



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

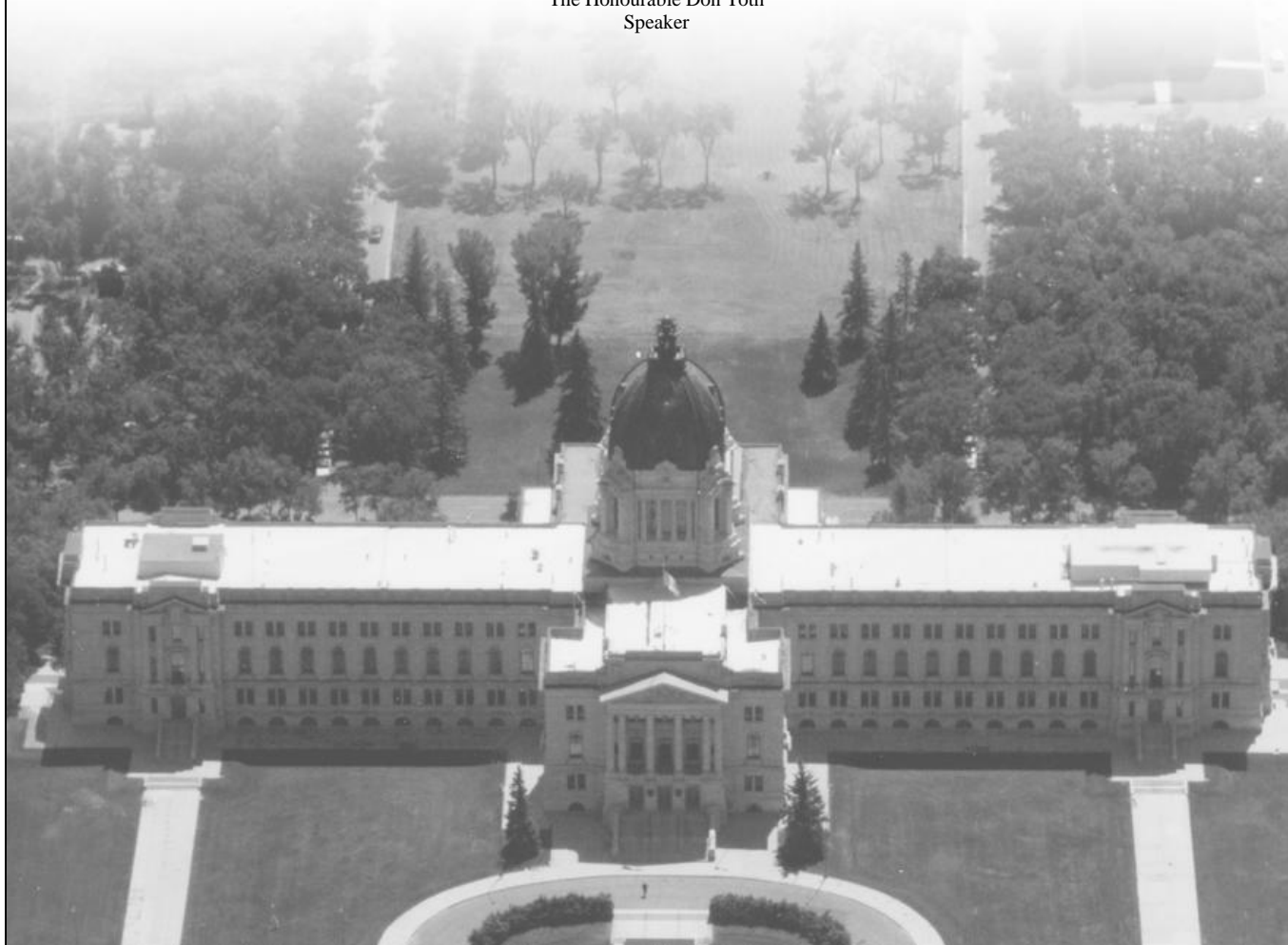
of the

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

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

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Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Hon. Mr. McMorris, seconded by Ms. Ross, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Lingenfelter.]

The Speaker: — Being 7 p.m., the session will resume. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure again to resume the debate on the Throne Speech, and I was just talking about the needle exchange and how we hope that we proceed on evidence-based best practices and not on ideology. This is so important. We know the history; we know what's happening Saskatchewan — HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] — and this is something we need to do our best work in. And people right across Canada, North America are wondering, what's going on here? Let's let evidence-based practices guide us.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I really want to frame my comments, my thoughts around this Throne Speech really can be the two headlines that were in *The StarPhoenix* last week. Thursday, October 22, the headline, "Shelter struggles, YWCA turns away 3,300 women in 2008." This is on their watch, Mr. Speaker. This is on their watch, and this is a serious, serious thing.

Now they can talk about all their stats, they can talk about all their stats, but here are 3,300 women that have been turned away from the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] in Saskatoon. So that's the reality people are facing in Saskatoon, in Saskatchewan.

And of course the next day we wake up and we read the paper, "More bad news about potash." "More bad news about potash" — the second headline. And then Saturday, the headlines were about the 1,100 people who received layoff notices the day before. That's the reality of Saskatoon.

And while the member from Northwest can talk about a little bit more happiness would go a long way — and in many ways we should be a little bit more happiness — but you've got to face reality. You have to face reality and last week we heard about it in spades in *The StarPhoenix*.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I heard the minister . . . I believe the member from Wood Mountain is in charge of gangs. He went on and on about the '80s . . . Wood River. He's in charge of the gangs and yet he talked about the '80s and '90s — not a word about gangs. And you know, I have to tell you that when I talk to people in Saskatoon Centre, they're concerned about that. And I was hoping I would hear more leadership from one of the new ministers, from one of the new ministers who would take

the opportunity in his first Throne Speech to really talk about something that people are looking forward to hearing about.

Well, Mr. Speaker, so those headlines are what's going to frame my thinking about this Throne Speech. And I need to tell you what's been missing, what I was hoping I would hear in this Throne Speech. And last week in Saskatoon was a special week. It was the week, Poverty Awareness Week, and we understand there's a petition going around asking this government, this province to consider putting together a poverty elimination strategy. And we know the minister's on record now and has been on record — you said she doesn't like to blue sky but — she doesn't really like those kind of things.

We know there are three provinces left in Canada that do not have a poverty elimination strategy. They happen to be Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

I think people are seeing this is the way to go. You have to have a comprehensive strategy that puts together all the work that you're doing right across the government, whether it's in education, whether it's in child care, whether it's in housing. All of those pieces come together. But you have to have a strategy and a commitment and a vision by the government that you're going to make a difference in people's lives in Saskatchewan.

And while we can talk about the stats and maybe we're doing a little bit better than other places in Canada . . . But that's how you look at it. We know when we read the headlines from last week, 1,100 people receiving layoff notices; 3,300 women being turned away from the YW. Clearly every one of those folks have an individual story to tell and they have pain that they're going to be facing and suffering through, and we need something like a comprehensive poverty elimination strategy . . . Well I heard about this three-point plan. It's about jobs, isn't it? It's about the trickle-down theory. You know, this doesn't work by itself. You need more than that. You need more than that.

And that's a second point that I wanted to raise was around a comprehensive housing strategy. Now we heard the Minister of Justice earlier today raise the issue of municipal elections. This is interesting because really we haven't really talked about elections, and I'm not sure if that's the thing we do in this House, talk about elections at different levels.

But I wish that these folks, when they're talking to people at different levels of government — whether it's federal, municipal, or provincial — they all need to get together and put together a comprehensive housing strategy for all housing right across the board. We have an opportunity to do that. And here we have . . . And we know if they could talk to their federal cousins in Ottawa about this, we could do some amazing work on housing. But it's just not happening.

Now they will talk a little bit about some of the things they've done about increasing the rent supplements, and that's all right by itself. And every once in a while the minister will do something. We heard the member from Northwest talk about Habitat, things they're doing. And I have said in the House that I'm excited and delighted about those announcements.

Individually they're okay, but we need a strategy that ties it all together. And that's what's missing — a strategy that ties it together, a multi-year strategy like we see in other provinces. And in fact just west of us, we hear about Alberta that's got a 10-year plan.

Why can't we be doing that kind of thing here in Saskatchewan so people have a sense of confidence that this government is more than photo ops, more than one-offs? They've got to have a plan about how we move forward together. And I tell you, I like those words, moving forward together, but I don't see it in this Throne Speech at all.

The other thing that I found that was missing, and earlier I talked about the mandate letters that were missing from the new ministers, but I often take a look at the old mandate letter that the Minister of Social Services got, and I am still wondering what's going to happen.

And I thought today or last Wednesday we would have heard about the commitment that that party made throughout the election and made it in the mandate letter, but it's still not . . . in fact, it's fallen right off the face of the earth, but I'll read it to make sure it gets into the record. And this is a letter dated November 21st, 2007 from the Premier to the Minister of Social Services, and it goes that the things that . . . Here are the "clear priorities which are to be addressed by you and your Ministry."

And the very last one:

Reconvene the Saskatchewan Legislature's Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children through the Sex Trade, which first provided recommendations to the Government in 2002, to determine whether the recommendations have been effectively acted upon and to identify further action that can be taken to prevent the abuse and exploitation of children through the sex trade.

This is a very important item, and I would hope that the minister comes clean, clear, about what is the intention of the ministry and the minister, of whether or not they are going to live up to this expectation, this promise that was made.

We saw what happened in the spring when the Minister of Environment said, you know what? We're not going to keep our promise on CO₂ emissions. We're going to break that promise. And she was very clear. I didn't like it, but at least she was honest and straightforward.

Here's a promise, and people are just avoiding the discussion. And I hope she does reconvene that committee. But I hope that as well, when she reconvenes it, the commitment will be along with that, that money that would be used or is being used right now for helping those who are vulnerable who are involved with the sex trade, that money will not be diverted from their services to the committee, but in fact there will be more money, more resources made available. I think that was the intent of the promise that this is an issue that needs to be dealt with.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about foster care. And I am very happy to see that the minister is keeping the promise where she talks about reviewing *The Child and Family*

Services Act. And the key word though — and she has used this — the key word is thorough. We need a thorough review. And we need to make sure all parties are involved and have some opportunity to be heard on this issue. We need to really make sure that the public confidence in *The Child and Family Services Act* has re-established itself.

We see over the last little while . . . In the near future we hope that the Children's Advocate will be making his report public on the follow-up to the February report. I know there's one that's due. We hope to see that soon. We know this a tough problem. It's been there for several years. It has gone through parties of all stripes. And so I hope that we can move this forward. This is a very, very important issue.

I was hoping to hear a little bit about the seniors' income plan. We've heard the members speak a lot about it. We have not heard about the indexing, and last spring we raised the issue about those who are in long-term care who did not receive the same benefits or nearly the same increases as those others.

Just a minute about DISC [Disability Income Support Coalition] too, if I can. I was really happy to hear the progress made along that. The challenge will be for this government, and I hope this government can live up to it, is around the adequacy. We don't need a program just that has a different name. We need to make sure folks who are living with disabilities are not living in poverty.

And I have so many I can go on, but I do want to talk about Bill 80 because that is such an important issue. And I was really hoping that I would hear in this Throne Speech that the Minister of Labour has decided to take a second thought on this and withdraw the Bill, but unfortunately he has not. The other day he was quite excited about this Bill. And I would really remind him to think about the words respect and respecting working men and women right through this province who built this province. And what does this mean to them? We need to work together collaboratively and not causing more conflict than is necessary.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time. There's so many more things I would say. Of course, you know when I read through this and I start to think about the broken promises, the CO₂ emissions that we've not heard about, the new parks that were promised in the campaign — what's happening with them?

And I also just want to say, I was looking through last year's . . . Here's one from last year's Throne Speech, October 22nd, 2008, "a strong Saskatchewan . . . a better life." And here's one for seniors, and I know seniors will be interested in this one, "complimentary home security audit . . . [and] the installation of basic security devices" for low-income seniors. I have not heard a word about that. Maybe that's coming up next week. But I know seniors in my riding looked through these things and were pretty excited to hear about that kind of stuff. Not a word. I have not heard anything about that, so yet another broken promise.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting and supporting the amendment. I think it makes a lot more sense than the main motion. I agree with the chair last week who thought we should just call the whole thing off, maybe send it back and get it

rewritten, take out the dust, take out the moving back. Let's move forward more of that stuff. So, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the main motion. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's an honour to be up here once again and talking about our Throne Speech. And yes, we have to talk about the past because it's going to lead us to where we are today and some of the future initiatives as well.

So before I begin though, I want to take some time to thank my family for supporting me of course — and as everyone here, we spend many countless hours on the road and at meetings and other events that take us away from our family — and for that I'm very thankful. And I think we all are, actually.

The next people I want to actually thank are the constituents of P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton who on November the 7th, 2007 came out in full force to change the face of Prince Albert Carlton politics. But on that note as well, I want to also acknowledge Mr. Kowalsky who was a very honourable man; he served well in the Chamber as well as for Prince Albert Carlton. But people in Prince Albert Carlton wanted a change, and part of that change involved our platform with promises.

So for many years growing up in Prince Albert, I saw the NDP [New Democratic Party] government at election time always coming out with these great cheque signings and these great ideas of things they were going to do, and then not to follow through until just before the next campaign started, to fulfill a promise. Well we tried something different. We made a commitment through our campaign platform to come with the promises. And in November 7th, 2011, I firmly believe that the Prince Albert Carlton constituency will be won again by the Sask Party, by myself, and the reason is that we have made promises that we can review and we can say we've kept, Mr. Speaker. And actually on that note, we see a lot of those promises already kept in our Throne Speech today.

But I also want to say, you know, across the floor today, the current Leader of the Opposition was asking me that, you know, come back, come on their side. And then the member from Regina Walsh Acres asked me to take . . . She wants to take me out for dinner in Prince Albert when she's in Prince Albert sometime. And with all due respect, I just can't see myself doing that because the Prince Albert Carlton constituency people voted for change, never voted to go back; they want to move forward. They want to see Prince Albert benefit from a good strong government, with good strong representation. And I firmly believe that we'll be here for many years to come. So thank you for that.

The first part of our Throne Speech of course talks of moving forward, Mr. Speaker, and that's a strong message because in the last two years we've moved forward. We've committed. Over 100 campaign promises have been met, and we've seen that because of strong fiscal policy, strong policy development involving business community members. We've brought 16,000 people back to our province, and that's an outstanding record, Mr. Speaker.

[19:15]

And you know, the people that we actually have to thank that drive our economy are those local entrepreneurs, the men and women who come to our province, who've been here, who take risks every day of their lives by putting their houses on the line and everything they have for equity to start something new, a new venture. And it's because of them that people get jobs and they truly drive the economy.

And we can't forget that local businesses in the past have spoken to me about how they were left behind by the previous NDP government. And one thing that really, really hurt them was, in a previous campaign, the previous Finance minister said that, we're not going to raise taxes during an election campaign because that would be just brutal. That'd be wrong to do. We can't do that.

But as soon as they got elected, what happened? They jacked up the taxes, Mr. Speaker. I can't believe they'd do that. They said something, then they went against — as opposed to us that we make a promise and we keep it.

One thing we have to recognize, Mr. Speaker, is that we have economic times like never before in the world. There's a recession globally. But one thing that this government never talked about doing was raising taxes. We've been firm on the fact of lowering taxes, removing the red tape and the barriers to growth to allow businesses to come into our province. And because of the 16,000 people that we've seen come back to this province, we've seen businesses start up like never before, Mr. Speaker, which is very important to look at for the future.

My colleague from Saskatoon Northwest talked about the entrepreneurial cities. And I thank him for that, because he mentioned my great hometown of Prince Albert. So although it ranked number 10 in the cities in North America, the entrepreneurial cities in Canada, not bad for a city whose population is about 34,000 people. I'm pretty darn happy about that, because it's the spirit of the people in Prince Albert that were ranked, the business people who've led that city — those same people that support our government because of all the changes we're making for the positive, not going backwards.

The next thing about our Throne Speech I want to talk about is the health, putting patients first. A patient first was something we actually talked about doing in our campaign promise. We fulfilled that now. We listened to the patients. They've come forward, told us how the system has treated them. We asked them for their advice. And moving forward, the Minister of Health and this government will take those words of advice and implement a plan.

The Prince Albert Parkland Health Region has already said they have read the review and they are going to take action to move forward on the recommendations. Surgical wait times as well. Dr. Jim Cross, who's in charge of the emergency services at the hospitals talked about how — in fact, he's the chief of staff as well — how he's going to be looking at doing a new program there. They've been talking about it for a number of months, to bring in a way to ensure that surgical wait times are reduced in my city and along the entire region. And I give him credit for that.

The staff at the Prince Albert Parkland Health Region are more than willing to step up to the plate when they're called upon. And they will support this province like never before, Mr. Speaker. If they are called upon to have a patient transferred from another city to come in for surgery and there's an open O.R. [operating room] room, they'll be there to help out.

And to those people that work in the Prince Albert Parkland Health Region, I want to thank them very much — the CEO [chief executive officer] and the administrative staff and the board in Prince Albert who have a vision.

And to talk about that vision, they had to have financial backing for that. And for many, many years, the previous government always shortchanged the health region in Prince Albert. They were always in a deficit position. Finally, in the last year's budget, we provided in excess of \$30 million to go to some renovations but also operating capital — operating money that was required to meet their needs and their demands. And that's given them a strong foot moving forward now, where they're able to balance their budget and be able to provide services to the entire region.

And that particular hospital in Prince Albert has also been very well blessed, I guess, by the staff who work there who have a commitment to the addictions issue in Prince Albert.

And just two weeks ago, I was honoured to cut the ribbon on the new social and brief detox centre in Prince Albert, which is attached to the hospital, the north end of it. I also was there prior to do the sod-turning. But no one knew what it was going to look like and how it truly would function. There was myself and the mayor. The chief of police was there — a good friend of mine — Dale McFee. We all had a vision, from our backgrounds, to make Prince Albert better. We know we needed that centre. But we left it up to the architects and the staff there who in fact provided the footprint, the plan.

And when I toured the facility I saw that they have a facility that now the police can drop off those who are addicted to drugs and alcohol versus being left in a cellblock for eight hours with no supervision. They can be met by a doctor; they can be met by a nurse, an LPN [licensed practical nurse]; and if required, they can be moved over to the actual social detox part of the facility, which will in turn address their needs and be linked to community-based support as well.

So that's an important part of our Throne Speech, talking about what we've done in the past, but more so the re-establishment of a provincial addictions council.

We know that when they formed the health regions back in the early mid-'90s, that they were made responsible for addictions treatment through their regional concepts and their boards. Well I think it's sad to say that some people fell through those cracks because the previous government didn't see the foresight of keeping the SADAC [Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission] system in place, that council. So those people have done very well with what they've been told to do and directed to do by the previous government, but having this provincial addictions council now will actually make them move forward with some continuum of treatment, I believe is the best way to describe this.

My colleague from Saskatoon Sutherland and I were talking about it this morning that that's one thing that's been lacking. If a person needs to get treatment and they're full in one facility, it was difficult to transfer and move them to something else, another place in the province, to get that much-needed in-patient time. And now this particular council will have the means and be able to have that continuum of care to make sure there's bed spaces available.

The next part in the Throne Speech that I found was truly beneficial to my city is under the education component. Myself and the Education minister, we were able to turn sod on a brand new St. Anne School in my constituency in the spring, and it was within a week afterwards that I drove by there and they were going full bore on excavation of land. And it's well under way right now to serve that area of the city which is growing, in population as well. I'm happy to say that.

And the people there had a very old school that required their own investment as well, from the Catholic school division who stepped up with part of the funding as well. And the government was more than willing to help meet that need and that demand. Because they had one bathroom in that school for all the students, and that was just . . .

An Hon. Member: — One bathroom?

Mr. Hickie: — One bathroom. And they grew by having portables attached to it. It was never envisioned to have that many students there, but the area of Prince Albert expanded so they were tied without having any infrastructure to meet that demand.

The students were very well-behaved. I saw them in the hallway a couple of times when I toured there. And even the staff said that that was the biggest part of the new school, was going to be the bathroom. Myself and the member from Saskatchewan Rivers were there and they told us that day that the kids are happy because now they each get their own bathrooms to go to which is quite the . . . You know, you don't think about it. You think that what we take for granted in our schools, some schools haven't got that. So it's good to be able to do that for the students of St. Anne's and for the people of Prince Albert.

The next part that I thought was exciting was the student housing announcement that I took part in on behalf of the Advanced Education minister where, for the first time ever in the province of Saskatchewan, SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] has student housing.

And it's not just for students who are coming out of high school. We're looking at targeting from the North because as we saw our economy expand in the last two years and the demand for skilled trades and other people, there was a barrier for the northern people to come down to Prince Albert — to actually feel comfortable and welcome in their area, to take part in school, and find available housing. So we have actually just opened up the student housing as about two weeks ago, I think October the 16th. So last week.

And right now they're taking applications but they've had single parents in there right now. They've got working couples from up north who are both going to school. So that's a positive

step forward where they can actually feel comfortable because they're right next to the school and they see what they're doing every day. They get to go home to their families. SIAST has the child care facilities for their children as well. So it's a great overall picture for them moving forward.

As most of us had the experience to go to university much younger in our lives, we didn't have to worry about the burden of having children and a family. But on that note, those who now take the step forward to better themselves and our economy can take part and actually feel at home.

The thing with the Social Services minister, and, you know, putting vulnerable children first, that's a great step forward for this government, the looking at and reviewing of *The Child and Family Services Act* and *The Adoption Act* long overdue. There are parts of every Act that are working. We know that. But there are parts of every Act that have become redundant or have aged very poorly in the changing environment we're working in, whether it be the level of scope of need by the clients or the professional level of care provided by the social workers and the professionals who work within that particular ministry.

So you always have to ask yourself, what can we do better? And that's a step that's going to be taken on by the Social Services ministry and our minister. And I look forward to seeing that come to fruition because Prince Albert, like most other places in this province, have a big demand on their social workers and the demand on their child protection workers. They draw a huge catchment area as well into the city. And while I was policing — as everyone knows, I was a police officer before I got elected — on any given weekend our population would at least double, if not triple . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You didn't know that? Oh yes, I was.

So we had demands placed upon the system, and the mobile crisis units saw that same demand as well placed on them. And the next week when the files are transferred over, social workers or child protection workers were overwhelmed within what they were given.

So the next part about this is implementation of a new electronic case management system. And as time's evolved, cases become more complex. And we hate to lose anyone through a crack, especially those children — the future of our province.

You know, the early years of a child are definitely a time for growth and wonder and discovery. But so many of our children in our province are, again, having trouble, growing up in families where they need assistance, whether it be through addictions or through financial means. And this government recognizes that. The Social Services minister recognized that when we first formed government. I was privileged to be on the Treasury Board whereby I sat back and I helped out with some budget development to put funding forward for that and across all of Saskatchewan.

And the next step now, with the case management system, we talk about that. We don't want to lose any of these families or these children. So if we can track them better, kudos to the government, kudos to the minister and to the staff out there who need to work within a system that's antiquated but now will

have some new feet underneath them to take on challenges.

Another level of our Throne Speech that I found was quite interesting was talking about justice and policing. And it's linked to the vulnerable children aspect as well because when I was the minister, I was very honoured to announce some funding for an integrated child protection unit in Prince Albert, which was some new initiative where we had social workers now working with police officers, investigating offences against children, whether they be abuse of a sexual nature or violence, neglect as well. So I want to give the chief of police in Prince Albert extreme kudos for that and he's done a great job in showing leadership and initiative.

But along with his counterparts in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, they all see that we're evolving in this province because things have changed since 2007. We have more people in the province; we have more demands upon resources. And they are looking outside that box as well. For too many years they were forced to look within a box.

When the previous government promised 200 police officers — never delivered. Restated that same promise — never delivered. And I know that because when I was in the police association we kept track of the numbers and we knew that.

So now we have 120 officers we're going to contribute. We have 60 already in place. We're going to have at least 60 more in the next two years. And this government, there's a promise made, going to be a promise kept. We're going to do it well because we recognize that our cities, as they're growing as well, need that resource, big and small alike. So we have a good balance of rural with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and small town policing and our bigger cities as well.

So on that note I want to just say that, you know, keeping our communities safe and protect all of our citizens is very much at the forefront of our endeavours. We don't want to have anyone, like I said before, fall through the cracks. And policing has to change, and it has. It has because you no longer just go arrest somebody. They have a social problem they deal with every day of the week when they go to a call, and they want to have resources to be able to transfer these people to. And they leave the houses, and they just simply walk away. Sometimes they have to solve a problem, and they have no resources to go to. So this is going to be a good step.

The chiefs of police are working on initiatives. I know the new minister has talked to them already about business plans moving forward. And this government will be able to utilize any means possible to ensure that our most vulnerable children are safe and our people and our province are safe from the criminals that actually are out there preying upon us every day of the week, whether you're in a big city or a small town. People are opportunistic in looking for any means to take advantage of those who can't protect themselves. And it's an honour to be a part of a government that actually has that commitment in place, a promise that has been made and will be kept absolutely.

Another part of policing that I find — and I know my colleagues get tired of me talking about policing, but it's what I

know, so a little bit longer, little bit longer — is that, you know, we've . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you, Mr. Deputy Premier.

One thing about policing is that we know that there is problems involving violence in our communities. And by talking to the police chiefs, talking to the associations as well of what they need, they need to look at a different approach in crime and law enforcement. And one thing that they noticed — and I didn't talk about it very much with the addictions part of it — we know it's affecting families. But almost all the crime the police officers are dealing with involves a level of addiction, whether it be a domestic dispute, whether it be drunk driving, whether it be a violence and an assault. Typically we see officers responding to calls involving violence, and alcohol addiction is part of that, but also it becomes those people out there who can prey on those who are unable to say no to the drugs and drug use and addictions problems.

[19:30]

So again, I was very honoured to be a part of a government and as a minister in my tenure that started a new enforcement unit for the North where I know the new minister announced that, and he did a great job — thank you for that — to follow through with the promise we made about that.

And I'd look to the police forces, the RCMP, and the city police in Prince Albert who talked about that need because the North is an area of the province where criminals and drug use abuse . . . And the member from Athabasca and I have talked, Cumberland and I have talked about it as well, that it's tough to police such a vast area. But with a new integrated unit where you have RCMP and city police working as a unit, not as separate entities, they can share information better. They can respond to crime better. And we're seeing that in the public right now, that there is a general dislike for criminals. People are starting to come forward now and actually say that they've had enough, and they're going to help out as well with that.

So I want to talk about the issue of . . . You know, front-line battle with criminals is one that the government takes very, very seriously, and we're going to keep moving on that issue as well.

First Nations and Métis Relations, this is the Year of the Métis, and for all of us, we have to respect the fact that that has been overlooked for many years, and this is another good initiative for us and our government.

I know Robert Doucette, head of the Métis Nation, and I used to play hockey together at Prince Albert Midtown. He was a heck of a goalie. He probably could have gone somewhere if he had the level of . . . now with the amount of hockey teams out there that were able to take players. Robert was a heck of a goaltender. I know he shut me down many times, and it's because of him I didn't make the AA team one day. I know that for sure because I couldn't get a goal on the bugger, so that's why . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, I was a good . . . I was fast. I was fast. Hockey's a game where you can be speedy; you don't have to be big, Christine.

I guess, in closing, I wanted to say that, you know, our government's been very proud of our relationship with the

federal partnership we have as well. In Prince Albert we took part in an announcement recently for a new water treatment facility. And when I talk about announcements in Prince Albert, housing as well, the same way, is that we have facilities that are going to be all across Prince Albert, not just my constituency. I don't want to be taking all the credit for that because I mean, if I had to do that and ask for my own constituency, that'd be great, but we're going to service all of Prince Albert.

So we have more housing available now with our partnership, new water treatment facility in Prince Albert, and the economic diversification fund has actually been utilized to give \$1 million to the city to expand our airport as well. Not our initiative for sure but because of our talking, lobbying, we're going to make sure it gets done because Prince Albert's expanding.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I will — because of all the great things we talked about and our vision for the future still was promises made, promises kept, some still outstanding — that I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will support the Throne Speech. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to get up and talk about the Throne Speech today.

But before I do, I'd like to welcome our newest members to the Assembly. For the member from Douglas Park, it's his second time he's been elected for the first time. And I welcome him to the Assembly.

And the new member from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting her husband a couple nights ago. And they have a very young child about almost exactly the same age as mine. And it is refreshing to watch another MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] chasing a child around a public function because I've been doing that, and it's a lot of fun. And I wish that member luck. It's going to be a great experience.

Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, I think this is a good opportunity. I'd like to thank my wife for all the help she gives me and support. I know it's not easy being a wife of an MLA. My little girls, we try and manage it as best as we can, that they get to be around. But it's not always easy. And my wife has been a great support and a great help for me.

I'd also like to thank the people that work in the constituents' office in Lloydminster — Marilyn and Caren. They keep me organized and pointed in the right direction. And I can't say thank you to them enough. It makes life a lot easier, and it makes the people of Lloydminster . . . They're very well served by our office, and it's very much a reflection on the good work those ladies do.

In this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to have a couple themes come through. One is coincidence. You know, what is a coincidence and what isn't? And I kind of picked up off where the member from Saskatoon Northwest was enlightening us on the difference between ingenuous and disingenuous. And I think I got my head wrapped around that, and I truly appreciated that little educational tidbit. It's something that I'll use again and again, so thank you.

But if I can offer anything to debate, Mr. Speaker, it will be coincidence. What is and what qualifies as a coincidence? If you think football, you know, the Roughriders have won Grey Cups never when the NDP have been in power. Is that a coincidence? Is there something deeper to it? I'm going to give that the benefit of the doubt. I don't think that the members opposite actually are calling plays in from the sidelines, that they think it's another Crown corporation and they'll call a CEO and start fiddling with the plays and screw it up, which is kind of how the Crown corporations have worked for them. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that that truly is a coincidence.

But going down that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start off going at some of the stuff I've seen in this Throne Speech that it's really, I think, affected my community and been very positive for the province as a whole. Starting off, you know, we've seen 16,000 people move back to Saskatchewan this year. You talk about a different feeling in the province; I think that the people that are here are more confident and they feel great. People around Canada are looking at Saskatchewan as a real option. You know, maybe my family will flourish there. And they will. And these people have come here, and they will continue to come here, Mr. Speaker.

With that said, when they're looking at Saskatchewan, the new study that came out with five cities in the top 10 in Canada for entrepreneurial cities are in Saskatchewan. The number one city two years in a row was a Saskatchewan city.

And the city of Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, for two years in a row has made the top 10. I'm from Lloydminster, and I know it is one of the most entrepreneurial cities. There are businessmen and businesswomen there that are being very successful and working very hard. And as the MLA, that's something I'm going to try and foster as much as I can because I think that having a society of hard-working people that are trying to make their lives better are really making lives better for everyone in society. And I'm going to try and help out where I can.

Mr. Speaker, a major theme of this Throne Speech was health care. We talked about what we've done to this point, why we've done it. The big one here, Mr. Speaker — we said before we got elected — we think that we can attract 800 nurses. And I can remember when we made that announcement during the campaign, and there was just boo-hooing from the opposition, the then-government saying that isn't doable. We've tried; we've talked to all the experts, and you cannot bring 800 new educated nurses into Saskatchewan.

And we said, you know, it's going to be tough. We're starting out here, but what we're going to do is we're going to raise the bar. We're going to say, this is how high we want the bar to be and we're going to try and exceed it. We said 800. We said we could try; we could do it. And so far, Mr. Speaker, we're at 560 nurses. We're two years into a mandate, not quite, and we're at about 70 per cent to that. Mr. Speaker, that's a promise that we've made, and we haven't got there yet, Mr. Speaker, but we're going to.

In this Throne Speech we said we think wait-lists are too long. We hear from our neighbours. We hear from our communities that people in our family that have back problems, knee problems, they need surgery. They can't go to work. They may

not be as active in their communities. They may be coaching their kids' ball teams, but they can't do it because they've got a bad knee or a bad back.

Their doctor says, you know, you've waited six months for your MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] or you've waited for your diagnosis, and that's great, but now that you've got it, you've got to wait for your surgery. And, Mr. Speaker, that's unacceptable. These people have to earn a living. They want to contribute to their society. They want to be part of their family's family life, and they find out it's 18 months to get back surgery.

Mr. Speaker, our government in this Throne Speech, we said very clearly we want to get that down to three months. I don't think anyone wants to wait three months but, Mr. Speaker, that's where we've put the bar. We're going to strive for it, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you we're going to make it, Mr. Speaker. That's what this government does: we set goals and we achieve them. It's a simple plan, but it's something that's going to work for us for a long, long time.

Mr. Speaker, financially, what have we done so far, Mr. Speaker? Let's lay the groundwork out. We've dropped 80,000 people off the tax rolls. The 80,000 people that are in the bottom part of the working people in Saskatchewan that can least afford to pay a large tax bill are dropped. They can put that money into where their priorities are. And the other people in Saskatchewan that, I guess, are the higher income earners are able to contribute more and are able to still pay tax. But, Mr. Speaker, taxation is something that we've looked at across the board.

We identified property tax, Mr. Speaker. We identified it. Well I guess the opposition identified it too. They talked about it for a long, long time. They often talked about the status quo not being on. In fact I believe they made the same speech twice to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and still never solved the problem.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't easy, I will admit that. I don't think it was easy. The Legislative Secretary wrote a report. He had to work very hard on it. He truly understood the issues. He made recommendations. And the Minister of Education also took a good, long look at the report, educated himself and figured out that this is doable.

It's not easy. I'm not saying it was easy. That's probably why it never got done before. But, Mr. Speaker, we said we were going to do it and we did it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about policing. The last member that graced the Assembly with some intelligent words spoke about policing. We said we think Saskatchewan needs 120 new police officers in the mandate, in the four years. We set the bar. We said this is what we can do. You know, the opposition, the then government, I believe, said they were going to bring in 200 new police officers, and that was what needed to be done. That's great, they set the bar. They set a goal. But the fact is they never achieved it, Mr. Speaker.

Our government, in the short two years we've been here, we said a similar type thing. We said we think that 120 police

officers. That's 30 a year; it's manageable. And each year, what have we done, Mr. Speaker? We've done what we said we would do. And again it's a simple, a simple thing, but you just have to do it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about immigration, another target — 3,400 under the nominees program. Now not easy, again not easy, I think the opposition, the then-government four years ago, they talked about bringing in immigrants, and they were pretty happy with some pretty low numbers. That isn't acceptable on our side of the House. If you're going to set a goal, set something reasonable.

And if you read the Throne Speech, how are we going to achieve such a bold and ambitious goal? We're finding efficiencies. Last year I believe it was a 25 per cent efficiency in the speed in the number of applicants that were processed. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan expect a government to do the work of government. And bringing in nominees, bringing in workers to Saskatchewan that want to raise their families and build lives here — that's what we said we're going to do. Mr. Speaker, we're going to do it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another section in the Throne Speech which is near and dear to me is the energy. The Crown Corporations Committee, we've just wrapped up the first half of energy committee hearings looking into the future energy needs of Saskatchewan and how we could best meet those needs, those growing needs, in a manner that is safe, environmentally friendly, reliable, and cost-effective for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in those nine days, day number one SaskPower was invited. SaskPower was asked to really lay out the groundwork. What does it look like in Saskatchewan? What are our needs? What's our current generation? When will it need replaced? Nothing lasts forever.

SaskPower came in. They put together a very comprehensive document. It did. It spelled out that currently we're about 3800 at peak load, that our infrastructure is aging, and that our growing economy and industry are requiring more electricity.

When we asked them a little further, let's spell this out, let's get our head's really wrapped around where we are and where we're going . . . We asked them, you know, it's fairly obvious that these coal mines, these coal-fired power plants and these generating stations, they need replaced or they need upgrading. And the timeline, it's very specific that in 30 years this needs to happen, in 20 years this needs to happen. And a lot of those timelines are coming up fairly quickly.

And we asked the people from SaskPower, is there money put away to do these extremely expensive replacements? Well no there wasn't. Was it known from the former government that this was going to need replaced, that this infrastructure would need rebuilt?

And, Mr. Speaker, it's right from the power poles that are in the ground through the substations. The infrastructure is aging and needs some serious work. This year alone SaskPower has spent over \$1 billion to upgrade their system.

[19:45]

So we pushed SaskPower on a lot. Pushed is the wrong . . . We questioned them on a lot of things. But a few things jumped out, and it was really maybe the lack of preparedness from the former government and planning into the future. And what really jumped out at me was rate increases. Starting back in the mid-'90s, what were the rate increases of SaskPower? In 1999 there was a zero per cent rate increase. I think that's great. Nobody wants to pay too much. 2000 — 1.5 per cent. 2001 — 2 per cent. 2002 — 4 per cent. '03 — zero per cent again. '04 — 5.7. '05 — zero. '06 — 4.9. '07 — 4.3.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, the numbers are up and down depending on . . . but one thing that kind of jumps out at you is in every election year it's zero. Why did the electricity rates never go up in election years? Except for '07, Mr. Speaker. I correct, I correct that, Mr. Speaker. In 2007 the electricity rates went up by 4.3 per cent. But, Mr. Speaker, that was after the election. SaskPower very quickly after the election came to the rate review panel and said, oops, we have some major growth needs here. We need to raise rates by 4.3 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that's a coincidence. I don't think that is a coincidence. If we're trying to figure out coincidence and not coincidence, I don't know. Someone might say disingenuous, but on the coincidence scale, I'm going to leave that one just hanging out there.

Mr. Speaker, on the growth side, that's a very good news story. We know that Saskatchewan has got some fairly good growth in our province, in our industry, and that need's fed with electricity.

We finished up our nine days. We're going to put out an interim report here shortly, and we're going to have nine more days for people to comment on that interim report in January, Mr. Speaker.

Further on the energy front, Mr. Speaker, I want to make some comments to the new member who is the Leader of the Opposition. Now he left Saskatchewan about 10 years ago to go work in Calgary. And, Mr. Speaker, I guess I should premise this with, I've never been a lobbyist for the big oil industry in Canada. So I premise . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . There's always hope when my colleague said, but I premise my comments with the fact that I don't want to second-guess anyone that's been there because I have never been a big oil lobbyist, Mr. Speaker. But in his comments in his speech the other day he spoke of many countries where he was the front man, he was their political government relation man.

He spoke of Yemen where it was a country where his company did a lot of work. Doing some research for this speech, Mr. Speaker, on the Internet on the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] they just did a story called Yemen in crisis. Yemen's running out of oil, Mr. Speaker, and they rely . . . About 30 per cent of their GDP [gross domestic product] comes from the oil industry. And, Mr. Speaker, Yemen is not a society like Canada where we have very many resources and options. Their poverty level is far higher than here. I don't know the exact numbers, but the number of people living on \$1 a day or less is a reality in that country.

Nigeria is another country that the former energy lobbyist used to do a substantial amount of work. Now Nigeria — doing some research for this again — the Nigeria delta is one of the roughest places in the world. They've been embroiled in civil war. The Nigeria delta is the heavy oil area in Nigeria, Mr. Speaker.

We look at Madagascar. Now I have never been there. I would love to go to Madagascar. I think it would be a beautiful place. Again it's a place that has just come through a military coup. The former president was ousted with a military strongman. That was in March. I know that that has to be a tough place to do business, but we know that the former member was heavily involved with the former president before he got ousted.

Now when we look at those countries, and we know that they're not like Canada, but where are they ranked, Mr. Speaker? We've got Amnesty International which looks at the human rights areas around the world and compares what one country does to another, and they put out a ranking from first to about 200 of the world's best to worst human rights records. Now there's a company called . . . not a company, an organization called Transparency International, and they rank the corruption of different countries around the world. Now, Mr. Speaker, Canada as you would expect is in the top 10. We're a very democratic country. Corruption is not tolerated here.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this is a coincidence but, Mr. Speaker, Yemen, Nigeria, Madagascar are all well down in the list. Yemen is 141st. Nigeria is a similar number. Mr. Speaker, I don't know, if that member was part of a team that was approaching these countries, why not . . . I don't know. But it just seems like we could set the bar higher, Mr. Speaker.

Before I wrap up here, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to look at that former member's timeline. We know that Saskatchewan is an oil-producing province — one of the best, Mr. Speaker. And we're getting better at it all the time. But back in the '70s, there was something called Saskoil. It was a nationalized oil company owned by the province. And it was good. It was bad. I don't know. I wasn't old enough in the '70s to know. But in the '90's, it was still controlled by the provincial government. In the '80s, part of it was sold off. But there was certain laws, where their head office had to be here in Saskatchewan. They had a lot of employees here in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the then minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] repealed *The Wascana Energy Act*. Sask Oil became Wascana Energy, and they repealed that Act that allowed their head office to move. It then got sold under the minister of CIC to a company in Calgary. That company was Canada Occidental, Mr. Speaker, and Canada Occidental became Nexen. Again, Mr. Speaker, coincidence? That's for everyone to decide.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask was SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] a coincidence? Was the membership scandal a coincidence? I don't know, Mr. Speaker. Was Channel Lake a coincidence? Mr. Speaker, these are all questions we have to ask.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wrap up with something a little lighter. We talk about the good news in Saskatchewan. The

opposition thinks that we're cheerleading. I don't mind cheerleading, Mr. Speaker. In fact you know, when my hockey team beats the hockey team in Edmonton — let's say — I call up my buddies in Edmonton, and I rub it in a little bit. If my football team beats the team in Vancouver, I call my mother-in-law and I rub it in a little bit, Mr. Speaker. If my province is ranked top five out of ten for cities in the country for entrepreneurship, Mr. Speaker, I stand up and I say, I think that's good news, and I'm proud of this province.

As members of the Legislative Assembly, we represent people in this province. I've got about 17,000 in my constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, when I go to Alberta, when I go to British Columbia, I hold my head high because I'm proud of my constituency. I'm proud of my province. I think that we're one of the most exciting places in the country. And I think that if we tell people about it, they're going to get excited as well — and as they should — many of which have heard about it now and are coming here, 16,000 last year.

But, Mr. Speaker, to call us cheerleaders, to say that spreading the word about how great Saskatchewan is, is a negative thing, Mr. Speaker, I just don't buy it. Mr. Speaker, I often think Saskatchewan is going to be at the front of the pack for a long, long time. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how long the good people of Lloydminster will grace me with the opportunity to represent them but, Mr. Speaker, be it two more years or longer, it doesn't really matter. I'm always going to be proud of the time I've served here and of the province I call home. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Assembly for listening to my speech tonight, and we'll allow one of the other members to take the floor.

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to first start out by saying please bear with me; I'm fighting a bit of a cold. Some days the cold is winning and some days I think I'm winning. But so if my voice crackles or I have to clear my throat, please bear with me.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure and an honour for me to rise in the House and to take part in this Throne Speech, especially an honour to do so on behalf of the fine people of Regina Northeast. I think, Mr. Speaker, I've said this before in the House, but I do believe it bears repeating, is that wherever you travel in this fine province of ours — north or south or east or west — you meet nothing but fine, friendly, hospitable people. And that is a testimony for Saskatchewan people.

But I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, there is nobody finer than the fine people in Regina Northeast. I say that with a degree of certainty because I have spent a lot of time on a doorstep visiting with the good folks. Every summer I like to get out and knock on doors and talk to folks on their doorstep to find out from them what their issues are, what their concerns are, what their thoughts are. And I find that quite useful.

And having done it for a number of summers now, it's to a point now, Mr. Speaker, where many people will recognize me at the door as soon as they answer the door. It's also to a point where many of these people I've visited before. And I've had

the privilege of having a conversation with them before, and you begin to relate after a while as to what their experiences are and how things are going for them and how their family is growing and how the world is developing in their own way. So with that, I find that quite rewarding and I enjoy doing it every summer because I always come away . . . Every evening, I sit back and I think about the conversations I've had, and I think about the knowledge I've gained from talking to folks in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start out by congratulating our two new members of the Legislative Assembly, first, the member from Regina Douglas Park who is certainly a welcomed addition to our caucus. His experience, his talent, his commitment is something that we will benefit from. But I think also, for those of us who know our member fairly well, I think the thing above all that stands out — and there's a lot of attributes there — but the thing that stands out for me at least is his passion for Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan people. And that passion shows through. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that his service here will be to us all a great service.

He will serve the New Democratic Party as a leader very well. He will serve the opposition in the House here very well. But he'll also serve the people of Saskatchewan in an outstanding manner. So I want to once again congratulate the member for his election, the by-election win and the election to the Legislative Assembly.

I also want to pass on my congratulations to our newest member from Saskatoon Riversdale. I had the opportunity during the by-election campaign to spend a little time in Saskatoon. I was out door knocking in a poll there. And it didn't take me very long to find out and quickly learn that the member, our member, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale is a member of her constituency. She reflects that constituency and she is very much a part of that constituency.

And I'm, I suppose, double pleased in having the opportunity to share similar office space with her. And just over the last few days, I've had the opportunity of a couple of short conversations. And from those conversations, I've learned that she's certainly a person of passion, a person who cares. And that's demonstrated quite clearly, that she has a deep caring for the people of her constituency.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that it's safe to say that she will have a long, long political career in this Assembly. It will be a short career on this side of the House — only another two years — and then she'll join the rest of the NDP members on that side of the House when we form government. Well she'll be joining the NDP members on that side of the floor when we form government after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to just touch briefly on just a couple of my critic areas. First, the Saskatchewan Transportation corporation. And I would suggest members should do this. I had the honour over the last few months to get to know some of the employees that work for STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] — not only the bus drivers, but some of the guys in the garage and some of the clerks and some of the guys working the freight areas. And there's really a uniqueness about them.

They're certainly committed to their company. They're committed to providing good service. There's a pride, there's a pride that they exhibit in the company. And you can hear it in the language: they don't talk about the company or they don't talk about the Crown, they talk about our company or they talk about my company. And I find that very, very, very rewarding because there's a dedication there, a true dedication that we should be very proud of.

[20:00]

And certainly STC is providing an essential service throughout this great province of ours, particularly the rural areas. There's a lot of our small towns that is populated by seniors, in many cases widows, who don't drive or don't feel comfortable driving, at least into the big cities, so they'll take the bus to keep health appointments or to visit family. They just find it a lot more convenient to do that, and I think the STC provides an excellent service in that way.

Many of our students also have used STC to travel back and forth from home to university. And I think they provide a great service, and I think a lot of that is due to the fine, fine quality of personnel or employees that STC does have. So I just want to take my hats off to the employees of Saskatchewan Transportation Company.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's safe to say exactly the same thing about the employees in the Department of Highways, what used to be the Department of Highways, now Ministry of Highways. I have a hard time to always put it like that because for me it will be the department for the longest time. But they are great people working in the Department of Highways or the Ministry of Highways. They're dedicated, and they feel the same dedication I think as the employees in Saskatchewan Transportation Company, but they are truly dedicated to their cause.

Many of them, particularly the snowplow operators in the winter months, will travel out into conditions that I think you and I would rather just sit at home. But they will do their job. They'll go out there and they'll do what they're called upon to do. And I think often we don't recognize that within the employees, certainly not often enough. The dedication and the commitment they have to their job is something that I think we all in this province are proud of, certainly I know we all in the Assembly will be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, this summer I had the opportunity to travel through Saskatchewan a fair amount with my colleague from Regina Walsh Acres as part of our MLA summer tour. We travelled through five or six, I think it was about six constituencies in the province, and during that time we of course travelled over a lot of roads and gave me sort of an opportunity to see some of the road conditions first-hand. And after that, Mr. Speaker, over the last five or six weeks I on my own have travelled a lot of kilometres, checking out and seeking out roads throughout Saskatchewan.

In the last five weeks the ones I've concentrated my efforts on have been those who have brought to my attention by good people throughout Saskatchewan here — and they have done that by contacting my office, either by telephone or email

or even a number of letters I've received — of good folks of Saskatchewan who have concerns about different highways. So I took it upon myself to check it out.

I always kind of like to know things first-hand. I like to say that I've travelled over a particular road. If somebody says it's good or it's bad, I can verify that to some degree at least because I've been over that road. So I took that opportunity to do that and I guess you would say, Mr. Speaker, it was a bit of an eye-opener because I soon discovered that there are a lot of miles and roads in this province that are in need of much attention.

I know that the government often likes to suggest that every highway in Saskatchewan is fixed to the letter T and that there is no problems. Well that's not quite the case; that's not quite the case, Mr. Speaker. I know that there's a number of roads that are in a sad state of repair. Some are under construction and some, I believe, are on the five-year plan to be addressed.

But what's scary, Mr. Speaker, is a number of these roads that are in sad state of repair today have been for some time, and yet don't make the five-year plan. That is scary because it's telling those folks there that they don't have a hope for at least five years of having any consideration to their roads. Now that is something that many people are concerned about and I certainly have heard that throughout my travels.

There's then a number of instances where they just couldn't conceive why their particular road had been left out. It had been left out for a while. It's not just something that happened in the last year or two, Mr. Speaker. It's been in need of repair for a number of years and most people would think that would be priority enough to at least get into the five-year plan — perhaps not this year, perhaps not next year, but at least into the five-year plan. But here they have their road . . . Their road is in a sad state of repair. It is deteriorating even further and it hasn't yet made the five-year plan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you there is a number of people out there that are quite concerned about that. And I can assure the minister that he will be hearing more about those roads as the session goes on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've, as you well know, been around this, had the honour of being around this Assembly for a number of years. And with that honour comes the opportunity to listen and sit through a number of throne speeches. And that I have done over the last number of years.

But I think it's safe to say, Mr. Speaker, I have never sat through a throne speech that has been so hollow and so empty and so void of substance — long on rhetoric, but empty on substance. And as my colleague pointed out earlier today, Mr. Speaker, if you look through the Throne Speech, you will see there's approximately 10 items that is relatively forward looking.

Now in its own being, a throne speech is a tool of government. It's an opportunity for government to paint with a very broad brush, to paint a wonderful picture of the future, of all these things that they want to achieve for the province of Saskatchewan. And that's what a throne speech is usually used

for, is to paint those wonderful things that all governments want to see for Saskatchewan.

They want to see Saskatchewan people prosper. They want Saskatchewan to move forward. And here's the opportunity to lay out in the broadest of forms — no details, no specifics — just the broadest of forms through a throne speech of the wonderful, bountiful opportunity that Saskatchewan is going to have into the future.

But this Throne Speech doesn't do that. This Throne Speech has approximately 10 items that is forward looking. And it has another 50 to 60 items that's referencing the past — referencing the past, Mr. Speaker. Well as I said, a throne speech is an opportunity for the government to paint a beautiful picture of the future, beautiful picture of the future, but this Throne Speech doesn't do that. This Throne Speech concentrates its time and its efforts on the past. It's like one of the members once said when asked about what their vision was. They said, well don't tell me we don't have a vision; look at all the things we've done. Well a vision isn't in the rear-view mirror. A vision is forward looking.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what message does that send to us? What message does that send to us? It sends to us, Mr. Speaker, that if the government has got 10 items forward looking and nearly 60 items in the past, I think the government is trying to tell us that the past is a lot brighter than the future's going to be. The past is a lot brighter than the future's going to be.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at this Throne Speech. Let's look at this Throne Speech as far as the working people is concerned. What's in this Throne Speech for the working people, the working people of this great province of ours — east and west, north and south, big cities, smaller communities, villages? What's in this Throne Speech for the working people?

Simply, nothing. There's nothing in this Throne Speech at all, Mr. Speaker, for the working people. Even it doesn't even mention the working people — the very people who drive our economy. Our economy is driven by the working people of our province. It's those people who go to work every day, who come home, who make the payment on their mortgage, make their car payment, buy groceries, buy some clothes for the kids, have a little bit of disposal income. They spend it in the community.

They don't spend their money in New York, London, Dallas, Boston. They don't spend their money down there; they spend their money right here, right here in our local communities. And that's what drives our economy is those people with disposable incomes spending the money here in our economy, here in our province, here in our community.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech doesn't even mention them. And I asked why. Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess you just simply don't mention in a throne speech the people you're at war with, people you're at war with. Because that's what this government said prior to the election. They said if they were the Government of Saskatchewan, they would go to war with labour. And that they have. And that they have, Mr. Speaker. They have gone to war with labour.

And I can assure those members opposite that they can go to war with labour, but they will lose the battles. They will lose the battles.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what's in this Throne Speech for farmers? What's in this Throne Speech for farmers? Simply, nothing. Nothing in it for the farmers.

Oh yes, there's a mention about agriculture, mention of moving bureaucrats from one community to another. But, you know, there's no mention, no mention of any type of relief for the beef industry, the beef industry that is under siege and has been for a couple of years now, a beef industry that is shrinking in this province. The cow herds are shrinking in this province because people are just going broke and getting out of the livestock industry. And, Mr. Speaker, it could very well be the end of the industry.

And I know the members over there, particularly those in the rural areas, will understand this. This summer I talked to a couple of different farmers, one who has been in the industry for quite a few years, and he was running about 150 cows. And he told me that that was it. This fall, he was done. He was taking his cow herd to market and he was out of the business. He was tired of fighting, tired of losing money, and he was just going to get out of the industry.

I also talked to another young fellow, I'd say about 45, thereabouts. Been in the business, in the industry, been in the business about 20 years now. And he was running about 800 head. Now that would be cows and calves and feeders and so on and so forth. And he too tells me the same thing — that this fall, they were all going to market.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the sad part of it is, there has been thousands of cows, good quality breeding cows go to market this fall and none of them have gone back into the cow herd. They've gone to slaughter. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a formula for a loss of an industry, and this government has failed to address that issue. They have failed to be able to convince the federal government to join them in a meaningful program to support the industry, support an industry through its hard times so would be something there when the good times return.

Mr. Speaker, there's no mention in this Throne Speech about relief for the beleaguered hog industry, a hog industry that has been under pressure for a long time and continues to go down. Oh yes, I believe that if you ask the minister about what is he doing or what is this government doing about the beleaguered hog industry in this province, he would probably say, well we've provided them loans; we've provided them loans.

Well I can assure you, if you talk to the hog producers out there, they will be the first to tell you that the last thing they need is another loan. The last thing they need is another loan. What they need is a meaningful program to support them until the marketplace returns and they can start to make a reasonable profit in their operations.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's safe to say, if you drive through Saskatchewan today, even in the southern parts of Saskatchewan but more pronounced in the central and northern parts, you will see hundreds — no, I'm wrong there — you'll

see thousands of acres of crop out, thousands of acres of crop that's not harvested, thousands of acres of crop that's sitting there. And I'm afraid, at this time of year, it's going to end up going under the snow, and it won't come off till spring. Many of those crops will be valueless in the spring — valueless. And yet, Mr. Speaker, there was no mention, no mention in this Throne Speech about any type of an emergency program that the government was even willing to look at or consider some type of emergency program for those farmers who will not be able to get their crop off this fall — nothing. Those farmers are left to winter the best they can I guess.

[20:15]

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech — and I don't want to be negative all the time; I want to be positive when I can — and I want to suggest that the Throne Speech does, does do a couple of things. It does admit to government failures. The government admits to government failures.

It admits that the government has failed in their health care plan. Oh yes, two years into their term and they're announcing that they're going to implement a new plan, a new plan. Well the only reason you bring in a new plan is because the old plan has failed. And that old plan was what they campaigned on. They campaigned on, in the election, they said if they were the government, they would reduce waiting lists in this province. Well they haven't. In fact I've been led to believe that there are some waiting lists even longer now than they were in the last election.

So they're going to fix this with a new plan. The old plan didn't work. The new plan we're going to introduce. But we're not going to see the results of the new plan until after the next election. Vote for me, trust me, I guess is what they're trying to say. Well, Mr. Speaker, that plan has failed as they have failed the people of Saskatchewan. On a health care issue, this government has admitted to failing.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, another failure, another failure to bring financial stability to our province. Remember when they became government and they inherited \$2.3 billion, \$2.3 billion at a time that resource revenues were flowing in at a rate never heard of before in this province. It was flowing in. They had money to spend, so they put together a rainy day fund, put nearly \$2 billion into a rainy day fund.

But I believe it was the Premier, not certainly the other members of the government opposite said, that was going to be the rainy day fund, and that was going to be a fund like a rock — a rock the Saskatchewan people could lean on for generations to come. That money was going to be there as the rock of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, two years have gone by and what's happened? They've stripped money out of that rainy day fund. They stripped money out of that rainy day fund in order to balance the books, and they're going to be stripping more in order to hope to balance the books for this year. And, Mr. Speaker, two years ago they set up a rock, and today some two years later, they've turned that rock into a marshmallow. Mr. Speaker, last spring, with their overenthusiastic predictions of resource revenue, has now come back to haunt them.

This summer, in touring the province of Saskatchewan, that was one of the things that was common. And it didn't matter really who we were talking to, whether we were talking to municipal leaders or urban leaders or various different groups, Mr. Speaker, and certainly they weren't New Democrats, but they all expressed this underlying fear of this government's ability to maintain its spending level. They realized that this government had increased their spending in two short years by in excess of 30 per cent. And they wondered what would happen if, as we were seeing at that time, resource revenues going down. Good folks out there were beginning to wonder what would happen as they strip away the rainy day fund. What happens when that's gone? Oh they can buy themselves a year or two or maybe even three, but it's taking their money out of the rainy day fund and bailing themselves out.

But what happens then? That was the question that was being posed to us. What happens then? Well, Mr. Speaker, the last two years have been kind of interesting and in some ways even exciting in Saskatchewan. There was a song made popular a number of years back by — I believe it was — by the Dave Clark Five. The name, a number of years ago, but the Deputy Premier obviously remembers the song. It was a catchy tune. It was called, "Catch Us If You Can."

An Hon. Member: — That was Dave Clark Five.

Mr. Harper: — Dave Clark Five, that's what I said, Dave Clark Five, "Catch Us If You Can". Nice tune, good tune. And it was to that same tune, Mr. Speaker, it was to that same tune that the Sask Party members over there travelled the province over the last two years, and they were humming and singing that same tune. The words they were using was, we have lots of money to spend; we have lots of money to spend.

Well, Mr. Speaker, today in Saskatchewan, today in Saskatchewan as a result of the fiscal mismanagement, fiscal mismanagement that's now becoming accountable to this government — and people of Saskatchewan are recognizing that — today the people of Saskatchewan are singing, they are singing to the same tune as the Dave Clark Five, only they're using a little different words. The words they're using in Saskatchewan today is, uh-oh, here we go again. Uh-oh, here we go again.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite they don't have to panic. It's two years. It's two years. It's two years to the next election, two years to the next election. And a lot of things can happen in politics in a week, let alone two years. And I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that when the election does roll around in 2011, let me assure the members opposite that the people of this province will change their tune. They will change their tune, the tune they will be humming as they go to the polls in the next election. Urban Saskatchewan, as they're driving along the streets and they see the big billboard over that says vote for Sask Party, or in rural Saskatchewan when they're driving along the grids roads and in the ditches, there are signs in the ditches saying vote for the Sask Party, the good folks of Saskatchewan will be singing a jazz tune, "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" is what they'll be singing.

Mr. Speaker, I am voting, I am voting, I am voting for the

amendments.

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We're so very happy to be speaking today in support of our government's Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank several people. First I'd like to thank my family, my wife Martha and our daughter Jacqueline, for their love and support. We all know, Mr. Speaker, the impact of our positions as it relates to the amount of time that we can spend with our families. We are humbled and honoured, you know, regardless of party, regardless of partisanship, to hold these positions. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that our families bear the brunt of the service that we undertake. I want to also offer my sincere thanks to my broader family, to my mom and my dad, to my sister, to my grandparents, Bill and Sheila. But tonight, Mr. Speaker, my thoughts are with my other grandmother, Blanche Côté. She's fighting a courageous and final struggle with cancer. And she's in my thoughts, she's in my thoughts tonight, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank our remarkable team in Greystone. Kalle and Brendan Curson and their new son Emmett, Kathy Ejack, Lesley Porter — all doing excellent work. A lot of other former colleagues, many neighbours, friends for their ongoing support, I offer again my sincere appreciation.

I'd also like to extend congratulations to two new MLAs: in Regina Douglas Park, on the return of a gentleman who's returned to this Assembly; and Saskatoon Riversdale. Welcome to the new member. My daughter goes to the Saskatoon French School, so I'm in your constituency on a regular basis, and it's a fine part of Saskatoon.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also highlight though the efforts of Kathleen Peterson and Corey O'Soup. Our candidates did remarkable work. They organized remarkable teams, and it was just an honour to be associated with both of them, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to acknowledge the outstanding people who make up the office here: Linda Roy, Jenn Franks, Matthew Glover, Laura Buckley, Lindell Veitch, and Mary Donlevy-Konkin.

And I want to also extend a thanks to the officials in the ministry. Our deputy minister, Clare Isman, is doing excellent work. She's tireless in her efforts. And that thank you extends all the way through to our front-line people, right across the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour as well as into the WCB [Workers' Compensation Board], into the Apprenticeship Commission. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to work with all of these officials.

I thought I'd start my substantive comments, Mr. Speaker, by talking a little bit about the economy. To do that is to make the connection because it's so important to the people of this province, to our communities. We know we're not immune from what's going on around us, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time we know there are real signs of optimism.

Recently the Dominion Bond Rating Service upgraded

Saskatchewan's credit ratings. And the rationale offered related to the reductions in debt, our fiscal prudence, sound economic fundamentals, and the second best debt to GDP ratio in the Dominion. That's significant, Mr. Speaker, because it helps to set the tone for what we're doing — moving forward while others perhaps may have a vision for moving the province backwards.

Mr. Speaker, while we know there have been layoffs and we're working diligently with some of the affected manufacturers and those in the resource sector, we need to highlight that Saskatchewan still has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Saskatoon and Regina respectively have the lowest unemployment among major cities in the country.

It's important to note that we've added, as has already been said, more than 16,000 people to our population, Mr. Speaker, just in the last year. It's important because, as we work to meet our talent challenge, as we work to meet more, work more closely with First Nations and Métis peoples in our province, as we work to ensure that our ex-pats are invited back home, as we work to ensure that newcomers realize that we want them to call Saskatchewan home — not for a few months, not for a few years but to actually stay and raise their families and have their careers and benefit from and contribute to our increasingly diverse, dynamic, and cosmopolitan communities . . . We know, Mr. Speaker, that we're not immune from what's going on around us, and I don't want to minimize that.

I want to make sure that we are empathizing with and working on behalf of those that are feeling the effects of what's going on around us. Through the ministry, we're undertaking some significant steps. Our Canada-Saskatchewan rapid response teams are working diligently to help workers affected by the global economic downturn through layoffs or production slowdowns. The rapid response teams promote federal and provincial programs and services like the work sharing program that protects jobs through challenging times, the provincial skills training benefit that supports the training and career development of individuals. And importantly, Mr. Speaker, so far we've been able to assist 1,300 individuals and prevent more than 640 layoffs.

As we focus on our communities, Mr. Speaker, it's important for us to focus on what the Premier has established as a bold vision for health care in Saskatchewan through the excellent and endless efforts of our Minister of Health. I'm proud to support that vision. The Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour plays a key role in helping our province train and keep the highly qualified health care professionals that are the backbone of our health care system.

And I want to take a moment to thank all of the health care workers who joined us here at the legislature today during this Health Care Providers' Week. As my colleague, the Minister of Health, stated earlier today, day in and day out, these amazing women and men help mend the bodies, heal the spirits, and save the lives of our neighbours, friends, and family.

But the sad truth, Mr. Speaker, is that there just aren't enough of them working in our system. We need more and we know that there's more to do. We've already seen success in recruiting and retraining nurses. There are over 500 more nurses

in Saskatchewan than on November 7th, 2007, when we took office. And we're going to keep working with partners locally and globally to continue to recruit and retain even more nurses.

We're also focusing on recruiting and training and retaining more doctors, and again the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour will be proud to support these efforts, especially those led by the Minister of Health. We're working with partners in health care to recruit internationally educated health care professionals and we're doing this through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program.

[20:30]

That leads us to a discussion, Mr. Speaker, of post-secondary education, skills training, personal and professional development. Training and keeping health care professionals is only one piece of our government's commitment to post-secondary education, skills training, and development. Mr. Speaker, our government is helping to position Saskatchewan to be a national leader in post-secondary education, in skills training, in areas of development, in research, in innovation, in the knowledge economy, and we're making investments that are needed to make that a reality. Over the last two years, Mr. Speaker, we've dedicated over \$1.1 billion to that task.

The key emphasis obviously focuses on people, but what we've realized is that we need more spaces for our students, for our faculty members, for our scholars to learn, and, in some instances, to live. Since taking office our government has invested more than \$150 million into post-secondary infrastructure alone. That's the biggest post-secondary infrastructure investment ever.

And certainly when I've met with Dean Chuck Rhodes at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, and he says this is making all the difference to be able to complete this project, to ensure that we maintain our competitive advantage across Canada and around the world, and that we're better positioned to make contributions in research relating to zoonotic diseases. That means that Saskatchewan is making a difference, Mr. Speaker. It's making a difference here at home. It's making a difference around the world.

Our government has also supported the first ever SIAST student housing facility at Woodland Campus. We were just up there a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, for that announcement. I was able to meet two of the families moving into that new facility.

And of course we're getting under way with the new residence at the University of Saskatchewan. When I arrived as a graduate student in 1994 at the University of Saskatchewan, it was obvious, it was apparent that residences were needed. It's been a long time coming, Mr. Speaker, but we've been able to deliver on this when members of the other party just simply overlooked that priority of providing housing in Saskatoon.

There have been some comments earlier this evening regarding the academic health science building. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll phrase it like this: construction's under way; we're under budget.

And the track record of those members opposite, well it rests

simply like this: they were willing to allow the College of Medicine to go on probation. They were willing to risk training doctors in Saskatchewan forever. We said, that's no way to go forward, Mr. Speaker. We've increased the number of seats. We're going to go up to 100. We've increased residences. We're going to go up to 120, Mr. Speaker. D-wing is well under construction. And I was just on campus on Sunday morning. E-wing is already started. Those preparations are under way, Mr. Speaker. And there were cost savings so that the people of the province were able to ensure that they received some dollars back, Mr. Speaker.

This speaks both to our government's commitment to post-secondary infrastructure and to previous neglect, Mr. Speaker. It's also part of a broader commitment that we've had, more than \$2 billion, regarding infrastructure across the province, Mr. Speaker.

And if I may, Mr. Speaker, I'll speak a little bit about what that means for us. It means we want to see increased competition within the construction sector. It's one of the reasons we're moving forward with Bill 80, to have a more robust and competitive construction industry, a growing industry within Saskatchewan. We want to maximize taxpayer investments in infrastructure and support major private sector investments right across the province.

Now what does that mean, having a more robust construction sector? It means there's more choice. It means government shouldn't choose unions for workers or associations for employers. So employee choice, Mr. Speaker, regarding which union or bargaining unit can provide representation; employee choice regarding the type of bargaining unit employees seek to belong to. That can be a traditional tradecraft or it can be a multi-craft bargaining unit according to Bill 80, Mr. Speaker, as happens in other provinces, Mr. Speaker.

For union choice, it means which unions are able to participate in the construction sector. Mr. Speaker, this is pretty fundamental to a democracy — freedom of association. It also offers us an opportunity to clarify the issue of abandonment. And finally, it offers an alternative to the status quo, a status quo that is no longer likely constitutional, Mr. Speaker. Freedom of association has evolved within the Canadian constitutional, judicial network and framework of decision making.

And we've been able to ensure that this is a flexible, reasonable, moderate response to ensure that we have a more robust and competitive construction sector offering greater choice, greater clarity, and moving forward for Saskatchewan's construction sector.

Mr. Speaker, I'll make one additional comment before I circle back into the specific remarks regarding the speech, and that relates to a few individuals who have commented and quoted Winston Churchill. I'll follow in their stead. He once said that only the facts can tell the tale and the public ought now to have them.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Fairview this evening misconstrued a comment that I made last week, and I want to be very explicit about this. Last week I offered informal criticism

on a point made by the Leader of the Official Opposition, not for what was included in the economic model that he was offering, but over whom he omitted in his analysis.

He mentioned — and these are obvious, Mr. Speaker — the value of organized labour within Canada. Of course. Since 1872 unions have been recognized and legitimated for their important role. The Leader of the Official Opposition also recognized the significance of private and public entities, including co-operatives. Of course, Mr. Speaker. This speaks to our history within Saskatchewan, but also more than 500 years of enterprise within Canada.

He then made mention, Mr. Speaker, of the vital role for government. And again we can go back to the 1890s and see where this regulatory role began, whether that was addressing areas of new competition, regulation, public ownership. And we can look at an example, for example, the *Combines Investigation Act* passed in 1900. All of these in the late 1800s, early 1900s.

But the Leader of the Official Opposition, he left a significant gap regarding who he missed, who he discounted, for the efforts of thousands of people across Saskatchewan were missed by his three categories.

There are other categories. The most significant for us would be what the OECD [Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development] calls social partners — the open door societies, the literacy organizations, churches and community networks, and a whole range of other community-based organizations. Mr. Speaker, our government, we are working to ensure that we are more inclusive, that we are forward looking in our relationships with these social partners because we recognize the significance of their efforts for our community and for our economy. Unfortunately what we had presented last week — and perhaps we'll have an opportunity, I hope so, to debate the model that was on offer — it's a model that's rooted in decades past.

Mr. Speaker, I'll now return to the substance of the speech and it relates to key areas where we're making progress. We've put additional dollars into apprenticeship, Mr. Speaker, more than \$17 million in apprenticeship. This has resulted in over 8,900 registered apprentices as of June 30th, 2009, a 64 per cent increase from approximately 5,400 registered in 2005.

And that's not all. This year alone, through budget '09-10, we invested \$23.5 million to keep tuition reasonable; up to 18.5 million to expand the graduate retention program, including 6.5 million in new funding; \$2.8 million to index the provincial training allowance for shelter and energy costs; \$2.2 million for student loan enhancements, the first enhancements of their kind since 1994; 1.8 million in new funding for regional colleges, and expanding the Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems or MITACS program, which has opened up even more opportunities for graduate students for their research to be linked into Saskatchewan industry.

And we created a new Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour, an award that's been mentioned already today, Mr. Speaker, a day that I think it's safe to say members on the government side and the opposition side took great appreciation in being able to

honour those who serve our country. And I would like to pay special appreciation and note of congratulations to the Minister of Corrections and Policing. His work as liaison officer has served our province so very well. Thank you, sir.

You know, Mr. Speaker, along the way, along the way I've had an opportunity to meet a lot of interesting people, as we all have. But one of the most interesting has been in a women's shelter, and she was a three-year-old girl, Mr. Speaker, a young First Nations girl. And at the time I was on crutches, and she came over and began to ask me, what happened to your leg? And I thought, you know, that's not really the question. The question is, how can we help you, little girl?

Because we know statistically, Mr. Speaker — Eric Howe has done some work — that for a First Nations or Métis woman who doesn't graduate from grade 12, she's not likely to make \$100,000 in her life. And we know what imperative that means for all of us in this House. It means we need to work even harder.

And so we need to redouble our efforts regarding First Nations and Métis people because Professor Howe has also done some analytical work to say if that little girl, if we can make sure she graduates from grade 12, if we can make sure she enters and graduates from a diploma or certificate or degree program, then her earnings — as just one indicator, but an important one, of her quality of life — will then begin a trajectory up 250,000 or 500,000 or 1 million.

And as important as the money is, the gifts that she possesses, whether maybe she'll play the cello or discover a cure for cancer, that she'll be able to meet her full potential, Mr. Speaker. That's the imperative with which we all work.

And that's why in the speech we highlighted the importance of the province's First Nations and Métis peoples and the funding that we've provided to the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, to other post-secondary educational institutions right across the province to help ensure that more First Nations and Métis peoples have the skills and education they need to enter our growing workforce.

Mr. Speaker, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour there are over 70,000 learners. More than 13,000 of those are First Nation and Métis peoples. We know there's more to do. That's why in this latest budget, '09-10, we included over \$30 million for First Nations and Métis post-secondary education, skills training, personal, professional development opportunities — a 31 per cent increase over '08-09, our first budget. And there are millions of additional dollars embedded in other investments that we make within this ministry and well beyond that have those same objectives.

And we're working in partnership with other levels of government, with industry, with First Nations and Métis communities to increase employment and educational opportunities through initiatives like the two Aboriginal skills and employment partnerships.

These are called ASEP [Aboriginal skills and employment

partnership]. We have one in northern Saskatchewan. It's \$33 million. It's helping to train over 1,000 people. It's the largest of its kind in Canada. We're delighted to be working with the private sector, with the federal government, with a number of First Nation organizations across the North. This focuses specifically on the mineral sector.

We've just launched a second one, Mr. Speaker, with a focus on Saskatoon where more than 400 people are being trained in the construction trades, and they're being trained, Mr. Speaker, well they're being trained while they're building affordable houses.

[20:45]

These are the types of projects that we're undertaking in this province, Mr. Speaker. We're doing more regarding construction career projects that have provided our construction industry an increasingly skilled labour pool and initial work experience for those participants.

In both Regina and Saskatoon, we have the trades and skills centres which offer skills trades training for youth who are still in high school and young adults who want to better prepare themselves for work and their careers. In fact we just had another announcement in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, regarding even more dollars for that trades and skills centre.

We have workplace essential skills . . . We have pilot projects that are enabling 250 workers and job seekers to build the skills they need for long-term employment and advancement through partnerships between public training institutions, industry, employers, and community-based organizations.

And most recently, we've launched up in La Ronge the fourth phase of the multi-party training plan, an agreement between 11 public, private, and non-profit partners. The total funding for this agreement is 12.7 million over five years for training in apprenticeship opportunities in northern Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour is providing \$3 million, close to one-quarter of the total agreement funding.

Through this multi-party training plan, over 100 mining-related training opportunities are provided each year, as well as scholarships and additional supports for apprentices and northern contractors. I met one of the young students already participating in this. We're seeing young students at the University of Saskatchewan actually form their own association so that, through peer learning and peer support, they can ensure that they're succeeding in their studies and succeeding on their career paths.

On the employment side, we continue to see gains in First Nations and Métis youth employment. In September 2009, employment among First Nations and Métis youth aged 15 to 24 was 8,400 — up by 300 for a 3.7 per cent increase from a year ago.

Of course I need to mention another important milestone, and that was a summit that we held — that is the Deputy Premier and myself — through CMEC [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada], a national summit on Aboriginal education

that we hosted in Saskatoon. It was historic. For two days, ministers from across the country met with national and regional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit leaders, former prime minister the Rt. Hon. Paul Martin came in. And we came out with a clear vision on future steps.

And I want to applaud the Deputy Premier for his work on this file on the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system. After all, Mr. Speaker, when First Nations and Métis students, when their families, when employers and employees, when our communities, when we succeed, we think we're getting closer to Saskatchewan succeeding because we know that the secret of this province meeting its full potential is to have each and every one of our individual citizens meet their full potential.

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't touch on immigration. As we focus on meeting our talent challenge, helping first and foremost those people across our province as well inviting back our expats, we're also inviting newcomers from across Canada and around the world. From across Canada, we have some numbers. In the fourth quarter, almost a thousand people came in from other parts of Canada. Nine hundred twenty-one of those came in from Ontario, people seeking a new life not unlike 100 years ago where they see Saskatchewan and the West as a land of opportunity, not without its challenges but with a real sense of purpose and pride.

As mentioned in the Throne Speech, our targets have moved up to 3,400 nominees. When families are included, we anticipate that that means 10,000 people will be arriving over the next 12 to 18 months. Let me give you a reference point, Mr. Speaker. Between 2001 and 2006, Saskatchewan brought in just over 8,000 people through both federal and provincial immigration programs. What we're talking about is ensuring that we are able to reach those targets on an annual basis. The reason for this is that we need to ensure that our communities continue to be revitalized and our workforce continues to grow. And we've certainly caught the attention of other governments including Ottawa.

During that same period of time, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba brought in over 30,000 people. What we're doing is simply picking up our game to ensure that we're competitive with our neighbours. And our goal is to have the best immigration system in the country. We're not there yet, Mr. Speaker, but we're well under way.

But importantly this is not about numbers. This is about our neighbours, and that's why we ensured that there were more than 2 million additional dollars put into the budget this year to help for additional settlement activities. That's more than \$12.5 million dedicated to immigration.

We know there's more to do, and that's why I want to send a special and deliberate thank you to those settlement agencies, to those community-based organizations, to those church groups, to our institutions who are helping to ensure that people who are coming to Saskatchewan as newcomers that they have an opportunity call Saskatchewan home. And certainly we're on the right track, Mr. Speaker.

We have just launched a new initiative, Mr. Speaker, as part of our broader strategy. We launched that strategy in Greystone

Heights School, right in the heart of Saskatoon Greystone, one of the most cosmopolitan schools that there is. And what we were able to do, Mr. Speaker, is move forward on a number of fronts. Most recently we announced our entrepreneurship streams. We said that it's time for us to move forward because entrepreneurs coming in to live in Saskatchewan are helping in key areas of succession planning. We know that over the next five years, 40 per cent of small- and medium-sized businesses within Saskatchewan are looking for ways to transition their leadership — that is, transition the ownership and senior managers. This is a way to help address that, Mr. Speaker.

We're also focusing on ways to ensure that it's easier for those from other countries seeking to invest in our impressive R & D establishments, research and development establishments and institutions, have the opportunity to do that.

We're also undertaking work that links some of those international investors with First Nations and Métis communities. That remains a work in progress. I've sat in on one of those dialogues — very, very impressive to see the amount of energy and the ideas that are coming along. And, Mr. Speaker, we've also identified a mega investor class to help ensure that those who are focused on creating more jobs in Saskatchewan can receive the attention from government that they warrant.

Out of this, Mr. Speaker, we anticipate that over the next two to three years there will be about \$90 million entering the province through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, the entrepreneurship stream. And that will help to foster and facilitate about 900 new jobs. Mr. Speaker, this is just a small contribution our government is making to help ensure that we're sustaining the growth that's under way in Saskatchewan and sharing the benefits of that growth with the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more to say, but I will simply conclude with this. The Speech from the Throne highlighted many exciting areas of endeavour for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. I look forward as always to working with our Premier, with my caucus colleagues, with our ministry officials, and most importantly with people right across this beautiful province of ours to help ensure that this Speech from the Throne further builds the promise and potential of Saskatchewan. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'll be voting in favour of this speech, and I hope everyone in this Chamber does too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well I'm honoured once again to stand in this Assembly and speak to the Speech from the Throne and enter the debate.

Before I start, I'd like to join my colleagues on my side of House with congratulating the two new members to our Assembly. The member from Saskatoon Riversdale, I heard a lot of good things about her while I was out door knocking with our candidate in Saskatoon Riversdale. She seems like a very fine lady and a hard worker. And I enjoyed a little bit of her

company at the Lieutenant Governor's house the other day, and I enjoyed watching her young child playing on the floor. And I just hope she hangs on to a lot of that kindness and that sweetness that she brings to this Assembly because, you know, it is definitely a refreshing, refreshing personality.

I'd also like to welcome the new member from Regina Douglas Park and, as has been said, he has graced this Assembly before. And I couldn't help, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my work past over the 9 or 10 months with the honourable member from Martensville, the Minister of Environment, my work with specifically the three Rs — reduce, reuse, recycle — I couldn't help but focus on the recycle side of that as I welcome the new member back to this Assembly.

I would first off really like to, as some of the other members on this side have done as well and I think members on the other side, have thanked their families. Without my family, the support of my family, I definitely couldn't do this job. I wouldn't be able to be here without their support. So to my wife, Leone, my daughters, Katelin and Rayanne, thank you very much for all the support they give me and all the leeway they give me in carrying out this job.

And it isn't easy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Quite often when attending public events where, you know, your wife maybe wants to dance, you're taken away and talking to people about certain situations. And it can be very difficult, but my wife time and time again just proves her understanding and letting me do the job that the people expect me to do in representing them. So I thank her very much for doing that as well as the children allowing me to be away from home as much as I am and being as understanding and loving and caring and supporting me in that. Again I thank them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The people of Yorkton, I can't say enough about them. Obviously, I mean, Yorkton has a wide demographic of political beliefs and philosophies. There's a strong New Democrat movement there. There's a strong Sask Party movement there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One thing I found very encouraging in carrying out my job in the constituency is the understanding there as well. Quite often some of the kindest notes and words I've gotten have been from people I know didn't support me in the election. But by carrying out the job in the best way I can and being as fair and equal of everybody, looking after their constituency concerns, trying to get success with all case files . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I say, quite often some of the kindest notes and letters and words come from people I know never supported me, but I'm hopeful that they will at least consider us in the next election two years from now.

The business community in Yorkton, the whole community as a whole, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very supportive, very kind, and always there to give a kind word and keep you going when you're having a tough day or even a successful day. They're always there encouraging, no matter what.

My colleagues on this side of the floor, as well as at home . . . My two girls that work for me there, Annie and Laretta, I couldn't do the job I do without them. Their capacity in work and their people skills are second to none. And time and time

again, I continuously get feedback from constituents and people around the province who have come across them at different meetings and the like, with just their kindness and their work ethic and their skill and the way they help me and support me in carrying the job that we have to do as a team back in Yorkton.

Back to my colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I couldn't imagine working with a more diplomatic, a more cohesive team: no egos, no personalities, Mr. Speaker, everybody working together, helping each other out. And I think that's a big reason how we're able to keep moving this province forward is . . . Well that positive attitude, that work ethic, that cohesiveness — it does rub off. As I've heard many members on this side of the House as well speak about . . . I think my friend, the member from Saskatoon Northwest talked about that, where the attitude just carries through. It's almost like a virus but a good virus, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that spreads throughout the constituencies, throughout the province, and is why we have such a positive attitude and optimistic attitude going throughout the province as we do.

As I mentioned, the Minister of Environment, working with her is a very pleasant experience.

The work I did formerly with the Minister of Social Services, the member from Humboldt, again a very good experience and very encouraging, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see how a lot of what would be perceived as formerly New Democrat-type areas of expertise or support where we have found success. We've found where the people need help. We've been able to carry through and help them with a lot of the work done through Social Services, with the supports and the helps coming through that ministry. The work ethic and the hard work coming from that member is very reflective, I believe, in the Throne Speech. And I will get to speaking about that more in detail.

I've heard the odd, I guess, lighthearted jab I think, at our Premier, the member from Swift Current, referred to as a cheerleader. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe he is a cheerleader and a sorely needed cheerleader for this province. We've seen this province for year upon year, decade upon decade being sort of dragged back by the doom and gloom attitude, this province can never grow attitude, we'll never be as good as our neighbours attitude. And that just isn't acceptable. It isn't acceptable on this side of the House. It shouldn't be acceptable on that side of the House either.

[21:00]

And if we break down that word cheerleader . . . cheer, well I think a lot of us over here cheer. I really reflected on the comments of my friend, my colleague, the member from Lloydminster, in his speech to the Throne, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about, you know, what's so bad about cheering for your home team? What's so bad about cheering for a child? What's so bad about cheering for a friend? What's so bad about cheering for our home province? If we aren't going to cheer for this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who will? Who will? If the opposition doesn't want to, that's their philosophy. The government, the Sask Party members on this side of the House, definitely will be cheering for our province and our home.

Again getting back to our Premier, yes he's a cheerleader, Mr.

Deputy Speaker. He's been cheering this province up, not only within our borders which . . . you know, all due respect to the former member from Riversdale — a very nice man, always pleasant to talk to, philosophically different than myself in a lot of respects to be sure but, you know, always there for the province — but quite honestly from my point of view, inward-looking.

We're looking outward, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're looking outside the borders. We're looking at what works in other jurisdictions, what works in other provinces, building relationships that goes across the country, around the world, and we're seeing the fruits of those labours right now. We've seen the potash industry take a little bit of a hit over the last year. That can be expected in any resource-based industry. But still we're out there promoting our province, looking for other avenues. The Premier's out there looking for other opportunities for our province and, as the Throne Speech says, moving forward. We are moving this province forward.

Breaking that word down a little bit further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other half of that word is leader. And I've said over and over again at anywhere I've been able to speak or anywhere I've been able to share with my personal thoughts and my personal feelings about our Premier, the member from Swift Current, is . . . I've never found or run across in my life another true-born leader as he is. I've run across different leaders in different areas and different things I've been involved with before, but quite often will find, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at times those people are more of a dictator than a leader. I don't know. You know, I can't speak for any members across the floor. I can speak for this member who I refer to not only as a leader, but I've grown to know him as a friend and a confidante. Someone you can share . . . even very interested in your personal life. If he thinks you're having a bad day, he's more than interested to take a couple of minutes out his day to see how things are going — how's the family, how's the wife? — interested in the people back home, interested in the community, interested in the province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to me that's a true leader, not somebody that rules by an iron fist, not somebody that rules by dictatorship but somebody that rules by example — kindly, respectfully — but can rule regardless, the type of a leader where people don't have to follow. Every member on this side of the floor, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wants to follow, and to me that's the sign of a true, honest-to-God leader. And I truly believe that's what we have on this side of the floor.

And if you look around the province, speak to people around the province — philosophical differences, political differences — I hear the same thing over and over again. Well I'm not sure if I'm philosophically aligned with your party. I'm not sure if I, you know, am really excited about openly supporting you, but you know, that member from Swift Current — almost said his name — that member from Swift Current is definitely what we've needed in this province for year upon year upon year. And now we're seeing where that's taking us, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I've heard a reference over and over again to these metaphorical pompoms. Initially I was a little upset. I heard about these pompoms. And I've never been a cheerleader in the true sense

of the word. Metaphorically, no doubt, I . . . [inaudible] . . . My wife was a cheerleader. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, anybody that knows my history with my wife, my family, we've been together for 29 years, and she was a cheerleader when we were in high school. And I have to admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that had a little bit to do with my attraction to her. There's nothing like a good-looking blonde cheerleader in high school. But I regress.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to get back to attitude. And over and over again . . . And this is something I've lived my life by, especially over the last number of years. And it's all about attitude. And I found and it's true — and whether you believe in New Age, whether you believe in Christian spirituality, whatever — over and over again different beliefs and different philosophies around the world will pretty much say the same thing: what you think about is what you bring about. And thinking negative thoughts, talking about the rainy days here, needing an umbrella, well I think one of my colleagues in a conversation here over the last days mentioned something about I'd rather have pompoms than an umbrella. And that goes to attitude, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You've got to believe. You've got to believe in yourself. You have to believe in the province. We over here in the government, we believe in this province.

Granted we had some hiccups. The Minister of Finance has referred to a mistake. If anybody remembers back to *Happy Days*, the Fonz, he couldn't say the word. He was . . . [inaudible] . . . the Fonz was . . . [inaudible] . . . Well the Finance minister has said we were wrong. We were wrong in information we have gotten from experts that are widely recognized throughout the world, throughout their province, throughout the industry, time and time again have had spot-on information, and they were right on the numbers with what projections we could expect in our resources. As I think has been pointed out by other members, the pricing wasn't the problem. The sales volumes were the problem, something nobody could forecast.

But what seems to be neglected to be mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the same thing happened with oil, only the other way. We are looking at almost double prices of oil that were forecast which has offset some of those potash misforecasts as well as other things like tax, PST [provincial sales tax], PST income that has come in because of the unbelievably high amount of retail sales we've experienced in the province.

The members across, as they chirp and holler, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they like to paint that bleak picture. But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people in Yorkton aren't buying it. And over and over again, over the past number of weeks, we're in the fall supper season right now, and I've been enjoying the fall suppers at churches and organizations around the constituency from Rokeby . . . I wasn't able to go to the Willowbrook one last Saturday because of the Health Foundation gala — I might touch on that a bit later — but wasn't able to take them all in. But I take in as many as I can.

And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking to these people . . . and I know they're not all my supporters. But time and time again, what do I hear? You guys are doing a great job, keep up the

good work. They're not hearing the doom and gloom. They're not listening to the doom and gloom from the other side of the floor. They're understanding that things, some of the resource industries are having a little bit of trouble much like a farmer might experience a crop failure, short-term thing.

Year over year, it's not going to happen. We'll be looking at some more resource revenues coming in, in the coming months and years to offset the downturn that we've seen and experience the growth as has been mentioned again by my friendly member from Saskatoon Northwest, GDP expected to grow over the next couple of years at three and a half per cent. So we'll be awaiting that, waiting that to happen, and we'll be planning ahead and enjoying that as it comes in.

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — It's getting just loud enough that I can't hear. And I'd appreciate the opportunity to hear each of these speakers as they take the floor, and the member from Yorkton has the floor. We'd appreciate hearing what he's got to say.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So what's the best word that wraps up all these comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Optimism, optimism, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what we're seeing around the province, and we're not going to let any words from across the floor influence that. Now getting to the Throne Speech . . .

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I would appreciate being able to hear the speech. I think we have agreement that it's the honourable thing to let members speak as they have the floor, and I'd like the member from Yorkton to continue.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now getting back to the Throne Speech, "Moving Forward," and you know when I first read the Throne Speech, I thought what an aptly named speech. The quote from Einstein I thought really points it all out. It's like riding a bicycle. If you want to maintain your balance, which we need a balance in this province, you have to move forward. Continually moving the province forward, keeping a close eye on all things that affect the province and keeping our balance will suit us just very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was very excited to see the reference in the Throne Speech the 16,000 people, the growth the size of Yorkton we've gotten over the last number of months and year, another city the size of Yorkton effectively within this province. Yorkton is actually up I think over 17,000, so we're getting up, and by this point, we probably have caught up, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Again as mentioned by other members on this side of the House, unemployment rates all-time low. The lowest unemployment rate Saskatoon, second is Regina. Property tax limits through the education property tax incentives we have brought in, very well received throughout the province. We're seeing that great effect, not only in homeowners but specifically landowners, farmers, ranchers. Very excited about these initiatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Again massive record investments in infrastructure including our roads and highways, another very welcome addition to the province, helping to keep our economy strong and grow. We all know we need that strong infrastructure, that positive infrastructure to keep our economy moving, and that's what we're seeing. Not only is it a boost to the economy, but it's something well needed in the province that we all well know has left to decline over the past number of years.

The member from Lloydminster touched on, as well, the five best cities to invest in, in the province. I don't think that point can be repeated enough. Him and I have this ongoing sort of a debate over the third largest trading area, third best trading area. This pretty much proves it, Mr. Speaker. I will concede that the member from Lloydminster has, I would argue, probably the third strongest trading area in the province. Yorkton still is the third largest. His economy is quite strong. We're in close, nipping at his heels there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I reflect on the numbers. It's cities over 25,000 I think, Yorkton at 17,000, very close in the running and for a city the size of 17,000 with such a strong trading area, again the third largest trading area. Lloydminster, welcome cousin in the area of economy, and I'm glad to see that Lloydminster's doing so well.

Any interviews I've done, the first thing that the interviewers want to talk about is our initiatives in health, talking about what a lofty goal that may be, reducing the wait times for surgeries to three months within four years. Now, Mr. Speaker, I've heard a lot of doubt and maybe doom and gloom on that point as well. But quickly people realize the lofty goal we had with nursing. The Minister of Health, the Legislative Secretary for Health — the member from Regina Qu'Appelle — very successful in that front. Within a year, we were 570-some nurses. We're 30 per cent to go to that goal.

As the member for Lloydminster said as well, set that bar high. Let's try and meet that goal. If we don't measure up to that goal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can measure ourselves. Where did we come up short? We can admit we were wrong. We came up short of that goal; how can we better change our plans to meet that goal next time? There's no sense setting the bar so low that we can attain it but it's not going to get us anywhere. We've got to recognize where our needs are, and we're going to strive for that goal. And if we come up short, we're going to try and do better next time.

It's not for us, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's for the people of this province. It's for my wife. It's for my in-laws. It's for my parents. It's for our children. If we're going to maintain our health care system and get to the point that we have to get for when a lot of us are getting up in years — I've got a couple years to the time I hopefully need that extended care — but we want to make sure that we start building that system for the future. It's not going to get done in one day, as the Minister of Health pointed out, but we've gotten some great headway on that. We've gained some great momentum.

And looking at a lot of the strategies that were also mentioned today, we've seen an increase in doctor training seats. We see an increase in nurse training seats. I just got some great news Saturday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the Health Foundation gala

which I mentioned before, that we will soon be having four-year nursing programs at the college in Yorkton. We already have the RPN [registered practical nurse]; we're expanding nursing into Yorkton. Building that college capacity out in some of the more rural areas is an exciting thing. Yorkton used to train nurses back in the '60s, and now finally back, 2010 we will be looking at training nurses again. And that's very welcome to the community.

We've seen improvements for our long-term care for our seniors, as has been mentioned about the investment in some of our long-term care facilities. Some of the places we're not actually adding beds, but we're improving the beds that were up to this point pretty much unliveable, Mr. Deputy Speaker — totally unrealistic and unreasonable for our seniors. We're moving forward. We're getting it done.

So what we're seeing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the health care, is optimism. We have a lot of challenges, but if we keep optimistic I know we can get there.

[21:15]

What I want to touch on now in my closing minutes is some of the work that the member from Humboldt was able to accomplish that just never got done. And we're going back to 1992 with a lot of these things that just weren't improved upon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The seniors' income plan virtually untouched since 1992. In the last year, double recipients, double the income.

Housing. Well we've seen some new low-income housing in Yorkton coming up. We're seeing some more projects coming for at-risk youth in Yorkton, and moving forward, looking at some help for low-income seniors and others, to be sure.

We see a disability plan sorely needed in this province, not necessarily for the income side of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but for the dignity side of things. I've got a lot of friends in the province who have disabled children, and adults that quite frankly are uneasy with the stigma attached to social assistance at times. We see these people, because of their health concerns and their special needs, they will never be able to go to work. They were asking for disability, a separate disability plan from social assistance, for years and years and years. This year, this October, we're getting that done.

The benefits of the income tax cuts to those, a lot of them low-income, or all low-income, some of them with special needs, a lot of them seniors as well. The income tax cuts 80,000 people off of the provincial income tax registers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We see social assistance, transitional employment assistance, food allowances, housing allowances all increased virtually the first time since 1992, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Justice and policing very well received. We're looking at banning texting and hand-held cellphone use in vehicles. Very welcome throughout the province. The police officers, I believe the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety touched on where they're going with that. Yorkton was blessed to be the recipient of two of those police officers. We now see for the first time in probably 15 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Yorkton having a full complement of police officers addressing some of the crime

issues that we have in Yorkton. And having a full force, we have those boots on the street and we're moving forward with that.

Agriculture. Moving AgriStability to Melville, another welcome thing that . . . I've heard some sneers and jeers from across the floor. How is this going to help? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, moving jobs to rural Saskatchewan where we can better look after this program and have those jobs spurring our economy, I think is welcome news.

First Nations and Métis relations. I won't get into that too deeply, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but one thing I have heard from a lot of my friends in the First Nations community, the Aboriginal community, is respect for our Premier. How they've got nothing but good to say about our new Premier, our Premier of two years, that they're looking forward to great things coming with the relationship that they're building with him.

The member from Lloydminster and the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies with the program they're going through, talking about, you know, not focusing just on the nuclear. A lot of the people just want to focus on the nuclear to take away from the other initiatives, but we are looking at wind power, possibility of more hydroelectric power. We're looking at more natural gas plants. We're looking at clean coal. We're looking at all avenues of energy for our province in the coming years. We know that our energy needs are going to double probably in the next 15 years, that we can't just be looking at a one-trick pony, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have to be looking at all forms. And I think they're doing a great job in getting out there and getting that information.

I've heard a few comments about investing in the Olympics. Well you know, I can't say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we shouldn't do that. You look across the provinces. Every one, every province across this great Dominion is investing in forums and in venues at the Olympics to promote the province. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would ask you, how would that look? The province with arguably the best economy, the best and strongest economy in the Dominion of Canada, does not invest in a pavilion at the Olympics. That's ludicrous. And the numbers I've heard thrown around where we know in fact the pavilion itself at the Olympics is half of the numbers that the members throw around, \$3.6 million for the pavilion there, Mr. Speaker.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll conclude my comments. Again thank you to all my colleagues for being the people you are and being as enjoyable as you are to work with. Many thanks to my Premier, the leader and friend that has nothing but respect from this side of the House and the people of the province. And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be voting against the amendment. I'll be voting for the main motion. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a true pleasure to be on my feet this evening, Mr. Speaker, and join the debate on the Throne Speech that was given a few days in the legislature. As I said a couple of days ago in question period, it is great to

be back in the Assembly. It's great to be back with colleagues from both sides debating the issues that are important to people in Saskatchewan and I'm very happy to be here and very happy to enter this debate.

Before I get into my remarks about the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few hellos and a few thank yous to people. Of course every MLA is highly dependent and needs to have a solid constituency assistant back home. And in my situation with Donna working in the office, it's a great feeling to be here in Regina knowing that things are being taken care of in Saskatoon competently and with the good service that individuals are accustomed to when they come to the office. So thank you to Donna.

I also want to thank the staff here in the building, Mr. Speaker, whether that's our caucus staff and the good work they do in supporting us and making us have the information available to us that we need and all the other work, a thank you to them. And everyone else tied into this building, Mr. Speaker. There are a great number of people that are involved in this type of production that goes on here during session and outside of session. And I want them to know we do appreciate, I'm sure all members do appreciate the work that they do.

I also want to say hello and a thank you to my wife, Ruth, for her support. And yes, enough said. And also to my good friend Lindsay, thank you for his support. I do want to make one special hello, Mr. Speaker — and the special hello was to my wife; that one does count — but perhaps a more special hello to my grandma, Ferne Vincent. I know she's at home in Outlook in the Luther facility watching when the legislature is sitting. All members can be confident that my grandma has the TV on the whole time. She listens to everyone equally; she likes to know all the issues. And a special hello to Ferne Vincent in the town of Outlook.

Mr. Speaker, with the new sitting, we also have a couple of new members here in the Assembly. I'd first like to welcome the Leader of the Opposition to his seat, the member of Douglas Park, and say that it is great and it is an exciting time for our party and our caucus and very happy to be part of it.

I also want to . . . Well the members opposite are talking about who supported who. And I can tell you, during the by-elections, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to work a good amount on both of the campaigns going on. And what I found so encouraging and so positive as a New Democrat, Mr. Speaker, was whenever I went into the committee rooms, there was always a wide representation of people working in those offices. And people from all of the leadership campaigns, Mr. Speaker, all the campaigns, all the volunteers are on board and were certainly doing the work that needs to be done at the constituency level and as a party on the whole.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to welcome the new member for Saskatoon Riversdale. I spent the lion's share of my time working in Riversdale during the by-election, and I know that the member will be a great addition to this Assembly, as many other members who have welcomed her have agreed to that statement. Having spent a lot of time door knocking, I know I've seen how individuals respond to her in a very positive way because of her genuine desire to help individuals and to listen.

And I think the members of Riversdale will be served well by the new member for Saskatoon Riversdale for a good number of years, Mr. Speaker.

Last and certainly not least, perhaps the most important — right up there with grandma, I would say — is thanking the constituents of Saskatoon Massey Place. Over the summer I was able to do a good amount of door knocking in my constituency, knocking on a lot of doors in different areas, knocking off a lot of polls, Mr. Speaker, and always good interactions. Happy to hear from individuals who voice concerns with what they see with the Sask Party government, and happy to receive encouragement from them in terms of what we are doing as an opposition. So I thank the good people of Saskatoon Massey Place for their support. And I guess we're about midpoint now in this term and I look forward to the next two years, Mr. Speaker, a great deal.

Well when looking at the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, it's important that before we get into the meat and potatoes, if you could say that — I think that's perhaps an overstatement on this particular Throne Speech because there isn't much in there certainly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Gruel, says the member from Saskatoon Centre, and I'd have to agree with him on many fronts.

It's important to look at the situation that we find ourselves in as a province, Mr. Speaker. And in order to do that it's necessary to look a bit at the current reality that we face. And we do that, Mr. Speaker, I think by looking at the previous budget that we had because the budget and the fiscal state of the province, Mr. Speaker, has great bearing, has great bearing on the ability of government to carry out what they put down on paper in their Throne Speech.

And when we look at that budget, when we look at the current state of the finances here in the province, I think members on both sides of the House and members in the public would agree that we see some very troubling things. We see a situation that is not encouraging, in my opinion.

And there's been a good amount of debate in the first two days here in the legislature and I predict — I don't know, but I predict — that we'll be discussing this for some time here in the legislature. And one of the main issues that we will be discussing, Mr. Speaker, is the huge error that occurred with predictions of potash revenue and where we would be as a province in receiving revenue from the potash industry.

Now a few days ago, on October 22nd, the Minister of Finance in question period, Mr. Speaker . . . We were having this discussion, as you will recall. We were talking about potash numbers and the current state of the books, and the Minister of Finance said — this is in *Hansard* from October 22nd, 2009 — he said, "There is virtually no one in the world that would have predicted what has happened in the potash industry." This is the Minister of Finance's remark on October 22nd. "There is virtually no one in the world that would have predicted what has happened in the potash industry."

So I thought to myself, well I know the Finance minister is a good man, and I wonder if in fact his statement holds water and whether that is a correct assessment of whether or not

individuals in Saskatchewan and here in the province and in this Chamber thought that what was going to potentially happen in the province in regards to potash, would happen.

So I went back, Mr. Speaker, and looked at some of the budget statements that were made at the last budget, knowing that the numbers that we face now here in the province, the budget numbers that we have here in the province have a direct impact and influence on how that Throne Speech that was delivered a couple of days ago will or will not come into being. And what is the motive behind that Throne Speech? Why would they be taking the angle that they are taking, Mr. Speaker?

So if we look back to March 26th, coming out of the budget discussion, the same Finance minister, some time earlier, said, "And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan and members opposite, I am very much convinced we're using cautious, prudent numbers in the presentation of this budget." It goes on further, in these remarks on page 2586, Mr. Speaker, and he says, "And so, Mr. Speaker, you're right if you say that we are optimistic in a prudent and guarded way about the future of this province," Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, with the remarks that the Finance minister said, I mean at the time it sounded like he was saying, well we're, you know, we're pretty careful and, you know, we think we actually . . . numbers aren't bad. And so, so far, according to the member's statement where he said recently in question period a couple of days ago that, well no one could have predicted — well according to the remarks so far, Mr. Speaker, I suppose that's true.

But I dug a little deeper and I looked at some of the other remarks that were made around the budget, Mr. Speaker, and this is where I feel that the statement that he made a few days ago about the ability, a few days ago that no one knew what was coming in the potash industry, I found these statements to shed some additional light on how that initial statement doesn't hold water, in my opinion.

Now the previous member for Regina Douglas Park who was serving as our Finance critic at the time of the last budget, Mr. Speaker, he of course had some comments to make as Finance critic. And, Mr. Speaker, at the time when the Finance critic made his remarks, he took a lot of flak from the members opposite. They were saying oh he's a Debbie Downer, and like come on, how does this guy call himself a Finance critic?

[21:30]

But I think when we see his remarks and we look a little closer at his remarks, I think there may perhaps be some vindication for the former member of Regina Douglas Park. And the member said — this was in a question period exchange, Mr. Speaker, on March 19th, 2009 — the previous member from Regina Douglas Park said:

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party is projecting potash to generate almost \$2 billion, one-fifth of the provincial revenue in the coming budget. This is an incredibly optimistic projection, considering that the Potash Corporation has just announced a further \$1.5 million tonne cut in production, and market reports since the

budget was prepared, market reports also point to changes in price structure, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: did his budget projections take into account the most recent cut in production by PotashCorp?

Well, Mr. Speaker, at the time that the member made this statement, there were all sorts of remarks made by the members opposite. Oh it's not about the production levels; it's about the sales that determine how much revenue is coming in on potash. And they were making fun of the member and saying he doesn't know what he's talking about.

Well, Mr. Speaker, production is the first step to selling the actual potash. So while these initial cuts to production may not necessarily affected the amount of revenue generated from potash, when you looked at what was going on in the world economy, when you saw what other countries, the fiscal state of other countries on a global scale — the countries that buy Saskatchewan potash — it's a fairly logical conclusion and fairly logical understanding that this would have huge implications for the revenues of the province when it comes to potash, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the remarks that Mr. Van Mulligen said, the past Finance critic, clearly, clearly, Mr. Speaker, what the Finance critic was saying a couple days ago about no one knew what was going on, this just came out of nowhere, how could anyone have predicted it, well, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition some time ago — through looking at what was going on in the world and listening to not only the voices they wanted to hear, but looking at all of the analysis and the voices from individuals who were analysing the situation — clearly knew that the numbers that were predicted by the other side were not sound and solid numbers, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not only the numbers, Mr. Speaker. It's not only the amount that he predicted to get from potash, Mr. Speaker, but there's a huge amount of concern about the percentage of provincial revenue that was being placed on potash, 20 per cent, one-fifth of government revenue based on the potash numbers. So it's not only the numbers that were off, Mr. Speaker. That's concerning. But it's the reliance on those numbers that was also concerning. And this too, Mr. Speaker, was pointed out by the opposition.

On March 19th in his reply to the budget, the former member from Regina Douglas Park said, quote:

Well, Mr. Speaker, where I come from, if you have that great a reliance on a single revenue source — to put it in metaphorical terms, if you have that many eggs in one basket — you should be careful. You should be doubly careful, very careful, Mr. Speaker. Because since the budget was put to bed, what we get are indications that may not necessarily be incorporated into the government's assumptions about what is taking place in the potash industry and therefore what kind of revenues we can expect.

So, Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Finance minister said about no one knew what was going to happen, no one predicted this, totally came out of the blue, if we look at the record, Mr.

Speaker, as to what was said in this Assembly — not even what was said around the world by analysts and economists — if we look at just the record in this Assembly, that simply is the not the case, Mr. Speaker. There were plenty of individuals saying that the numbers were off.

So, Mr. Speaker, okay if the Minister of Finance was off on this statement and wasn't clear of the record at the time of the budget, perhaps there were other members, Mr. Speaker, that had a better understanding of what was going on, other members of cabinet who would have a say about potash numbers, would have a say about the state of economy in how things should be controlled. And, Mr. Speaker, when I was considering that, well maybe it's not just the Finance minister; maybe there are other individuals perhaps.

If we look at what the member from Kindersley said, if we look at what the member from Kindersley said, he said — this was on March 13th, 2009 — on the potash numbers, in addition to that, this is what he says, I quote:

In addition to that, we've talked to senior executives of all the potash corporations and said to them, we want your best estimates as to what you think is going to happen in the potash market. They've been very forthcoming with respect to that. [And] They have said . . . they think our numbers are accurate. They think that they may even be on the low side in terms of these projections.

Mr. Speaker, thank goodness the member from Kindersley was not in control the entire budget. I shudder to think of what our current state of the fiscal affairs would be in this province if the member was responsible for the entire picture. So on this, on this issue alone, I will give some credit to the Minister of Finance for his ability to have a bit of control over things even though he was horribly off with his numbers.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't just me saying this, Mr. Speaker. It's not just the opposition that has some serious problems or made some real statements about the state of fiscal affairs in this province. From Murray Mandryk on August 26th from an article, "Gov't made Devine error." I know some of the members opposite who sat under the Devine administration and have a deep fondness and still a deep amount of support and admiration for the man, Mr. Speaker, perhaps don't mind this comparison. Maybe they think being compared to Grant Devine isn't all that bad, perhaps. Yes, happy to be compared to Grant Devine. But if we look at the track record of that Devine government and now if we look at the emerging track record in two years of this Sask Party government, we see some problems. And what this columnist said, Mr. Speaker, on August 26th was, "This happens to be the biggest government miscalculation since PC finance minister Gary Lane's 1986 budget."

So, Mr. Speaker, when the budget came out, there was all sorts of talk, all sorts of talk about how this budget was a historic budget. This budget is the most amazing thing ever. Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget has proven to be a historic budget — historically brutal, Mr. Speaker, historically brutal in its projections for revenue, historically brutal in the way that it miscalculated what revenues would be in the province, historically brutal in how it treated the people of this province

because now we're in a situation where the government, when they came to office, the Leader of the Opposition talked about how they think they found a wallet full of cash. Well, Mr. Speaker, the cash has been spent. It hasn't been managed. They've messed the numbers so badly, Mr. Speaker, that now this historic budget that was touted by the Sask Party, by the members opposite, is now no better than a brutal budget from Gary Lane in 1986, Mr. Speaker, and sadly that's where we now stand.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the members opposite — based on their comments from their seat — I don't think they really appreciate how much they were off by, how great \$1.3 billion actually is. I don't think they get it, Mr. Speaker. And it's a huge number. You have to put a whole lot of zeros down on the calculator to see \$1.3 billion — so far, so far, Mr. Speaker. We don't know how much more off they are. But I thought I would break it down into terms that I think they can understand, terms that are near and dear to their heart and terms that have a really, a daily influence on what they do here in this Assembly.

Let's look at the issue of pompoms, Mr. Speaker, pompoms. And I'm not talking about, you know, these cheap little pompoms for a buck or two. I know the Premier demands top-notch pompoms. He wants every member to have the best pompoms possible. I'm surprised pompoms, Mr. Speaker, didn't make it into the Throne Speech. There was enough fluff and other stuff in there. Why pompoms aren't in there, I don't know. But, Mr. Speaker, with \$1.3 billion, members opposite could buy 52 million sets of pompoms at 25 bucks a pop. Not bad, not bad — 52 million. And that could go around Saskatchewan a long time.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know some of the members opposite are better than cheering than others. But I know all members on the other side — and truth be told, members on this side as well — do have a fondness for cake, Mr. Speaker. And what we've seen in these first two years of Sask Party government is a lot of cake cutting, a lot of balloons. I didn't calculate the numbers for balloons, but I'm sure you could buy a lot of balloons for \$1.3 billion as well.

But if we look at cakes, Mr. Speaker, say \$50 a cake. I haven't purchased a cake recently. But you know, if you want a good slab of Black Forest cake probably to feed a good amount of people — because if you have balloons out, people will come — Mr. Speaker, you probably need . . . at 50 bucks a pop, members opposite could have bought 26 million cakes to cut. That would have been a lot of cake cutting. I think the members could have paraded around their constituencies for a long time cutting those cakes, Mr. Speaker.

Well if pompoms don't cut it, if cakes don't cut it, let's talk about something else, Mr. Speaker. We know members opposite have a certain fondness and a certain attraction to . . . They've a vehicle of choice. There's a vehicle of choice on the other side, Mr. Speaker, and the vehicle of choice is the Jeep Patriot. These members love their Jeep Patriots. The member from Cannington . . . Not all members, the newest minister in the back there says, no I don't like the Jeep Patriot; I'm more of an Impala guy. That's all right. I understand.

But I know the member from Cannington loves the Patriot. He

said well hey . . . Oh he doesn't love them as much as Hummers but, Mr. Speaker, I think based on his remarks earlier in justifying why Patriots are okay . . . But, Mr. Speaker, at \$1.3 billion, members opposite . . . Now I don't know the exact cost of a Jeep Patriot, but we'll say \$30,000 because I know the members like the a/c [air conditioning] and the four-wheel drive and the works, you know. Maybe even, well maybe not leather. Any leather in those Patriots? Perhaps not. But at \$30,000, the members opposite could buy 43,333 Jeep Patriots. That's enough Patriots, Mr. Speaker. They could give one to everyone in Moose Jaw and Swift Current, so clearly a great deal.

Mr. Speaker, for \$1.3 billion, the last amount, Mr. Speaker, let's look at . . . and this one it's not as much, Mr. Speaker. The amount isn't in the \$50 range. It's \$2.50, Mr. Speaker. It's only 2.50. I called Peavey Mart this afternoon and said how much this is. And, Mr. Speaker, for \$1.3 billion, members opposite could buy 520 million packs of rat poison, Mr. Speaker. There would be plenty to buy with \$1.3 million, Mr. Speaker.

So we know, Mr. Speaker, from the financial state that we find ourselves in, that colours, Mr. Speaker, how we examine this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. And this is where, Mr. Speaker, I have trouble taking this Throne Speech for what it is because, given everything that's occurred, Mr. Speaker, given how badly the numbers have been messed up, given how arrogantly they plowed ahead with numbers that were totally off, Mr. Speaker, I would expect this Throne Speech to speak to that in some way. I would expect this Throne Speech to recognize the historic blunder on the budget that occurred, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, the contrition in this Throne Speech is absent, Mr. Speaker. There's one sentence — it's a short sentence, four words — “This forecast was wrong.” That's it. They're out \$1.3 billion, Mr. Speaker, and the only reference to being out \$1.3 billion — a historic blunder, Mr. Speaker — are four words: “This forecast was wrong.” Not even, I am sorry; this has horribly affected the province. This has horribly affected our ability to deliver things in the Throne Speech. No, none of that, Mr. Speaker, no contrition, Mr. Speaker, no I'm sorry — nothing.

So now when I look at everything they put out in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, when I see how badly they have messed the numbers, how can I take them, Mr. Speaker, with a straight face, expecting them to deliver what's in this Throne Speech? It's just not believable in my opinion, Mr. Speaker.

And I say it's not believable because I think Saskatchewan people want more than a four-word apology or a statement on the issue. It's not an apology. In fact it's so far from an apology, they blame the structure. They don't even own the issue. They don't take responsibility for this huge blunder. No, Mr. Speaker, they blame it on the process and say, oh the process is wrong; we've got to tweak that process now, Mr. Speaker. Well the process worked well, Mr. Speaker, for quite some time. And we look at the process at that time. There were all sorts of people saying the numbers weren't good; the numbers weren't solid. They weren't on solid ground, Mr. Speaker. So for them now to say the process was wrong, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, is passing the buck.

Any parent in this room, Mr. Speaker, or someone who's dealt

with anyone in life, when there's been an error, when you've been wronged in some way, it's not enough just to say sorry, Mr. Speaker. There needs to be a change in behaviour. I know you would understand this, Mr. Speaker. And I think some of the members opposite might understand this too. Now I think some of the members that understand it, Mr. Speaker, aren't in cabinet any longer and aren't able to actually speak up to this issue and speak to how actions need to follow words, Mr. Speaker.

[21:45]

But I say there is no change in behaviour, Mr. Speaker, because I keep seeing the hollow cheerleading. I keep seeing the empty words, Mr. Speaker. If we look back at the budget that was back a while ago, the member from Carrot River . . . And I like the member from Carrot River a great deal, Mr. Speaker. He's a pleasant guy. I always enjoy chatting with him and I'm sure he's doing great work in his constituency. But his remarks on the budget, Mr. Speaker, he said, speaking how this budget was historic back in the spring, and I quote from *Hansard*, page 2431:

Mr. Speaker, of course I support this budget. Let's face it, Mr. Speaker, this budget is not only a fantastic and historic budget for Saskatchewan but also the best budget in all of Canada and [possibly] . . . the best in North America.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member stopped there, perhaps it would be okay. But this is the part, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about hollow cheerleading and pompoms, a perfect example here:

Oh heck, let's go a little further, Mr. Speaker. I think it's going to be the best [budget] in the whole world.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when a budget, Mr. Speaker, when a budget is out \$1.3 billion, Mr. Speaker, not the best budget in the world; not the best budget in North America, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a pretty brutal budget. Same way, if you look at the comments in the press about the budget, how it's in comparison to 1986 — not so good, Mr. Speaker. And this is my problem.

And now in the rhetoric and the talk in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, it's the same over-the-top new direction, great horizon, moving forward, stuff that's coming from the members all the time. It's nothing but pompoms, Mr. Speaker. It's not looking at the reality on the ground. It's not looking at the reality in the bank account which is empty, or getting that way, Mr. Speaker, because of the mismanagement.

So when they talk about this Throne Speech and how it's a great plan forward, I have a problem really taking this Throne Speech as a valuable document because I don't think it matches reality here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Part of the change in behaviour, Mr. Speaker, would be a recognition and a change in behaviour, a change in actions. And, Mr. Speaker, the one issue was the change in a reliance on analysts to do with the economy, economists and different financial analysts, Mr. Speaker. Back when the budget was being discussed, Mr. Speaker, the opposition pointed out that

the growth projections that the members opposite were using were out of whack with the average of, it was six or eight private sector lending agencies, Mr. Speaker. Totally off, Mr. Speaker.

But the opening paragraphs to this Throne Speech were all about referring to analysts. So what's changed, Mr. Speaker? Why were those analysts believable now, but not believable in the past, Mr. Speaker? So when they're dealing with the Throne Speech now, another instance where I don't think actions are matching the reality, Mr. Speaker, in not showing any sort of contrition, any sort of new direction that shows the finances the province will be . . . they will be good stewards of the finances of the province. They are simply not cutting it, Mr. Speaker.

But we can also look at . . . I've used up more time than I probably ought to, so I won't go down that avenue. I'll save it for another day, Mr. Speaker.

So looking at this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I don't think their actions give a whole lot of credibility to what they laid down in this plan. Because, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is a channel-changing document. It is nothing more than an attempt by the other side to change the channel from the brutal mess that they have left here in the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't in this Assembly and, you know, I was in grade school during the Devine era. I know some members were here, members from both sides, Mr. Speaker, and they can speak to the situation. But sadly, Mr. Speaker, history is repeating itself here. Nothing but fluff, nothing but pompoms, nothing but over-the-top rhetoric. And no sound financial stewardship, Mr. Speaker. Just simply a reckless attitude and that's it.

If we look at the issues, Mr. Speaker, over the summer that I've heard about as I've had the great opportunity to door knock in Saskatoon Massey Place, a whole lot in Saskatoon Riversdale, some in Douglas Park, and also part of rural tours, Mr. Speaker, in various communities throughout Saskatchewan, you know, the Throne Speech might touch or have a, you know, a passing reference to some of the issues. I've heard about issues like affordable housing, Mr. Speaker, issues like rent for individuals here in the province, cost of living issues like utilities. Mr. Speaker, I've touched so much on the issue of financial stewardship. But people were bringing this up on the doorstep, and people really aren't pleased with what they're seeing. And people are concerned.

In terms of student issues in the province, Mr. Speaker, for students in our post-secondary institutions, just to name a couple of the issues, nothing in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, about continuing to fix the problems in the grad retention program. Master's and Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] students are still excluded from the program, Mr. Speaker.

So much doublespeak, Mr. Speaker, about how everything is great, Mr. Speaker. But when you actually look at the programs for master's and graduate students for benefits — not there. No reference to tuition, Mr. Speaker. We can only assume by how badly, how brutally they've messed up the finances here in the province that it won't be good news for students here on the tuition front in the province. So it doesn't surprise me that it is

absent from this document.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've touched on a lot of issues but I think they're relevant issues. I talked about how really the situation we find ourselves in today goes back to the brutal mistakes that were made in the previous budget. I've talked about how this Throne Speech here really doesn't hold water, in my opinion, because we haven't seen any change of heart with how they deal with the finances of this province. And I've talked about what I've heard and how individuals really, I don't think . . . I think individuals see this document for what it is: a channel-changing document full of fluff, full of pompoms, and not addressing the real issue.

So it won't be a surprise to members on this side, and likely to members on the other side as well, but I will not be supporting the Throne Speech. I will be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the last speaker was talking during *Frasier* because there was probably nobody watching while *Frasier* was on. Anyway thank you for the opportunity to talk about the Speech from the Throne.

And we are living in good times in Saskatchewan. You can visit all over the world but anywhere else you go, it's always nice to come back, to return with much appreciation for the amenities of life and the opportunities to work and to create wealth and be part of a community and to raise your family in this province.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is moving forward. There's certainly been an attitude change over the past number of years. And the opportunities are now and they're here.

You know, growing up in a farming community, there was a struggle over the past generation to find opportunities in this province. Four of my seven siblings, like thousands of other young people, Mr. Speaker, found it necessary to move out of the province, you know, and it seems a shame that after the years of growing up and being educated here in Saskatchewan, they left. They left to build careers elsewhere, to build the economies of other parts of Canada and beyond.

But now there is optimism. There is future. There is an opportunity for everyone to live and to grow and to prosper here in this province. Saskatchewan is moving forward.

Over the summer I attended three conferences on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan — conferences in Toronto and Kansas City and in Edmonton.

The Regional Commonwealth Conference was held in Toronto. We met delegates and legislators from all across Canada as well as Great Britain and Pakistan and Australia. We discussed a variety of topics, but one topic was about laptops and computers in the Assembly. And I thought one of the delegates from Pakistan put it in a good perspective when she referred to the conversation and she said, you guys are discussing computers in your Assembly. We're discussing about stopping wars and

preventing people from dying from starvation in my country. And it did put it in a bit of perspective. And when you hear these stories, you realize how wonderful it is to live in Canada and particularly here in Saskatchewan.

I attended the Midwest Legislative Conference in Kansas City, which was also an interesting experience, conversing with the American legislative counterparts on many topics of mutual interest. We talked about the economy and transportation, education, energy, and of course Medicare is a big issue in the States.

But you know, it was nice to get back to Saskatchewan. You know I think my wife, Debbie, said it best. After being in Kansas City, we landed in the airport and she mimicked the words of Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* when she clicked her heels together and said, "There's no place like home." "There's no place like home." And really, Mr. Speaker, there really is no place like at home.

I actually was pleased to be part of the delegation to attend the Canadian conference on public accounts in Edmonton as well. An interesting addition to this conference was an opportunity to tour the Alberta oil sands. The oil sands is a mammoth project. And I found it very interesting as they showed us the process of oil recovery from the tar sands. I was amazed at the size of the project and rather impressed with the respect shown to the environment and the rehabilitation of the area back to its natural state after the extraction of the oil.

It was a gratifying experience to see the white sand after the oil extraction and to view the reforested area where the natural vegetation had been reintroduced. The trees, the grass, the greenery was much more than I expected after hearing much negative before I actually saw the project. There was even a herd of buffalo that were grazing on the reclaimed area, totally oblivious to the work that was being done just a few kilometres away.

After all, it was nice to return home and consider all the opportunities of this great province. Saskatchewan is moving forward, and it's a great place to call home. I can proudly say that my four adult children are making their homes in Saskatchewan where they were born and raised. It's certainly a change from a generation ago when my siblings had to leave the province and establish their careers and create a living in other parts of the country.

To me there is no greater misdeed of past governments than to allow the export of our young talent, especially, especially when Saskatchewan has a wealth of resources and an opportunity in this province. And I've spoken about this before — about the great coalfields of southern Saskatchewan. We have a third of the world's potash, a third of the world's uranium deposits. Two-thirds of our province is covered with forestry. We've got gas. We've got oil. And we've got almost half of the agricultural land in Canada is right here in our province. Yet for years there was the short-sightedness of people in power that kept this province poor. But now, now, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is moving forward.

I'd like to thank the people of Moose Jaw and other acquaintances from many parts of the province that have

expressed their encouragement and appreciation to the Saskatchewan Party government for making this a province of development and a province of opportunity. I thank my constituents for their positive comments. They tell me that they appreciate the improved programs and the policies making their lives better here in Saskatchewan.

I particularly appreciated the comments of one of our city councils who confessed to me that she, like many others, were sceptical of this new party and this new government. However she went on to say, we, the city of Moose Jaw, has never received this much money as this government has given us by any other past government. I appreciate the people who comment that we are on the right track.

Another citizen of Moose Jaw that was at the Ducks Unlimited banquet just a week ago told me in the past he had voted for the NDP; however he's likely to vote for the Saskatchewan Party the next election because of the good work we're doing. As a matter of fact he said he had an NDP membership because their leader had bought it for him, is what he said. I suspect this may be part of the NDP membership scandal and the criminal investigation that's conducted by the RCMP that was announced in this past June.

Mr. Speaker, people are realizing that this province has to provide for a better living for all of us. The attitude of the province is changing. People are understanding that Saskatchewan is a land of opportunity, and we are moving forward.

The personal income tax exemption increase has let people keep more of their hard-earned money. This in itself is a huge assistance to citizens, especially low-income earners who now have more money in their pockets to pay for the needs of them and for their families.

The property owners are paying less for their property tax. And this is especially in Moose Jaw where the education mill rate was the highest in the province.

Our government paid down the debt. Paying down the debt by 40 per cent is saving huge dollars in interest costs. By reducing the provincial debt, it improves our credit rating. But more importantly to our citizens, the interest saved can be better invested in social programs and infrastructure upgrades here in Saskatchewan, making living better for the people in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is moving forward.

[22:00]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my wife, Debbie, for her support and assistance with many of the MLA functions. To us this is a family venture, and I do appreciate her support. There are all kinds of events and business openings, meetings, sports days, anniversaries, social functions, and lots of fowl suppers. We really love fowl suppers. There are a lot of late nights too, and there are a lot of missed suppers and interrupted socials that come with serving the constituents. But it's all part of the representation for the constituents, and we all appreciate that opportunity.

I'd like to acknowledge my assistant, Denise Arnold, and the

other office staff in our constituency office, addressing many of the concerns of our constituents. Most of these are handled in a timely manner, and I appreciate the dedicated work that they do.

But Saskatchewan is moving forward, and the Speech from the Throne shows it, that was presented on October 21. The speech reminds us of what has been accomplished by this government for the continued benefit of all Saskatchewan people.

Yes, it reflects some of the accomplishments that have been achieved and the progress we are continuing: paying down the debt by 40 per cent, increasing seniors' assistance plan, doubling it. It's the first increase in the plan since 1992. The largest income tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history — 80,000 people in our province don't have to pay any provincial income tax at all. The largest education property tax cut in Saskatchewan; a commitment to a long-term revenue-sharing deal with municipalities helping to meet the needs of those communities; infrastructure improvements in roads, schools, health facilities, daycares; the largest youth retention program in Canada, \$20,000 if you stay in Saskatchewan after graduating from post-secondary education; the municipal economic enhancement program, Moose Jaw graciously received \$3.5 million for the MEEP [municipal economic enhancement program] program.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to hear the members of the opposite shouting about where the money went. We heard this even just a few minutes ago and during the by-elections. Where did the money go? Well, Mr. Speaker, any grade school student could do the math and tell them where the money went. The money went to improve the lives of Saskatchewan people.

The members opposite mention this, that they had \$2 billion when they left office, and that's true. However our government paid down the debt by \$2.7 billion — 40 per cent. Our government invested \$1.2 billion repairing over 3200 kilometres of provincial highway that had been deteriorated. Post-secondary infrastructure projects, over \$150 million; 18 million was spent on student housing.

When it's so obvious where the money went, why would they even ask? Perhaps they really don't recall. But I think I know why. Because they try to be masters of manipulation, manipulation by fear. The message they tell can be light years away from the truth, and yet they tell it with fear and false accusations, embellishment. And they keep spitting it out in an attempt to mislead people when there's no validity at all for the statements that they make.

I think that mantra of where did the money go must be part of the opposition's makeup. Maybe it's even in the *Regina Manifesto*. Maybe it's what they used when they were in government for 16 years. I'm sure that question was asked by themselves. Lord knows the people of the province never got an answer.

Where did the money go? Where did the money go from tappedinto.com, over \$6 million? And where did the money go for Persona, over \$9 million? Where did the money go for Navigata, over \$40 million? Where did it go?

Where did the money go for SPUDCO, \$35 million? For

Channel Lake? Craig Wireless, \$10 million. Coachmen Insurance, where did the \$16 million go? The Meadow Lake pulp mill, \$800 million, where did the money go? ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan], \$100 million. Where did the money go, with nothing to show for the benefit of the people of this province?

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is moving forward. The Saskatchewan Party government is continuing the solid investment into the future. The Speech from the Throne assures all Saskatchewan citizens that this government is working for the betterment of the people's interests. We've seen population growth. We continue to have the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Saskatchewan has — this has been brought up a few times — Saskatchewan has five of the top ten entrepreneurial cities in Canada, and Moose Jaw is number four.

I talked to Mayor McBain this morning, and he tells me there's 171 new businesses started since the start of the year. The chamber of commerce CEO, Brian Martynook, also said there's been an additional 69 home-based businesses that started as well. Moose Jaw should be one of the entrepreneurial cities, and it certainly is with those kind of records.

Unfortunately there's some businesses who are experiencing slowdowns and temporary layoffs. However things are looking good as part of what is happening in Moose Jaw. We have a new multiplex complex that's going in downtown. Also in downtown is a new downtown development that's going to be close to the multiplex and of course the 171 new businesses that have been attracted to Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne highlights accomplishments and sets a strategy for the future. Our government is focusing on the surgical wait lists. We all know people who are waiting extensive periods of time for surgical procedures, people who are suffering during this waiting time. This endurance can take its toll on families and relationships and can develop secondary complications that require even costlier procedures. So establishing an aggressive goal for surgical wait time is just the right thing to do. Extended wait times can no longer be considered just part of the system.

We heard before, the waiting times have improved since 2004 when over 9,000 people were waiting on surgical waiting lists for longer than a year. Well, Mr. Speaker, that number is down now to less than 4,200 that are waiting for more than a year. And that's a great improvement of course, but it's little comfort to the 4,200 on the waiting list.

This government has already started to address the concerns by expanding the number of seats in our universities for training doctors and nurses. We've hired 500 nurses to fill the shortfall of many years and are getting more aggressive in attracting doctors from other parts of the world. This government is now addressing wait times. It's an aggressive target for sure, but it is an achievable one. Our goal is to reduce surgical wait times in Saskatchewan to no longer than three months. It is an aggressive goal but what's more important, that it's the right thing to do for the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about the needle

exchange program as well. The *Leader-Post* reporter in last Thursday's edition stated that there are almost 4 million needles a year that are given out in the needle exchange program in Saskatchewan with an estimated 5,000 users. Mr. Speaker, an easy math tells you that's between two and three needles per day. That's the highest rate anywhere in Canada. We should be concerned about that statistic.

The report says there's a rate of return of more than 90 per cent, and while that's considered a good return, it means there's still approximately 400,000 needles that are unaccounted for. Should we be concerned? I would think so. This is a concern for safety not only for the addicts but for the neighbourhoods and the children who play in those neighbourhoods. What we've been doing with needle exchange hasn't been working well. This is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, this government has done a lot to lead the province into growth. We will continue to lead, to promote, to provide, and encourage the citizens of Saskatchewan. The solid enthusiasm for our productive future for this province comes from the people of this province, the men and women that go to work every day to earn a living and to establish a quality of life for them and for their families. It comes from the initiative of leaders and managers who have the foresight into the future and accept huge risks to attempt to achieve goals. It takes the vision and dedication of women and men who create the inspiration for all Saskatchewan people to realize the potential of this province.

Mr. Speaker, it comes from leadership like the men and the women that lead our ministries and a positive, energetic person that occupies the chair as the Premier of this province, a person who carries a message of opportunity to markets and leaders all around the world. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to sit on the side of vision, of growth, enthusiasm, good management, and common sense.

But there is one question. Why do most of the citizens in this province get it, yet there are 20 people of the most negative people in the province sitting on the other side who cannot see the potential of this great province? Mr. Speaker, the amendment has been conceived in a negative mindset. It's poorly thought out. It does not focus on the positive momentum of a province moving forward, and I cannot support the amendment.

As for the motion for the Speech of the Throne, it moves forward for the betterment of the Saskatchewan citizens, and it has my support. May God continue to bless this province.

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's getting pretty late in the evening, Mr. Speaker. But you know, I played a lot of baseball, Mr. Speaker, and I batted ninth a lot of times so this is nothing new. So we'll finish up here for the night, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly and speak in favour of the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and the motion moved by the Minister of Health. But before I place my comments on the

Throne Speech on the record, I want to acknowledge a number of individuals, Mr. Speaker. First, Mr. Speaker, I want to express thanks and appreciation to my constituents for really an incredible summer of well wishes and congratulations and, in many ways, a lot of patience that they showed me. Being named to the cabinet at the end of May, Mr. Speaker, meant a bit of an adjustment for the amount of time that I can be around the constituency office, and the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy have just been very, very gracious about it in their support and their patience.

And I also want to thank my constituency assistant Marcie who, Mr. Speaker, is celebrating her 10th year as a constituency assistant in the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And Marcie does a tremendous job in handling the office duties, largely without me over the summer, Mr. Speaker, and she's been great with constituents as well who contact the office and so I greatly appreciate her.

I also want to thank the staff here at the Legislative Building that I work with, Mr. Speaker. Melissa, Heather, Bob, Marg, and Darin have been great to work with and have done a tremendous job, first in bringing me up to speed and now in helping me to do my job as a member of the cabinet, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate them very much. And I also want to thank the folks in the ministry, especially in those initial weeks, that made sure that I was up to date on the file.

[22:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention and thank my wife, Amanda, who's been very supportive of me not only in the last few months as I took on this new job but throughout my life, the short time that I've been an MLA.

Mr. Speaker, in David Gergen's wonderful book *Eyewitness to Power*, he correctly points out, Mr. Speaker, that the ones who pay the highest price for government service are always the spouses, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't agree more. It's certainly been the case in our house. And Amanda's probably watching. She said she was going to tune in so she's probably watching. And I'm very grateful, Mr. Speaker, for her support and for the fact that I get to drive home most nights. So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate her support and I consider myself very lucky in that respect.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to extend my congratulations to the two new members of the Assembly, to the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, who I had the pleasure of attending the SPRA [Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association] president's minister luncheon on Friday with her, and I want to wish her the best as she gets used to this new life. Certainly I don't want to wish her too well seeing that she's my critic, Mr. Speaker, but I know that she will do a good job for her constituents in this House. And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to add my congratulations to the Leader of the Opposition, the new member for Regina Douglas Park, on his return to the legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members of the House will know that I have a keen interest in history, Mr. Speaker. And I note with interest that by the time the 2011 election rolls around, Mr. Speaker, and assuming the Leader of the Opposition is still a member of

this House — you never know but, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of argument, I'll assume it — by the time the 2011 election rolls around, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the new member for Regina Douglas Park, certainly you know this is something to be commended, but the member will have spent parts of five different decades as a member of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, which is certainly something to be noted.

It is an achievement that he has served constituents that long, Mr. Speaker, you know, and I think that is an accomplishment — five different decades. I think that's an accomplishment that really only Gordie Howe could maybe appreciate, Mr. Speaker. And after just only a few question periods sitting in the House at the same time as the member for Douglas Park, I was starting to think that that's not the only thing that the Leader of the Opposition has in common with Gordie Howe, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I get to the Throne Speech, I want to add a couple of congratulations. Mr. Speaker, when the Order of Merit were announced, there were a number of recipients that fall under the category or the sectors of tourism, parks, culture, and sport.

And so I do want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that and congratulate Dr. Sharon Butala, who is an author and has been important in the Eastend cultural and artistic development, Mr. Speaker; Mr. Jack MacKenzie who has been a leader in the areas of physical education in Regina, Mr. Speaker; Arne Petersen who has certainly contributed a lot to the tourism sector. I've been fortunate to stay at the Elk Ridge Resort, Mr. Speaker, on a couple of occasions and certainly has added a tremendous amount to that industry.

William Shurniak who has an incredible art gallery in Assiniboia. And I know the member from Wood River knows all about it, Mr. Speaker. And I would encourage all members if they have a chance . . . It's just since 2005, when Mr. Shurniak founded this art gallery, more than 50,000 visitors have visited the art gallery and that's in a community of less than 3,000 people, Mr. Speaker. So it's certainly something to see.

And I also want to add somebody who I've met before, only once, Geoffrey Ursell who's an author. Mr. Speaker, I in fact met him at the opening of the Persephone Theatre earlier this fall, at the grand opening of the adaptation of Martha Blum's novel, *The Walnut Tree*, which Mr. Ursell wrote. And so congratulations to him.

And, Mr. Speaker, of course to Linda Rudachyk of Weyburn who has meant a great deal to me in my short time as a member of this House, who has added so much to the community of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, and somebody who I have a great deal of affection for and respect for.

And so congratulations to not only those members, but all members of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit for 2009, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, obviously it's been a very busy summer for me, getting to know not only my new role, my portfolio, but in many ways, Mr. Speaker, in a lot of ways, rediscovering a province that I have lived in my entire life. It seemed like almost on a daily basis we were out around the province and

seeing something new that the province had to offer, such as my first time out at the T.rex Discovery Centre, Eastend, or a number of other places across . . . Wanuskewin was another place that I was able to visit for the first time, Mr. Speaker. So it certainly was a very good summer and a busy summer and one that involved a lot of work and a lot of learning and I appreciate the time that I was given to do this.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to mention that certainly Weyburn-Big Muddy is a very busy place despite the doom and gloom that we hear from others, Mr. Speaker. I know that my constituency, along with the Estevan constituency and the Cannington constituency, the entire southeast part of the province, Mr. Speaker, has seen a bit of slowdown but certainly there's lots of activity.

I've been fortunate just in the last couple of weeks to attend the grand opening of one of our new hotels in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. We have two, in fact, the Ramada and also the Canalta. And, Mr. Speaker, the Canalta group, who builds the Ramadas and I believe Super 8's across Western Canada, they decided that Weyburn would be their location for their first Canalta branded hotel, Mr. Speaker. So that was certainly a positive event in the constituency. And I believe the same group is building in Humboldt and Moosomin, Mr. Speaker. There's a hotel going up right now and certainly there's lots of activity in my constituency.

Weyburn has undergone a significant amount of growth in the last number of years. Mr. Speaker, I have a new neighbour on the north side of our house on 6th Street, a gentleman and his family who've moved from the Prince Albert area to work in the oil industry, running an oil service company, Mr. Speaker. So there's lots of development and lots of new houses going up. It's been a very busy year, and much of that's been driven by the world-renowned Bakken oil play, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to offer my congratulations — I know we have civic elections coming up and we're not, I guess nobody's sure what will happen but — certainly I want to offer my congratulations to the council that is looking for re-election, Mr. Speaker. The city council has decided to partner with our school board to build a performing arts centre in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, attached to the high school. The city's going to put up \$3 million, Mr. Speaker. There's going to be fundraising for I believe another 2 or \$3 million.

So certainly that's something that will fill a void that we've had in Weyburn. There's some venues that you can have events but nothing of the magnitude of something like the new performing arts centre. So we're looking forward to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on one other event that was a highlight for me over the summer. Not long after being named to the cabinet, Weyburn hosted the oil and gas show, as Weyburn does every second year. And, Mr. Speaker, this was the most well attended in terms of not only exhibitors from Saskatchewan and out of the province, but also just people that wanted to come and hear what's happening in the oil industry.

Mr. Speaker, one of the best days in the short time that I've been a member was having the opportunity to escort the Premier around the grounds of the oil show, Mr. Speaker. And

there was so much enthusiasm and positive attitude. And when the Premier spoke, Mr. Speaker, the ovation that he received was just tremendous, Mr. Speaker. And certainly a lot of people were talking to him and about him, but congratulating him on the record level of infrastructure being built.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter whether you're driving on 39 Highway or 33 Highway to Francis has received a great deal of upgrades this summer, Mr. Speaker. You know, people were thanking the government for the great inconvenience of so much highway construction, Mr. Speaker, and of course the 40 per cent of the debt that's been paid off. That's something that has been very well received by the people of my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, you know what they weren't talking about at the oil show, Mr. Speaker? They weren't talking about the Leader of the Opposition. They weren't talking about the member from Douglas Park that was coming back from his oil job in Alberta. There was no talk about . . . Well I've got to correct that a little bit, Mr. Speaker, because if you remember the oil show was in early June, and there was something else happening in June, Mr. Speaker.

And a lot of people asked, a lot of people asked around the oil show, you know, people were saying, I need to check whether or not I'm an NDP member when I woke up this morning, because it seems like a lot of that's going around this province, Mr. Speaker. So there were a lot of people at the oil show that were wondering, you know, did I wake up and magically become a member of the NDP? So, Mr. Speaker, you know certainly that's not a new story around these parts, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as for the Throne Speech, there is a number of areas that I want to highlight, areas that I think will be of benefit to my constituents. And the areas that the government is addressing, I think, are the priorities of my constituents, Mr. Speaker. First is the commitment to health care and in particular the reduction in wait times. Mr. Speaker, I think there are few priorities that align so well with my constituents, Mr. Speaker, who have expressed, in my time as being an MLA, their concern with wait-lists.

Mr. Speaker, I remember very well a long-time resident, a very well-respected man in our constituency, a gentleman that had been retired for quite a while. He and his wife live in Weyburn. And, Mr. Speaker, his wife was on a wait-list. She's on a wait-list. At the time, she was on a wait-list for surgery and she didn't know when she was going to be able to have the surgery, Mr. Speaker.

And this gentleman, you know, he's worked his entire life in Saskatchewan. He's worked hard. He's paid his bills. He's abided by the law of the province. He's in my office sitting in front of me and he has tears running down his eyes, Mr. Speaker, because his wife was in such pain that she was on such a strong painkiller, Mr. Speaker, in essence a strong narcotic, Mr. Speaker, to control her pain. And there were times when he wasn't even sure if she could even understand what he was saying — she was in such pain, Mr. Speaker.

And so I think that this government needs to, you know, I think the measure that we have introduced, Mr. Speaker, to make a commitment on wait-lists, something that the NDP never did,

Mr. Speaker; everybody knows that — one of the reasons I think why they're sitting on those benches, Mr. Speaker, and why we're over here. And it's a commitment that we've made to the people of Saskatchewan and it's one that I'm certainly supportive of, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another event not long ago that is indicated in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, was the commitment that we are making to the more special people in Saskatchewan, our more vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker, and that is partnering with CBOs [community-based organization] to eliminate the wait-lists for specialized residential and day program service for people with intellectual disabilities.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of my happiest days as a member of this government was opening new group homes in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. In fact we had a really great picture taken — it was in the newspaper — of all the residents of these new group homes. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, it's a special picture for me because my niece is in the picture, Mr. Speaker, because she's one of the residents that will benefit from a new group home being opened in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker.

This was a part of funding provided by the Minister for Social Services, one that addresses a wait-list. We're not finished on it, Mr. Speaker, but an unacceptable wait-list that was brought in place by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister for Social Services is working hard to address it . . .

The Speaker: — Being the hour of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EVENING SITTING
SPECIAL ORDER
ADJOURNED DEBATES
ADDRESS IN REPLY**

Forbes3191
Hickie3193
McMillan3196
Harper3199
Norris3203
Ottenbreit3207
Broten3211
Michelson3216
Duncan3219

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier
President of the Executive Council

Hon. Bob Bjornerud
Minister of Agriculture
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Crop Insurance Corporation

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Partnership
Minister Responsible for Innovation Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Research Council

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Corporation
Provincial Secretary
Minister Responsible for Information Technology Office
Minister Responsible for Information
Services Corporation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

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Minister of Social Services

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

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Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

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Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Capital Commission