to start running the show. Yes, we'll talk about the press that, Mr. Speaker, we'll talk about the press and how he arranges it later, but it's not the right way to do it.

Yes, arranges press, with press secretaries and high-paid help. But, Mr. Premier, pretty soon you're going to have to, Mr. Speaker, pretty soon the Premier is going to have to get his own line and do his own work because he's run out of money.

It's like the guy who takes over a farm — beautiful farm, money in the bank, grain in the bin. And two years later the father comes back to see how this young guy is making out. And it's in shambles. Every plan he had is burning and smouldering on the ground. The bins are empty, the savings gone, and he's selling off land to keep the farm going.

And I just say to the Speaker, through the Speaker, to the Premier, his record — the Premier's record — on fiscal responsibility is not that good. Not that good.

The one other thing that I want to mention about fiscal responsibility is when he came to government, the similarity to what he said and his former boss, Grant Devine. Now he'll leave when I start talking about that, I'm sure. I think he'll leave now. Doesn't want to talk about that. Doesn't want to talk about that.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Just to remind members that they are not to refer to the absence or presence of individuals on either side of the House. I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member from Swift Current doesn't want to listen to this speech, doesn't want to hear it. If you don't want to, you don't need to. That's the prerogative of a democracy. You don't have to listen to me speak. So if you don't want to, you don't need to.

But the fact of the matter is that the member from Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, when he was working for the Devine government . . . And if you look back, you'll find that the order in council to hire the member from Swift Current to work in the government is signed by Grant Devine because that's who he worked for.

But why doesn't he mention that in his resumé? Why doesn't he talk about that? Why wouldn't he be proud of the fact that he worked in this building? Mr. Speaker, you were there, as well. We were all here. But why do we pretend we weren't?

Why do we pretend that we didn't work for the Mulroney government? Why is he not proud and standing up and saying

yes, I left the province too for a while? No, only after he got caught. He's like the kid. He's like the kid. Guess what? I did it too. Yes, right. Right. Yes, that'll work, all right. That's a good one. After he gets caught, yes I did too. Sure he did.

He went to Ottawa to work for the Conservative Mulroney government. Now there's nothing wrong with that. But how can you be critical about other people who go and work somewhere else? How does that work? What kind of hypocrisy is that? It's terrible.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that whatever you do in life, mistakes or otherwise, be proud of them; talk about them. Some of your members have done that, and they should be proud of it. There's nothing wrong with having a bankrupt company. There's nothing . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, that's right. It was a mistake, and we paid for it. And we paid for it . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. No. And we did too. And we did too. And we did too.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would just ask members to allow the member who's speaking . . . and not get into direct debate with individuals who happen to be on their feet at the time. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as I say about the issue of who you work for and being proud of it, when you make a mistake, there should be consequences. And you should be proud of it, and you should learn from it. So there's nothing wrong with an individual on this side of the House or that side of the House who runs a business and goes broke. There's nothing wrong with it at all. But talk about it. Don't pretend it didn't happen.

But it should be thought about when you hire that person to do the most important job in the province. Because if you didn't get the numbers right in your business and you haven't taken any training and you were learning from your scholar who was the premier who had the worse deficit in the history of Canada, maybe you will have learned the wrong habits. Maybe. And the key is the worst thing that could happen is what's happening here where this Premier, Mr. Speaker, on a Saturday afternoon, phones up his poor Finance minister and asks him and tells him to move \$600 million. That's not the role of the Premier or of a CEO [chief executive officer], I might add. It's not their role. They shouldn't do it.

And why they shouldn't do it is because you have professional people to do it in your departments. And they should do the numbers and they should report to the Minister of Finance. Then there should be a debate and agreement. But let me say this. It's true that the Premier said in the press that he did it that one time. The question is, how many other times did he make calls?

And the more I watch the Minister of Finance, the more I'm now believing this isn't his fault. I look at him; he's tired. He is stressed big time. And you know what? I now know why. He dreads waiting for those phone calls from the Premier telling him to move money because there's no more money to move. That's the problem. There's no more money to move. It's all been moved. It's all been moved.

So now what are we doing? So now what are we doing? Let's change the budgetary process. Let's change the process because the process is wrong. Not my fault that we got the numbers wrong and spent all the money and the till is empty. It's not my fault. It's the process's fault. Even though he talks about the process being him phoning on a Saturday afternoon — I don't know if he's mowing his lawn or what he's doing when he thinks of this — and then runs in the house and phones his Minister of Finance and says, move another 600 million. Boy oh boy, if anybody, a CEO came to me and said look, this is how I'm running my operation, I just phone up and move billions of dollars, I think the board of directors would fire him. And I think that's what's going to happen in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a couple of other points in the Throne Speech before I take my place. I want to talk about agriculture because there is a section in agriculture . . . And the minister, I know, is pushing as hard as he can for some of these programs to take place for beef and pork. But in the Throne Speech, there's one thing they've proposed for the future of agriculture in the province, one thing. They talk about what they did in the past. Then there's one brand new exciting thing. They're going to move some bureaucrats from one city to another. That's it, full stop, period. That's the plan. That's the plan. Well I can guarantee you I have not heard one farmer, not one farmer has suggested to me that that is an important issue for them, not one. But that's their plan.

The other thing I want to mention is, when I look at the pillars of the economy . . . My belief is you need three pillars to make a modern, 21st-century economy. One is you need strong business, public and private and, in this province, co-operatives. You need strong unions and labour organizations to look after the families who work in the strong businesses, and you need strong government to oversee the environment, the policy that labour and business work by. That's a modern economy.

Those who believe that you can get rid of government . . . It's just an impediment. If we just had no government, everything would be good and . . . 19th century, that's what you think. The Minister of Labour says to his neighbour, that's 19th-century thinking. That's the 19th . . .

An Hon. Member: — Where's the innovation agenda?

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Oh my God. Oh my God, you got to clip that one. Clip that one. Mr. Speaker . . . Brilliant. Brilliant. The idea that labour doesn't play an important role in any economy, any economy . . . Let me tell you a little story about the company I worked for, Mr. Speaker, in Calgary.

We worked in many countries in the world. But you know where we chose most to work were two countries, Norway and the United Kingdom. Do you know why we chose to work there? Because they had the balance of government. They had strong government in Norway and in the UK [United Kingdom]. They had strong unions and they have strong companies. And these, of all the countries we worked in — Nigeria, Colombia, Yemen — the two that were the most pleasant to work in and you could make a profit and go to sleep at night believing all of the citizens were taken care of were the countries of Norway and the United Kingdom, that have strong labour laws, strong companies, mixed private and public oil

companies, and strong labour unions. That's a modern economy.

It's not 19th century. It's not. It is not 19th century to believe labour is a big part of a successful province or economy.

Now I did the statistics on the economy in 2007. That was with good labour law, good involvement of the public and private sector, and good oversight from the government. We hit the peak. And since then, as we weaken labour law and don't pay attention and weaken the role of oversight by government, our economy is into free fall.

Now the worst thing of all is the insult that this government gives to working people, to working people. Working people are hurt by this government. Bill 5, Bill 6, now Bill 80. Not even just what's in the Bills . . . What's in the Bills is important; don't get me wrong. But the signal that it sends is that working people are unimportant to this government. There's not one word, not one word in the Throne Speech about that pillar of the economy. And that's sad. And it will come back to haunt us because, when you ignore your workers — whether it's on your farm, whether it's in this building, whether it's in government, whether it's the steelworker, whether it's CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] — they're important.

They're as important as the business people. They're as important as government employees. And as leader, I would take a very different approach, and I would treat them equally and with respect. That's my commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I travelled the province. I heard many requests. In Canora, they talked to me about spot loss hail. In Douglas Park they talked about high rents. In Broders Annex they were talking about utility rates, and in Shaunavon they talked about some assistance for livestock. In Kindersley they talked about support for their airport, and in Outlook they were talking about government funding for dental assistance. And in Estevan and Weyburn, they want their highway four-laned, and in Moose Jaw there were questions about the government commitment to the Union Hospital. In Prince Albert and the North, they want to know what the forestry strategy is for the province. And they wanted to know, working people, wanted to know what is the strategy for working people.

And when we went through the Throne Speech, we waited for the Throne Speech to see if these issues were dealt with because if they're talking to the same people we are, these are what people are talking about.

Is there any mention of spot loss hail in this document? No. Is there any mention of an airport support for Kindersley? Not a thing, and I can go through the list. But I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the members of government, we cannot support this Throne Speech, and I want to move the following amendment, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow that the following words be added to the motion:

This government no longer enjoys the support of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan because of this government's lack of vision for the future and because of this government's woeful mismanagement of the

province's fiscal and finances and because the government has failed policies on health care, the Crowns, energy, housing, the environment, and the economy and because of this government's refusal to listen to the people's priorities.

I so move.

[12:45]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The amendment presented by the Leader of the Opposition, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow reads as follows that the following words be added to the motion:

This government no longer enjoys the support of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan because of this government's lack of vision for the future and because of this government's woeful mismanagement of the province's finances and because of this government's failed policies on health care, the Crowns, energy, housing, the environment, and the economy and because of this government's refusal to listen to the people's priorities.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say it is nice to be back in the House. It is always good to be back with my colleagues and be able to address many, many of the issues that we have heard over the summer not only in our constituencies but as we travelled around the province doing a summer tour, meeting with other communities, rural municipalities, and organizations across the province. So it's time to be back in the House and be able to discuss issues and put forward our ideas and suggestions for the government to improve programming and initiatives that they are proposing.

But before I get into any of the initiatives in the Speech from the Throne presented in this House yesterday, I really want to offer my congratulations to the member from Regina Douglas Park — congratulations. And I look forward to serving with him for many, many years and moving over to the other side of the House also, Mr. Speaker, after the next election.

But I also want to say a congratulations to the new member from Saskatoon Riversdale. She ran a very good campaign. And it's young women such as herself that we need more of in this House to make sure that women across this province, when we are 52 per cent of the population, are more aptly represented and that concerns are brought forward. So congratulations to the member from Riversdale.

Mr. Speaker, while many have said that it wasn't that great of a summer, I have to say while I agree in many ways it may not have been the greatest season that we have had, but really was more of a state of mind and a bit of an attitude, but it was great to be at home in Moose Jaw Wakamow and be able to attend many, many community events. And while there's a number of things that take place right in Moose Jaw, I want to name or just talk quickly about a couple of events that I had an opportunity

to attend.

One was about 12, 13 miles south of Moose Jaw. The Red Lake School celebrated their 100th anniversary so we were out at the school for the day. We had a great time. We had a parade. We had a wonderful meal that was put on by the community and of course had the prerequisite softball game which took a little bit of effort and I felt the effects of for a couple of days. But it was a great deal of fun, and it was a great celebration to see the support that the community has put into the Red Lake School to maintain it as a landmark in their community and an active part of their community just south of Moose Jaw.

And also I want to offer a congratulations to all of the volunteers at the Sukanen museum just south of Moose Jaw also. Every time you go out to the museum and have an opportunity, whether it's a threshing bee or one of their annual events, it's absolutely fabulous. The work that they have put into the community at the Sukanen museum, the improvements they make year in and year out, and it absolutely is a fabulous part of our history that's being maintained by this group of volunteers through many, many hours of hard work. But I just want to let them know that we do appreciate it because it's a part of Saskatchewan's history that needs to be maintained and needs to be treasured for future generations.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we listened to the Throne Speech yesterday, I didn't of course have a lot of pens, papers, or we don't have a copy of the Speech from the Throne when it's being presented. But what I did, I had a scrap of paper, and I started doing a bit of a check-off list. And I did it in two categories, new and old. And I have to tell you that there was considerably more old initiatives that were talked about in the Throne Speech than what there were new.

And in my rough list that I did yesterday, it worked out to just over 50 old initiatives that were highlighted in the Speech from the Throne yesterday. And I was thinking, well this isn't a particularly strong vision for the future from this government after their two years. Now maybe the two years seems a lot longer to them than what it does to us, but I find that hard to believe. But the new initiatives in the Speech from the Throne, I figured on rough count yesterday listening to the speech, there was just around 10, maybe 11.

So I went home last night. I got a copy of the Speech from the Throne when I was leaving the legislature yesterday, sat down with a highlighter, and I went through and marked what were former initiatives that they were again highlighting — not over just last year but over the previous two years — and my final count came to 53 old initiatives that were highlighted again in the Speech from the Throne. And I was being generous, Mr. Speaker, in what I considered a new initiative, and I think there's around 15. Now I counted some of them that I have heard being announced before, but I thought, well I'll be generous; maybe there is more to come as we get into session and we start looking at this.

So when I look at the front and the cover of the speech and it was titled "Moving Forward," it's pretty hard to move forward when you're spending so many pages in your vision for the future looking back and patting yourself on the back. Over 50 previous initiatives highlighted, and that was the bulk of the

speech. It truly raises a number of concerns and is a concern, I know, for us. This government that claims to be moving forward in the Speech from the Throne, but they spent a majority of the time reminiscing about the last two years and how much money has been spent over the last two years. And really it was prosperity that had been left behind by the previous government, and really was due to no initiatives from the current government. Money that they enjoyed.

But what they've done is . . . That money's gone. And when we look at the mid-term financial, which should be being presented within this session probably within a month — two weeks to a month — and we look back to the first quarter financial when it was released. And there's obviously been some devastating consequences for this government in some inaccurate projections and inaccurate . . . I shouldn't say inaccurate. Well they are inaccurate, Mr. Speaker, but the revenue projections that were put forward in the budget obviously the Premier has admitted, the Minister of Finance has said, they used best numbers that they had but were considerably out in their projections. And we're now feeling this.

And the Premier in fact stood and said, we were wrong. And in the Speech from the Throne it says, we were wrong. Well it's one thing to admit you were wrong, but what happens is that we will pay for that for years to come. Because after only three months into the budget, already we were seeing adjustments to spending, we were seeing cutbacks being put in place. And as we come closer to the mid-term financial report being released, the concerns are even higher that there will be more, and that we will truly be in a deficit before too long. So that's a number of concerns.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the Speech from the Throne, you also see a number of areas . . . Well it just reinforces the concerns that the financial situation that we find ourselves in currently has had an effect on the Speech from the Throne, and it will have an effect on what happens over the next year, maybe longer. So a number of concerns.

And while that rainy day fund, the Premier stood a couple of times today and said, well we've got \$800. Well excuse me, you had 2.3 billion not that long ago. So over this last very short period of time we have seen billions — absolutely billions — of dollars spent. And that just adds to the financial crunch that may be hitting this province. So it is a problem and it is a concern.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition, in his comments, he stood and spoke about door knocking during the by-elections, and listening to people that they had talked to on the doorstep, what their issues were.

And that's the same as being at home in Moose Jaw Wakamow, in my constituency. What are the issues I'm dealing with in my constituency office? What kind of phone calls am I receiving at the constituency office? And it's very hard to try to speak over the member from Canora, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at this Speech from the Throne and when I think of my constituency in Moose Jaw, what kind of phone calls am I receiving? What kind of issues are we dealing with in my constituency, and what kind of issues are going to be addressed

by this government? And truly, many of these issues that I'm hearing have not even been mentioned or touched on in this Speech from the Throne. So that raises a number of concerns.

I know that the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, when she has been travelling around the province talking about seniors and the issues of seniors . . . I have a fair number of seniors' high rises and residences in Moose Jaw Wakamow. So when the member was in Moose Jaw, I went out to listen to the discussion and the comments that were made. And we had a very good turnout in Moose Jaw. And I'm pleased to see that my community felt this was important, and made the effort to come out and speak to the MLA when she was there.

But then to look in the Speech from the Throne, and all they talk about is there will be changes made to long-term care. Well the meeting in Moose Jaw — and I'm not sure about the rest of them around the province, but I would assume they are fairly similar — in Moose Jaw there were a number of issues. And there is no senior or no middle-aged person in the province of Saskatchewan that their long-term goal is to have a nice long-term care facility to live in. Mr. Speaker, they want to live now. They want to enjoy their life now, and they want to have the supports that are needed now.

There's concerns about home care. There's concerns about safety when you're living on your own. And home care has many opportunities to be expanded and to look after many of the seniors' issues that are out there and that were brought up at these consultations. Private care homes and that gap that seniors have between the time they have the ability to live on their own and when there is a need, a physical need, to live in a long-term care facility, but there are no other options for them and when they have been assessed at that level, to move into long-term care. But there can be many, many years between living on your own and long-term care. What supports are there for seniors? Private care homes — many seniors are struggling with the issue of accessibility to private care homes, whether it's affordability, whatever the issue. These are areas that need to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed that the Throne Speech totally missed the mark. Now I'm ever hopeful and I'm ever an optimist, so I'm hoping this will be expanded so that not only long-term care . . .

The Speaker: — Being the time of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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