



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

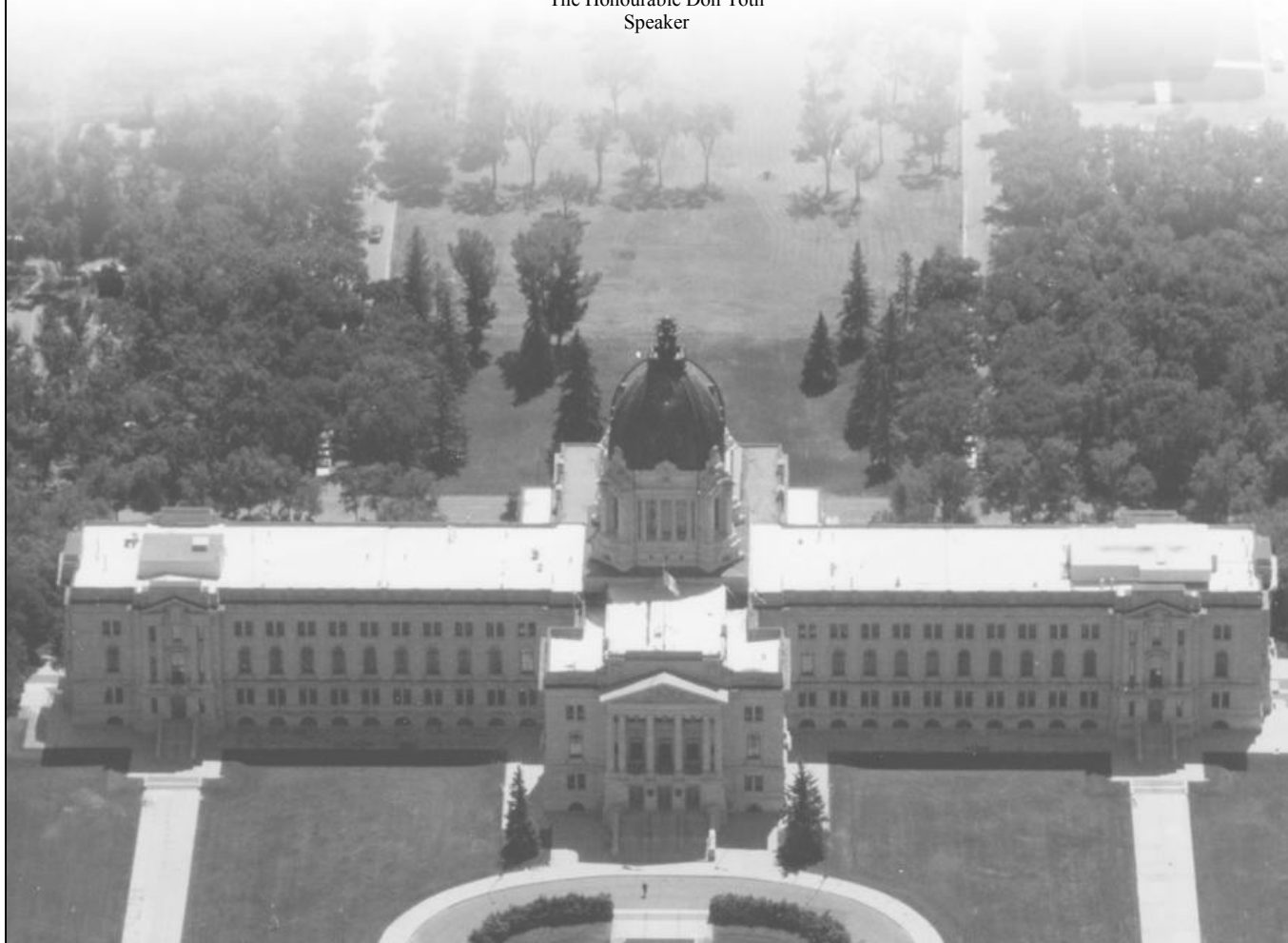
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly 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 the 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 evening session of the Legislative Assembly will come to order. I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now that I'm fuelled up and ready to go, I think I have a little energy to give a speech here tonight. I have a song in my heart on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan — health care providers, working people, no matter what the walk of life they have.

Mr. Speaker, we talked earlier about of course the health care workers and two of the things that have happened. One, the Sask Party government having said they had a plan before they were elected two years ago to drive down the wait-list for surgery. Then in the Throne Speech delivered here the other day they said, well that plan didn't work so we have a new plan that we'll unveil over the course this year, this coming. We have a plan now that we'll unveil. And they say the report card won't be due until sometime 2013 — a full two years after the next general election.

I want to say to Sask Party government members that that's wishful thinking on their part. The report card is going to be coming due a lot sooner, and in fact in many ways that report card's happening already.

The second part of course of health care that's happening is the essential services legislation where the Sask Party proposed legislation that said, here's the minimum level of workers you need to work safely in a hospital. This is the minimum level. And despite being shown in writing 1,305 times in one two-month period that the staffing levels were lower, they dither and do nothing. Mr. Speaker, that's the shame.

And it's a shame that the workers in three health care unions had to come to their legislature to try and be heard by the government, to point out the errors of their ways, only to be — after they've had their peaceful rally and a few speeches — only to be told they couldn't get in to the legislature. This legislature that Sask Party government members claim far and wide when they introduce people, they welcome them to your legislature, is the words they use. And I pointed out that your legislature is fine if you happen to be here at the invitation of a Sask Party member, but it's not your legislature if you happen to be here protesting or part of any organized group that says things aren't perfect.

Mr. Speaker, in the interests of time, that's the summation of my brief speech before supper. But I have several other points that I really wanted to speak to on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. One critical one, that it seems New Democrats are forever asked to clean up the mess left by right wing governments. I remember it well, as my leader points out. I remember it well because I served my first term in office in opposition to the right wing Grant Devine Conservatives. And I recall the debt, the deficit, the impossible decisions that were left for the New Democrats when Roy Romanow won the election in 1991. And I don't want to, I don't want to go over old history other than to say if we refuse to learn from history then I guess we deserve to repeat it over and over and over.

Mr. Speaker, I talk about finance because earlier this year the Minister of Finance stood and gave a budget with a projection of \$2 billion in potash revenue. He had other projections that were very rosy. And what we've been reading about ever since is problems, particularly in potash, but problems throughout the piece — not restricted to the 800 workers that were laid off or got layoff notice — 800 workers from Rocanville, Cory, and Allan potash mine but . . . not restricted to them, but certainly not restricted to the 300 workers that also got their layoff notice earlier, late last week from Case IH in Saskatoon. That's 300 layoff notices that frankly we were led to believe the opposite was happening.

Mr. Speaker, what we have is the \$2.3 billion Fiscal Stabilization Fund is gone, and what do we get in this Throne Speech? Now we get the rhetoric that, well what we need is to change the budget reporting process. The budget process needs to be changed. This in this year's blueprint from the Sask Party government: we need to change the budget process.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say from experience: beware; watch out. When a conservative government says we need to change the budget process when they're in trouble, when they're in fiscal trouble, when the money's gone, now they're trying to find ways to not have to report the true financial situation of Saskatchewan, finding ways to hide deficit. Finding ways that are going to leave inevitably a New Democrat Party government sometime in the future will . . . leaving us to clean up the mess yet again. And it doesn't have to be.

You know, Mr. Speaker, just because someone has a right wing philosophy doesn't mean they have to misrepresent the fiscal situation. It doesn't mean they have to misrepresent any of that to the people of Saskatchewan. We all know that things can't be perfect every day and in every way. That's the reality of Saskatchewan, but it's also what makes the unique character of Saskatchewan people. It's what makes us resilient and vibrant and sharing and caring with each other.

Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to the budget situation a little bit later in my speech. But I want to point out that, respecting finances, this Sask Party government inherited \$2.3 billion in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And their record is dismal, dismal when it comes to standing up for working people in Saskatchewan.

Utility rates are at an absolute all-time high. We've paid, for the

last winter, the highest, the highest natural gas utility rates of any province in all of Canada. We just had an 8 per cent increase in our power rates earlier this spring, and we've had the promise of annual increases in the range of 10 per cent for at least five years more into the future. This is what the Sask Party government is promising to us — this at a time when they took away the lowest cost utility bundle that was a guarantee, or almost a birthright, of Saskatchewan people. A guarantee that no matter what happened with utility rates, at the end of the day the government would make it right and we would have, we would pay the lowest for the total bundle of any province in Canada.

Now on top of the gas and the power rate hikes that keep happening, Mr. Speaker, the latest insult that we've got is a 4.4, 4.5 per cent average increase in SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance]. This is in the Auto Fund rate of SGI. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that there's absolutely no reason for this. The Auto Fund maintains a stabilization fund that has an admitted target rate of 80 to \$120 million. That's the target to keep the stabilization rate in the Auto Fund.

And what's it at, Mr. Speaker, when this rate, average rate hike of four and a half per cent came into effect? The Auto Fund had a surplus of just over \$102 million, just slightly above the median of what their target is — \$102 million surplus in the Auto Fund. And despite that, they ask Saskatchewan drivers to pay an additional, on average, four and a half per cent. And I say shame, Mr. Speaker. There's simply no need for it. There are other ways to deal with it. We would have dealt with it in other ways. And in fact we did, as the record will show because we enjoyed the lowest SGI Auto Fund rates in all of Canada and we're very proud of the work we did in that.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about the layoffs that happened late last week — the 800 layoff notices to the potash workers and the 300 to the Case IH workers in Saskatoon. I'm not talking about the Sears call centre in Regina that's shut down or for many of the other areas of concern for working people. But I ask people not to take my word that things are tough. I think they should look at Stats Canada, which reports in September of 2008 there were 3,700 fewer full-time jobs in Saskatchewan than there were in September of '08. I think I may have said '08 in the first instance. From '08 to '09, September to September, 3,700 fewer full-time jobs in Saskatchewan.

And the government says, oh, we're all doom and gloom on this side. Well tell that to any of the 3,700 people that are no longer working full-time — the single moms and the dads that are trying to put food on the table and keep their children clothed. Talk about the people trying to work to pay exorbitant rents that just skyrocket every day. It seems they just spiral up.

An Hon. Member: — You know that that's not possible.

Mr. Trew: — And you know, Mr. Speaker, I hear the Deputy Premier is saying, well you know that's impossible. Well that's not what my constituents say. My constituents are telling me that rents are going up, repeatedly going up. Repeatedly this has been happening. My constituents are telling me that. I'm shocked if they aren't telling government members as well.

And I'm not talking rents going from 450 to \$470. I'm talking

rents that go from 450 to \$600 and beyond, Mr. Speaker, without anything being done to the apartments. And that's just examples, of course; many of the rents are a lot higher than that. And they are skyrocketing. They continue to skyrocket and this government, the Sask Party government, does nothing to mitigate it, nothing to help Saskatchewan renters, Mr. Speaker. And I would have thought that that would have been in the blueprint, in the Speech from the Throne budget plan. I would have expected that government members would be hearing some of the same things that we're hearing, Mr. Speaker.

I want to swing into agriculture briefly, Mr. Speaker. And briefly is about what the government says it deserves, because the mention of agriculture was so restricted and limited in this Throne Speech. But I wanted just to make this observation. Spot loss hail coverage was promised by the now Minister of Agriculture, by many members opposite. It was part of their election platform — spot loss hail coverage for farmers.

The report was given to the Minister of Agriculture, to the Sask Party government, that recommended that spot loss hail insurance be included in crop insurance. And what's the response?

An Hon. Member: — Who cut the program?

Mr. Trew: — And what's the response? The response is, still no spot loss hail program. The Minister of Agriculture chirps from his seat, "Who cut the program?" Well, Mr. Speaker, we answer for what we did in government when we cut or enhanced programs. We answered for it. We answered for it, and you bet we answered for it in the last election.

But we weren't the ones going out and promising that we were going to be able to be the ones that delivered it. You, sir. You, sir, promised that. You did, not me. You did, sir. You promised it.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I want to remind the members that the comments are to be directed through the Chair, and I remind the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — And I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. Mr. Speaker, so no spot loss hail, despite the promise of many members opposite — including the Minister of Agriculture — to farmers, that it would be delivered.

Mr. Speaker, what was in this year's blueprint from the Sask Party respecting agriculture? Well there was some bragging about having moved the AgriStability program. Moving it. Can you imagine? Farmers must be just elated to know that the management, the people that administer the AgriStability program, were moved from one city to another city. Man, that must help farmers. I bet they're just elated.

Imagine all of the workers moving from one city to another city. Well congratulations, you really delivered this time. How absurd, Mr. Speaker, how absurd. Wonder when this is going to turn and when it is, Mr. Speaker, turning to a different . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I've hit some nerves here, I can tell.

[19:15]

Mr. Speaker, we are pointing out, our job is to point out promises made and promises not kept, promises broken. That is our job, Mr. Speaker, and it is our job to point out what we might do differently. Our job is not to deliver wall-to-wall disappointment; our job is to deliver good suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, moving to housing where Saskatchewan had record housing starts. Well you know what? In 2009 housing starts are down 51 per cent from 2008, Mr. Speaker — 51 per cent drop in housing. This is not doom and gloom from us; these are Stats Canada numbers. It's the reality out on the street. You look at what is going on in Saskatchewan and we see housing starts down off 51 per cent. And there's reason for it — 3,700 fewer full-time jobs in Saskatchewan is part of it at a time when the government, Sask Party government says, oh we choose not to participate in the world downturn.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. If members would like to sit down and chat, they're welcome to do that, but there are places where members could sit down and chat where they wouldn't interfere with the member on his feet. So I ask members to recognize the right of the member from Regina Coronation Park to be able to present his speech. The member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — And I thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of this and I haven't even touched on forestry where, what was the election promise? In P.A. [Prince Albert] it was, a vote for Darryl is a vote for the mill. Well you know what? The building's still standing there. The equipment's all gone. The trees are standing there. Not one of the 700-plus jobs in the mill is in P.A. A vote for Darryl is a vote for the mill, close quote, from the election in Prince Albert.

There is disappointment across the forest belt in Saskatchewan, huge disappointment because they have not seen anything but empty rhetoric from the government members opposite, from the Sask Party. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, forestry was the fourth largest contributor to Saskatchewan's economy and had potential to grow even more. Forestry that employed thousands upon thousands of people, most of them in northern Saskatchewan. I confess that Regina's forest belt is beautiful but tends not to be enough trees in Regina to be commercially viable in a major way. We certainly can't support a pulp mill in Regina but maybe there's some potential in future for other ways, other areas.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked about health care. I have talked about a number of things but I want to come back to the budget and I want to come back to what I've heard. I actually heard some members opposite saying that that what their constituents deserve and what the people of Saskatchewan deserve is our honesty and our integrity — our honesty and our integrity, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day as a politician, that's what we have to bring to the table.

I heard the Deputy Premier bragging, waxing eloquently about education and about how he's convinced the Minister of Finance to pump ever more money into education. And it sounded wonderful, Mr. Speaker. I heard that. He spoke just before me. I heard it. And let me point out some of the harsh reality that comes out of the Sask Party's own news releases, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since the budget was introduced in this boom times, since the budget was delivered and they had \$2.3 billion surplus in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, since that time, the reality that has set in on the people of Saskatchewan is Sask Party government slashed \$32 million from the academic health sciences building in Saskatoon, slashed \$32 million out of the budget.

Then they took an additional \$30 million out of the Education budget. Well how is it, how is it that things are so perfect there? And they say, oh but we on the opposition side are negative nellys, they say. We didn't cut \$32 million from the health sciences budget. We didn't cut \$30 million from the Education budget. We didn't this year cut \$130 from health care and then say, oh but you have to deliver ever more. Cut \$130 million out of this year's budget — that's what they did. And 9 million, get this: at a time when there's 3,700 men and women fewer working full-time in Saskatchewan than there was a year earlier, they cut \$9 million from employment and training programs, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine that?

And they have the audacity to say, oh but things are perfect. If you happen to be a health care worker, you're not welcome in the legislature. If you happen to want the academic health sciences building built, not this year. If you happen to want some school roofs fixed and some things like that, not this year. No, not this year. Stay tuned. Maybe next year. Maybe. If you happen to need that 130 million in health care — now what could we need 130 million for? Well I don't know, Mr. Speaker.

I look at today's *Leader-Post* and I see "H1N1 hits hard . . ." It's the headline. "H1N1 hits hard . . ." It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, instead of proposing essential services legislation, they could take that \$130 million and fix a lot of wrongs in the health care system.

They had all the answers before they were elected two years ago, Mr. Speaker, but very few of them now. So, Mr. Speaker, in opposition, the Sask Party . . . I think I'm getting the hook here. I got a minute left there and the time's up here. Mr. Speaker, I will take my place fairly quickly.

But I want to point out, in opposition the Sask Party had all of the answers. And then when they were elected, they had all of the money — all of the money, including the \$2.3 billion Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Then the Sask Party government spent the 2.3 Fiscal Stabilization Fund. They overestimated revenues, and now they say we need to change the budget process.

Well beware, Mr. Speaker. We need to change the budget process — why? Why would they say that at a time when revenues are collapsing for them because they overestimated? Why would they say that when they have had to slash their expenditures? Why would a government say we need to change the budget process? Well my hypothesis is nothing short of a cover-up.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment very proudly. And I will not be supporting this Speech from the Throne.

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by welcoming the new member on the opposition side, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale. And to the returning member, we welcome him as well, back to this legislature.

I'd like to make a few comments about my constituency, the constituency of Martensville. I think there are few places in Saskatchewan that are growing at such a rate as my constituency. And I may be a little bit biased, but I don't know that there's any place in Saskatchewan that better represents the new attitude of growth and moving forward that can be found within my constituency.

This summer, in fact, the town of Martensville, inside the constituency of Martensville, was named a city. It was the 15th city proclaimed in the province of Saskatchewan. It is growing at an unprecedented rate. And from door knocking in the last election, I can say that a lot of the people that are moving into my constituency are people who used to live in this province, who had left over the last 20 years and are now coming home. They've got a great hope for our province and are very confident in their future within our province.

In speaking of Martensville, I'd like to offer a special recognition to their mayor, Giles Saulnier. He has been mayor of the town of Martensville for many years. He oversaw the town of Martensville becoming a city. He has recently stepped down. I asked him the other day why he was stepping down. He's done such great work. And he said he was tired. And I told him, after all his lobbying our government over education property taxes, that I was pretty tired of him too. But I'm pretty sure that his replacement will continue to represent Martensville well. And we wish Giles all the best. He was an amazing advocate for his community.

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I like, not most about my constituency, but one thing that makes me pretty happy, it's one of the few constituencies in this province that has never been, ever, represented by a CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] or NDP [New Democratic Party] member. And I think that's pretty fantastic, and I have to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member opposite said they came close. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the members opposite that in the by-election in March of 2007, the Saskatchewan Party got 77 per cent. The NDP got, I think, about 10 per cent. It was the worst showing of any election in the history of this province, and it was so low that the NDP actually didn't get their deposit back. So I don't think they're making a whole lot of inroads in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the voters in Martensville who've elected me twice in less than three years. Their confidence in me is very humbling.

My constituency is full of very hard-working people, and I would like to mention just a couple of them. Kevin and Melanie Boldt own Pine View Farms in my constituency. It's a organic meat processing plant. They sell throughout the province and outside the province and recently they partnered with the folks who own Calories in Saskatoon and opened up a specialty food store called Souleio Foods in Saskatoon. I was able to be at the grand opening yesterday, or on Sunday. The Minister for Advanced Education, Labour was there as well.

They're a remarkable couple. They're a young couple and they have such a vision and determination for their business, and to contribute to their community. Between Kevin and Melanie and their partners, with the various businesses that they have, they employ 100 people in our province, Mr. Speaker, which I think is exceptional for such a young couple.

I would also like to take a minute to thank the staff that I have working for me in my constituency office, Whitney Friesen, and in my ministerial office, Cam, Drew, Kelly, Krista for all of their hard work and dedication.

I would also like to offer some special thanks to my Legislative Secretary, the member for Yorkton, who has been working on the recycling file. I recently got his report. It's very large. It's a huge binder and he did a lot of work. He did consultations across Saskatchewan and outside of the province as well, and I certainly appreciate the efforts that he made on behalf of our province, working towards better opportunities for recycling.

I would also like to thank the hard-working men and women who work within the Ministry of Environment, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, and SaskWater. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the public servants that work for us are the unsung heroes. They do most of the heavy lifting for us, sometimes all of the heavy lifting for us, and in my ministry, I'm blessed to have amazing staff. In particular — and I hate to start picking out one or two — but in particular my deputy minister, Liz Quarshie, who is a shining star, and I wouldn't be able to do what I do every day without her help.

And I cannot forget that a large part of our government's continued success is the contributions from all of the caucus members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. They are dedicated to making our province a better place. But I have to say, I don't believe that anybody serves us better or deserves greater thanks than our Premier, the member for Swift Current. I don't believe that we could have a better leader and it is an absolute honour to serve with him.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand today to reply to what is now our government's third Speech from the Throne. A great man once said:

Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

But, Mr. Speaker, what a beginning we have had. Never in history of our province has a government acted so quickly to keep so many of its promises. We have fulfilled over 100 of our campaign promises and are making steps to address the remaining ones. And I think that's a pretty fantastic record for two years in government.

Mr. Speaker, we have given the largest tax break in Saskatchewan history. We have removed 80,000 people from the tax rolls — low-income folks who will no longer be paying provincial income tax. We have provided the largest property tax relief since the tax was established. The members opposite promised to fix this for decades and it never was addressed. They promised that the status quo was not on and then failed to deliver.

We have introduced climate change legislation and a real plan. The members opposite, particularly the member for Regina Walsh Acres, will like to lament that we abandoned their climate change plan; but, Mr. Speaker, I would remind her yet again that there really was no plan. A glossy brochure does not make a plan. Our government has done the work. We have introduced legislation and will pass regulations to make sure that emissions are actually reduced in our province.

The members opposite can stand up and ask questions in this House about climate change. I think it's a little bit laughable, considering under their tenure, greenhouse gases rose by almost 70 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That is their record. What they have left behind is an environmental debt.

[19:30]

I'm sure that at some point the NDP Environment critic will stand up and lament that we closed her climate change secretariat. I was actually surprised, Mr. Speaker, she had her Speech from the Throne and barely addressed the environment at all, and even left out her three main talking points. But I would point out yet again that by her own quote she has admitted that the climate change secretariat actually never existed. It was just a plan to do something at some future date.

An Hon. Member: — That's your version, Nancy. You stick to it.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — She says it's my version. Here's a quote from the member opposite, the member for Regina Walsh Acres. "Saskatchewan also had a plan outlining the establishment . . ." Not the actual establishment. She also said, "It was going to be but it never was," because they never did it, Mr. Speaker. Not my version; that would be her version.

And, Mr. Speaker, on addressing climate change, the members opposite like to discuss their \$320 million, a one-time payment that was going to address all of our problems. But, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to almost \$2 billion. And just to read into the record some of the things that we are doing: \$700 million for the Boundary dam clean coal project, gas turbines, aqua store, deep saline aquifer CO₂ storage projects, continued support for CO₂ monitoring. We have committed money to the Saskatchewan-Montana CCS [carbon capture and storage] project.

The list goes on, Mr. Speaker, including increased funding to the PTRC [Petroleum Technology Research Centre]. We've increased funding to the Go Green Fund. I have other ones here, Mr. Speaker, but I've read most of them into the record before, and I would hope that people are making notes of the commitments that we've made.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we are committing \$70 million over four years to the Go Green Fund. We've re-established the fund; we did a restructuring.

Last year we had a report done on the previous NDP Green Initiatives Fund to see if it was actually living up to the expectations and, Mr. Speaker, the report came back stating that it was absolutely not living up to expectations. The report came back saying that the fund lacked any quantitative measures. It

had weak objectives and ignored the largest emitters in Saskatchewan. It lacked clear priorities and had no focus on environmental objectives. It was also unlikely to achieve the government's objectives.

So, Mr. Speaker, like I said, since then we have restructured it, looking for quantifiable objectives such as actual reductions of greenhouse gases, actual water conservation. I would point out we've committed over the next four years \$11 million to a toilet replacement program which, when it's fully implemented, will save 15 million litres of water per day, which I think is an extraordinary achievement for the province.

We also committed money to biodiversity conservation and energy conservation.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's lack of commitment on the environment is very evident from their time in office, as most of us would know. Kyoto was signed in 1998. It took another four years, until 2002, for the NDP to release a position paper on climate change — not a plan, just a position paper. And then it took another five years, on the eve of an election in 2007, for them to issue some glossy brochures. So, Mr. Speaker, in the course of time, it took almost a decade. And at the end of it, they still didn't have anything concrete that was going to make any difference with our emissions.

In contrast I would like to point out that in just 18 months of this government, we aligned with the federal government's targets. We did widespread consultation. We introduced legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, we signed an agreement in principle with the federal government that would ensure working towards an equivalency agreement to make sure that money stays in Saskatchewan for investment in technology.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, for all of the NDP Environment critic's lamenting, we're just doing what she asked us to do. And I would quote, "I would say the federal targets are something they should clearly be adopting." So I'm not quite sure what she's so upset about. They ask us to do, they expect us to do what they ask every day. And then when we do, then they complain about that. So I think it's a bit of a hypocritical approach.

Mr. Speaker, I think their dedication to the environment is pretty evident. In 2004 the NDP fired 200 environmental staff. It closed nine rural and northern environment offices and six fire bases. And the Environment minister at the time, the member for Saskatoon Centre said, in response to questions about these cuts, "We have our priorities and we have to support those priorities." Well apparently, Mr. Speaker, the environment was absolutely not a priority for the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, this government has undertaken other common sense initiatives. Within my ministry one of the things that we did, which is a common sense thing that people in Saskatchewan had been asking for, was to allow Saskatchewan residents to enjoy Sunday hunting. And I have had overwhelming positive response, I would point out, positive response to the fact that we have made this change. It brings us into line with just about every other jurisdiction in North America. It was something that had been asked of the NDP for years, and they completely ignored the request, but, Mr.

Speaker, we felt that it was a good decision to make. It gives people an extra day to hunt.

I received a letter from a young boy last year. I think he was about 10 or 11 years old and his dad works full-time and he could only hunt with him on Sunday or on Saturday. So he had asked why we didn't allow Sunday hunting. It gives him an extra day with his dad. And that's one of the many reasons why we made this change, Mr. Speaker. It also will generate, we're estimating, an additional \$9 million in revenue for the province.

Mr. Speaker, we've also increased funding to conservation and development authorities to a total of \$1.2 million. We have identified dam safety projects. These are long-term, long-standing issues that need to be addressed to ensure the safety of our water supply.

We have also done substantial work in the area of acid rain. And we know that there's issues with acidification in northern Saskatchewan. And it was something that again, Mr. Speaker, on the eve of an election, the NDP started to address this issue but didn't make much headway.

In fact, in March of 2007, they let lapse a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Alberta. And I'm not really sure how we address acidification in northern Saskatchewan unless you're working with the Government of Alberta because the problem starts in Alberta. So if you're not talking to that government, how do we expect to address some of these issues? Mr. Speaker, we are working on reconstituting that memorandum of understanding, and we will actually be expanding it to include air monitoring.

In total, since forming government we have spent additional money on monitoring and have dedicated staff on this file as well, Mr. Speaker. We have undertaken testing and have begun preparing baseline information. And also on the water file, we've increased the funding for watershed planning implementation to \$800,000. This will allow local watershed groups to implement plans they have been developing and provide serious protection for our water sources across the province.

We have also added an additional \$260,000 to the environmental assessment branch and three additional full-time equivalents. This will allow us to decrease the project wait times. There is still a substantial amount of interest in exploration in our province, Mr. Speaker, and this will allow us to keep up with the demands of industry.

We have also allocated over the last two years \$2 million to a northwest sustainable development plan. We know that the members opposite were happy to hand out exploration permits in the North, Mr. Speaker, but they did it without a plan in place. And we thought that it was probably a wise move to make sure that we have a land use plan in place for northwest Saskatchewan, so that we can make good decisions moving forward when it comes to environmental protection.

Mr. Speaker, also in Saskatchewan recycling is an issue and, as I pointed out earlier, the member for Yorkton has been helping me out on that file. And with the downturn in the recycling market, there are communities and organizations that were

struggling and asked us for assistance. So just recently we announced \$2 million in bridge funding while we work towards a multi-material recycling program. Mr. Speaker, that money went to SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] and SARCAN, the Association of Regional Waste Management Authorities, and to Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities to hand out to various municipalities who needed help on the recycling front.

Mr. Speaker, we are also steadfast in our support for Saskatchewan technology, in particular, carbon capture and storage. Not only are people in Saskatchewan aware of what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, but we believe that the world is paying attention. I know that under the NDP, they promoted the idea.

The member opposite, the NDP Environment critic, has recently called carbon capture and storage unproven and untried. She said it was too expensive to use. And I'm not sure where in the last two years the NDP went from full-on support of carbon capture and storage to a complete denial of its benefit to our environment, Mr. Speaker. And I would suggest that the member opposite might want to sit down with Malcolm Wilson. He's the director of the office of energy and environment at the U of R [University of Regina]. He's a very wise man, and he will tell her that the technology works and that it's cost-effective and that it actually does make a difference.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just recently the International Energy Agency said that without CCS technology and addressing greenhouse gas reductions, that the cost to reduce those emissions would actually triple. CCS is a tried technology, and it is cost-effective in the area of greenhouse gas reduction.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I'm most proud of that our government has done in the last two years is pay down our provincial debt by 40 per cent. The added benefit, not only to get some of that debt off the books, but it frees up interest payments which has allowed us to assist in building schools, repairing hospitals and long-term care homes — things that are necessary for our province.

Mr. Speaker, within my ministry we have also looked to find efficiencies giving Saskatchewan people value for their money, and I think that's an important initiative for any government, regardless of what kind of economic times that we're living in. I know that the members opposite had questions — it would have been our first budget — about moving food services from government. We don't think government needs to be in the business of being in business all the time as the NDP did, but actually let local businesses participate in that food distribution for our fire crews.

So I asked the other day, just for an update after this last fire season, how things were going. And things are going very well. The local businesses are participating, and the added benefit to this, Mr. Speaker, is that any leftover food that is available in those communities has been donated to preschool and Head Start programs for those communities. And if we can help kids while saving money and being efficient, I think that's a pretty good approach for our government and for the communities that it benefits.

We have also removed — and also the NDP had questions

about this earlier this year, so I thought I'd provide an update — but the wet and wild programs through the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, we had asked the Canadian Wildlife Federation if they would deliver these programs for us. There's a cost savings to the government of \$85,000. And, Mr. Speaker, we have managed to save money without reducing any services to the people of this province. Again, I think that's a pretty good approach for government to take.

We have also listened to Saskatchewan communities who need assistance, and we heard earlier today in a member's statement the assistance that was provided to Duck Lake. The member for Regina Walsh Acres continues to re-petition, saying that Duck Lake needs financial assistance. And I'm pretty sure — I could check again with the Minister of Municipal Affairs — but Duck Lake received money earlier this year to help with their water situation, Mr. Speaker. And if she would like to talk to the Municipal Affairs minister about that assistance, I am sure he would be more than willing to discuss that too. I'd discuss that with him.

Mr. Speaker, we are listening to communities, something that the members opposite actually didn't do a very good job of. We are continuing to provide free water testing for communities. In fact we tested water in Hepburn earlier this year. Hepburn was able to take that information— their water quality was not good — and use it as part of an application form for the Building Canada fund. And they received \$9 million this year to implement a municipal water system within their town. And so they no longer have to use the wells that are in their community which are unsafe.

We are continuing the water testing program for communities that are at risk. We announced earlier this year that Katepwa Lake is next. And, Mr. Speaker, we will be discussing with other communities that are at risk, their needs, and see if they are also wanting us to assist them in water testing. Mr. Speaker, the NDP on the other hand waited for communities to call in. So while the NDP sat by the phone waiting for it to ring, we are taking action and being proactive in working with these communities.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP knows that water's an issue in this province. Water has not been an issue for just the last two years. Safe drinking water for our communities has been an issue for quite a while. And again I think it's pretty hypocritical for the NDP to pretend like this is, you know, a new issue. I would point out that the last two years of the NDP government, they handed out \$9 million for water projects.

Mr. Speaker, in our first two years, we have committed \$76 million for water projects. I think our dedication to our communities is clear. And water will remain a priority for our government as we move forward. We will be also working towards a new regulatory framework for the province. It's a results-based regulatory framework. It was actually first recommended under the Blakeney government, but those recommendations were apparently ignored.

We think it's a common sense option for environmental protection in our province. We have done extensive rounds of consultation with stakeholders, with industry, with environmental NGOs [non-governmental organization], SUMA

[Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], and other organizations. And, Mr. Speaker, we have unanimous support of this approach for our government to be moving ahead. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we also have the 100 per cent support from NGOs like the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and also industries such as Nexon. I believe that the opposition leader is familiar with both of these organizations. And I would hope that he would be supportive of his former colleagues as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, we will also be working towards a comprehensive water management plan for the province. I know that again the NDP like to talk about things. They don't actually like to do things. And I have here a discussion paper from 1999. It's now 10 years old. And on page 17 it outlines a problem, and I quote, "In some situations such as in smaller communities, there are insufficient resources available to replace aging infrastructure and meet existing regulations." Which we agree with, there are some deficiencies within municipalities to be able to keep up with demand.

[19:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, if you flip a few pages over, under their action plan, it says to establish a funding mechanism to support provincial water infrastructure. And, Mr. Speaker, that didn't happen. That was from 1999. So while they talked about it, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we've handed out \$76 million for water projects. And we will be moving forward on a water plan for our province.

Mr. Speaker, later this year we will also be introducing our climate change legislation. And I know, while the NDP members opposite can cling to their shiny brochures, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have an actual plan. We have legislation. We will have regulations. We have also hired climate change staff within the ministry and have, as I outlined before, the projects that will address emissions in our province. We have allocated almost \$2 billion to combat climate change. I think our government has proven that we can act. We've done all of this within 18 months, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to the 16 years of NDP where they virtually ignored this till the very end of their mandate.

Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to be able to represent Saskatchewan at the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen later this year. I think Saskatchewan has a remarkable story to tell, and that is the story that I will be telling while I am there. We have realistic targets. We believe that we have an opportunity to balance environmental protection with a continued economic growth in our province, Mr. Speaker, and we have a unique approach with a technology fund that will reinvest in low-carbon solutions within our province. And I'm looking forward, as I said, Mr. Speaker, to telling Saskatchewan's story at Copenhagen on a global stage.

I don't know that anyplace else in the world has the same resources as we have, but we also have the added burden of having exceptionally high emissions on a per capita basis. And that is a challenge for us to be addressing.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of remarks, it has been a

great beginning for our government. And as we move into our third year, we can do so with our heads held high. Our government has shown that it can govern effectively and successfully at a time of plenty, and we will continue to do so in this continued time of uncertainty.

We are also capable of admitting our mistakes, Mr. Speaker, which we have done, and working towards correcting them — unlike the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, who apparently reacts to his own gaffes and mistakes by saying, I don't recall. Well, Mr. Speaker, he may not recall calling the Premier to offer him advice on how to defeat Lorne Calvert and the NDP, but the voters will. He may not recall the massive scandal that erupted during the Leader of the Opposition's leadership campaign, and the fact that he's the only MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] under RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation, but the voters will. He may not recall that he was willing to accept a salary from his caucus office, something that the NDP had criticized a former Sask Party leader for doing, but the voters will.

He may not recall that SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] cost the people of Saskatchewan millions of dollars, but the voters will. He may not recall Channel Lake, another absolute boondoggle that cost the taxpayers of this province, but the voters will. And, Mr. Speaker, he may not recall the decline of our province and the population decline under his tenure as the NDP deputy premier, but we do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to work to gain and keep the trust of the people of this province. They have placed it in us and we value that above all else. I believe our government has taken action on important issues that are facing Saskatchewan people, and we will continue to do so.

This year our government has declared a bold new initiative to shorten surgery wait times to no longer than three months in the next four years. We have vowed to improve access to long-term care for seniors. We are continuing repairs on schools across this province, schools that were badly neglected under the NDP. We have set aside millions of dollars to improve the child welfare system. And we are providing millions in direct support to livestock producers. And, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, our beginning may have ended, but we will continue to move forward. And I have to say it's been disheartening to sit in the House — we're only a few days into the session — and to hear the continued gloom and doom from the opposition members. So, Mr. Speaker, while the NDP are cheerleading for a recession, we will be cheerleading for Saskatchewan.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be supporting our government's Throne Speech. And I will not be supporting the opposition amendment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I focus on the Throne Speech, I would like to make a few comments. First of all, I would like to congratulate the member from Regina Douglas Park on his re-election, and also the

member from Saskatoon Riversdale on her election. And it is my hope that they serve their constituents well.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of the Estevan constituency for allowing me the privilege of representing them. As you would know, Mr. Speaker, I was first elected in 1999, subsequently in 2003, and again in 2007. And sometimes it really seems hard to believe that it's been 10 years since I was first elected, but I feel as honoured today as I did that September evening 10 years ago.

Estevan has a very diverse economy — the oil industry, agriculture, small business, the Shand and Boundary dam power stations, and mining, of course. And, Mr. Speaker, Estevan will soon be home to a new event centre and the energy training institute, which we are so proud that we are getting.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my constituency assistants: my full-time assistant, Rosalie; as well as my casual assistants, Danita and Wilma. And I thank them for their loyalty and dedication to me and the people of the Estevan constituency.

And last but certainly not least, to my family: my son Terry and his wife Marnell; my daughter Trisha and her partner Terry; and my grandkids Beau, Brooke, Bailee, Shelby, and Tristan. They have supported me wholeheartedly and organized family events around my schedule.

And as every member of this legislature knows, our families make huge sacrifices so that we can all do our jobs effectively. And I would like to thank my family and the families of all members for their support. And, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the Premier and all my colleagues for their friendship and support. They are truly my other family and for that, I thank them.

And now to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

This government is committed to ensuring that everyone in Saskatchewan benefits from our economy. Saskatchewan was not immune to what was happening in the rest of the world with the economic recession. All the while the rest of the nation and in fact the world faced gloom, Saskatchewan moved forward with huge population growth; record investment in infrastructure, including a \$1.2 billion historic investment in provincial highways; paying down the debt by 40 per cent which is equal to \$2.7 billion. We have made significant investments towards helping the most vulnerable people in our province, especially children. Mr. Speaker, this government believes that children hold the promise for continuing our social and economic growth. We have a plan to address immediate concerns and are putting in place long-term measures to strengthen our child care system and prove outcomes for children in care.

Mr. Speaker, in the current fiscal year, over \$4 million has been provided for the development of 1,000 new licensed child care spaces. By the end of March 2010, the number of funded child care spaces will total 11,400. Mr. Speaker, we can also point to our government's doubling of the daily food allowance for children on welfare. Because of this new funding, healthier food can be provided for children giving them the energy to be

achievers at school and in life.

This government has also brought in the active families benefit. This benefit is a fully tax refundable benefit of up to \$150 per year for children aged 6 to 14 who are enrolled in cultural and sporting activities.

Mr. Speaker, this government has acted in many other areas to enhance the quality of life in our great province. We have taken a tough approach on crime to ensure our streets and communities are safer. Drug use and associated criminal activities and violence in northern Saskatchewan will be enforced by a new unit made up of RCMP and the Prince Albert Police Service. The officers assigned to this new unit are part of our government's promise to create 120 new policing positions in four years; \$1.6 million has been invested in the hiring of 30 new police officers and three new prosecutors whose sole responsibility is to tackle violent crime in our province.

Action has also been taken to clean up certain areas that are experiencing dangerously high criminal activity. This is through SCAN, the safer communities and neighbourhoods program. These initiatives display this government's commitment to fighting crime and making Saskatchewan a safer place to live.

Mr. Speaker, regarding agriculture. This government realizes the importance of the agriculture sector to this province. I've said it before and I'll say it again: it's so great to finally have an Agriculture minister that truly understands the industry. We appreciate the hard work and the investment of farmers and ranchers. We know that the Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers produce nearly half of Canada's canola. They are also one of the world's largest exporters of canola. Saskatchewan ranchers have the second largest beef, cattle, bison, and elk herds in the country. And Saskatchewan is also one of the world's largest exporters of flax, lentils, peas, and wheat.

Saskatchewan again has demonstrated strong leadership when dealing with agricultural program design. The lack of leadership had been lost when the previous administration was forced to appoint ministers to this portfolio who had little or no understanding of the industry.

Under the leadership of the member from Melville-Saltcoats, this government has launched a review of crop insurance. We focused on ways to improve the program from a farmer's perspective. From that review, our government has made the largest ever contribution to the crop insurance program by any Saskatchewan government. Our government's \$20 million dollar increase to the crop insurance program brought the program's budget to \$155 million. This investment means better coverage for producers, and it also lowers their premium's cost.

When the NDP were in power, Mr. Speaker, every farmer was frustrated because of their backward thinking. Under their watch, the programs they offered established high premiums for reduced coverage.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very pleased to see the head office of AgriStability moving to Melville. This will enable farmers and ranchers that are using the program more direct access to the people administering them. This new office in Melville will begin operating in 2010 as it begins processing the applications

for the year 2009. And, Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite have been saying it's no big deal, but it is a huge cost saving to the people of this province, and also the processing will be a lot more timely than it is at the present time. And, Mr. Speaker, this will result in 10 new jobs at the head office of crop insurance in Melville, and 30 new jobs at crop insurance offices throughout rural Saskatchewan. And this is in stark contrast to the NDP who closed the rural service centres.

Our government has also assisted livestock and hog producers with direct support of \$70 million through the cattle and hog support program. And our government has also given all property owners the largest education property tax reduction in the province's history. This was an issue for many years, but the NDP failed to act and turned a blind eye. When we campaigned on the property tax issue, we were the only party that included agricultural land in this program. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite excluded farmers from a reduction program, but that certainly didn't come as any surprise to our farmers and ranchers, and it certainly wasn't the first time they were forgotten about or abandoned by the NDP.

I would again like to thank the Minister of Education and the present Minister of Highways and Infrastructure, the member from Rosetown-Elrose, for all their hard work on the property tax file. This is a file we promised to move forward on during the election, Mr. Speaker. And I am proud to say yes, this is one of over 100 promises that our government has kept.

We have also moved forward in responding to alleviating long-term drought assistance issues in southwest Saskatchewan. Through positive co-operation with the federal government, we have invested \$29 million in the farm and ranch water infrastructure program. The funding will go towards community wells, large and small diameter wells, deep buried pipelines and dugouts, and all of these will help producers have a stable water source so that they can be productive and competitive in dry years.

Mr. Speaker, when we formed government we faced a huge infrastructure deficit. Since forming government, we have committed \$2.5 billion for a wide array of initiatives. These initiatives include highways, schools, health care facilities, and municipal projects. Through the Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative we provide municipalities with an interest subsidy for five years to fund infrastructure development. Mr. Speaker, this program will save municipalities \$5.6 million this year, and over the course of the program can save municipalities up to \$67.5 million. This is a stark contrast from the past 16 years where the previous government shortchanged municipalities by millions of dollars in operational funding.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan municipalities can anticipate further increase next year when the municipal operating grant moves to an equivalent of one point of the PST [provincial sales tax]. For 16 years, Mr. Speaker, municipal requests for funding fell on deaf ears.

[20:00]

And, Mr. Speaker, our government is also helping communities to grow during this current global recession. We have invested \$100 million in our new municipal economic enhancement

program, or MEEP. This is unconditional infrastructure funding with no political strings attached. Nearly 800 communities have taken advantage of this funding, which in turn allows their city, town, or rural municipality opportunities to enhance their residents' quality of life.

And, Mr. Speaker, I attended a number of announcements in my constituency over the summer, and they never failed to mention how pleased they were with the accelerated process. They all mentioned how this is the first time a government has allowed them to choose projects which were their top priority. The people in the community know what their own community needs. Mr. Speaker, I will add that the delivery of this funding was unprecedented.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, when the Saskatchewan Party formed government, we inherited a huge infrastructure deficit. That infrastructure deficit included a health care system that was on life support. We have taken many steps towards improving our health care system including something very near and dear to my heart, and that is cancer care.

Mr. Speaker, there is not one person in this Chamber whose family hasn't been touched by this horrible disease, some maybe more than others. Mr. Speaker, it was just this last Sunday that marked 14 months since I lost my own husband to cancer. Some may think that 14 months has flown by, but believe me, when you go home to an empty house and absent-mindedly pour two cups of coffee, buy two tickets to events, that 14 months really seems like an eternity. So any progress we can make regarding cancer care, cure, or cancer research is extremely important to me.

Mr. Speaker, we've added more training seats for doctors and nurses and we've added 13 new long-term care homes for seniors — one of which, I am proud to say, will be in my constituency at Radville. The Marian Health Centre in Radville is in dire need and construction of their new facility will begin in the spring of 2010.

Mr. Speaker, the Patient First Review was recently released. In his report, Tony Dagnone made the profound statement. He said, "Residents are proud of this province's health care heritage, but they want to see the 'care' restored to 'Medicare'." The Patient First Review included youngest to old, rural and urban, rich and poor, with special emphasis on and including First Nations and Métis voices. People of our province said they are not satisfied with the quality of the health care system, the health care system that had been neglected for 16 years by the former government.

They were well aware of the increasing surgical backlog which in turn created longer waiting lists, but they did nothing. Our Saskatchewan Party government has set this goal, that over the next four years we will reduce surgical wait times in Saskatchewan to no longer than three months for all surgeries. This is a bold goal but, Mr. Speaker, it is doable.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, when the former Minister of Health, the member from The Battlefords, would refuse to set goals because he might not be able to achieve them. And I also remember the criticism our government received when we stated we wanted to recruit 800 additional nurses within four

years. Mr. Speaker, today there are 560 more nurses working in our province than when this government took office. We have reached 70 per cent of our four-year goal in less than two years.

Let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, it was the NDP that closed 52 hospitals in Saskatchewan. They also closed the Plains hospital, a hospital built to accommodate people from rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about the differences between a forward-thinking government and the previous government who, the only time their 1970s engine was put into gear, it automatically went into reverse. Unfortunately that hasn't changed. They were a government that settled for mediocrity, a government who called this province, which I am so proud to call home, a wee province. They were a government who did not plan for growth. Their mindset was, when people left this province it was a good thing because there was more left for the rest of us.

They must have thought they were very successful then during the span of 2001 to 2007 when Saskatchewan lost more than 35,000 people to net out-migration. In fact before the current Leader of the Opposition left his high-paying executive job at Nexen in Calgary, he was the minister of CIC. Mr. Speaker, in the last two years in government as CIC minister, the current Leader of the Opposition left a legacy. What does this legacy entail? Saskatchewan's population dropped by 10,000 people and had the worst job creation record in Canada. Now that is a legacy that I would try and not recall.

The member from Douglas Park said on the news Monday morning that the Throne Speech left farmers in limbo. Well, Mr. Speaker, what left farmers in limbo or perhaps even devastation was when that member was part of a government that tore up their GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to address a few mistakes that the member from Regina Rosemont made in an October 23rd interview he did with *Lifestyles* magazine out of Estevan. I heard it once said that the facts should never get in the way of a good story but this member really takes these words to heart. First of all, the member said that he was disappointed in the Throne Speech because he would like to see more training spaces for Saskatchewan nurses. Well I am surprised that he is not aware that that has already happened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2008 there was about 520 first-year students and we are likely to see an increase of 200 students in 2009. I guess like the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Rosemont has a difficult time recalling some things.

Mr. Speaker, there is more good news for that member from Rosemont. We have added 40 new psychiatric nursing positions. These are the first 40 positions for psychiatric nursing ever in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to give this update on nursing positions to the member from Rosemont so that he can sleep easy knowing that there are more training positions in Saskatchewan.

And another miscalculation that the member from Rosemont made in the same paper was stating that the opposition is

disappointed that the government will run a deficit in 2009-2010. Well I can tell him that that is not true.

And I am happy to jog the memory of the member from Rosemont. And I guess having trouble recalling situations has become a common occurrence on the opposition side of the House but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if these were the only two issues that the member from Regina Rosemont had with the Throne Speech, I'm glad to inform him that he was mistaken and now he can throw his support behind the Saskatchewan Party and vote in favour of the Throne Speech.

And lastly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to invite the new Leader of the Opposition out to my constituency, which is also the home of the beautiful Rafferty lake. The people in my constituency are anxiously awaiting for him to come out there and walk across Rafferty lake. And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the motion put forth by the Minister of Health, and I will certainly not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour to enter into the debate on this Throne Speech that was presented in the legislature last Wednesday.

An Hon. Member: — I'm predicting this is the last throne speech she ever responds to in this House.

Ms. Atkinson: — The member opposite says it'll be my last throne speech. I can assure the member opposite that I have a few more responses to throne speeches left, and it's not my last one.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to congratulate the returning member of the legislature, the Leader of the Opposition, who recently won the by-election in Regina Douglas Park. I want to congratulate him, and I also want to thank his family for once again allowing this member to participate in political life in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's son is a constituent of mine, and he was referred to in the leader's response to the Throne Speech. But I can attest to the fact that Travis Lingenfelter is a very bright young man that also has, I believe, a political future in the province of Saskatchewan. He also has a great partner in Caitie Cottrell who is a political person as well. And I think that these two young people represent a number of young people in the province who are interested in politics.

I want to welcome my colleague, the new member for Saskatoon Riversdale, to the Assembly. The new member comes from a long line of New Democrats, and she and her family and her mom and dad, her grandparents, have been active in the CCF and the NDP for decades. And I think that this young female member of the Assembly will distinguish herself in the days ahead, and she certainly will represent the people of Saskatoon Riversdale.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a very interesting couple of days in the Assembly. And, you know, my vantage point has changed somewhat in terms of this particular session of the legislature.

And I have been interested to follow members of the legislature in terms of their response to the Throne Speech. And you know, it was a very interesting quote that opened the Throne Speech. And the government members chose to use a quote from Albert Einstein, who . . . And they said in the first sentence:

Albert Einstein, a man who used his prodigious intellect to unlock the secrets of the universe, once made this simple but . . . [eloquent] observation [and I quote]:

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you . . . [have to] keep moving.

Well the Sask Party clearly left the impression that this Throne Speech was going to unlock the secrets of the universe. And I have to say that when you sat in the Assembly when the Lieutenant Governor read the Speech from the Throne, I noticed that there were a number of empty seats in the Legislative Assembly. There weren't that many people in attendance, Mr. Speaker. In fact I think if the member from Massey Place hadn't invited a large school group, I'm not sure the east gallery would have been full.

And, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I found interesting is that the members opposite seem to be unenergized by this Throne Speech. So it appears as though their universe has run out of gas — or is it run out of money, Mr. Speaker? Run out of money that the NDP — you know those people that they talk about in terms of the last 16 years — I think the NDP left them with \$1.9 billion in cash, and it appears as though they have run out of gas, they have run out of money, and they're now left to ride a bicycle, Mr. Speaker.

Now this government has been in office for two years. But if you were here on the day of the Throne Speech, it felt like they had been in office for decades, decades.

Mr. Speaker, there are number of adjectives to describe unenergetic. Now I would describe the members opposite as unenergetic. And here's what *Webster's* says about unenergetic: lethargic, tired, deficient in alertness or activity, worn out, downcast, slow going, dormant, lifeless, dull, hibernating, weary, listless, stuporous, unenterprising.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a little definition that they say in *Webster's*. It says bullfrogs become unenergetic with the first cold nights. And I was thinking, Mr. Speaker, maybe it was the weather last Wednesday because there seems to be a lot of bullfrogs over there, and they seem to be very listless, unenergetic, and cold. Now, Mr. Speaker, that was the Wednesday.

And then on the Thursday, the Leader of the Opposition stands up and he asks his first question. Now I clearly remember the Premier promised the people of this province that he wasn't going to engage in the old style of politics and take on people personally. I remember that. I remember that he was going to be a new adult, that he was going to act premier-like and adult-like. And this was after the video when he gave a very heartfelt and impassioned speech in this legislature about the video and he apologized. And he said he was going to become a better person.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier, in answer to the first question from the member from Regina Douglas Park — his first question as Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition — the Premier gets up and acts in a way that I thought he promised the people of Saskatchewan he was not going to act like, I was surprised. So I was surprised about the Throne Speech, and I was surprised about the Premier's response. Because somehow, you know, Mr. Speaker, I thought the Premier was above this. That's what I thought. I thought the Premier had better things to do than to get down in the mud and do what the Premier did, Mr. Speaker.

[20:15]

And I have to say that I do think the Premier has a lot to do, and I do think the Premier should act like the Premier and not engage in what I saw him clearly do last Thursday, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech. The Throne Speech, as I understand throne speeches, is supposed to be about the government's way forward, what their vision for the province is, and how they plan to work on behalf of the citizens in the coming year. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have pointed out on a number of occasions that if you read the Throne Speech, and certainly if you listen to the members opposite's response to the Throne Speech, what they have done is they have clearly regurgitated what they have done in the last couple of years.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, they have in many respects not been totally straightforward about the last couple of years and they have not been forthright. And I just heard the member from Estevan refer to the fact that it was the Sask Party that put in place the first psychiatric nurses in the . . . or training seats in the province. And that's simply not correct. It was the NDP government that announced those seats. They had to get those seats in place. And so I would say that it wasn't the Sask Party that did this. It was a combination of the vision of the previous government and the implementation of the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. I would say that. And there are numerous examples of that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a real test of any government is how a government handles adversity. And I would say that if you look at all of the economic indicators, we have adversity in the province of Saskatchewan. And I know that the members opposite want to talk about all of the wonderful things that have taken place in the province in the last couple of years.

I would say to the members opposite that there was a lot of hard work that went in to getting us to the point where there are many citizens in our province that are enjoying the benefits of that hard work. But, Mr. Speaker, a true test of a government is how you treat all of your citizens, not just some of your citizens.

And, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I noticed, I noticed a Throne Speech that really isn't about moving forward, it was about looking back. I mentioned the Premier and the Premier's comments in this Assembly on Thursday. So that was Wednesday, Thursday.

Yesterday I saw something in this Assembly that I haven't seen,

Mr. Speaker. And what I saw was a government that locked the front doors of this Assembly to a group of men and women — mostly women — that came to this Assembly to have their voice heard.

And I'm talking about the people who clean our nursing homes, clean our hospitals, prepare the food, do the laundry, who are laboratory technicians, respiratory therapists, people who are nutritionists, dietitians, I mean people who do the day-to-day carrying out of duties in our health care facilities, people who maintain those facilities. What we're really talking about, Mr. Speaker, is working men and women who provide care to our families each day of the week, 365 days of the year. And you know, Mr. Speaker, they came to this Assembly and they wanted to be heard.

And the members opposite on numerous occasions over the years have welcomed . . . I remember there were hundreds of people here as Save our Schools when they were upset about a school being closed in rural Saskatchewan. This Assembly has welcomed farmers who did a sit-in in the cafeteria, and they were in our galleries.

This Assembly has welcomed Power workers who were upset about contract negotiations with the government. This Assembly welcomed hundreds of nurses that were being ordered back to work. And I have never ever in my 23 years in this Assembly seen those doors locked to the public, when people came to this Assembly to have their voices heard.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you cannot welcome some people, you cannot welcome people who are Save our Schools to the Assembly, farmers to the Assembly, chamber of commerce people to the Assembly that were opposed to the most available hours — we cannot welcome those people and then not welcome other people when they have a problem with the government.

And, Mr. Speaker, I do speak with some, a bit of authority on this. I was the Health minister when those nurses were ordered back to work. I was the Health minister when they were in this Assembly and those members asked us questions, and at no time were those women that provide 24-hour-a-day care, 365-day-a-year care to the people of our province, not once were those doors locked to those people, Mr. Speaker.

And so this is the fourth day. In three days I have seen things that I have not seen before. I've seen a Throne Speech that looks back, not forward. I see a Premier that lays the glove first in this Assembly when he promised us he wasn't going to do that. And then I saw the front doors locked and then I saw signs that said, authorized personnel only, going to the cafeteria. And, Mr. Speaker, I find that unacceptable in a free and democratic society where we have access to this Assembly, where people can come and have their voices heard regardless of whether or not the government likes it or not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot treat people differently. You cannot have one set of rules for one group of citizens and then another set of rules for another group of citizens. Now I know that members opposite, they have a propensity to like people that have a lot of money — you know, rich people, people that are . . .

An Hon. Member: — Like you. Like you, Pat.

Ms. Atkinson: — Or they say like me. Okay, I'm a middle-class woman. I am. But I don't consider myself rich. I don't have a business. I don't run an oil company. I don't own a gold company. I don't own a potash company. I'm not a chamber of commerce member, Mr. Speaker. But I come from a working background. I was a teacher. I was a person who provided education to students.

And, Mr. Speaker, what I find so insulting, what I find so insulting is that these men and women, they decided that they're going to take on working people in this province.

You know, I have nephews. I have nephews that work in the construction industry. You know, they're carpenters and they're plumbers and they're pipefitters. And you know what, Mr. Speaker, they're proud.

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order. Order. Order. Thank you. I would like to hear the member's speech.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. You know, I have family members, Mr. Speaker, that are in the construction industry. I have some family members that own construction companies, and I have other family members that work in those construction industries. And, Mr. Speaker, historically they have belonged to the Carpenters' Union, the plumbers and pipefitters union, the Sheet Metal Workers, the millwrights, and so on and so forth, Mr. Speaker. They have belonged to their particular union group that represents their craft — their craft.

And what the members opposite have done with Bill 80 is that they've said that that craft doesn't matter any more. It doesn't matter that a union can come in and totally change the way that most people who are in the trades are represented in this country unless they live in Alberta.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what we should be thinking about is how do we enhance the skills of people that are in the trades. That's what I think we should be thinking about. I think what we want to make sure is that we have more journey people, not fewer journey people. I think that we should encourage people to become experts in their craft or their trade. That's what I think because I know that when that plumber comes into my home to do work in my home, that the work is going to be properly done. When they come in and do pipefitting in terms of natural gas, I know that the work is going to be properly done. And when they come and do carpentry work — and there's now journey people who are painters and drywallers and so on — that the work is going to be properly done.

But what I don't understand is, who is asking for the way that we've organized the trades in this province to be changed? That's what I don't understand. And you know what? Those people who are in those trades don't understand it as well. And the people that own some of those companies that have worked with those trades, those unionized trades for decades, don't understand it as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite said before

the election that they were going to go to war with people who are working people, people who are organized. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't think, I don't think that you can have a decent civil society when you pick some people who you are more interested in looking after and helping than others. And I think, Mr. Speaker, it speaks to the whole issue of leadership and it speaks about to decency and it speaks to not being mean and ugly to people, and mean spirited to people that you don't necessarily identify with.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I thought that when we got elected that we worked to the best of our ability to represent as many people as possible. Mr. Speaker, in my constituency I can speak to people who are politically active Sask Party people, Liberals, New Democrats, and I try and represent them all, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I was in cabinet, I tried to represent business people when it came to changing corporate capital tax and corporate income tax . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And oh, well you know, there you are. You see? There you are.

And so here we have a government that just wants to represent the one aspect of society, and I find that very, very difficult to take. Oh, you see the member opposite, this speaks to their meanness, Mr. Speaker. This speaks to their meanness. They don't want to hear that the idea is to represent as many people as possible. And that speaks to the kind of person that that particular member is. Now I know he's a bit sensitive because he's under a little bit of heat because of H1N1, and I'm sure there's going to be more heat that's going to be on him in the next couple of days. But you're going to have to get used to it, Mr. Member. You're going to have to get used to it. Oh yes. You're going to have to get used to it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a 15-page Throne Speech, a 15-page Throne Speech, and they spent most of that Throne Speech looking back on the past two years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Think about this government. They come to office in November 2007 and there's \$1.9 billion in the bank, \$1.9 billion in the bank. That was as of the mid-year financial report which went to the end of September, and \$1.9 billion according to the Minister of Finance. And then we have escalating commodity prices. And at the end of the year they had a \$1.8 billion surplus and a huge Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And then in 2008-09 they had a surplus of \$2.4 billion. Now, Mr. Speaker, has there ever been a government in the history of the province that has had over \$5 billion in the kitty? Can you imagine?

[20:30]

And then they think that they're miracle workers because they reduced the debt by \$2.3 billion. Well I think that's a no-brainer, Mr. Speaker. That's a no-brainer.

And they had a \$1.6 billion Fiscal Stabilization Fund, but now it's down to 800 million and I'm waiting with interest to see what the Minister of Finance is going to say. And if, you know, maybe in mid-November . . . That's the mid-year, mid-November, maybe the third week in November. I have a hunch that they probably won't release that until after we adjourn on December 3rd. I'm going to be interested to see when the mid-year financial report gets released. Usually it's

released in November, but I think these guys might delay it until after December because the legislature will be adjourned.

Because I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that their deficit is going to be close to \$1 billion — \$1 billion. And why is that? The reason is that they overestimated the potash. Potash. I think they had it about 20 per cent of their revenue stream was going to come from potash. And what did we say? We said . . . [inaudible] . . . Why are you doing this? Where are you getting this information? And what was their answer? Oh, we're optimistic there's going to be a deal with China.

Now did they check to see to figure out that China had just opened a big potash mine in December of 2008? No. Did they look at what was happening across the globe in terms of potash sales? No. Did they have any intelligence in terms of what was happening in China? The answer is no.

And so we have a problem, Mr. Speaker. We have problem in that we probably have a deficit of close to \$1 billion in this province. And why would that be? We've had unprecedented revenue, and they've spent money like there is no tomorrow. And they've spent money in the last two years. And I guess the question is, what are you going to do next year? And that's why we have a Throne Speech that says not much about next year.

Now what we do know is that they're going to reduce wait times in the province to three months. It's going to take them four years. But a few days before they announced this, they cut the money to the ambulatory surgical care centre here in Regina. They've had two years to put it together — haven't done it.

And then they decided that they're going to change the needle exchange program. All of the evidence — this gets to the mean-spiritedness — all of the evidence, their own report from their own consultant that they paid thousands of dollars to have them tell them the needle exchange program works. It works. Don't change it; don't change it. Well what are they going to do? They're going to cap the needles that people get. And it's not about good public policy. It's not about leadership. It's about mean-spiritedness. It's about mean-spiritedness. It's not about leadership and good public policy. And I think the Minister of Health knows that. I think he knows that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have people that come into our constituency offices all the time and, Mr. Speaker, what are they talking about? They're talking about affordability. They're talking about escalating utility costs. They're talking about wages that aren't going up to meet those escalating costs. They're talking about the price of food, gas, repairs — everything has gone up. And did this government once talk about or address affordability in this Throne Speech? The answer is absolutely no.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they did refer to immigrants, and I do want to talk a little bit about the people who have come to our province. People have worked very hard to change the immigrant nominee program so that more people would come to the province. And a lot of those people have been working in the service sector and what they've found is they've found their hours reduced. And we need to spend more time through the

Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour making sure that those folks are being properly treated because I can tell the members opposite that there are some difficulties among a number of immigrants that have come under the immigrant nominee program, particularly in the service sector.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you come to this province and you think you're going to be earning \$13 an hour and you're earning \$9.65 an hour, minimum wage, there's quite a difference. And when it costs you 700 or \$800 for an apartment and you're earning minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, it's kind of difficult to make a living. And so I would say to the members opposite that we need to do some follow-up work with employers in the province to ensure that those immigrants that have come here under the immigrant nominee program are being properly treated because the last thing that this province needs, the last thing that this province needs is to develop a very poor reputation internationally and to have those folks that have come here under the immigrant nominee program go back home, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was particularly interested in what the members opposite had to say about agriculture. And I'm no longer the Ag critic, but I can tell you that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The Ag critic is the Leader of the Opposition. And what I can tell the members opposite is that there's still a lot of pain in the cattle industry. There's still a lot of pain in the hog industry. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I have people that contact me that are getting prices, 1987 prices — over 20 years ago — those kinds of prices in terms of today when they sell a steer or a heifer.

Now what do they talk about? They talk about previous announcements. We all know they're moving the AgriStability program to Melville. We all know that they changed crop insurance. We all know that there is an agricultural Crown land sale — not too many people buying it. We know about the gopher control rebate program. We know about the farm and ranch water infrastructure program, and we know that there's been support to the cattle and hog industry. Now what the members haven't done is talk about the way forward; but 22, 23 per cent of the crop still on the ground in this province; and we have a hog industry and a cattle industry that is hemorrhaging; and all the government did was regurgitate what they have done in the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of my colleagues have certainly gone through this Throne Speech. And I think there were only five new initiatives, five new initiatives, and the rest of it was all regurgitation.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have spoken my 25 minutes. I want to thank the Minister of Health for giving me the opportunity to speak in the Assembly. I know that he's under a lot of pressure in the days ahead . . .

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order please. It's not increasingly difficult — I can't hear at all. And when the side conversations are louder than the member presentation, it's unfortunate for those of us who want to hear the member speak. So would you please allow the member from Nutana to

continue uninterrupted.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Health for giving me the opportunity to speak in the Assembly. I know that he wanted to speak. I know the Minister of Health is under a great deal of pressure, personal pressure given the situation in health care these days. Some of us have had that experience before, but I really do want to say to the Minister of Health that, you know, just chill out, take a bit of a deep breath. Life is going to be okay. You don't have to get mean and ugly and nasty, that life will be okay once we get through the H1N1 crisis, Mr. Speaker.

So with that I'll take my seat. And it'll be interesting to hear what else they have to say about the Throne Speech because so far all we've heard them talk about is what the NDP did for 16 years and what they've done the last two years. They haven't told us how they're going to move forward with \$1 billion deficit and some of the economic issues that this province is facing. And all you have to do is look at the latest Statistics Canada to know that there are more people unemployed. There are more bankruptcies. Retail sales are down.

An Hon. Member: — Doom and gloom.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, they say doom and gloom. I think that's reality. And the question will be, how are you going to manage the situation, and how are you going to lead us out of this?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure this evening to rise to my feet and enter the debate on the Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, while I am doing that, I will certainly want to take the opportunity to talk a little bit about my constituency and the people that help in our office, the CAs [constituency assistant] that I have in my office in Kindersley.

I'm very proud to represent the constituency of Kindersley off and on now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since 1991. The election of '91 was an interesting election; the '95, '99, and then stepping aside in 2002 and then coming back in the last election.

The people of Kindersley have been very, very good to me over the years, Mr. Speaker. It's been a pleasure to represent that constituency, a constituency that has a tremendous amount of vibrancy, a large agriculture base — both grains and oilseeds, cattle. Lots of diversity in terms of the oil and gas sector in that area. A constituency that one could be . . . any member of this Assembly would be proud to represent, I'm sure. And I certainly am as well.

All of us in the legislature are supported by a number of folks. And certainly the people in my office, in the constituency office in Kindersley, Susan and Sherri, do a tremendous job of looking after the day-to-day work that all MLAs are faced with in their constituency — fielding calls from people, visiting with people when they come in. They do a tremendous job of looking after the affairs of the constituency, and I'm extremely grateful to their assistance.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, in my office here in Regina, we are certainly supported by a great number of folks who are tremendous in terms of their ability. And I'm again very fortunate to have, you know, a number of folks working in there. I think in fact I have the Leader of the Opposition's former employee in my employ now, and it's interesting some of the discussions that we have from time to time.

And, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, of course you are always blessed by having a very, very supportive family that is very helpful in terms of your operations, in terms of your business — in my case, our farming operation. My son is taking over the operation. We're extremely pleased about that. It's going a lot better than I expected, and I'm sure a lot better than he expected in terms of that, Mr. Speaker. So I'm very, very happy about that. And incidentally, Mr. Speaker, when I'm talking about agriculture, I want to make it clear that there's a lot of people out there in agriculture that are, right now across this province, either are on combines and trying to get the last bit of their harvest off or they're anxiously looking at the weather forecasts.

You look at what you see around Regina these days, and water in the fields, raining all day most of the day here in Regina — very, very difficult and anxious times for family members. I have a brother-in-law that farms just north of the city here a little bit. I think he's got 5 or 6,000 acres to go, and I certainly feel for him and his family right now, recognizing the challenge that they are going through and certainly the challenges that many, many producers across this province are.

But the good news, Mr. Speaker, is that people in agriculture are a very resilient bunch, and they will be working long and hard. The other evening in the Kindersley area I'm told that farmers were combining till 2, 3 o'clock in the morning, many of them — long after, long naturally after the sun went down and a long, cold evening out in the field dumping, you know, unloading grain and all of that kind of stuff. It's not much fun when you're under the gun under those kinds of circumstances.

[20:45]

I would hope members opposite, many who don't have a connection to agriculture, would understand the challenge that many farmers are faced with in terms of dealing with it, Mr. Speaker. So we certainly are on this side of the House well acquainted — many, many members have agriculture backgrounds and would know the challenges that the ag community is going through.

The other thing that I'm always amazed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the legislature is how freely the opposition members are prepared to give people in agriculture advice. I'm always amazed by that — people who haven't had a connection to agriculture in a long time. I mean I think agriculture people are pretty, you know, pretty open-minded. They're prepared to take some advice from time to time. But I suspect when they hear members from downtown Regina giving them advice about AgriStability, AgriInvest, whether it's going to be beneficial to have those operations housed in Saskatchewan or not. And they're saying, what difference does it make?

Well I can tell you, Mr. member from Coronation Park, that it

means a lot to farmers to have some of those things housed in Saskatchewan. And the reasons are really quite simple. It's because when farmers want to phone up and ask questions about the programs, they want to know that there's someone on the other end of the line that actually understands what they are talking about.

And so when you're talking to somebody in Winnipeg or someone in Ottawa and they're asking you questions about how could your grain possibly go from no. 1 to no. 3 and they simply do not understand the question, it's a little bit frustrating for someone that's come in from harvesting till 2 o'clock in the morning and has to get on the phone at 8 o'clock the next day to try and get a hold of somebody in these programs to ask them some questions, and then have someone ask that kind of question of you.

It will be in this province. We will find that we'll make sure that there are people that the Minister of Agriculture will have in his employ in these operations that will actually understand how that could happen. And it will be, I think, a very, very good thing for the people of Saskatchewan. It'll be much more responsive, much more timely, and a much better program because it'll be designed by the cabinet and the caucus of this side of the House.

Actually it will be designed, the changes will be designed by people that know just a little bit about the subject when it comes to agriculture rather than the members opposite. And they're talking about GSP, not realizing that it's actually GPS [Global Positioning System]. When you're talking about that, the Leader of the Opposition I think was the one that said that. So when they understand some of those things, a little about it, it would be helpful in terms of that kind of advice from the members opposite. And it's troubling for people in agriculture when they're advised by folks on that side of the House about these kinds of things.

I want to — while I'm speaking and while I think of it — I want to take the opportunity to welcome the new members to the legislature. We have the new member for Saskatoon Riversdale, a very nice young lady. I've had occasion to meet her and greet her and welcome her to the Assembly. It's going to be an interesting time I think for her. I suspect she's already learned a few things about the legislature, and we would want to take the occasion to welcome her.

I would also want to welcome the new Leader of the Opposition, the gentleman that's come back from a executive position in an oil company. I think if I'm not mistaken, I believe it was a government relations position with a oil company in Calgary. I would want to take the opportunity to welcome him back to the legislature.

He's no stranger to this Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I guess it was pointed out by one of the members that he's been in the legislature in serving parts of five decades. I've been here a little while, but I think I'm only working on my second one right now, Mr. Speaker. But five decades is a long, long time. He's seen a lot of things. I suspect he would like to see the clock turn back in a lot of areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

He always — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be a little careful about

how I say this because I don't want to offend the member opposite — he always refers to me as a good friend of his. I'm not quite sure politically why he does that. We've always been on opposite sides of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have had a little, you know, opportunity to have a few discussions from time to time.

Generally speaking, when you talk about good friends, you would normally associate it with speaking with someone more than once or twice a year. It's usually the kind of thing that you might occasionally, you know, go out for dinner or have them over to your house — those kinds of things. That's just something that really hasn't happened a lot.

I have a great deal of respect for the Leader of the Opposition. I think he's, you know, he's probably represented the constituencies he's had represented for a long time pretty well, I suspect. I don't agree with his philosophy. And, Mr. Speaker, he's simply on a different wavelength than I am politically. I just simply do not agree with the policies that he's been a part of over the years. Whether its nationalization going back to the early days of his career, whether it's some of the things he's talking about these days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's just something that I'm not sure why some people would think that we are very close friends. I think I would characterize it a little bit more as a casual acquaintance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But nevertheless, I want to welcome him back to the legislature. I hope he has the opportunity to serve to as the Leader of the Opposition for a long, long time, Mr. Speaker. And I suspect given the way things look in Saskatchewan these days, I think he likely will be in opposition for a long, long time, and at some point they'll be going through another leadership campaign.

I think they made a mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the leadership. I think they should've reached back to a younger person to represent the leadership aspirations of that party. I think it would've served them better. Frankly when you look at the election results in the two by-elections, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think you can see that in any reasonable analysis of this, with anybody with any degree of political acumen would look at this and say the NDP didn't do all that well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You backed up a long ways. And it would like the equivalent of, it would be like the equivalent of the Saskatchewan Party just barely squeaking in a by-election in Kelvington-Wadena or in Cannington or some of the other constituencies, or Kindersley perhaps. But nevertheless, when you look at the results, and when you look at the results and you run them all across the province of Saskatchewan, I think what you'll find is is that many, many members are probably wondering about their future in this Assembly.

And given the attitude of people across Saskatchewan these days, I suspect many members opposite, even though there's a great deal of bravado about the election results in those two constituencies, when you win Riversdale by 350 votes, I think you realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker — as anybody on that side that has a moment of honesty in terms of looking at these results — would realize that that's not a very strong result. And when you look at the northern member in his seat just barely squeaking in, you realize how perilous your seat is at the moment, sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I've noticed probably most in the last couple of years across Saskatchewan, that I think as a member that's been in the legislature for a period of time, is the change in attitude that people have in this province. All across Saskatchewan you are seeing that change in attitude that we haven't witnessed, I don't think, in decades. We're seeing a level of optimism, a level of hope. People now are very proud about Saskatchewan. We're seeing people moving back from other provinces — even the Leader of the Opposition — moving back to Saskatchewan. Because it's a changed province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a place where people want to stay now.

When you go to your constituency, and you're in the constituency, and you're talking to people, talking to young people across Saskatchewan, I remember many occasions speaking to graduating classes in my constituency — and on the odd occasion, in other constituencies as well — and you'd ask the young people, almost plead with them, what are you thinking about doing? Are you going to stay in Saskatchewan?

And it wasn't all that many years ago — about three — when you would talk to young people in Saskatchewan and they'd be saying to you, I'm probably leaving Saskatchewan. I don't see a future for me here. I don't see opportunity for me here in Saskatchewan. And it was sort of about 7 out of 10, 8 out of 10, occasionally unfortunately, 9 out of 10 young people would look you straight in the eye and say, I don't see opportunity for me. I'm leaving Saskatchewan. I'm going to Calgary. I'm going to Edmonton. I'm going to Red Deer. I'm going to British Columbia. I'm going anywhere but staying in Saskatchewan. And that was always very, very difficult for all members. And I suspect all of the members opposite have had similar experiences until we've seen the change in the last few years.

We've see that attitude change where there's hope and there's optimism. And young people now, young people now, when you ask them that very same question, are saying things like I see opportunity here in Saskatchewan. I see great things for our province. I see the opening up of our economy. I see a pro-business attitude from the government that's welcoming people to our province, welcoming investment to Saskatchewan. And now they want to be a part of that. And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you see the population growth in Saskatchewan. You see young people staying in staying in Saskatchewan. You see investment in Saskatchewan like you haven't seen in a long time.

Just today was another good example of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker: the Premier and I were in Saskatoon, and we had the occasion to welcome another company's significant ramped-up investment into Saskatchewan. PetroBakken, a company from Alberta, is looking at Saskatchewan. And they want to try out the THAI [toe to heel air induction] type of technology that they have developed — toe, heel, air induction program. They've developed a way of extracting more oil from the reservoir in what was formerly thought to be depleted oil fields of Saskatchewan, ramping up production dramatically.

And where, when they looked at all of the places, and they're invested all across the world — Petrobank is soon to be known as PetroBakken, actually — when they had looked at all of the places across the world where they could have looked at this as

a first type of a project, which one did they pick? They picked Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And one of the reasons that the senior executives, the president was there, CEO [chief executive officer] was there, and the COO [chief operating officer] was there, the vice president of heavy oil development for their company was there, and he said there are a number of reasons why we came to Saskatchewan. First of all, there's a positive business climate in Saskatchewan. Second of all, in terms of the permitting process, it took us six weeks to get the permits approved in Saskatchewan.

When the media asked the vice-president of heavy oil development, are you looking at these types of development in other places? And he said, well our first choice is Saskatchewan. We're going to be ramping up in Saskatchewan over a time, a great number of wells. We expect we may be up to a thousand at some point in time in this type of oil development that we're working on. We're also looking, we're looking at projects in Alberta, and we're looking at projects in British Columbia, but our first choice is Saskatchewan.

They asked them then, how are the approvals going in Alberta? And they said, well we're over a year now and still haven't got approval. In British Columbia, I think it was eight months, still haven't got approval.

In Saskatchewan it was six weeks, and they had the appropriate approvals to move forward with a very, very exciting development for our province, looking at recovery rates of 70 per cent possibly. They are very, very optimistic that they're going to see that in a reservoir where you would normally expect recovery rates to be 8, 10, maybe 12 per cent if you're lucky.

So it's this type of technology that's unlocking these new developments in the Viking formation, in the Waseca formation, in the Bakken formation. And it's those types of things that we are seeing across Saskatchewan, where companies are coming in and they're saying it's the attitude in Saskatchewan that's making a difference. It's the opportunity in Saskatchewan that's making a difference. And they want to be a part of this.

And that's why . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Of course, it's a resource. Without a doubt it's the resource that they want to come here to Saskatchewan. We're blessed with those resources. But we're also, when you ask the companies, they're saying there's resources in many, many places in the world, but when they look at the rankings of places where there are resources, when they look at those kinds of things, they're saying Saskatchewan ranks right up there with the best places in the world to invest.

And that's why you're seeing that type of investment here in Saskatchewan. That's why you'll continue to see that kind of thing. That's why you're seeing companies ramping up the level of investment that you see in Saskatchewan. And, you know, as we see prices changing and moving up a little bit all of the time in the last few months, you're going to start seeing more and more development.

[21:00]

And what we also see is, when you talk to these senior executives they will say to you, it's very, very important that they understand that there's a stable royalty regime. They want to make sure that they have an opportunity to recover their investment and make a return on their investment. And that's what they see as an important thing. They are also interested in what they see from the opposition these days. And we'll be talking a lot more about that in the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can be sure of that. We want to make sure that the members opposite understand that.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at other opportunities in Saskatchewan, I know the Premier met with a couple of young people in Saskatoon today to talk about a new development that they had. We think it has great potential in Saskatchewan as well, and their first choice. They have opportunity to manufacture and develop this project. I think they're looking at, they were working in . . . Which country was it?

An Hon. Member: — Korea.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Korea. That's right. They were looking at operations in Korea, but they really want to have those operations headquartered in Saskatchewan — young people, 22, 23 years old that want to stay in our province, want to help build Saskatchewan. And that's the kind of atmosphere that we see in our province that hasn't been in this province for a long, long time. And it's great. We are extremely grateful to see people that want to take the opportunity to stay in our province, help build Saskatchewan, and work towards a brighter future for our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources, I want to talk a little bit about the budget in terms of potash royalties because I think it's important that we get this on the record. The government went through the budgeting process as you would normally go through it. We looked at the recommendations from the Department of Energy and Resources, from the Minister of Finance's office. We asked for similar process that the previous administration went through.

You ask a number of independent analysts to provide you with information about what they think are their best estimates. You talk to the companies themselves, the three potash producing companies in Saskatchewan — PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.], Agrium, Mosaic — and asked them what their recommendations are. You talked to the people at Canpotex who sell abroad the potash for these three companies, and you ask them all of those kinds of things. And then you start trying to determine what their estimates of this are going to be.

They came up with estimates ranging from about \$600 all the way up to about \$850 would be the price per tonne that they would be selling it for, they expected. They also expected that they would be selling in the neighbourhood of about 10 million tonnes of product on a worldwide basis to countries like Japan, to countries like India, China, and others. A large market for potash is in the United States. The corn belt is a large consumer of potash.

Incidentally, Saskatchewan is a real small player in terms of the use of potash — lots of use of phosphorus, lots of use of

nitrogen, small player in terms of potash use in Saskatchewan. Our soils simply aren't deficient in potash to a great degree. There's a little bit used certainly in canola production where you might look at adding, you know, 10, 20 pounds or something like that. But when it compares to phosphorus or to nitrogen, it's a very small component of the nutrient blend that you would add to your production base.

So you ask all of those analysts, you ask all of the various ministries about what their views on this will be — what kind of production are you likely to sell? — and then you come up with a forecast of what it might be. Well, Mr. Speaker, we did that. We took a very, very small “c” conservative approach. They were estimating it was going to be about 650 price and ramping up from there. And we'll provide all of the analysis for the member opposite that's cackling like a hyena in the back row. But the fact of the matter was is that there was a number of analysts that provided that kind of representation to the people of Saskatchewan.

So you look at that; you look at those recommendations. From the 650-plus range we thought we had to be prudent and we pared it back to about 565, I think it was — \$560 a tonne. We looked at the production and the amount of sales that they were expecting. We reduced that by somewhat too, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And then what happened? What happened was that frankly the Canpotex company, the organization that sells on behalf of the three companies in the international market, we saw sales to the US [United States] just be scaled back dramatically. From there we saw the sales to India scaled back dramatically. We saw sales to China that still have not materialized in a sale, a contract with them. And frankly it resulted in a very, very significant loss of revenue for the province of Saskatchewan.

And of course, and of course there will be always second-guessing with respect to that. I guess I would liken it to something that people in agriculture would be very familiar with. When you seed a crop, you make the best efforts that you could possibly make. You go out and seed, you fertilize, you do all of the things, you go through all of the steps, but there are some things that are a little bit out of your control. And if you look at people in the Kindersley area this year, they would know exactly what I'm talking about.

When it doesn't rain and when you've got no crop whatsoever, it doesn't matter what you budgeted for. It doesn't matter what you budgeted for. You just simply are wrong. And it's just simply it isn't raining and you aren't going to have a crop. And that's just the end of the story.

But when it comes to this, it's a very similar situation, where you make the best estimates you possibly can make. You use all of the analysis of companies that are in the business. Some of them, you know, you look at companies that have been in business for 35 or 40 years, senior executives that know this business better than anyone. You've got to take their advice on some of these kinds of things. You took their advice exactly the same way that the NDP opposite took their advice over the years.

And when you ask . . . and now, now what's happened is the

senior executives are saying, well we fell on our face. We were wrong. We thought we were going to sell a large contract to the Chinese and it just simply did not happen. We expected, we expected that the US economy was going to be such in agriculture that we were going to sell a large volume into the US. That didn't happen. In 35 years, in 35 years of forecasting they realize, more than ever, that they were completely wrong in their estimates.

And if we were out 100 million or 200 million or something like that, you could say, well maybe you were a little too optimistic or whatever. But when it's ramped back to the extent that it is at this point, I think any reasonable person in Saskatchewan would look at it and say, if we would have come — as the member opposite is intimating over there — and just said we'll just average it over the last few years, we'll take that average and that's what we'll go with, we would have been still wrong by hundreds of millions of dollars.

And so the situation is something that we have to be mindful of, Mr. Speaker. But the good news in Saskatchewan is, is that this government has planned for that kind of eventuality. This province has the fiscal ability to deal with that kind of devastating reduction because we've had a prudent approach to the finance of this province for the last couple of years and that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we still are confident that the budget can be balanced in Saskatchewan.

We are still confident that we're on track in terms of the debt paydown in this province. We're still confident that we can carry forward the property tax changes that we have made. We're very, very comfortable in terms of that, Mr. Speaker, and we expect, or hopeful that we will see a return to more normal markets in 2010, and we look forward to that because clearly it's a very important component of the fiscal situation of our government, of any government in Saskatchewan.

Members opposite that sat on the Treasury Board would know very well that it was a big part of their revenue base in Saskatchewan. It will be a big part of any government's revenue base for a long time in this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Throne Speech you saw something that you rarely see in the political world, and that's a political party saying, we were wrong. We were wrong; we accept the responsibility for that.

The people of Saskatchewan I think have understood the situation much better than the members opposite would ever want to admit. I think the people of this province understand it. I think they trust the Minister of Finance. I think they believe the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan when he's talking to them about it, and he's straight with them. He's honest with them and he provides the information that they're looking for in terms of understanding the situation.

And that's why you don't see the kind of concern, feigned concern that the members opposite have about the budget of this province. That's why we're confident that the people of Saskatchewan will recognize the challenges before us and continue to support the government of the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to close by saying that we are still optimistic in Saskatchewan that we will have a very strong agenda as laid out in the Throne Speech. We're going to be tackling some very, very important areas that are of concern to people in the health care field when it comes to wait-lists.

Any member of this Assembly, I suspect, would know of people that have been waiting a long, long time for surgeries that are very, very important to them. That's something that we have decided is a very, very significant area of concern to the people of Saskatchewan. We're making the commitment to deal with that. I'm very confident, Mr. Speaker, that we can. And we're going to use all of the ways that we have at our disposal to try and work on that.

It won't be based on philosophy, Mr. Speaker. It won't be based on whether it is, as the members opposite want to portray it, as privatized health care services or anything else like that. It would be based on need, necessity, understanding people's circumstances, understanding the health challenges that they have, and trying to do something other than just come forward with uninformed rhetoric about how this is going to somehow or another deteriorate our health care system.

Well when you have a person that's in dire need of health care services, I don't think they really care a great deal about the philosophy that the NDP want to suggest is the be-all and end-all when it comes to health care services. They're much more interested in a government that takes a compassionate look at this and says, we have to do something for the people of this province who helped build this province.

So you're going to see a government move forward with that. I'm very confident that the Minister of Health will be dealing with this in a very straightforward manner, Mr. Speaker, and it is for that reason and many, many others that I remain very, very supportive of the government of the day, of the Premier of this province. And it is that reason, Mr. Speaker, and for the hope and the opportunity and the optimism that we see in Saskatchewan, that I'll be wholeheartedly supporting the main motion and voting against the amendment from the members opposite.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I begin I would like to thank and acknowledge the work of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle. And I also want to welcome and congratulate the new members opposite, and I trust that all of us in this room are determined to make life better for all Saskatchewan people. And I look forward in working in co-operation with all of you.

Now I'd like to make mention of my family support: my husband Doug and my four children, Matt and his wife Katie, Brigitt, Lacey, and Markus. And also of my constituency assistant, Marcus Abrametz. And Marcus takes very good care of my constituents when I'm away, and we really appreciate him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to speak about several issues that are being experienced in my community and my

constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers and how they're being addressed by our government. But I also want to say I have a great job. I really enjoy my job and I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of the province and of my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers.

[21:15]

And I would also like to express my gratitude to . . . and the co-operation of the people of my constituency for their understanding about my roles and how I have to be away from home and work as an elected official. I also appreciate all the staff, the staff here and at home, which render this valuable support in the spirit of democracy and of guiding the fundamental principles of being an elected official.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to stand here today and reply to the government's Throne Speech. And I do believe our government is going to keep moving forward — forward with policies that ensure a balance between a growing economy and ensuring that everyone in Saskatchewan sees the benefits of our economy.

The honourable opposition is welcome to try and critique Saskatchewan's fiscal management, but I know that the people of our province will simply look at the facts as our record speaks for itself. Our province is poised to be the only one in Canada without a deficit.

And a study issued last week by the Toronto Dominion Bank reported that our country's federal and provincial deficits may possibly reach \$100 billion. Saskatchewan however will be the only province able to avoid a deficit, and I think the citizens will see this news at face value. Since our province will be the only one in Canada in the black, the people from Saskatchewan can form their own conclusions.

I believe Saskatchewan will remain confident in serving its citizens with the lowest unemployment rate in the country, a strong provincial economy, provincial tax cuts, and a 40 per cent debt reduction in only two years.

When our government took office we inherited a public debt of more than 7 billion. Now we promised to pay down the province's debt by 250 million within our first year in office and dedicate half of all budget surpluses to debt reduction. So we greatly exceeded our plan to pay down the province's debt by 250 million within our first year in office. And in our first year in office we reduced the debt by \$5,000 a minute, \$300,000 an hour, or 7 million a day. And this means that we can now devote a greater portion of people's tax dollars towards the programs and services that they want and deserve, and less towards paying interest charges left to us by previous governments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last October our government announced the largest single-year income tax reduction in Saskatchewan history. So overall we're putting 7 million back into the hands of Saskatchewan people through tax reductions. As our province continues to grow and move forward, the importance of bringing those who left behind is increasing.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time in a generation, people are

coming back home. And from my own family we welcomed a new baby grandson, Casey Matthew Wilson, in January, and he's the fifth generation on our farm. So like many young people in our province, my son had to leave Saskatchewan for Alberta to find employment. And he always wanted to come home but, because of the previous government's policies, the jobs were not here.

And welcoming newcomers is what I've personally been busy with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very literally. Since I was appointed as the Legislative Secretary to the minister in charge of Immigration, I've been active in immigration communities throughout the province. Diversity and growth will prove to be our strength. And I've been welcoming groups of newcomers from near and far, a concept unfathomed under the NDP. And I have met with recently arrived immigrants who came from neighbouring provinces as well as neighbouring continents.

I was especially happy to have made the acquaintance of Marge Nainaar, the executive director to the Prince Albert Multicultural Council. And she has been recognized over the years, and I'm proud to have her in my community. She greeted me very warmly at Tapestrama in Prince Albert, and I had a chance to enjoy cultural music, dance, and some really good food. Now I'd like to take this moment to recognize Marge Nainaar, as she should be praised for her many accomplishments and her continued goals to foster multicultural harmony in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to think of myself as being very multicultural, as I have a background of Austrian, Polish, German, and Norwegian. And my husband is Irish and English. So when I tell people this, I'm greeted with great surprise when making the acquaintance of some immigrants with less diverse backgrounds. So my children just call themselves Canadians.

I believe diversity is our strength, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I look forward to a more diverse, welcoming Saskatchewan in our future. Now for the past decade our province has been not as nearly welcoming as it should. And in order to accommodate newcomers, planning and infrastructure are needed. We all realize that infrastructure is . . .

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Members, I call the members to order, please. Order. Order. Order. There is very many interesting conversations going on, but the member from Saskatchewan Rivers has the floor and we'd like to hear her.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you. Thank you. Now with our government lowering taxes, investing in infrastructure, and rebuilding rural Saskatchewan, jobs and investments are following. And my son was able to find a job here in Saskatchewan. And I'm happy to have him home.

I'd also like to speak today about the proud history of agriculture in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers. Now five families from our riding this year were awarded the Century Family Farm Award. And I look forward to more recipients next year. Now my grandson will be a fifth generation on our family homestead and I'd like to work very hard to ensure that he has a respectable province to call home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a cattle rancher I'm very proud of our government's accomplishments when it comes to our producers. I believe our government is moving forward by making support for our agriculture industry a priority with reforming crop insurance, support for our cattle and hog producers, and improving service to our producers. We here on this side of the House believe that agriculture contributes to our economy as a direct result of the hard work of Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers.

Now Saskatchewan has made a name for itself as a reliable supplier of quality agriculture products and we can thank our producers for that. I also think the review of the crop insurance program is very good.

As a livestock producer and a pet owner, I'm passionate in my care towards animals and wildlife. Last month I brought greetings to the local SPCA [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] and it was called Walk for Paws. And this SPCA branch serves not only the city of Prince Albert but also many neighbouring RMs [rural municipality] in my riding. I think a community can be judged by how well they care, not only for each other, but for their animals as well. So we must speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. And I think we also have to speak for those who cannot feed themselves or look after . . .

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order please. Would the members care to carry on their conversation behind the bar so the rest of us can hear this speech? The member from Sask Rivers has the floor.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country. And I'd like to point out that the snowmobile competition in my area, where recreational snowmobilers show off their skill and experience, has hundreds of visitors come.

And also in my riding of Saskatchewan Rivers, I believe we have some of the best parks and lakes in the country. And one particular area is Waskesiu which is both a lake and a town flourishing within the borders of the Prince Albert National Park. And this park covers over 38,000 kilometres of beautiful wilderness. So I encourage every member of the Assembly to spend a weekend in Waskesiu, and I guarantee you'll fall in love with the area and want to come back again and again.

So to ensure that people's experiences while visiting our parks, heritage sites, and museums are enjoyable and memorable, our government has committed a lot of money. So our government believes that Saskatchewan has some of the most beautiful parks in the country, and attendance was up in the parks across Saskatchewan this summer. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year more people than ever enjoyed the natural beauty that Saskatchewan and my riding has to offer.

Our government will create more opportunities for people to get out and enjoy the beauty of Saskatchewan. By the beginning of 2010 camping season, our government will have added 600 electrified campsites. Yes. And our new provincial cultural policy will enhance the distinct character of our unique

Saskatchewan communities.

And in my humble opinion, there's no place in the world that I would rather live or raise my family than right here in this great province of Saskatchewan. On the other hand, we know that everyone cannot be lucky enough to live here with us. For those people who don't live in Saskatchewan, we would like to make vacationing as memorable and enjoyable as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has also taken many steps towards improving our health care system. And we have strengthened cancer care. We've added more training seats for doctors and nurses, and we have also added 13 new long-term care homes for seniors. We want to see care restored to medicare.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we all know, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. And it's important to bring awareness and to encourage women over the age of 50 such as myself to take action and commit to getting a mammogram every two years. And in my riding we have the Prairie Women on Snowmobiles Ride which will finish in Big River this year. This is the 10th anniversary of the ride and is an important fundraiser for breast cancer research. And this is something special to me because of my personal experience with breast cancer in the family. In 1992, my mother died from breast cancer. And because of this, I put a tremendous value into research.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has also committed to reducing wait times for treatment in this Throne Speech. At the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] our government and our minister participated in the sod turning for the construction of the E wing phase of the U of S academic health sciences project. The construction of this facility enhances the world-class life science cluster at the University of Saskatchewan, thereby helping to ensure that Saskatchewan continues to lead the country in key areas of health sciences research and boost our prosperity today and for the future.

[21:30]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when this is . . . Deputy Deputy Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party formed government, we developed a plan to rebuild Saskatchewan's crumbling infrastructure by investing in both provincial and municipal projects. Since forming government, we've committed 2.5 billion in the province's infrastructure for such things as highways, schools, health care facilities, and municipal projects. Now to meet this challenge, the Ministry of Highways has developed Saskatchewan's first rolling five-year capital plan for highway construction.

I'd like to dwell on some positive news that has come out of Saskatchewan Rivers since the new government took office. Now for anyone who has visited the Murray Point provincial campground as I do every year, you will see the state of disrepair in which the road was left under by the previous administration.

Now historically, prior to the NDP's gravel conversion, the Murray Point access road served as an entryway to the impressive Emma Lake and everything that it has to offer. Now

this road was converted to gravel under the previous administration and many people felt it was a slap to the face. Local businesses along with Emma Lake residents have struggled with this hardship since that terrible decision. The road was dusty and dangerous and quite insulting to the people of Lakeland. And what is more disgraceful is that this decision was made in light of the important geographical location of this road. It leads to a provincial campground and recreation site and is used by thousands of eager tourists and residents every year.

But I am very pleased to announce, as the MLA of that area, that resurfacing of this road has already begun. So no longer will visitors and tourists be greeted by a dusty, unwelcoming highway because this resurfaced highway represents Saskatchewan's vision of moving forward — a bold, fresh effort to welcome newcomers to our province and specifically to show the care that our most popular tourist destination certainly deserves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the significant investment will improve infrastructure in our province and will have a real and lasting impact by creating local jobs, as well as building safer roads and bridges for our Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for 16 years, municipalities' requests for funding fell on deaf ears, especially in rural Saskatchewan who have gone without for so many years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is moving forward to help communities to grow during this current . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. I said order. Respect the member that has the floor. I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Our government has announced 100 million municipal economic enhancement program, which is unconditional infrastructure funding — no political strings attached. Because of this funding, nearly 800 communities now have money and hands to make their cities, towns, and RMs better places to live in the province.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this has had an impact in my area, where several communities used it for projects like water and waste water and our roads. To make the most impact on the communities, we needed to accelerate the process, and we did just that. We will ensure that municipalities in Saskatchewan will move forward and prosper in the years to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very proud to announce that one of the 12 recipients of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit resides in the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers, and I'd like to take the opportunity to recognize his achievements today. Mr. Arne Petersen of Emma Lake was awarded the Order of Merit in recognition of his many achievements in my community and his, and also in the province as a whole.

So over the years, Mr. Petersen has created hundreds of local jobs through his entrepreneurial endeavours, and countless others have benefitted from his impact on the forestry industry. Elk Ridge Golf Resort is among the most impressive of Mr. Petersen's achievements. For those of us who have been lucky

enough to visit this resort, which is located in the riding of Saskatchewan Rivers, you will bear witness to an impressive display of what our province is capable of.

The setting of this resort highlights another of our province's best resources, our outdoors. And Mr. Petersen's appreciation for beauty, sport, and the outdoor wilderness ensured minimal environmental impact during the development of this resort. And this resort employs hundreds of people and was recognized by the Canadian Professional Golf Association as the 2007 resort of the year.

Mr. Petersen has devoted great time and effort to various charities as well. He's a man of great talent and vision, and he could have chosen more welcoming horizons. And I'm proud to call him my friend. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to congratulate him and his team of employees for their hard work, dedication, and vision over the years.

Now to conclude. I'm very excited and optimistic about our Saskatchewan, our new Saskatchewan. And from what I see in my constituency, most of the people in the community feel the same. Even though there is a tough recession, Saskatchewan is seen as a beacon of hope on national and even international news reports.

I represent dozens of smaller communities and towns, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're excited at the prospect of more growth. Work has already begun in many regards. Roads are being paved. The Garden River RM will finally receive a much-needed bridge. Community sports arenas are being improved on in Big River and Buckland. Tourist hotspots such as the Emma Lake and Candle Lake, Sandy Bay campground will finally receive makeovers.

So Saskatchewan is growing and exceeding, and for the first time in decades is leading other provinces in growth and job creation. Saskatchewan is preparing for future generations, a province of opportunity and hope. With this new government, Saskatchewan is now being seen as open-minded and more optimistic, a province that continually is making more sense.

Saskatchewan is the envy of the country. No longer will our province be derided for missed opportunities; Saskatchewan is the opportunity. I will be voting against the amendment, and I am in favour of the Throne Speech. Thank you.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening. I appreciate that members are perhaps a little tired, a little impatient, and want to get home. It might be showing a little bit, Mr. Speaker, in the deference they are showing to people who in this . . . on their feet.

But this is an opportunity, my only opportunity, to respond to the Speech from the Throne. And I want to do that on behalf of the constituents of Saskatoon Meewasin. The speech, Mr. Speaker, is called "Moving Forward," which is sort of Orwellian language for a speech that perhaps speaks less of the future than any Throne Speech I've ever seen presented in this

legislature, by either Sask Party government or an NDP government.

Perhaps it speaks less of the future than any Throne Speech ever has, Mr. Speaker. It speaks almost entirely to a selective history, a revisionist history over the last two years, Mr. Speaker, and very little to the future. But if you want to misdirect from that, I suppose a good title is “Moving Forward.” And the government chose a quote, an interesting choice from a self-proclaimed socialist, Albert Einstein, as to formulate the principle that if one wants to not stand still, one must move forward. And the quote is, “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.”

There are a number of formulations of that principle, that if one doesn't want to get stuck, one doesn't want to end up standing still, one has to keep moving forward. And Premier Grant Devine was famous for saying in his day, don't say whoa in a mudhole.

And you would have thought, Mr. Speaker, you would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that a Saskatchewan Party government would have chosen a local conservative formulation of the principle as opposed to the description of the principle by a self-declared socialist, Albert Einstein.

But you can understand, Mr. Speaker, as to why, as to why the government would not want to be drawing attention to the record of the Devine government because we have learned this fall that the . . . And it's not simply the opposition, as I will point out, it's not simply the opposition, but the glaring similarities between how this government budgets and how Grant Devine budgeted, particularly in the late '80s, had become evident to a wide part of the Saskatchewan population, Mr. Speaker. Not just, not just to the opposition as the members opposite would suggest, but to others as well, Mr. Speaker.

This is a government that seems to be running out of ideas and money at about the same time, Mr. Speaker, and it's not just the opposition that says so. I rarely have occasion to quote from my hometown newspaper, but when I do, I like to take it, Mr. Speaker, and in a response to the Throne Speech, the editorial board of *The StarPhoenix* said on Thursday, October 22nd, 2009, “For a party still so relatively new at the task, the government's speech from the throne spends an inordinate amount of attention looking back [Mr. Speaker].”

In the rear-view mirror. A government that wants to talk a lot more about the last two years than they want to talk about what they're going to do, Mr. Speaker. As I said, a government that seems to be running — perhaps coincidentally, perhaps not — out of ideas and money at the same time.

So let's for a moment join the government in its two-year review, Mr. Speaker. Its record, and we heard tonight and we have heard in response to the Throne Speech from government members about this select project or this select statistic, Mr. Speaker, but let's look at the overview.

Over 4,700 layoffs in Saskatchewan in 2009; 700 fewer jobs year over year; loss of 3,700 full-time jobs year over year; loss of 10,000 full-time jobs in August and September of 2009.

Latest unemployment figures from September show EI [employment insurance] recipients have increased by 44 per cent year over year; a record-setting — not the only record, Mr. Speaker, this government has set — but a record-setting unemployment with 14,000 EI recipients in May of this year; decline in youth employment of 6,000 jobs year over year.

And there's been a lot of back patting and cheerleading on the government benches about youth and what's been done for youth and how much things are better for youth in the province of Saskatchewan, but the facts show otherwise, Mr. Speaker — a decline in youth employment and a significant decline in youth employment in the province of Saskatchewan. Youth employment is up 8.5 per cent, which is an increase from 2008 where this youth-friendly government had it at 7.3 per cent.

A 142.4 per cent increase in EI recipients under the age of 25 between July 2008 and July 2009. It's fortunate that this government cares so much about youth and cares so much about their employment, or can you imagine what the increase in EI recipients under the age of 25 would have been if they did not care, Mr. Speaker? 142.4 per cent increase over the year, Mr. Speaker. And this is an important number, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Energy and Resources and others rise up and say, it's not our fault that the projections were all wrong. It's not all our fault. I don't think the minister used these words, but he came pretty close to calling it an act of God, Mr. Speaker.

[21:45]

The projected economic growth in 2009 is point five per cent, Mr. Speaker. That is a number worth remembering because, Mr. Speaker, in March when the government was projecting economic growth four times that, 2.1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, the private sector forecasts averaged together were point six three per cent. Point five per cent — what actually has happened so far — is a lot closer to point six three per cent, very far away from the 2.1 per cent.

The Minister of Energy and Resources didn't want to explain how that number was calculated, Mr. Speaker, but it seems like it was calculated the same way that the potash revenues were calculated. You take all analysis that's been provided by the private sector and you times by three, or by four, to get the 2.1 per cent growth in 2009, Mr. Speaker.

An increase in corporate bankruptcies, but an even greater increase in personal bankruptcies in 2009, and then a 1 per cent increase in inflation, Mr. Speaker.

And I've had occasion in this House when we've been discussing the history of the province of Saskatchewan, and sometimes the members opposite like to go back 16 years. They don't like to go back much further than that. And sometimes they only go back a couple years. But I ask this question because it's a short historical question. It's a brief time. When was the last time that Saskatchewan was both a have province and the most affordable place to live in Canada, Mr. Speaker? When was the last time that was true? In 2007 before the Saskatchewan Party government was elected.

We have the 1 per cent increase in inflation. It doesn't sound

like very much, Mr. Speaker, but two things about that: first of all, the only province with inflation this year; secondly, Mr. Speaker, largely within this government's control. Much of this inflationary increases were housing costs around utilities, Mr. Speaker. And now we have a government that is talking seriously about a SaskPower increase every year — every year — of 8 per cent until the price of electricity in this province doubles, Mr. Speaker. And they're proud of it. They're proud of it, Mr. Speaker. They have excellent reasons for it, I am sure. I just don't understand what they are.

Now remember, Mr. Speaker, the figure point five per cent economic growth and the figure 1 per cent increase inflation. Back in the '70s if you managed to pull off in your economy, an economy that was frozen, an economy that wasn't growing but still had inflation, it was called stagflation, Mr. Speaker. And Saskatchewan is the home of stagflation. We are the only place in the country with stagflation and the stagflation is in large part caused by the government and their approach towards utility rates — dramatically different than their approach when they were in opposition, dramatically different than when they said that there should be subsidies, that there should be rebates, Mr. Speaker, dramatically different.

Now that people are suffering inflation and an economy that's not growing, in which unemployment is growing, in which EI recipients are growing, they no longer believe in those policies of rebating the value, rebating to natural gas customers. They no longer believe in holding down the cost of utility rates, Mr. Speaker.

So that's sort of a two-year history and that's a two-year history of a government, Mr. Speaker, that inherited an enormous surplus — the largest surplus that this province has ever seen inherited by a new government, Mr. Speaker.

Now I think it was Peter Drucker who said that doing things right is management; doing the right thing is leadership. And this government and this Throne Speech falls on both counts — both doing things right and on doing the right thing. Mr. Speaker, this is a political government. And that's not a criticism. Most governments are, to some extent or another, political governments. But this is a very political government, Mr. Speaker. For all its talk about bold visions and bold plans and bold new ideas, well, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech shows how bold and how new the vision of this government is — hardly a new idea in it, Mr. Speaker.

This is a government that's very concerned about political management and very concerned about politics and now finding themselves on the wrong side of public opinion. That's what this government is about, Mr. Speaker. And there's something to be said for that, Mr. Speaker. I mean, in a democracy, you're making most of the people happy most of the time. If you can do that, there's something to be said for that. It's not particularly leadership necessarily, but there's something to be said for it. And this government has made relatively few blunders in that respect.

I think the cancellation of Station 20 that brought 2,500 people out on the streets of Saskatoon is an example of a blunder. But there haven't been a lot of those.

This is a government that's capable of reversing itself, turning on a dime. And I would use an example of that, the Bill in respect to receiving profits from criminal notoriety. One week, well no, it's the convictions and the principles of this government that such a Bill would be wrong. And then on Monday of the next week, it's the conviction and the principle of this government that such a Bill would be correct, you know, be the right thing to do. Very adept at making those kind of turns when they have to make them to be on the right side of public opinion, to be on the right political side of the issue.

So you can't fault, I suppose, a political government — as political as this one is — for not showing leadership, Mr. Speaker. I mean it's the last thing they want to do. But you have to judge them by what kind of managers they are, Mr. Speaker. You have to judge them on management. If they can't do the right thing, Mr. Speaker, if they're not interested in what the right thing is, if the right thing changes from one week to the next, you have to judge them on how well they manage.

And perhaps what is most disturbing about the gross miscalculation of what the economic growth in Saskatchewan would be in 2009 and what the potash revenues would be in 2009, is not just the miscalculation itself and throwing the whole budget into disarray and having to essentially cancel programs like the children's hospital in Saskatoon that you've been promising to the people of Saskatoon — I mean that's probably the most distressing part of it, clearly — but also is the surprise, feigned or otherwise, by ministers of the Crown that this could possibly happen, from the Premier, the Minister of Finance, Minister of Energy and Resources. Well who told us? Who told us that this could possibly happen, that we could be so far off? Who told us that?

Well you know, it didn't come as a surprise to the opposition. And I rarely take the opportunity to quote myself in the House, Mr. Speaker, but on March 24th, 2009, I spoke in response to the budget. And this is what I said, Mr. Speaker:

First that the budget is not realistic, Mr. Speaker, is probably the most simplest and easiest of the propositions to argue for, and I'll be very brief on it. Speakers have commented on, and I imagine will continue to comment on the discrepancy that exists within the budget document of the Ministry of Finance forecast — which doesn't seem to have any basis or any explanation for it — of 2.1 per cent, and the private sector forecasts, none of which was as high as 2.1 per cent. It's not like the government picked the highest of private sector forecasts. None of them were as high as that, but the average was 1 per cent.

So the Finance forecasts the Minister of Finance puts forward as the core assumption of his budget for economic growth in the province of Saskatchewan, 2.1 per cent, is twice the private sector forecasts. Well the private sector forecasts have been downgraded since the budget came down and that's, you know, we don't expect the Minister of Finance to have a crystal ball, but we are now debating a budget that forecasted growth in the Saskatchewan economy at 2.1 per cent. We all hope that that's correct, but the private sector forecasts are for point six three per cent on average, Mr. Speaker.

So the government's forecast of budgetary growth is now three times what the average is for private sector forecasts. And we question whether that assumption is realistic, when it is off the private sector forecasts by a factor of three, Mr. Speaker.

There's been some debate about the value of revenues from potash to this budget and to the assumptions of the budget, and that 18 cents on the dollar of revenue for this budget comes from potash — potash one way or the other, Mr. Speaker — and the government and particularly the Minister of Energy and Resources says that we do not need to be too concerned about the cutbacks in production of potash . . . that's not where the money comes from; it's based upon sales.

Now you take that to its logical extreme and you stop producing potash at all; as long as we're selling potash, it doesn't matter if we're actually producing any. But of course you have to produce potash to sell potash and ultimately production does matter at some point. It may not matter in the short term but ultimately it does matter.

The strategy as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, in relation to potash production is that there's a great deal of concern in the markets about the sustainability of the current price — that the Chinese want to buy potash but they don't necessarily want to buy potash at the current price. Brazilians want to buy potash but not necessarily at the current price. And of course every economy in the world is strained and less able to purchase what they might want to purchase than they have been before. And so the strategy, as I understand it in the case of potash, is to hold up the price, sustain the price by cutting production, actually, and therefore hold up the government revenues as well as company revenues.

Now the winner, if the strategy works, is first of all potash companies, Mr. Speaker, because the price doesn't drop, and secondly the government because the price doesn't drop. And as the minister points out, most of the revenue is based upon price and on the sale taking place at that price, that current price, Mr. Speaker.

The only losers in this strategy, if it works, are the laid off potash workers. And, Mr. Speaker, because of course they're not producing potash, they're part of the strategy to cut production and keep the price higher by cutting supply, Mr. Speaker, in supply demand, keeping the price up. And that works for the company, that works largely for the government. It doesn't work for the potash workers that are laid off and, if the strategy fails, Mr. Speaker, then it doesn't work for anybody.

And if the price drops anyways, Mr. Speaker, then unfortunately so do the revenues of the province and in a significant way.

Now I don't have access to all the sources that the Minister of Energy and Resources had and that he commented upon in his speech today, and I'm not the expert in commerce and commodities that the Minister of Energy and Resources is. But I could tell you on March 24, 2009 — and I did, Mr. Speaker; I

did tell you that on March 24, 2009 — that those numbers were unrealistic and that budget was unsustainable.

And so the expression of surprise that now comes from government benches, as if they had never heard this before when they heard it from the Finance critic and they heard it from a number of members across the way, and they heard exactly what I quoted this evening back then, Mr. Speaker. Their expression of surprise is a little bit hard to understand, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'm not alone in my concerns about the government's ability to manage. I did say further on March 24, 2009:

. . . is reminiscent of the early Devine years where after a while it did get a touch of unreality, Mr. Speaker. Where revenues would be forecast to almost meet expenditures, Mr. Speaker, but there was no basis for those forecasts and every year included not only overly optimistic forecasts but an explanation as to why last year's forecasts were so far off the mark.

Very much like the explanation we heard tonight from the Minister of Energy and Resources, Mr. Speaker. Not only an optimistic projection about next year, but an explanation about why they were wrong last year. And that will be very familiar to anybody who was living in the province in the late '80s, Mr. Speaker, and paying attention to the way the Devine government was budgeting.

And as I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm not the only one to make the comparison, which I think is rather a glaring and obvious comparison. Mr. Mandryk, a columnist in *The StarPhoenix*, my home paper again, said that in respect to the budget, "Devine comparison . . . apt." And I quote from Mr. Mandryk:

The least flattering comparison for the Saskatchewan Party government — and the one that its supporters bristle at most — is to be measured against Grant Devine's Progressive Conservative regime of the 1980s.

This month's first-quarter budget update, which showed the government's overestimation of resource revenues meant a budget shortfall of \$415 million, all but invited precisely such a comparison.

At least it should. This happens to be the biggest government miscalculation since Tory finance minister, Gary Lane's budget of 1986.

This is from August 25, 2009.

[22:00]

The member from Rosemont and Mr. Mandryk may have an argument about whether it's the second biggest miscalculation or the biggest miscalculation, but they're playing in the same leagues, Mr. Speaker. They're playing in the Grant Devine school of economic league of government financing and government budgeting.

Mr. Mandryk goes on to say:

The problem Wall faces is two-fold.

First, his government is now completely reliant on the private sector to provide such forecasts after it purged the Energy ministry and others of civil servants who supposedly did not share the Saskatchewan Party's vision. The loss of professional objectivity in the civil service is the same mistake the Devine government made, which proved to be costly.

Second, that Saskatchewan Party's "vision" for province has been exceedingly rose-coloured . . . [Mr. Speaker.]

And that's the problem with the forecasts. That was the problem with the predictions, not that they were misled by Canpotex, not that they were misled by, as we know, those of us who have served in government and sat on Treasury Board, fairly conservative — and I mean that in the best sense of the word, Mr. Speaker — fairly conservative officials in the Ministry of Finance.

It wasn't the fault of those officials. It wasn't the fault of private sector forecasters that this government managed finances, the people's finances, the people's treasury so badly, Mr. Speaker, so badly that Mr. Mandryk is forced to concede that the Devine comparison is apt.

And now we have recently learned that there have been 1,300 reported cases where staffing fell below the level that government says is safe in our health care facilities. The Minister of Labour says it doesn't matter that the work levels or the staff levels have fallen below safe levels according to our essential services legislation because it didn't happen during a work stoppage, Mr. Speaker. If that's not the most ridiculous thing I've heard in this House, it is very close, Mr. Speaker.

The service isn't essential, Mr. Speaker, today. It isn't essential yesterday. It isn't essential tomorrow. It isn't important for the safety of Saskatchewan patients and Saskatchewan citizens unless there's actually a strike. And then we'll have that health service level. But we won't have it otherwise, Mr. Speaker. It's an Alice-in-Wonderland view of what essential services is about, Mr. Speaker. This is not good management. It's not doing things right, Mr. Speaker.

Now in respect to leadership, doing the right thing, Mr. Speaker, we don't see a lot of leadership in the speech. As a matter of fact we don't see a lot of vision in the speech. We don't see a lot of new ideas in the speech. One of the few, one of the few ideas for the future in Saskatchewan contained in the Throne Speech called "Moving Forward" is to restrict access to clean needles, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a group of people in our province who are citizens of our province. They don't pay income tax for the most part — didn't before this government's income tax reforms, didn't before the NDP government's income tax reforms. Many of them don't vote, Mr. Speaker, and they certainly don't contribute to political parties. They are still citizens and they are in, according to the definition in the Scriptures and common law, our neighbours. They are our most disadvantaged and vulnerable neighbours. They are descendants of generations of poverty and exclusion and unfortunately they

are often seen as social problems, but they are not. They are inflicted with social problems. They are inflicted with crime. They are inflicted with substance abuse. They are not those problems.

And while we walk around this legislature wringing our hands every time we pass one of the dispensaries for antiseptic soap concerned about H1N1, these are communities in which hepatitis C and HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] are epidemic, Mr. Speaker. And so we have in the Throne Speech, which I'm sure is a very political decision — I'm sure they're on the right political side of this issue — in respect to the province's needle exchange program, ". . . a need to balance harm reduction and improved health outcomes with broader concerns . . . [Mr. Speaker]."

Mr. Speaker, it is apparently the government's hope that if you do not give a sufferer of substance abuse a clean needle that, to quote the Throne Speech, there'll be "more frequent contact with health professionals," Mr. Speaker. I fear that the government will be no more successful in winning a war on drugs on the backs of drug addicts, than they were in holding up the price of potash by sheer force of willpower, Mr. Speaker.

I fear that women who were put out on the street for sale when they were children will not, when confronted with the government's refusal to provide them with a clean needle, seek more care from health professionals. I fear, Mr. Speaker, that instead they will seek a needle where they can get one, and that this government's desire to balance harm reduction and improved outcomes for those people with broader concerns, Mr. Speaker, is immoral, and is to sacrifice the health and lives, in some cases, of our most vulnerable citizens and neighbours to politics and to political management.

And this is not hysteria on my part. Or if it is hysteria on my part, Mr. Speaker, it is not merely on my part. And I quote again from the same *StarPhoenix* editorial, Thursday, October 22nd, 2009. Not a radical journal, Mr. Speaker, but my hometown paper: "A government proposal to change Saskatchewan's needle exchange program is also bound to draw friction, principally because it is wrong-headed and could ultimately lead to disaster," Mr. Speaker.

What would have been doing the right thing? What would have been leadership, Mr. Speaker? If they are concerned — as they should be — about substance abuse, if they're concerned about the prevalence of needles, if they're concerned about dealing with the issue of drug use in the province of Saskatchewan, illegal drug use in the province of Saskatchewan, what about addiction counsellors at the needle exchange sites instead of saying, no, we're closed today. You could catch HIV. You could catch hepatitis C from a dirty needle, but we're closed today.

What about instead of that policy, Mr. Speaker, a policy that had addictions counsellors at those needle exchange sites? Or what about working on the methadone wait-list, Mr. Speaker, the methadone therapy wait-list which I understand is four to five months, Mr. Speaker. So we'll say, the government will say no you can't have a clean needle, but you can get into methadone therapy if you can stay away from dirty needles for five months, maybe, if you're lucky, Mr. Speaker. What about

that? That would've been leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Now that would have cost money, and I appreciate that you have to make decisions about how you're going to spend your resources. Government is about choosing, and I can understand the government didn't want to make these choices, not a lot of politics in those choices, Mr. Speaker. But if you don't want to make those choices, at least don't do what the government is proposing as one of its handful of new ideas — limit clean, safe needles to the most vulnerable people in our province, people already inflicted with high crime rates, substance abuse, hepatitis C, HIV. Why contribute to that problem, Mr. Speaker? Why play politics with that problem in a speech that you want to call "Moving Forward"?

The Saskatchewan Party can't do things right, not when it comes to government finances, not when it comes to safety in our health care system. The record does not show management. The Throne Speech does not show leadership. The Throne Speech does not address doing the right thing, Mr. Speaker. The record doesn't show management. The vision doesn't show leadership. I will not be supporting the motion. I'll be supporting the amendment.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly pleased to be able to enter into the debate even though the hour is late. And I recall many years ago when I was involved at a local level with a committee of our local municipality — at that time I believe we were called the ag committee — and our major function was to organize the annual spring ratepayer supper. And there was a group of us that were fairly young in those days and quite enthusiastic. And we had a lot of good ideas, but we never could seem to agree on the number of guest speakers that we should have at these functions, so we generally would invite them all. And so the evening was started off with the social hour. The bar was open. The ladies of the community would prepare always a great supper, and then we would expect these people to sit and listen to all our great guest speakers that we'd lined up for the evening. And on more than one occasion, not only the ratepayers of the municipality seemed to think the evening was quite long, but so did our guest speakers. And now I can sort of realize what at least the guest speakers were up against.

The evening is late, we've had a number of speakers today address the Throne Speech. And so it's somewhat difficult to come up with some new positions, I suppose, on the Throne Speech although even it is a great Throne Speech. But I will try to cover a couple of topics that pertain to the constituency.

I should start by welcoming the new members to the legislature — the member from Douglas Park who is certainly not new but starting a new session in a new position, and the new member for Saskatoon Riversdale. Certainly I have to congratulate both of them. Although we probably don't agree on all the issues and all the philosophies, we are here to serve the people of this province in the way we see fit. And I think each of us in this Assembly do that in our own particular way.

As other members have done, there are people that I need to

thank. I certainly must thank the voters and the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood for their continued support. I have to thank the two ladies in my constituency office who point me in the right direction and make sure I'm prepared for the various constituency events and make me aware of the calendar that I have, that being Carol Mellnick who has been with me since I was first elected, and a new addition to the constituency office is Sandra Geber — both very capable constituency assistants and serve the citizens of Last Mountain-Touchwood very well.

Also as all members realize that without our family's support, we couldn't be doing this job here, and so I would like to certainly thank Marlene and the rest of my family for the support they've shown me over the years and helped me to serve the people of the constituency and the province.

Now I'm sure members have heard me give the statistics and the background of Last Mountain-Touchwood on a number of occasions, but in case they forgot, I may remind them of the political history of the constituency. For quite a number of years, the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood was a swing constituency. It was one of those swing ridings that would elect a member to the government's side of the House. So when the government changed, there was always a member from the constituency sitting on the government's side of the House. And that continued for quite a number of years — I believe 30 or 40 years — until 1999 when we changed that and we were just, I always say, we were a little ahead of our time. Now we've gotten back into sync, and there'll be a member of the Saskatchewan Party representing that constituency for quite some time. And they will be sitting on this side of the House, because the voters are very discerning voters there. They're very politically astute. They know the issues. They understand the issues, and they make their choices wisely, and they vote for those members and those political parties by and large.

[22:15]

Certainly both political parties, main political parties that we have in our House today have their core supporters. But then we also have a vast majority of voters who are in the middle of the political spectrum, and they vote for the political party that they believe will deliver good government. That's their primary objective. Politics isn't the first thing that they think about when they wake up in the morning, but they understand what's going on, and they certainly keep their ear to the ground. And that's the way it should be. They demand to be served. They expect their issues to be taken forward, and we try to do that through my constituency assistants and myself. We try to do that on their behalf.

As all members have, they have a number of issues in their constituencies that they have spoken about, and I will take this opportunity to do that. One of the experiences that I had just very recently was to visit our school, one of the schools in my constituency, and it was an evening event. The school had organized an information evening for parents and students of the school. They had cake and coffee. They had a program and told the people present about the program for the year, the initiatives that they are undertaking.

And there was one initiative that really caught my attention. The school had visited a neighbouring school — I believe it was

last spring — and there was a guest speaker at the neighbouring school who spoke about an initiative that this individual had organized and taken to help underprivileged and destitute children in Africa, in fact in Kenya. And this individual, a writer from Central Canada, had been travelling in Africa and in Kenya, met a couple of children in a small community who were orphaned, and he soon realized and was told that there was a vast number of orphans, I believe, because of the devastation of AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome]. Grandmothers were looking after these children, trying to do their best. And so when he got back to Canada, he decided that he was going to do what he could to help these children. And so he went to work and he partnered up — he may have had some connections — and he partnered up with aid agencies in Kenya and formed an organization or a charity called The Creation of Hope.

And he went about this. This individual, his name is Eric Walters and he went about this a little bit differently. He said I'm going to involve the schools and the young people in our schools in Canada and see if they can't help these young people in Kenya. These people were destitute. They had no place really to live. They had no food or just barely enough to get by day to day. And he was able to put together an organization whereby all the money that the schools raise, every dime of it, goes to the recipients.

There's administration costs, which are very low, are looked after by other people in other agencies, and he involved a number of schools. It started in Ontario, and then it progressed west. And the school that I happened to be in was the first school to take up the challenge in Saskatchewan. And I'm very proud to say that that was my own hometown school, Cupar School, the school that I had attended many years ago and who currently are . . . one of our granddaughters is attending. She is living with us, with grandma and grandpa. She's probably at . . . well I know by now, she'd be in bed. And she keeps grandma company while I'm away attending to the business of the province.

And this all came about because of the group of students from the school. And one of the staff members decided that this is something they should be doing and they were, as I said, the first school in Saskatchewan to take up the challenge.

They have now got other schools in the province and I think it's a . . . Every once in a while we, in public life and in our constituencies, run across these great stories, and I was so pleased to be able to come across that right next door. My office is only a short block away from the school, but yet as you know, we quite often, we don't have time to make the rounds as we should, and so it was a pleasant surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another issue that constituents talked to me about is of course the current topic that's in the news, and we've discussed and has been raised in this House, is the whole area of H1N1 and immunization. And people are concerned and undecided as to whether they should be immunized or not. And there are discussions about whether the information they received, whether they received enough information, and whether they should be vaccinated. They're consulting their family physicians. And occasionally they'll ask an opinion of myself

as to whether they should be vaccinated. And I said, well I certainly am no expert in this area. But what I do tell them is that they should pay attention to the people with the information, the knowledgeable people in this area.

And to that extent, I recently saw an interview with a Dr. Don Low from Toronto, who is the head of the microbiology department at Mount Sinai. And this individual was the lead person when Toronto had that whole issue of SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome]. And he's well-known, a knowledgeable person across the country and North America.

And this individual, Dr. Low, made it abundantly clear that for the average person he could see no reason why they shouldn't be vaccinated. He said the risks are negligent as far as being vaccinated and the benefits are great. He said why would you want to put yourself through suffering the flu and being sick for four or five days? As another doctor recently who was interviewed on one of the media outlets said, he was flat on his back for five days. He said, he basically asked the question, why would people want to go through that when there's a simple answer?

I don't think all the ads or the spots on TV showing the needle going into the arm is particularly helpful for those of us who really don't like to have needles administered. But I think we'll bite the bullet, at least in my own case, and go ahead and be vaccinated when the opportunity presents itself.

Another one of the issues, in fact probably as far as a constituency issue, is there are a couple of highways that I have spoken about numerous times in this Assembly that are in the constituency. And I would like to report that there has been some work going on, on one of the highways, Highway 310. The other highway, which the former administration turned back to gravel, it is in the works, and I know that we will see some things happening there in the not too distant future. But it is a concern. And people are, as I mentioned earlier, they understand but they are impatient. But they do understand that there's a lot of work to be done and that eventually it'll be our turn.

The major industry in Last Mountain-Touchwood, because it is a rural constituency — the largest community I believe has a population of about 850 people — so agriculture is by far the major industry in the constituency. And as many members have already talked, spoken, it's been a very, very interesting year in agriculture in Last Mountain-Touchwood. We were a bit more fortunate than perhaps the other parts of the province, particularly the west central part of the province. We didn't really suffer. The drought parts of the constituency had a slow start, but the rains came along and actually the crops are very good. Harvest, I would say, is about 80 per cent completed, perhaps 85. There are pockets where there's lots more harvest to be done. But other pockets there, they're virtually complete.

But it has been a challenging year. The crops — the yields were good, the quality was great up until October the first. And I certainly can identify with producers who have, say, 25 to 30 per cent of their crop out. With today's cost of production, there's a lot of money tied up in those unharvested acres. And it'll sure . . . If weather doesn't turn around, it's going to create some hardships for a number of producers.

And of course the livestock industry, particularly the beef industry — that'd be the industry that I would be most familiar with — they've been struggling for well over a year with depressed prices, trade impediments. The country of origin labelling issue in the US has certainly compounded issues, and it's been a challenge. [The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

And the producers, earlier on in the year and late last year, certainly have let me know — and have let members on this side of the House, and I'm sure perhaps have spoken to some of the members on the other side of the House — about the difficulties that they were facing. And this government did come through with some help and recognition of the problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they appreciated that.

I had a great number of calls at the constituency office in the early part of the year raising the issue of low prices and the number of difficulties in the beef industry. And then after the Minister of Agriculture made the announcement of \$40 an animal, I must say that a number of those producers phoned back, and we're very thankful. It's not often in public life that we get a thank you, and I can tell them that it was greatly appreciated, them phoning back and expressing their appreciation.

In agriculture there's been a number of challenges that have developed recently in the grain and oilseed sector and particularly in the oilseed sector in canola. Just last week, China announced that they would not be accepting any canola exports after the middle of November that could not guarantee that the seed was 100 per cent free of blackleg. Now blackleg is a disease of canola that's been around for quite some time. The plant breeders of the canola industry have been very good in developing the varieties that have been resistant, but in order to . . . It would be impossible for any exporting nation and any exporter to sign a certificate declaring that the seed that's being shipped is 100 per cent free of blackleg.

And so this had an immediate effect in the markets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The markets dropped dramatically when this announcement was made. There's been a very small recovery, but it certainly has created a great deal of uncertainty in the canola markets. And this is something that producers certainly don't need.

There's the durum market. The EU [European Union] has said that there's going to be a 25 per cent tariff on durum in exports to that community, and that's a recent announcement. That's something that producers don't need because there has been a significant decrease in commodity prices from a year ago. Granted, the production costs have dropped somewhat, but with the challenges of an incomplete harvest and so on, those are things that producers don't need, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are a number of issues that I'd like to speak about that were contained in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I see the clock is ticking down, and I suppose I'll have to do that tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time of adjournment having been reached, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

Trew 3255
Heppner 3258
Eagles 3262
Atkinson 3265
Boyd 3269
Wilson 3273
Quennell 3276
Hart 3281

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier
President of the Executive Council

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

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for Uranium Development
Partnership
Minister Responsible for Innovation Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Research Council

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Enterprise
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. June Draude
Minister Responsible for Crown Investments
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

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport

Hon. Rod Gantfoer
Minister of Finance
Government House Leader

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Municipal Affairs

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. D.F. (Yogi) Huyghebaert
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Education

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Rob Norris
Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. James Reiter
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Capital Commission