



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Don Toth  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
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 met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members of the legislature, I'd like to introduce the spouses of APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] representatives who are in town for the APAS mid-term convention. They had a tour of the building this morning, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd like to introduce Edie Marshall from Semans, Lillian Kurtz from Stockholm, Richard Weetman from Stewart Valley, Gail Boser from Reward, and Vicki Briggs from Whitewood. And I'd ask all members to welcome them to their legislature this morning.

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to request an extended leave to introduce guests.

**The Speaker:** — The member has asked for an opportunity for extended leave. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure, great pleasure to introduce guests in the gallery that have travelled here from Stanley Mission. Perhaps they could stand as I introduce them, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to introduce Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, chief of Lac La Ronge Indian Band; Brian Hardlotte, Stanley Mission band councillor; John Roberts, Stanley Mission band councillor; Sol Charles, health district at Stanley Mission; James Crawford, Stanley Mission resident; Elder Joe Roberts; also Jennifer Proulx, executive assistant to Chief Tammy Cook-Searson. These individuals work tirelessly on behalf of their community, which has proven itself in many accomplishments that they have achieved. One of such . . . [inaudible] . . . is the hard work that has been done to build the Stanley Mission hockey arena.

The idea first originated with a group of parents that used to take their children to La Ronge for hockey games and practices. They decided that our youth deserved such a facility in their community.

Meetings began in 1993 at which time the indoor rink committee was formed. With help of a big group of volunteer base from the community, fundraising activities began. This consisted of snowmobile rallies, fish derbies, summer and

winter festivals, and Nevada sales. In 1997, Lac La Ronge Indian Band generously committed 50,000 a year for 10 years. With fundraising money in place and the commitment from the band, the rink committee successfully got a 10-year loan from the bank.

Construction began in the spring of 1998 with a lot of in-kind help. Carle Service acted as project manager. Graham Construction did the concrete and metal work, and the interior work was done by a volunteer base from the community. The grand opening was on January 29th, 1999. Thanks to the band and the continued fundraising efforts of the volunteers, the loan is now paid off.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing the tremendous community effort of these individuals and welcome them to their Assembly.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, it's a pleasure to also acknowledge in your gallery the presence of Chief Tammy Cook-Searson and the delegation from Stanley Mission. And we join the member opposite in congratulating them on this very, very important project and its completion.

Mr. Speaker, we know the province is well served by leaders like Chief Tammy Cook-Searson who, in addition to the leadership she provides for that First Nation, she's also obviously an active mother and a marathon runner. And the list is long in terms of the chief's achievements. And so we want to welcome her to her Assembly as well as the delegation from Stanley Mission.

And while I'm on my feet, if I may, Mr. Speaker, there's also a constituent of mine in your gallery here with the APAS delegation. He taught me something called Boys' Brigade when I was a very young man growing up in Swift Current, through church. And he and his family are friends of ours as well as being a constituent. I'd just like to welcome and acknowledge Richard Weetman, who is with the APAS group in your gallery as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned over the condition of Highway 123. Mr. Speaker, Highway 123 is about 133 kilometres long and it's an important link to the outside world for the communities of Cumberland House and Cumberland House Cree Nation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's the only land link to those communities. Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to stop denying the money that

was allocated for this highway and to commit to immediately providing the repairs to this highway that the people of northeastern Saskatchewan were promised.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by the good folks of Cumberland House. I so submit.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan that speaks to the need and the issue that renters are facing in a combination in our economy of rising rental rates and low vacancy rates in many, many communities. And there are a number of constituents of mine that are facing severe rental increases that is beyond their ability to afford. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to consider enacting some form of rent control with a view to protecting Saskatchewan renters from unreasonable increases in rent.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions in support of people with autism. And these people are feeling disadvantaged by living in Saskatchewan with inadequate autism spectrum disorder strategies and funding. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Saskatchewan Party government to commit to providing a comprehensive provincial autism strategy that is based on proven best practice, evidence-based research, treatments, and programming; and given the complexity of the disorder and its treatments, the individualized funding concept be adapted for parents and guardians of autistic individuals.

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

This is the fourth of a series of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of petitions that are coming in. And these are from Weyburn, Kronau, Regina, Yellow Grass, Langenburg, Churchbridge, Yorkton, Hanley, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Shaunavon, and several others.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. And we know that they are paid on average 8 to \$10 per hour less than employees performing work of equal value in government departments. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, these folks come from Unity, Wood Mountain, and Mossbank. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of Highway 915 in Stanley Mission, and the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to upgrade and repair Highway 915 as soon as possible.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition in support of fairness for students here in Saskatchewan through the necessary expansion of the graduate retention program. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately expand the graduate retention program to include master's and Ph.D. graduates.

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from the city of Regina. I so present.

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

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present yet another petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind with respect to providing safe and affordable water and who as of not yet had a commitment of assistance. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

Now these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are signed by the residents of Duck Lake, Black Lake, Carlton, Prince Albert, Beardy's, Saskatoon, Chanté Lake, Prince Albert, Perdue, and so on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents who are concerned that we need a greater whistleblower protection Act in our province, Mr. Speaker. Since November 7, 2011, there has been a greater concern raised. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

That we request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan pass Bill No. 609, *The Whistleblower Protection Act*, in order to ensure the safety, security, and protection of any employee who acts as a whistleblower by disclosing information for the greater public interest.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, and around the province. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of the withdrawal of Bill 80. Mr. Speaker, *The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, 1992* has provided for us a stable environment. The people are concerned here about apprenticeship. They're concerned about the labour relations environment and the quality of work and the safety. Now the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to withdraw its ill-conceived Bill 80, *The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2009*, Mr. Speaker, which dismantles the proud history of the building trades in this province, creates instability in the labour market, and impacts the quality of training required of workers before entering the workforce.

The petition is signed by people from Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Regina, Indian Head, Balgonie, Waseca, Cut Knife, Lloydminster, Paradise Hill. I so submit.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and present a petition in support of affordable housing and rents for The Battlefords. The prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are all from the city of North Battleford. I so present.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. People are concerned by the billion dollar fiscal hole, the billion dollar deficit created by the Sask Party. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of Regina. I so present.

[10:15]

**Ms. Schriemer:** — I request leave to introduce guests.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Sutherland has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Schriemer:** — Thank you. To you and through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, today I'd like to introduce a friend of mine sitting in the west gallery, Mr. Robbie Picard. Mr. Picard I met when I was in the drug unit looking into raves and the use of drugs at these raves. He was very helpful. And we had lobbied the government of the day to bring in legislation to control these parties and unfortunately a young woman passed away before any legislation was passed. So thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to his Legislative Assembly.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

**Reaction to Budget and Mid-Term Update**

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member from Carrot River Valley wins the blue ribbon for the most colourful quote of the session. A few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, he was so pleased with his government's budget that he said he was "... happier than a hog with a fresh pail of slop."

Well, Mr. Speaker, if slop makes him happy, the mid-term financial update must have made him ecstatic. That's right, Mr. Speaker, because this member once said, and I quote again:

... this budget is not only a fantastic and historic budget for Saskatchewan but also the best budget in all of Canada and probably the best in North America. Oh heck, let's go a little further, Mr. Speaker. I think it's going to be the best in the whole world.

Mr. Speaker, the only words people would agree with today are, "oh heck."

This member, Mr. Speaker, once said that the budget was based on a philosophy called get 'er done. And he's right, Mr. Speaker. When it came time to break their promises, what did they do? Get 'er done. When it came time to cut programs, what did they say? Get 'er done. When it came time to run the biggest deficit since Grant Devine, what did they say? Get 'er done. That's right, Mr. Speaker. And what the people of Saskatchewan will say when it comes time to replace this government in 2011, they will say, get 'er done.

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

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and bring to the attention of this House that December 3rd is the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day was first proclaimed by the United Nations in 1992. The goal is to increase awareness and understanding of disability issues and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. According to the United Nations, Mr. Speaker, almost 1 in 10 around the world live with some form of a disability. More than 145,000 in our province live with disabilities, Mr. Speaker.

To help those with disabilities, our government created a separate income support program and the new Saskatchewan assured income program. Mr. Speaker, nearly 2,400 people have enrolled in this new program in just a few short months. And we have invested \$76.9 million over four years to eliminate the 440-person wait-list for residential care for those with intellectual disabilities in our province. To date over 260 people have been taken off that wait-list.

More work is to be done, Mr. Speaker, and this day serves as a reminder that we must be diligent and dedicated to the cause of promoting inclusiveness and accessibility for all members of

our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Rules**

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a Chamber where proceedings are governed by many rules. There are rules about what we can say, Mr. Speaker, and rules about what we can do. There are even rules about what we have to wear. There are no rules though, Mr. Speaker, against keeping members from doing something in this Chamber that is different from what they said they would do in a government press release or on the campaign trail.

For instance no rules against campaigning on NDP [New Democratic Party] greenhouse gas targets and then abandoning your commitment. No rules against pledging to warn people about offenders at large and then launching a witch hunt to cover up your incompetence. No rules against promising to balance the budget and then running a \$1 billion deficit. No rules against making a rock-solid vow to keep the rainy day fund full and then draining it. No rules against negotiating a fair revenue-sharing agreement with cities and then tearing that agreement up.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. But the Premier recently commented in the public rules of this place, and he identified another problem with those rules when he told *Maclean's* magazine — and I couldn't have agreed with him more, Mr. Speaker — when he told *Maclean's* magazine, and I quote:

One of the problems with the rules of our legislature is that you can be kicked out for calling a member a liar, and yet you can lie.

Mr. Speaker, we couldn't agree more.

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

**Turn That Frown Upside Down**

**Mr. LeClerc:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this House and state that Saskatchewan is still the best place to live in Canada despite what the members opposite say. Here's why, Mr. Speaker. Our economy continues to be one of the strongest in Canada, with Saskatchewan having the best job creation in the nation. We're expected to lead the nation in economic growth in 2010, and our province is experiencing the fastest pace of population growth in over 50 years.

As a matter of fact, as recently as this morning the Fraser Institute says that Saskatchewan is gaining on Alberta's long-standing claim to having the best investment climate in Canada. Saskatchewan is second only to Alberta in the institute's ranking of the best investment climates in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, our government has delivered the largest income and property tax cuts in the history of this province, reduced the provincial debt by 40 per cent, made a record investment in Saskatchewan's infrastructure, and we still have 600 million in

our savings account.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, since he came back from Calgary, all the Leader of the Opposition has done is run down Saskatchewan. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, he says our economy's in a bust. To that member opposite and his colleagues I say, turn that frown upside down.

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

### Quiz Show

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, everybody loves a good game show — *Wheel of Fortune*, *Jeopardy*, *Family Feud*, the *Liars Club*. Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate the Sask Party for adding a new quiz show to the season's lineup — who wants to remain a minister?

The government is still tinkering with the format, Mr. Speaker, but basically this show sees celebrity contestants — sitting cabinet ministers — try to hold on to their portfolios by asking skill-testing questions, challenging questions like, what's going on in your department? Or, how much are you borrowing?

This show's pilot episode, Mr. Speaker, aired a few days ago when the Minister of Finance chose the category budget blunders, and had to respond to a real puzzler: this Municipal Financing Board member missed a budget overrun of 100 per cent. We can forgive him for being stumped by this trick question, Mr. Speaker. After all, the right response was, who is the Minister of Finance?

Tuesday night's episode featured the Minister of SaskPower as he tried to answer the \$64 million question, was his debt going up or was it going down? Was it (a) 598 million; (b) 516 million; (c) 663 million; or (d) all of the above? Unable to answer, he used a lifeline, Mr. Speaker, and asked a few friends to help him out. No luck, Mr. Speaker.

With who wants to remain a minister, this government is running a worthy successor to *The Gong Show*.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

### Christmas Greetings

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to bring Christmas greetings during the most wonderful time of the year. Singer-songwriter Andy Williams captured the true magic of the holiday season with his . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I recognize the member from Cypress Hills. He may start his statement over.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to bring Christmas greetings during the most wonderful time of the year. Singer-songwriter Andy Williams captured the true magic of the holiday season with his popular, feel-good tune where it said, and everyone's telling you, be of good cheer; it's the happiest time of the year.

It's important to remember, celebrate, and enjoy everything that makes this season the most wonderful time of the year. A Christmas tree symbolizes family gatherings and traditions. Gift-wrapped presents symbolize giving and gratitude. Carolling provides for the spreading and sharing of cheer and holiday spirit. Turkey dinner offers an opportunity for prayer and thanksgiving, storytelling, memory sharing, and laughter. Santa Claus symbolizes that one person that can indeed make a difference by showing generosity and kindness that transcends borders, languages, and cultures.

Perhaps most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we remember the birth of the Christ child whose humble arrival heralded the promise of peace and joy in the hearts of millions of individuals down through the ages.

Mr. Speaker, I hope everyone's holiday season is full of fun-filled activities, and I hope that we all cherish the true symbols of this happy season with family and strangers alike.

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

### The Night After Session

**Mr. Furber:** —

'Twas the night after session and all through this House  
Not a creature was stirring — not a cat, not a mouse.  
The Premier in his kerchief, his deputy in his cap  
Had just settled in for a Treasury Board scrap.  
When up from Finance arose such a clatter  
That the Ag minister leaped to see what was the matter.  
When what to his wondering eyes should appear  
But the Minister of Finance pleading, poor potash here.  
More rapid than eagles, his cuts then they came.  
He dodged and evaded, wouldn't call them by name.  
He cut Health and cut Justice, Education, police.  
He cut job training, forced a big tax increase.  
But at mid-term the minister came in with a bound  
In the rainy day fund there was cash to be found.  
His eyes how they twinkled, his dimples how merry.  
Delaying a child's hospital, now that is the cherry.  
With a wink of an eye and a twist of his head  
Soon gave us to know we had everything to dread.  
And laying his finger aside of his nose  
He admitted the truth and his deficit rose.  
But I heard him exclaim as he kept his cuts out of sight  
Happy cheerleading to all and to all a good night.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

### Management of Provincial Economy

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, as the session draws to an end, the opposition and the public of Saskatchewan, professors at the university have exposed the provincial budget as the most irresponsible budget in the history of the province, a fantasyland budget that was wrong on most of the estimates for income, runaway spending, taking money from the Crowns that is unaccounted for, as well as spending down the rainy day

fund.

My question to the Minister of Finance is this: why in the world won't you answer the questions about the cuts that are coming, the cuts that are the responsibility of this government's mismanagement and incompetence? Can we get answers, even at this late date, to the cuts that are coming to the people of Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well it is obviously true that the government faces an unprecedented challenge in terms of revenue because of the lack of potash sales. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we've outlined for the people of the province our plan to make sure that the budget remains balanced in Saskatchewan, perhaps the only such balanced budget in the country, Mr. Speaker. We've outlined measures for deferrals of some important capital projects and they will be just deferrals, Mr. Speaker. There has been belt-tightening on the part of the government as we tabled the mid-term financial report. We also tabled a plan to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, here is the fact of the matter though. Even after the mid-term report, even after this loss of revenue, the following is the truth, remains very true. When the Saskatchewan Party took office, the province had \$6.8 billion in debt and \$1.2 billion in the savings account. Today the province has \$4.2 billion in debt and \$600 million in the savings account — a net benefit in two years of \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I'm very pleased that the Premier qualified this statement as being the truth. I find that interesting.

In 2007, we know that the government, this government, took over a booming economy, \$2.3 billion in the bank, and we've gone from that to a recession and a billion dollar deficit in six months. And what the people of the province are asking is, why doesn't this Premier have the decency and the common sense to stand in front of the people of the province and apologize for the mistake and admit that he's made a mistake and give us the definition of the mistakes and how that will affect families in this province? Why doesn't he do that?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, very frankly, very frankly, the admission that a mistake was made in terms of projecting the revenue for potash, Mr. Speaker, it was hidden, Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne which members on both sides have been debating, including that member opposite, Mr. Speaker. With respect to what happened when this party took office, here's what . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. The members have asked the question looking for an answer, were given the opportunity to ask the question without interference. I ask that the same courtesy be applied to the Premier. I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we took office from the NDP, the province had \$6.8 billion in debt and \$1.2 billion in the savings account. Today the province has \$4.2 billion in debt, Mr. Speaker. We've paid off 2.6 billion in the provincial debt and 600 million in the bank account. Again I say to that member and to the people of the province, and this is why the people of the province are actually happy about the state of affairs in the province today, that is a net benefit to Saskatchewan of \$2 billion. And the only source of gloom and doom you'll find in Saskatchewan today, notwithstanding the potash challenge, are in the benches opposite.

[10:30]

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier may have been away when the people wanting a little extra money for autism for treatment and for plans and to help them with that issue, he may not have been here for that day's question period.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Members are aware of the rules that you're not to refer to the presence or absence of members in the Chamber on a sitting day. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Let me reword. Maybe the Premier didn't hear the words of the autism people when they were here asking for help in the programming for their children and their families. Maybe the Premier was not here when the farmers who were being affected by big sky country . . . Big Sky Farms were here asking for help and asking to be paid for the grains they hauled to the hog farm. Maybe he wasn't aware that they were unhappy. Or maybe the people from Big River who were here yesterday asking for the minister in charge to help them get the forest that they need to run the mill in Big River.

The fact of the matter is there are many people in the province concerned about the finances of this province. Many people are saying, the problem with governments running up deficit and debt, like the Devine government and like this government, is they don't take the debt when they go. It's left for the people of the province to pay.

My question to the Premier is this: we have asked hundreds of questions about the cuts that are coming to the people of the province and we have no answers. Would the Premier make the commitment that, even at this late date, he would answer the written questions, the many questions we have put, to tell the people of the province how they will be negatively affected by the cuts coming as a result of their mismanagement and incompetence?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I repeat again, I repeat again for members of this House, and particularly for that member, that in two years of this government, this provincial government has reduced the debt of the province by 38 per cent. All the while dealing with the infrastructure deficit left behind by members opposite, all the while dealing with agriculture issues ignored by members opposite, including property tax reduction, including crop insurance programs. All the while reducing taxes



on property, all the while reducing income taxes, Mr. Speaker. These are the measures this government has taken. And we have also achieved a 40 per cent reduction in the debt in the face of the most significant global recession the world has seen since the Great Depression.

Mr. Speaker, that's why there is a disconnect between that member, those members, and the people of the province of Saskatchewan. He says this economy's in a bust. There's only one thing in a bust in this room, that's that member's approval ratings, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, question for the Minister of Finance. That government's billion dollar deficit has become its excuse for breaking promises and commitments. The children's hospital — cut. The Academic Health Sciences centre — cut. The nursing homes — cut. The promise of predictable funding for municipalities — broken. The promise of permanent property tax reduction — broken. The promise of predictable funding for school boards — broken.

In light of these broken promises and commitments, why should anyone in Saskatchewan believe any future promises of this government?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the answer is because over 100 promises made in that campaign have already been kept by this government, Mr. Speaker. That's why, Mr. Speaker.

Because we've made a promise to deal with the education property tax issue over four years of our government, and we are keeping that promise. That's why. Because we made a commitment to deal with municipal revenue sharing, long ignored by that party, over the four years of our government, and we will keep that promise. That's why, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the promises we've kept with respect to taxes, in addition to the fact that we campaigned on a platform of actually fixing our highways instead of talking about them, Mr. Speaker.

They should take heart with respect to this government because it has a track record, Mr. Speaker, of doing exactly what it said it would do. That will be the case when we have an election in two years. And we look forward to fighting that campaign on a record of promise keeping and growth, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Ministry of Health Expenditures

**Mr. Quennell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health, the government's cut the health budget by \$192 million. 122 million of that is to cut 13 long-term care nursing home projects across the province. That leaves another \$70 million in health care cuts the government has yet to account for.

Can the minister advise whether these cuts include family health benefits and supplementary health benefits to programs which provide health care protection to low-income people? And if those programs have not been cut, where are the other \$70 million in health care cuts that have not yet been disclosed to Saskatchewan people?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the deferral — and that's what it is — the deferral of long-term care facilities through 13 communities. Mr. Speaker, the deferral of the . . .

[Interjections]

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The deferral of the long-term care facilities, the deferral of the children's hospital is exactly what it is, Mr. Speaker. Finances will be there as the projects are ready to go. The communities aren't ready to go. Their 35 per cent share isn't ready to go. The planning hasn't been complete, Mr. Speaker. When that is complete, those projects will move ahead, Mr. Speaker.

But what I would say, it's a larger investment in two years under our government than under any years under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they should be absolutely ashamed of the way they left the health care facilities in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Drinking Water Standards

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, the budget for the Environment Department has been cut by nearly \$10 million. The government claims that much of that cut was from lower than expected forest fire costs, but that does not account for the total cut.

Mr. Speaker, more than 100 Saskatchewan communities do not meet Health Canada's guidelines for drinking water quality. Can the minister confirm that her department has cut its budget for assisting communities with drinking water quality, and if not, what has the department cut from environmental programs and services?

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

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite had submitted a written question which we responded to. And 104 communities that didn't meet the Canadian water standards have actually been on that list since 2002. It is not new, Mr. Speaker. And the reason that they are on that list is because the government of the day, they did the right thing. They adopted more aggressive standards for drinking water and gave communities an eight-year timeline under which to comply, Mr. Speaker.

So these 104 communities are in non-compliance. We are working with them to get them into compliance. But I would remind the member opposite that they have been on that list since 2002. And the difference between our two parties, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP in their last two years gave \$9 million for water projects. In this government's first two years, we gave \$76 million.

### Corrections, Public Safety and Policing Expenditures

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, the budget for his ministry has been cut by \$1.6 million according to supplementary estimates. Can the minister explain which public safety inspections have been cut or privatized as a result of their budget decisions, and if the Sask Party claims these public services have not been cut, then which services have?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well of course our priority for Saskatchewan people is public safety. But I think what the member is referring to is a deferral again because the remand centre, the remand centre proposed for Saskatoon, the request for proposals has just been completed. And so that money is not required for this period of time. And that money is deferred until the next year when the money is required once the shovel goes into the ground, and then the money will be there.

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

### Ministry of Education Expenditures

**Mr. McCall:** — The cuts that are deferrals. It's like listening to George Orwell over there, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister of Education. The Education budget has been cut by more than \$31 million. We are told the government is trying to cut the number of educational assistants in Saskatchewan. EAs [educational assistants] provide support to students with special needs, and school divisions find their work very valuable. Many employ more educational assistants than the bare minimum recommended under provincial guidelines. But this government is pressing school divisions to cut educational assistants.

Why is the government cutting support for students with special needs by trying to cut the number of educational assistants in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the boards of education in this province, all 29 boards of education, deliver a model for education in their area. Mr. Speaker, this year, this year we have added \$241 million

additional revenue to the boards of education.

These budgets have been approved, Mr. Speaker. These budgets are in place. The member knows that the school year budget is from September 1st of 2009 to August 31st of 2010. Mr. Speaker, the budgets are in place. The school boards are working within the parameters of that budget, just like they have in the past, Mr. Speaker. We have enhanced the amount of dollars to boards of education by \$241 million.

**The Speaker:** — Before I recognize the next question, I just want to remind members again that in order for people to hear the response, I would ask the members who are placing the question to give people the opportunity to hear by allowing the minister to speak without interjection. I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

### Ministry of Agriculture Expenditures

**Mr. Harper:** — Mr. Speaker, agriculture funding has been cut by more than \$40 million in the supplementary estimates, but yet no public accounting of these cuts has come forth from the minister. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture confirm that these cuts include cuts to the crop insurance program for Saskatchewan farmers, and if not, then where are these cuts being made? Where?

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

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, \$15 million of the dollars that weren't going to be utilized in the Crown land sale program is a big part of those dollars. Crop insurance, as the member asked, is about a \$9 million discount there that's not going to be utilized. We project at the beginning of the year where we think crop insurance would go, and we know the members opposite wouldn't understand this because they never fully funded the programs in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would also remind the member opposite that the budget for Agriculture stands today at \$443 million. That is the highest budget in the province's history for agriculture, Mr. Speaker. In fact in the research I did, the last time the Agriculture budget in this province exceeded 400 million was 1991. Not once under the NDP did the ag budget in this province come anywhere close to where it is today, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Northern Highways and Cellphone Coverage

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, leaders from Stanley Mission came here looking for answers today. They believe northerners are entitled to the same standard of safety as people in other parts of our province. But Highway 915 north of La Ronge presents a serious risk to the public safety. The condition of the highway is terrible and there are sharp turns that have resulted in a number of serious accidents. In fact, locals call parts of the highway suicide curve.

To the minister: does he believe northerners should have the same standard of safety as people elsewhere in the province?

And if he does believe that, when will Highway 915 be fixed?

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

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government is addressing the massive infrastructure deficit left behind by the members opposite in northern Saskatchewan. We began by holding multiple consultations in the North with First Nations, Métis, and industry association representatives. Together we created the northern transportation strategy, the advisory committee to provide recommendations on transportation infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, this group has held a number of meetings and will be providing recommendations on the prioritization of future investments in the North.

The people of northern Saskatchewan are working with this government developing our plan. They share a vision for the future, and they're confident that this government will deliver on our promises.

[10:45]

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's so wonderful to hear that all the northern leaders are taking part in these discussions, as the minister said.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, to add insult to injury, the people of Stanley Mission not only have to travel dangerous roads but, in the event of an accident, they also are unable to call for help. Why? Because on March 14, 2007, SaskTel announced the expansion of cell service to Stanley Mission. More than two years have gone; this promise has yet to have been kept. Community leaders want for this government to act now.

To the Minister of SaskTel: how much longer do the people of Stanley Mission have to wait for cell coverage so that they can at least call for help if something happens on their unsafe highway, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm exceptionally pleased to be able to get up in the House today and advise the members of the legislature and the people of this province that we have a very aggressive plan at SaskTel to ensure that we've got cell coverage on virtually all the major highways and throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have a rollout plan on new cellphone towers that is being announced over the next few months. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members in the North, members in the South that we will do everything we can to ensure that the people in this province have some of the best cell coverage in North America, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Northern Skills Training Expenditures

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My

question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. We know that this minister's department has cut nearly \$9 million from skills training programs, including the cuts to JobStart/Future Skills. What this minister has failed to do is account for the rest of his program cuts.

Last budget year, in the middle of a labour shortage, that government cut northern skills training by \$1 million. And this year, we know he has taken an additional \$300,000 from northern skills training.

Time and time again, we see the Saskatchewan people paying the price for this government's mistake. To the minister: the people want to know, the people of the North want to know what other cuts are being planned for the North as a result of your Sask Party government's fiscal incompetence?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity to highlight, this year we're spending \$92 million in training and employment programs, Mr. Speaker — \$23 million more than the previous government did as they were shown the door, Mr. Speaker.

Regarding the North, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about the Aboriginal skills and employment partnership, a \$33 million initiative with federal partners, the provincial government coming in, First Nations and Métis communities, and a number of private sector entities helping to train more than 1,000 people in the North stationed, headquartered out of La Ronge, Mr. Speaker.

There's more to do. But this is just one example of the excellent work that's under way, being led by the people of this province and supported by this government, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Finances of Crown Corporations

**Mr. Furber:** — To help pay for its financial mismanagement, that government has stripped almost \$1 billion in Crown corporation equity this year and it has increased the long-term debt of the Crowns by \$800 million more.

Will the minister finally admit that this is an attempt to hide the financial mismanagement from Saskatchewan families and amounts to nothing less than a back door tax increase?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Investments Corp.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting question from a group of people who stripped \$2.2 billion from the Crowns in the last 10 years. And what did they do? They left an infrastructure deficit in the Crowns that couldn't be seen the same way it could be seen with holes in the highways. It can't be seen the same way as schools that have leaky roofs. You can't see it like emergency room shortages.

But we know that they only spent \$500 million a year on SaskTel, SaskEnergy, and SaskPower. Last year alone, our government spent \$750 million on Crown infrastructure, and this year, \$1.25 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're doing to the Crowns.

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

### Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport Programs

**Ms. Chartier:** — Mr. Speaker, the budget for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport has been cut by nearly \$11 million. The government claims much of the budget cut was from the building communities program.

Can the minister tell this House the complete list of the community recreational projects cut or delayed by this budget decision? Just how many Saskatchewan families and communities have to suffer because of this government's financial mismanagement?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question.

I can tell the member that there are a number of communities, five or six communities, that have programs that under the contract with the program, they have to meet certain requirements for the money from the program to flow from the provincial government, Mr. Speaker. And so we are waiting and we are hoping that those communities will move forward with their programs. And the money will be there under our contractual obligations, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that the members know that one of the other areas that we have reduced in our budget is the active families benefit, Mr. Speaker. I want the members to know that the program remains intact. It's a program that provides a refundable tax benefit of up to \$150 per child ages 6 to 14, Mr. Speaker, a program that the NDP government were critical of when this party proposed it in the last provincial election, Mr. Speaker.

And I would urge the public and parents in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that the program is still intact and that they submit their paperwork when they're doing their income taxes for the 2009 income tax year in next year's income tax, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Ministry of Health Expenditures

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to health care, Saskatchewan families have already paid a huge price for this government's financial mismanagement. The children's hospital in Saskatoon, the surgical care centre here in Regina, and 13 nursing home projects right across this province have already been cut.

However, more cuts could be on the way. This government has failed to budget for the costs of fighting H1N1. Manitoba has confirmed that it will spend \$105 million on H1N1. How is this government going to pay for fighting H1N1? Will it add another \$100 million to the billion dollar deficit, or is it going to force another \$100 million in cuts on other health care programs and services for the people of Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member's question, I think we're looking at an estimate for the H1N1 of about \$30 million. And the numbers have not been all compiled because we don't know all the costs as the rollout of the vaccine continues. I will also say this, Mr. Speaker, that this side of the House is very proud of the Ministry of Health and the officials who I think have led the nation in terms of the H1N1 vaccination rollout, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to move this province forward in health care, Mr. Speaker. We are going to say to the people of this province within four years that waiting three months for surgery is long enough. That's the centrepiece of this session we're in right now, Mr. Speaker.

And people should know that they can count on that commitment because, Mr. Speaker, this is also the party that said we'd have 800 new nurses in the province. We've already got 570 . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. It's Christmastime. The Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, they're applauding the fact that we're already got 570 new nurses. Mr. Speaker, this government keeps its promises. This government right now is supporting an economy that is not just leading Canada, but is leading North America. And those members ought to just cheer up a little bit and be grateful as we all are to be living in a place like Saskatchewan today.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

#### Value-Added Growth and Economic Momentum

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we know, Saskatchewan is forging through this ongoing international economic downturn better and stronger than many jurisdictions could ever hope for. Our resilience, diversification, and depth are the main reasons behind this.

In spite of these strengths, Mr. Speaker, we also understand that we need to address the challenges that come with international fiscal issues and economic growth. Saskatchewan's competitive business climate is not immune to the effects of global markets. As such, we are committed to growing the Saskatchewan economy. And in order to do so, the cost of doing business must remain competitive with other jurisdictions.

With this in mind, I stand today to outline two announcements that speak to this government's attention to ensuring that our business climate and our economy remain amongst the best in the world, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Energy and Resources, has announced that effective January 1st, 2010, a deduction in determining the profit tax portion of the potash production tax will apply to each new corporate office job located in the province. A lesser deduction will apply to positions already located in Saskatchewan. After five years, Mr. Speaker, each new job would be treated as an existing job. Mr. Speaker, the mining industry continues to be a primary engine of growth in Saskatchewan, with potash, to be sure, front and centre, Mr. Speaker.

As the Minister of Energy and Resources noted, there are various expansion plans in the potash industry in spite of the cooling off of sales in 2009. Clearly this industry remains committed to the province and this government. And this government in turn remains committed to seeing all phases of their operations here in Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan.

As a result of this initiative, we fully expect to see an increase in value-added corporate presence in Saskatchewan from one of our key resource industries, Mr. Speaker. Corporate offices represent good jobs, stable employment, and a higher profile for our province and its communities. They bring even more economic multipliers — additional job opportunities for retailers, for professional services, construction, and property development. We can and we will facilitate and encourage corporate offices to establish themselves where they should be — here in Saskatchewan.

The second announcement, Mr. Speaker, is the government's intention to introduce a five-year corporate income tax incentive for corporations undertaking the refining of minerals imported into Saskatchewan. This initiative will provide significant incentive for firms that import minerals and make significant value-added investments through processing new facilities in our province.

In order to qualify for the incentive, an eligible corporation must operate exclusively in the processing of imported minerals or mineral concentrate to the prime metal stage of development, maintain a minimum capital investment of \$125 million in the Saskatchewan operation, and maintain a minimum incremental employment of 75 full-time employees in Saskatchewan.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, the proposed incentive provides a break on incremental tax dollars and does not take from the general treasury as taxes are not reduced until after the incremental investment has been fully spent and the new jobs are in place in our province.

In addition to the direct investment in the Saskatchewan economy, there is a significant ripple effect to this approach. It includes the economic activity resulting from capital expenditure due to construction, new employment for families, and the new income, fuel, and sales tax that is generated for the treasury, and the benefits which accrue to the supply chain for our provincial manufacturers and service providers, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to note that the efforts of our Enterprise Saskatchewan board in bringing about this initiative with a minimum of economic distortions while still advocating for more broad-based tax restrictions. Our government will continue to target the business and industry sectors that provide the value-added growth and economic momentum which is so vital to our continued prosperity and competitiveness as a province. And we will continue to utilize innovative partnerships to do so.

We are all partners in Saskatchewan, and we all have a stake in seeing that value-added growth continues in our province and that our province is enabled to maintain the momentum for economic diversification. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the remarks made by the Minister of Enterprise, the minister also responsible for trade. The minister makes a number of comments today with regards to potash and other matters, Mr. Speaker, and before I'm done I will make a few comments about the success of the mineral sector in Saskatchewan and our continued support for the mineral sector, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

But before I do that, I just want to indicate my amusement at the announcement today, Mr. Speaker. During this session of the legislature, the government has been quite reluctant to talk about potash, Mr. Speaker. And is it any wonder that the announcement today involving the potash sector comes on the last day of the legislature, minutes after the last question period has taken place because, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the members opposite, including the minister who just spoke, have to be concerned that their budgeting process included a commitment to fund 20 per cent of the expenditures of government on the basis of a forecast for potash, Mr. Speaker, a forecast that called for 1.8 billion to be received from potash. And in fact this actual reception at this point, Mr. Speaker, is calculated at a little more than 100 million, Mr. Speaker — a 95 per cent failure on behalf of the government to understand the global nature of the potash industry.

And as a result, Mr. Speaker, every day the government has had difficulty answering questions about why this mismanagement is going to affect individual Saskatchewan residents, whether they're seniors or students or young people or immigrants coming to our province, Mr. Speaker.

And we do remember the debate that occurred shortly after the budget was brought down, Mr. Speaker, in which after the potash industry itself was indicating that we're going to have production reduced in this province, Mr. Speaker, and there were layoffs in the potash industry, the Minister of Energy and the now Minister of Enterprise and others were on their feet saying, it's not about production. It's not about production. It's all about sales, Mr. Speaker. Well not only did they not understand what the production side was telling them, Mr. Speaker, but they were still convinced, while all of this was going on, that the sales were going to take place, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of their cluelessness on this, Mr. Speaker, what

we've seen, what we've seen is a reduction in services to Saskatchewan people. And we can only guess, Mr. Speaker, how they're planning to manage that in the future. They've got a budget to put together for the spring session, Mr. Speaker. They have no idea what their revenues are going to be, but they have spending that increased by 32 per cent this year, Mr. Speaker — spending, a lot of which either continues into the new year and increases the deficit or results in further cuts to the programs that Saskatchewan people recognize.

Mr. Speaker, New Democrats have always been very supportive of the mineral sector in Saskatchewan. We can go back a number of years to the report Industry and Resources put out, *Partnership for Prosperity*. Mr. Speaker, there was no doubt that that set the stage for a lot of what was to come.

In 2005, the centennial year, the economic summit that was held in Saskatchewan, an economic summit to discuss the future of the corporate sector in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party, including the minister, boycotted that event, Mr. Speaker. But who participated to a great extent? The mineral sector, the potash sector in particular, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of that economic summit in 2005, the government at the time, led by then Premier Lorne Calvert, brought in changes to the corporate capital tax, Mr. Speaker. That resulted in the potash sector stepping up and announcing expansion in the province of Saskatchewan, expansion that is continuing to this day, Mr. Speaker. And of course the government of the day in 2006 and early 2007 was complimented by the mineral sector for the efforts that were made on the corporate capital tax side.

Mr. Speaker, it can be argued, and correctly argued, that this was the beginning of the economic boom in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So there's no doubt that there is a strong record of New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, supporting the potash, the mineral sector in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of matters that are raised. Again I have to say that one must be supportive of tax incentives that will bring development to the province. It is interesting that the government has chosen at a time when the potash sector is actually laying off workers in rural Saskatchewan that they're announcing an incentive to bring corporate head offices likely to urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We do not stand in the way of any new investment that comes to urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. But it is interesting that this dynamic is taking place at this time. And we would welcome — no announcement, Mr. Speaker, from the government yet — but we would welcome an opportunity to see additional corporate head offices in the province of Saskatchewan.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, the second part of the announcement talks about providing opportunities for the mineral sector to process a product in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, certainly the Minister of Enterprise understands this. He was just, on behalf of Enterprise Saskatchewan, in Kazakhstan, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that he saw there a lost opportunity for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party government missed out on an opportunity there. I'm sure that the minister, when he went to Kazakhstan, came back with a message: we have to do something. And perhaps that's why this announcement is being in place. They've recognized a

failure on their part, and now they're trying to correct that mistake.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time is elapsing. Just one more comment, Mr. Speaker. I notice, in answers to written questions to the minister in which I asked a number of questions about the Enterprise Saskatchewan sector teams, it is interesting to note that the mineral sector in over a year has met four times, Mr. Speaker, and have provided the minister with two recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, we have not seen those recommendations from the board, but I hope that the minister will release the recommendations that the sector team has made to him and some kind of response because we know that the Enterprise board has made a number of recommendations to the government that the government has already announced they will not be following.

Mr. Speaker, the mineral sector has done a lot of work. They've made some recommendations. Let's see what they are, and let's see if the government's going to accept those recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member on her feet?

**Ms. Eagles:** — With leave to introduce a guest, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Estevan has leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. I recognize the member from Estevan.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all honoured members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce someone that is very special in my life. Seated in your gallery is my daughter, Trish.

Trish, if you just want to stand up so people can see who you are. I don't mean to embarrass you. But I'm very happy to have Trish in to Regina today, and we're going to do a little bit of shopping after. Mr. Speaker, as well as being my daughter, she's also my best friend. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming her today. Thanks.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

### Financial Support

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be given the honour of rising today to introduce our government's motion. Throughout this session, the members opposite have constantly preached their gloom and doom theory, rambling on and on about the recession and how it will

be worse in the future for the people of this province.

Well we've seen that some financial forecasters are predicting a much different story for Saskatchewan in the year 2010. We have seen that the Conference Board of Canada and the Royal Bank financial forecasters have said that Saskatchewan will either lead the nation or be second in GDP [gross domestic product] growth. Our government has said all along that the province of Saskatchewan is not immune to what is happening throughout the world. We have felt some of those negative impacts, particularly in the decline of potash sales.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that our government will put forward today states:

That this Assembly recognizes the actions taken by our government to provide increased financial support for those less advantaged and maintaining those supports in the face of a global recession.

Mr. Speaker, I will lead you through many initiatives to assist the disadvantaged that our Saskatchewan Party government has moved forward on.

Clients of the provincial training allowance and transitional employment allowance programs received offsetting increases to their home heating allowances. Saskatchewan assistance program clients will continue to have their actual utility costs paid based on billings.

It is important that our government increase the training allowance to provide relief to students in basic education programs. This increase will reduce the burden incurred by students due to rising energy costs, enabling them to focus their attention on their studies and on achieving their educational goals. For provincial training allowance clients, rates will increase by \$24 per month per household for single students living away from home and single parents, and \$26 per month for married students. In addition rates will increase by \$2 for each child in the household. Traditional employment allowance clients will receive an increase of \$24 per month for the first person in the household and \$2 per month for each additional person. Saskatchewan assists low-income adults in accessing basic education programs in order to upgrade their education and further their independence by moving into employment, post-secondary education, or training. Approximately 5,000 students receive the provincial training allowance annually.

Under the NDP, our young people left this province in droves, Mr. Speaker. Now they are getting an education in Saskatchewan and building their lives here. Our government is investing in the most important resource of our province, and that is our youth. This was unheard of under the previous government.

Fifteen million dollars will be invested in the University of Saskatchewan residences program, and this affordable housing will help graduates to succeed in their studies. Even the NDP was excited to hear about our recent economic booster shot and the funding we're providing to student housing. To quote the member from Saskatoon Centre in the *Hansard* of the Human Services Committee on March 9, 2009, I quote:

... that's very good news — I think everyone in Saskatchewan is excited to see student housing. That was one that I think that everybody thinks it's an important project. I mean all housing projects actually from my point of view is a very good thing. And so and clearly this has been a need that's the U of S has identified for many years and so it is good news.

The member from Saskatoon Centre seems to be aware that the NDP neglected student housing for years, and now we have to play catch-up.

\$26.4 million will be invested at Great Plains College in Swift Current and St. Peter's College in Muenster and SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]. The money will allow for facility upgrading and improvements to the learning environment that will pay many dividends, allowing our future generations greater access to quality education.

The Saskatchewan Party government announced the largest single-year income tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history. This tax reduction allowed the most disadvantaged people in our province to keep more of their money. This resulted in a saving of \$440 per year for the individual and \$1,320 per year for a working family with two children.

The 2008-2009 budget included the following tax changes: doubled the caregiver tax credit, doubled the infirm dependant tax credit, doubled the supplement to the disability tax credit, increased the disability tax credit, exempted the registered disability savings plan income from social assistance calculations. A total of 80,000 low-income taxpayers were dropped off the tax rolls altogether.

And those who pay no taxes now will benefit from a new low-income tax credit which replaces and significantly increases the Saskatchewan sales tax credit. This tax credit puts more money into the pockets of low-income people who pay taxes, like seniors and students and low-income working families. The maximum tax credits provided to eligible families with children is increased to \$600 per year, twice as much as the old sales tax credit. We provided additional tax savings to over 300,000 lower income provincial residents.

While the NDP claims to care about working families, our government is the one that has done the most to put the money back in their pockets, Mr. Speaker. And everyone should remember that it was the NDP that blindsided everyone in the province when they hiked up the PST [provincial sales tax] after the 2003 election.

Saskatchewan residents will realize a further \$22 million in provincial tax savings in 2009, as personal income tax brackets and personal tax credits are indexed to the national rate of inflation. Indexation protects us from what is called bracket creep, the automatic increases in taxes caused by inflation. The income tax brackets, basic and spousal credits, senior supplement, dependent child credit, disability related credits, medical expense credit, and the new Saskatchewan low-income tax credit are all subject to indexation. All of this means a working family with two children can now earn up to \$42,220 a year without paying any Saskatchewan income tax.

[11:15]

The NDP also never came up with long-term solutions to offset the effects of reassessment on municipalities and taxpayers. The property tax plan ensures Saskatchewan families and homeowners have relief from higher property taxes and more money in their pockets. Our government worked hard to develop a new property tax plan, unlike the NDP who did nothing to fix this issue. Even the hero of the NDP, Tommy Douglas, struggled with this issue. That's right, Mr. Speaker. The NDP knew something had to be done with property taxes since the 1940s, yet they never got it done. Our government has made more progress on the education property tax issue in two years than the NDP did in 60.

The provincial debt has been paid down by over \$2.6 billion since our government took office. This is a 40 per cent reduction and the largest paydown of debt in Saskatchewan's history. By reducing the debt, we are saving Saskatchewan people hundreds of millions of dollars in interest costs. By reducing and eventually eliminating the debt, we are creating a legacy for our children and our grandchildren. The money saved will be reinvested in schools, health care facilities, roads, and other infrastructure, improving the quality and affordability of life for Saskatchewan people. The NDP had years to pay down the debt, but they apparently did not see it as a priority.

Our government is also working with organizations to help create jobs for First Nations people, Mr. Speaker. Education and training opportunities with Northlands College, combined with the employment opportunities, will empower First Nations people to take advantage of potential employment opportunities. These opportunities also have the potential to improve the quality and affordability of life for northern residents in this province. Saskatchewan's Aboriginal employment development initiative is focused on bringing the largely untapped First Nations and Métis workforce into Saskatchewan's growing economy. Education institutions can then develop and offer programs to give First Nations and Métis people the skills they need to compete successfully for open positions.

All AED [Aboriginal employment development] partners work to identify and address barriers to training, hiring, and retaining First Nations and Métis people. Our government has committed to reducing barriers to the workplace for First Nations people.

The Saskatchewan Party government has continued to provide \$2.375 million in assistance to municipalities who provide a paratransit program. Our government provided funding for the replacement of five vehicles in the '08-09 fiscal year in the amount of \$275,000. This will allow municipalities to continue running this vital service for those who need assistance in getting around. Our government is committed to ensuring that all people are able to benefit from the province's growth.

Last year we provided more than \$3 million to northern communities through the northern residential subdivision program to provide serviced lots to meet higher demands for housing as the province's economy grows. \$2 million was committed to La Loche and \$1 million to La Ronge to build subdivisions with serviced lots. Our government is working hard to ensure that northern communities continue to benefit

from our province's growing economy.

Through our government's \$500 million economic booster shot, we provided over \$29 million in funding for affordable housing projects across the province, Mr. Speaker. These included: \$12 million to fund renovations at housing in Milton Heights, a non-profit apartment building operated by Regina Lutheran Care Society in Regina; \$2.3 million in funding for a 12-unit seniors housing development put forward by the Prince Albert housing society for the Métis community; \$400,000 for renovations and expansion of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council Activity Centre in Maidstone; \$100,000 for renovations to the Saskatchewan Abilities Council Activity Centre in Yorkton; \$100,000 for the purchase of property in which to operate a group home for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Langenburg.

This builds on previous initiatives by our government. In October 2008, our government announced the largest ever investment in the history of the province in support of citizens with intellectual disabilities. The \$76.9 million investment over the next four years will address a wait-list of 440 individuals in need of specialized residential and day programs.

Regarding the seniors' income plan, Mr. Speaker, we expanded that plan to include over double the amount of seniors who were previously eligible to receive assistance. The total number of eligible seniors is now over 18,000. And we also doubled the amount that those seniors can receive from the plan to a maximum of \$190 per month for single seniors and \$155 per month per person for couples. Seniors who qualify for SIP [seniors' income plan] also receive one free eye exam per year, free chiropractic services, home care subsidy, supplementary health benefits for those in special care homes, and loans on some low-cost devices through the Saskatchewan Abilities Council.

For 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP ignored the needs of low-income seniors by not increasing benefits under the seniors' income plan and I think that is absolutely shameful. In our first year of government, we doubled both SIP benefits for eligible seniors and the number of eligible seniors. And we are so proud to assist those who have done so much to build our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our government also provided funding to a number of affordable housing complexes across the province, including: 2.9 million through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to fund Juniper Manor in Saskatoon; \$3.4 million to help fund safe and affordable rental accommodations for 36 low-income families, many of them Aboriginal, who have a member attending SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Woodland Campus in Prince Albert; and support for a new group home in Wynyard for people with intellectual disabilities; over 1.7 million through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to help fund Columbian Manor in Saskatoon. Our government is committed to ensure that life in Saskatchewan remains affordable for everyone.

And I guess there's a huge comparison when you consider that the NDP, on the other hand, has a history of neglect when it comes to housing issues in our province. They did conduct a housing task force in the summer of 2007, Mr. Deputy Speaker,



but the recommendations were kept a secret.

We have support for low-income people with shelter rates and under the provincial training allowance and increased TEA [transitional employment allowance] benefits. The rental housing supplement has been increased, and you know, *The Residential Tenancies Act* will help ensure that everyone can have an affordable place to live so that the rent doesn't go out of control.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand in my spot today, and I'm proud of our government's record. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a . . . or Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sorry, that is a record that I will put up against the members' opposite any day of the week. And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I put forward this motion:

That this Assembly recognizes the actions taken by our government to provide increased financial support for those less advantaged and maintaining these supports in the face of the current global recession.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Estevan has moved a motion:

That this Assembly recognizes the actions taken by our government to provide increased financial support for those less advantaged and maintaining these supports in the face of the current global recession.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am happy to enter into this debate. It's an odd one that this government would propose at this time, after a few weeks of actually getting some of the ideas of what's actually happening in the budget and the mismanagement we've seen. And of course we've got several quotes, and I'll refer to them as we go forward — especially from Dr. Eric Howe, the economist, what he's been talking about, how this province has been left in really a state of shambles. We haven't seen this kind of recklessness when it comes to spending.

And of course today during question period, we had lots of questions about the cuts. We don't know what the cuts are. They're going to be coming. There's a chill right across this province. But for them to stand up, the audacity. And I had to think of the words this morning when the Minister of Health talked about the absolute shame. And I think this is what this government should . . . And as we go forward over the next while, we'll demonstrate this.

But I have to tell you the shame of what's actually happening to . . . Those who find themselves in the lower income bracket here in Saskatchewan are really worried about what's going to happen over the next few weeks, months, and hopefully just a few short years when these folks will come to the election polls and be turned out.

I think it's amazing what kind of things have been happening in this province, and yet this government doesn't seem to be in

touch, in touch with what's going on. Just a few short days ago, I tabled several petitions from 40 different communities right across this province.

And I'll talk about the actual stats from the member from Estevan, what's happening in her own riding. She gets up and she talks about the good things that are happening in Estevan. I don't know if she knows what's happening in Estevan.

Here are the housing waiting lists for Estevan, for social housing. January 2008, it was 23. Now it's 42. I don't think that's good news. Here's Melfort. January 2008, it was 2; now it's 10. Moose Jaw, it was 21; now it's 88.

What about the affordable housing numbers? How's that waiting list going for these folks? Well Estevan, the member who thinks they're doing a really good job, they're doing a really good job — 5 in January 2008; now it's 18. Tisdale 4; now it's 12. In the Premier's own riding, it was 8; now it's 43. And Moose Jaw again 11; now it's 45. Everywhere throughout the province it's going up.

But here's a group that was really, that came and brought those petitions forward because they were deeply, deeply concerned. It's the seniors. It's the seniors who are having a hard time making ends meet. They're not getting support through utilities, and one of the basic needs we have is around housing. How's housing going for seniors in Saskatchewan? Well in January 2008, we started out with waiting lists of 521. Where are we now? September 2009, it's 781 — a growth of over 200 seniors more on waiting lists to find affordable housing in Saskatchewan.

How's it working for her in Estevan? How's it working for her in Estevan? Well it's grown from 11 to 20. How's it going in Yorkton — 36 to 74. In Moose Jaw, 28 to 68. And I think that's shameful. That's absolutely shameful. How can they take any claim in helping out people who find themselves on fixed incomes or lower incomes when those numbers are there on a very basic need of housing?

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's lots of indicators that we can go through, some of the problems that we see in Saskatchewan. Of course a year ago, we had the landmark study — the health disparities report — that came out of Saskatoon, that talked about the needs of people living in poverty, around health care, and how we need to know that's tied to housing and that's tied to income. And we need to act on it. Has there been any action? Not at all, except for this government self-congratulating on the piecemeal approach.

And what about the YW [Young Women's Christian Association] story just a few short weeks ago? And they laugh. Three thousand women turned away. Three thousand women and children turned away, in a year, from a shelter in Saskatoon. That's mind-boggling and that's absolutely shameful. It's 3,000 women and children. That's 60 a week. Where do they go? Where do they go? Again a piecemeal approach to that.

And then we have the Sask hunger count, and that too is shameful because we see the increase here in Saskatchewan right across the province. And we've been out visiting some of

the food banks, and whether it's Wynyard or Humboldt or North Battleford, it's the same throughout the province that the hunger count is going up.

But this is what the story was talking about, and I quote. This is from *The StarPhoenix*, November 18th, and this is Paul Merriman. Now this is what the story was saying: "However, one area of concern is that Saskatchewan ranked second nationwide in the number of children using a food bank."

Now I again use that term absolutely shameful — absolutely shameful that we should find ourselves with that kind of a reputation. And it goes on to say — this is Paul Merriman speaking:

(More) immigrants and refugees are using the food bank, and we've seen a slight increase in our single moms, as well as within our aboriginal community. The perspective from the city is not good — it's up 12 per cent . . .

[11:30]

This is really something else. And again, being second because of the number of children who find themselves there.

And I've talked about the waiting lists for affordable and social and senior housing right across the province. It's everywhere.

Now what's really the worst number of all, and I find this truly amazing the government would have the nerve to stand up on the last day of the House, when we see the social assistance rates, the caseloads going up. And this is the minister in estimates the other night. And this is from November 23rd, and I'll quote:

The budget was prepared for 21,100 social] assistance plan cases and 1,950 TEA cases. And this allocation will be for the increase . . . to 22,800 [that's 8 per cent increase] SAP cases and 2,800 TEA cases.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's an increase of 44 per cent for TEA. That's a transitional employment allowance, folks. It's 44 per cent. And we hear both from the Minister of Advanced Ed and Labour and from Social Services, there's no more help for those folks. They'll get their allowances, but there is no support — no support.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, time is so short to debate this topic, but the reality is the caseloads are going up. More children, more moms, and more dads are finding themselves on welfare in this province. And I can't believe this government would stand up and say, this is a good thing; things are going well.

I'm sorry, I have to say that I have some deep, deep concerns. And we are not getting answers about programs that are being cut.

They like to talk about minimum wage. Will they index that? Will they index that? A simple request. And in fact, if I recall correctly, the member from Silverwood, when we made that announcement two years ago, thought that was a great idea.

Now they like to talk about SIP. We could go into that. They

talk about their \$10 million they put into that. We put \$50 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker — \$50 million into helping seniors. That would help over 100,000 seniors. We're not even in the same ballpark. They talk about 10,000; we were talking about 100,000. Not the same ballpark.

And I have to tell you, one of the most shocking quotes I have to say is from the Minister of Social Services, where she often talks about . . . And this is from November 2nd, the Minister of Social Services and her response to the Throne Speech says, "Currently we have over 500 units in construction, over 600 units in development and planning stages." Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's actually 320. It's not 600. And they'll go out and say it as if it's 600. It's 320. I think there's a little question about truth or fiction here.

Mr. Speaker, is there hope? Yes, there is hope. And we can do an awful lot — not by going with this piecemeal approach that this government is doing. We can have an anti-poverty strategy. Many provinces have it. In fact the only two provinces, major provinces — Alberta and BC [British Columbia] — don't have it, and they're seeing an increase in their welfare caseloads like ours, like ours. Other provinces are successful in working, fighting poverty because they have a plan.

And I would call on this government to come to the table with community groups, talk about a vision where our communities do not have poverty, that poverty becomes history. That's the kind of thing that we need to talk about — where dignity is for everyone, where everyone can afford their housing. They have a right to afford their housing and a right to a decent job with decent pay. This is something that we've all come to expect, and it's actually right in the United Nations, when they talk about human rights for security through economic activity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will be speaking in support of the motion. Now our government has made significant investments towards helping the most vulnerable in our province. We have a plan to address immediate concerns, and we are putting in place long-term measures to strengthen those who are vulnerable in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is proud to support seniors as they are the people who helped build our great province. When we became government, we made a commitment to fully engage the people of Saskatchewan in developing policy. And we wanted to dispel the myth that government knows best, which was practised by the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, this fall I had the opportunity to travel across this wonderful province. I conducted consultations with seniors and senior groups and interested persons. We asked them to help formulate policy. Now our government's consultations are developing workable, practical policies.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there will be even further opportunities for input needed to ensure that everyone in our

province enjoys the benefit of our economy. While the previous government continued to talk about a plan for our seniors, our government is in the process of developing the plan for our seniors.

One of our government's priorities is the creation of the senior care strategy. Now this strategy will focus on developing an intermediate- and long-term care facility, plans that address the care needs of our aging population, improving the coordination of long-term care beds to allow senior couples to stay together. We heard this over and over again when we went across the province. This is of great concern to the seniors in Saskatchewan.

We're also supporting non-profit agencies that provide long-term care and working with the federal government to increase long-term care capacities on First Nations reserve, planning to undertake a pilot project to provide government funding for level 3 and level 4 beds in personal care homes to reduce waiting times for long-term care beds.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is working with regional health authorities, community-based agencies, and senior organizations to create this senior care strategy for Saskatchewan. As our province moves forward, Mr. Speaker, our seniors are going to enjoy a better life.

Our government recognizes that low-income seniors are facing challenges of higher living costs. To help them meet these challenges, we expanded the senior income plan to include over double the amount of seniors who were previously eligible to receive assistance. The number of eligible seniors is now over 18,000.

We have also doubled the amount that seniors can now receive in financial benefit from the plan to a maximum of 190 per month for single seniors and 155 per month for couples. Seniors who qualify for the senior income plan are also going to receive one free eye exam per year, free chiropractic services, reduced reduction on prescription drugs, home care subsidies, supplementary health benefits for those in special care homes, and loans on some low-cost devices through Saskatchewan Abilities Council — for example, walkers and commodes.

Now we are glad to be able to assist those who have done so much to build our province. The previous government did not increase the senior income plan program benefits since 1992.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we aren't afraid of setting targets. We were not afraid to set the target of hiring 800 nurses in our first term. At this present time, we are over 70 per cent on our way to achieving that goal. Today, we have 570 new nurses working here in our province. And as our government moves forward, our seniors are going to enjoy a better life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are helping those who can't fight for themselves, and those are our children. We are addressing the

critical shortage of appropriate care spaces for youth across this province. And to help address this need, our government invested 4 million in Eagles Nest Youth Ranch Inc. to provide 20 new spaces for youth at risk. Eagles Nest is one of the finest providers of youth services in the province, and our partnership will provide the much-needed additional space to support these youth at risk.

Our grant will enable Eagles Nest, currently based in Prince Albert, to expand its services to Saskatoon, purchase property and necessary furnishings. This funding demonstrates our government's commitment to putting children and youth first, ensuring a better quality of life for the young people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at affordable housing, we see an area where the previous government ignored the problem for years, and we had to act. Mr. Speaker, we created the task force on housing affordability to ensure housing affordability keeps pace in our economy.

When the report came out, our government responded by providing 12.4 million to adjust shelter rates in the income assistance program and to index shelter rates, allowances, and supplements. This enhancement immediately benefited over 6,000 households across the province — that's 6,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Here in Regina, our government is expanding the Maple Leaf Estates to create an additional 53 units. And our government invested 12 million to renovate the 140-unit Milton Heights apartment buildings in south central Regina. Now this is an affordable housing unit.

Now our government also invested 10 million in new funding for affordable housing for seniors, low-income families, and those most vulnerable within our province. This funding will be used to deliver a total of 20 quality, affordable home ownership units in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, and Lloydminster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government also invested 3.8 million to develop a new 40-unit affordable, supportive housing unit for low-income persons; 32 units will serve people with serious mental illnesses, with the remaining eight units serving people with intellectual disabilities. This project is sponsored by the Ehrlo Community Service in collaboration with the Phoenix Residential Society.

Now these projects in Regina are an excellent opportunity for our government to join with community partners in developing quality, affordable rental housing for those most in need. Now our government remains committed to ensuring that all Saskatchewan residents benefit from the opportunities and prosperity that we are experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 our government has taken significant steps to move our province forward and we will continue to do so. We are focused on the future. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, it's with a certain sense of disbelief and astonishment that I rise in this debate today. I honestly don't know, Mr. Speaker, what planet some of these members live on. In terms of the poverty that grows in this province and in our cities and in the North, to hear them get up and do the back-patting and self-congratulating that we know is the hallmark of this government — but to sit there and to ignore the reality that people face in this province in terms of the inaction of this government, in terms of their inability to address the growing poverty in this province — to hear them get up and give the back-patting routine or to wail away on the scripts that are prepared for them by their caucus services and just sort of mellifluously tool their way through those scripts, you know, I'd like . . .

Sometimes about this House, Mr. Speaker, I think about how some of the speeches we give in this place, if we could give them in different settings, how that might affect the speeches that are given. I think about the member from Saskatoon Northwest and how he likes to get up and say, turn that smile upside down and sing it away.

And while this is what's happening in terms of the actual result of their words, Mr. Speaker, I'd like for them to go to the Food Bank. I'd like for them to go to the Food Bank and deliver the speech on the doors to the Food Bank, on the doorstep of the Food Bank to the increasing numbers of children and seniors and new Canadians that are going to the Food Bank. You know, it would be great if they could go there and see what those people think of all the good things that they're patting themselves on the back for over there.

[11:45]

I'd like them to go to the kids' Christmas parties that are put on by the different CBOs in our inner cities. And perhaps instead of, you know, helping out with the Christmas cheer, they could give a speech about all the great things they're doing and see what kind of reaction they get from those families that are there because this is the only chance at Christmas that they have, in terms of coming into the doors of these community-based organizations to have a little bit of that Christmas cheer that otherwise they're not getting. I wonder what the response to their speech would be in that circumstance, Mr. Speaker.

I would like them to go and deliver their speeches to the people that are on waiting lists for not just housing, Mr. Speaker, but the thousands of people that are being turned away from the shelters in the province. You know, perhaps they could go down to Waterston House and deliver the speech about how great things are, and they could deliver it to the jam-packed room full of the people that are there because they have nowhere else to turn. And then they could maybe go out on the doorstep of Waterston House and deliver the same speech to the people that are lined up down the street in terms of not having a place to go because Waterston House is full.

Or perhaps they could, you know, go to communities like Pelican Narrows and tell the people there what a great job they're doing. And how the road that is terrible going in, how that's no problem, you know. It's their lifeline on economic development, but don't worry about your road that's in terrible shape.

They could tour the substandard housing and the houses that have families, sometimes two or three families, stacked up. They could tell them what a great job they're doing.

They could go to places in my home community, Mr. Speaker, and tell the people that are living in very crowded conditions in houses that . . . You know, once upon a time we were getting a handle on the standards of housing in this province. There was great work being done with the communities in terms of things like the housing standards enforcement team.

But the impact, a positive impact that that was having on a community like North Central, that's been put sideways, Mr. Speaker, because when the housing standards enforcement team goes in to conduct a survey of a house and tries to, you know, assess if they shouldn't be living there if it's substandard, if it's not up to the basic code, in terms of what happened before, there were places for those people to go if they needed to have the house placarded and in some cases actually bulldozed, Mr. Speaker. Now we have a circumstance where those people don't have anywhere to go.

So the housing standards enforcement team, what do they tell these people? Do they tell them that they should move out into the snowbank and there's nowhere for them to go, but we'll get the standards fixed up? Or are people suffering through these circumstances because they have nowhere to go? And you know what, Mr. Speaker? More and more the people are suffering through these conditions that nobody should be putting up with. But because they have nowhere to go, they'll put up with that rather than nothing.

I think of the increase in Saskatoon, 300 per cent increase over the past two years in terms of people being turned away from the women's shelter. And these are families that, you know, mothers and children that are in a terrible circumstance of domestic violence, they've got to get out of the situation they're in. They need a safe place to go. That we've got an astronomical increase to the number of those people being turned away, Mr. Speaker, in a province that is as rich and has as many resources going for it as Saskatchewan, I find that hard to understand.

I find it hard to understand that in the first two years of this government, the first budget they brought in, there's a housing crisis on then. What happened in the first budget, Mr. Speaker? They cut \$8 million out of Sask Housing. And then because there was obviously a housing crisis going on, they responded, not with replacing the funding for Sask Housing, not with increasing the other funds that were there that built projects like Juniper Manor, that built projects like Maple Leaf Estates, that built projects like the Regina Rescue Mission Souls Harbour safe shelter.

They didn't increase those funds, Mr. Speaker. What they did was cut 8 million and then replace the activity with a task force. And you know, the task force did its work. They came out with some pat answers to say there's some undeniably good things that came out of that. But did it solve the crisis? It did not, Mr. Speaker.

So in terms of the adequate funding that needs to come forward to address housing, this government's fallen down. In terms of

the increasing social assistance caseloads that we see that's, you know, we get the numbers, chapter and verse, just the other night in committee, Mr. Speaker.

You know, perhaps they're just numbers on a page to some of the folks over there, but they're the people that come into my office on 5th and Retallack. They're the people that have nowhere to go. They're the people that have to take their meagre income assistance and pay it off towards rent. Or they're the people that get to double up and triple up, in some cases, or in the case of one grandmother, live in a tent in the backyard of her children's family for 11 months, Mr. Speaker. This was brought forward by Dr. Marc Spooner this past October in some great work that he's done around the housing crisis as it affects Regina. But if you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, a grandmother living in a tent in your kid's backyard for 11 months. And we've got a cold day today, Mr. Speaker. Last year was especially cold. That we've got people that are putting up with the kind of conditions that they've got, and this, it again blows my mind.

So we get the self-congratulation sermon from the members opposite about what great things they're doing. But it's no response. It's not even barely adequate in terms of responding to people who ask, where do we live? How do we put enough food together? How do we pay the energy bills? It's in terms of the crisis that's out there . . . And this was in the good times, Mr. Speaker. This is before the budget's . . .

The thing is about the '80s is that we paid for it through the '90s. And the members opposite like to check into their refrain about 16 years. Well what did we do for 16 years, Mr. Speaker? We paid off the mess that they had racked up in the '80s.

So here we go again, Mr. Speaker. It's not two years into their regime and we've got a billion dollar deficit at the mid-term of this budget. And the problem with that is, they make a mistake and the people pay. The people pay through increased utility rates. You know, it goes quite nicely with the doing away with the low-cost utility bundle that benefited seniors, that benefited poor people, that benefited working people, Mr. Speaker.

So that we get the litany of self-congratulation and, you know, in some cases actual back-patting from the members opposite in the face of what is a crisis and what is going to be a hard Christmas for many seniors and children, First Nations and Métis people, for a lot of people in this province, for women. It's hard to understand, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bradshaw:** — Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support our government's motion and our initiative to help out with the more vulnerable people of this province. You know, we've been working hard to try and get a handle on this, and we haven't got everything fixed, but we are working hard.

Twice this year our government has raised the shelter allowances administered by the Ministry of Social Services. The increases took effect October 1st for allowances provided under the Saskatchewan assistance program transitional employment allowance, and the Saskatchewan rental housing

supplement as our government continues to assist those most affected by the escalating housing costs that we have in this province due to our growth that we have.

Since these changes to the program were made, shelter allowances for Saskatchewan's major urban communities have now increased by nearly 12 per cent overall, Mr. Speaker. Furthermore in Regina and Saskatoon, the combined increases have been more than 25 per cent. The Saskatchewan rental housing supplement, available for families with children and people with disabilities, also increased for more than 300 families. And people with disabilities in the communities such as Prince Albert, Yorkton, Melville, Weyburn, Kindersley, Rosetown, Macklin, Creighton, La Ronge, and La Loche, this program covers up to 30 per cent of the average market rent for families, and up to 40 per cent for people with disabilities.

As the province of Saskatchewan moves forward, Mr. Speaker, our government will ensure that our most vulnerable are not being left behind. We're going to try and work with that. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to putting vulnerable people first. As part of our promise, we have increased assistance to low-income seniors by doubling the seniors' income plan benefit. And, you know, that wasn't done since 1992.

The other thing that's very important, Mr. Speaker, is taking 80,000 low-income people off the tax rolls in this province. This is very critical because these are the lower income people. These are the people that really need help. And that was a tremendous asset to the low-income people of this province.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, nearly 25 million has been set aside to improve the child welfare system, as well as implementing a new electronic case management system to provide better monitoring and protection of children and youths in its care.

Roughly one year ago, Mr. Speaker, our government announced the single largest investment in Saskatchewan history for supporting people with intellectual disabilities. It began as a four-year, 76.9 million initiative to eliminate the 440-person wait-list for programs. By the end of this fiscal year, 264 people with intellectual disabilities will have received the help that they require. Mr. Speaker, that's 264 more people receiving the services that they need to live more fulfilling and independent lives.

And on that, Mr. Speaker, we actually have something right in my home constituency, and that's the Oasis Centre that I've happily visited a few times over in Nipawin. Now I'll just explain a little bit about the Nipawin Oasis Community Centre. It began as a project for a student through a vision of a mental health nurse in Nipawin with a self-help program for people diagnosed with schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder, and other chronic mental health challenges.

It began actually in 1992 with a small group of individuals and now, 17 years later, it has grown to provide an enhanced draw in programming, home support, vocational opportunities, advocacy support, and regional summer camp for adults with chronic mental illness living in the Kelsey Trail Health Region and the Prince Albert Parkland Health Region. It's a great facility. It provides nutritional education program for vulnerable

families and children, and it has its own kitchen in there. As I said, I've been through the facility itself and it is. It also works very well with the Aboriginal communities up there and their workforce.

It's getting its money or a portion of its money through funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education minister and Social Services, the Government of Canada, and they also raise their own money over there, Mr. Speaker.

This centre provides informal — non-formal and transitional — to formal education to support individuals who are vulnerable due to many layers of barriers as lack of financial resources, low budget and planning skills, and people who are struggling with drug and alcohol addictions, lack of education, low employment and various different things.

[12:00]

Today the centre is also putting some of these people . . . or providing them with employment. They go out and they bid on different jobs. They bid on janitorial services, mail delivery. And this is a great centre for these people who are intellectually disabled and have chronic mental health problems. One example of how our government has really helped out is, there's about \$9,000 came from the Ministry of Government Services to provide a government mail delivery service in Nipawin. And this helped create a couple jobs for individuals with disabilities.

We also are receiving, at the Nipawin Oasis Centre, \$30,000 from the Ministry of Education to assist in providing nutritional education programming for approximately 50 vulnerable families. There also is approximately \$47,000 from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour to assist in providing bridging-to-employment programs for individuals faced with multiple barriers to employment. The majority of the participants are Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 30 and individuals with disabilities. Also there is about \$20,000 came from the Ministry of Social Services to work with individuals with complex caseloads. There's also \$55,000 coming from the Kelsey Trail Health Region.

In total, Mr. Speaker, this government is providing \$161,000 dollars to assist those people at the Nipawin Oasis Centre. Mr. Speaker, this is one example, this is one example just in my area alone where our government is committed to helping people, the disadvantaged of Saskatchewan.

Another one is putting money into Cumberland community college up there. The Minister of Advanced Education and Employment this year has announced a \$5 million program to increase the size of Cumberland community college in Nipawin. Now this college also helps a lot of the more vulnerable people within the area that can't get away, can't get the education, or maybe they don't have their grade 12 and they want to move forward. They give them training spots. This is something else that our government has worked hard on.

Mr. Speaker, these are great things, great things accomplished by this particular government, things that needed to be done to move, to move forward, to move to help the people to be able to help themselves to move forward within our province and go into meaningful employment and become great members of

society. Therefore I really support this motion, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion put forward by the member from Estevan. I wish I could say I was happy to be speaking to this motion, but honestly it's more of with a sense of amazement that this motion is before us that I'm on my feet. I'm not a big fan of self-congratulations and cheerleading at the best of times, but especially not when it's coming from a government in a province with the third highest child poverty rate in Canada and no real plan for eliminating poverty, let alone even addressing it.

Even the language used in the motion, even the language used in the motion itself clearly demonstrates this government just doesn't get it. They're wanting to commend themselves for providing increased financial support for those less advantaged. Yes, raising SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] rates and rental supplements for those on assistance is important. But the reality is most people living in poverty don't want financial supports. They want financial independence. They don't want to be part of a program. They want to be making a living on their own. They want to be able to earn a fair wage, so they can put food on their own table and a decent roof over their heads. If they work full-time, they expect they shouldn't have to live below the poverty line.

This is a government that boasted about its record of supporting the most vulnerable citizens in our province, and they have made a few positive changes. But this is also a government who has a habit of giving with one hand and taking away with the other . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You bet. They may have removed some of the lowest income earners from the income tax rolls, but these people are no further ahead when rents skyrocket without control and utility rates jump, which have under this government.

And in fact in light of our current fiscal circumstances and this government's inability to manage the finances, I'd be a little concerned about all these programs the members opposite have talked about and whether or not they're going to continue or come to fruition for all those that have been announced.

Although the constituency in which I grew up and still live in and have the privilege of representing has some of the poorest citizens in this province, poverty is by no means just an issue of Saskatoon Riversdale. We know there are citizens from around the province, whether it's Estevan or Swift Current or Saskatoon Riversdale, are having a harder and harder time making ends meet. I heard my colleague from Saskatoon Centre talk about some of . . . or how well people around this province are faring in this economy. Instead of bragging and patting themselves on the back, this government needs to reflect long and hard about how we support all citizens to become active participants in their communities and their economy.

I heard the member from Estevan talk about education. And education and training is critical, but if you don't put in the supports in place to make sure you can finish your education,

it's of no use. You need housing. You need food security. You need child care. If those things aren't there, you can fund as many educational institutions as you want, and people won't be able to complete what they need to do to become fully participating citizens.

People don't want hands out. They want a hand up, and this doesn't come in the form of cutting programs like the neighbourhood home ownership program. This is a program that over nine years allowed 110 Saskatoon homes to be purchased, upgraded, and turned over to co-ops of low-income earners who, over time, assumed the mortgages to themselves.

The Minister of Social Services was quoted as saying, it's very difficult to come up with a program that is going to work well in the market of Saskatoon right now. Well that might very well be the case and governing is difficult. But the reality is, if it's difficult for government to come up with a way to support programming and housing, try being the single mother trying to scrape together enough money to buy a house.

The neighbourhood home ownership program, I have first-hand experience with that. I have a very good friend who left an abusive relationship, a single mother of two kids, who had the opportunity to go to university. She put herself through university, but owning a home was a big goal of hers and she now has a home in the core. She's finished two degrees. She's working on a master's. She's employed with the federal government. And she wouldn't have owned a home had it not been for this program. And she's still a single mom with two kids who are now getting closer to university age. And without this program and the ability to have a home, especially in light of how the market has increased in Saskatoon, she may not have been able to be where she is today and be looking forward to supporting her kids in their educational endeavours.

Food security is absolutely critical. I heard, having read *Hansard*, the Minister of Health, when Station 20 West . . . When the money was pulled back from Station 20 West, the Minister of Health said that this government would be putting its funding into food bank support and child hunger programs, which are all important things to do. But the goal should be on supporting self-sufficiency, not band-aid solutions.

Station 20 West, food security again . . . if you've got a hungry belly — whether or not you're a child attending elementary school and trying to learn or you're a parent who's fed your children all the food in the house, and you have to either try to apply for a job, complete your education, or go to work — it doesn't work when you have an empty belly very well. Food security is critical.

I had the privilege on Friday night of being at the annual general meeting for the child hunger and education program which just celebrated 20 years in Saskatoon. CHEP [child hunger and education program] was one of the partners in Station 20 West. And some of the things that CHEP does to address food security issues, which they will continue to do but could have done at Station 20 West in much better capacity . . . collective kitchens. Collective kitchens are about people coming together, people who maybe don't have the skills and knowledge about good food and how to cook good food. They've never had those things modelled for them. Collective

kitchens allow you to buy in bulk and come together, connect, and have some community, but also to be able to go home, take some healthy meals home with you that you can use over time.

CHEP also does something called the Good Food Box which I buy. Seventeen dollars a month allows you . . . or \$17 every two weeks, you get a wonderful box filled with mostly local produce. And this allows people the opportunity to eat good food for much cheaper than they can purchase at their local convenience store in my community.

So CHEP was a really important partner in Station 20 West, and is still doing good work. But having Station 20 West would have been very advantageous. And I hope that this government somehow sees its way between now and February and somehow miraculously comes up with some money for this very important initiative in my community.

Child care's a huge issue in being able to achieve your goals, being able to finish school, being able to work, being able to rise out of poverty. On the doorstep, I met a woman who — during the Saskatoon Riversdale by-election — I met a woman who had to . . . She was working. She was a single mom but had to turn down a really good job because it had weekend work, and her subsidized child care was only offered Monday through Friday, basically eight to six.

And the job that she was going to take which would improve the lives of her kids and her life and help her take one more step out of poverty . . . There was no child care. Subsidized child care isn't available on evenings and weekends. This is something the government, if it wants to look at supporting the more disadvantaged people, really needs to focus on — not only creating spaces, but spaces that work for people who need them.

Oh I could go on and on and on. Well St. Mary's School. So St. Mary's School is a very important project in my community. When this government cut the funding to Station 20 West to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Shame. Shame.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I know it's a surprise. When this government took the money from Station 20 West, just a few short months later we heard about St. Mary's School being funded, which is great. I'm very glad to hear that St. Mary's School is going to be going ahead. It's not just a school; it was meant to be a wonderful community area.

If Station 20 West wasn't going to happen, well the community would accept that this is maybe the next best thing. But what did we learn in the fall? We learned that this school . . . that the Ministry of Education had been dealing with the school board in Saskatoon and telling them that they needed to scale back the size of this school. And some of the parts of the school . . . It just wasn't about, it just wasn't about education during the day. It was about bringing community together and having the space for community programming.

But I have some big concerns. I had an opportunity to ask the Minister of Education what was happening with St. Mary's School. And he didn't answer my question. I said, is St. Mary's School safe? Can the school board tender the project? And I didn't get an answer. I got to hear about all the wonderful things

that they've done everywhere else, but not here in Saskatoon Riversdale.

So the reality is people in Saskatoon Riversdale and around this province — people living in poverty — don't want charity. They want opportunity and they need the supports in place to become active citizens. And to be patting yourself on the back for a job that's not done or not even close to being done, I think is shameful. And I can tell you I will not be supporting this motion. Thank you.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find the members opposite and their feigned indignation about how this government is sharing the economic prosperity of Saskatchewan's people laughable. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are proud of the amount of money that they supposedly had stashed away. And if you listen to their Finance critic, he says all the time that this government inherited \$2.3 billion, Mr. Speaker. That was in the bank and there was a booming economy.

My question, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. We were still in debate but time has now elapsed and I'll take the member's question from Saskatoon Centre.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a question here for the government side. I don't know if they read the written questions — 491 talks about how many recipients of the Saskatchewan seniors' income plan lost benefits. Do they know in 2009, in the first 10 months, 3,981 seniors were thrown off SIP? And I want to know what the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley is telling seniors when they are worried about their pensions. On the one hand the government is talking an awful lot about SIP and all the great things. Almost 4,000 seniors have lost their benefits. What's she telling seniors now?

[12:15]

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

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my consultations across the whole province, seniors shared with us their concerns but also their wishes of what they would like to see in a long-term plan for seniors.

And we were more than happy to be able to spend the time listening to them. This is something that they said that the previous government had never done. They had never gone out and listened to them. They went out, they talked to them, they talked above their heads, but they never ever went out and asked them what did they have — what were their concerns. And we were very pleased to be able to listen to them and we will then be able to share with them our findings. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

we've heard from the members opposite about how they had \$2.3 billion stashed away in the bank some place, Mr. Speaker, but we also hear all the time, Mr. Speaker, from them, that they didn't have any money to do all the things they're asking for.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about the seniors' income plan. Well the seniors' income plan funding remained the same for the 16 years they were in government. It didn't change. This government increased it.

They talk about the need for the North Battleford hospital, Mr. Speaker. The former minister of Health was from North Battleford — did nothing for 16 years. Long-term rural care, Mr. Speaker, they talked about. They did nothing for 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, why all of a sudden, when the NDP didn't care about the people of Saskatchewan in government, now all of a sudden they think we should be spending money, Mr. Speaker? To the member from Saskatoon Centre: why didn't they care about people?

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — I appreciate the question and I found it very interesting. And of course this member will remember the '80s. And I just want to talk about what Eric Howe had to say about the behaviour of this cabinet who don't seem to have any kind of strategy about how to move forward to help people who are in poverty. And in fact here is a quote that Eric Howe said about Grant Devine, and I'll quote here:

So he recruited candidates for his party that had really good name recognition, and consequently won the election. But then he had very little control over the people he got into the party. He had very little control of cabinet, and the cabinet was madly off in all directions, spending money on all sorts of things as though there wasn't a budget constraint.

And we see that, and people in this province are worried today, Mr. Speaker. They don't know about the other shoe that's going to fall over Christmas. And I can't believe the member would talk about . . . Again to use the quote from the Minister of Health, they should be absolutely ashamed.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, my question's to the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. If they're doing such a great job for the disadvantaged in this province, how is it that food bank use rates are on the rise? How is it there are more women and children being turned away than ever from the shelters of this province? Can she answer that for us, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know affordable housing is a concern of people in Saskatchewan. Here in Regina, our government is expanding Maple Leaf Estates to create an additional 53 units. Our



government invested 12 million to renovate the 140-unit Milton Heights apartment building. This is an affordable housing unit.

Our government also invested 10 million in new funding for affordable housing for seniors, low-income families, and those most vulnerable within our province. This is a good example of how, in Saskatchewan, we can partner. We can partner with a place like Habitat for Humanity. And this funding will be used to deliver a total of 20 affordable homes in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Lloydminster. Mr. Speaker, our government is investing in the people of Saskatchewan.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to providing better monitoring and protection for children and youth in our care, which is why we have set aside nearly \$25 million to improve Saskatchewan's child welfare system. When the members opposite were the government of the day, they had ample time to make the system more efficient to better deal with our children and youth, but they didn't.

To the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: why did the members opposite fail to implement an electronic case management system, and by extension fail the province's most vulnerable children, during their 16 years in power?

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear \$25 million has been set aside. But on matters of fiscal issues here, this government has no credibility and the reality is, who knows what's going to be next to be pulled back? So I wish you well in getting that set up, but I don't have a whole lot of faith.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Again to the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. I'd asked her a question: if they're doing such a great job for the disadvantaged in this province, how is it that the use at the food bank is going up? And I guess that was in last year when of course we were in relative boom times.

Now that there's \$1 billion deficit at the mid-term, now that we're in recession, and now that we know that the Sask Party budget wasn't worth the paper that it was written on, how much does she think food bank usage is going to go up next year?

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

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year our government announced the largest single-year income tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history. And this resulted in a tax saving of \$440 per family of individuals and 1,320 per year for a working family with two children. Now that's the highest level of any province and it's one more reason that Saskatchewan is the best place to earn a living and build a

life in Saskatchewan.

Our government plans to lower taxes will benefit every income filer in Saskatchewan and even those who pay no income tax currently. The basic personal exemption and the spousal exemption will increase by \$4,000, while the child tax credit amount will increase by \$2,000 per child. This will mean a tax saving of \$440 per year for an individual. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier in the debate I heard one of the members talk about a poverty strategy for the province. And I would suggest that one of the best approaches to a poverty strategy is to provide a reasonable level of employment for the people of the province.

And in this province at this time there are more people working than ever before, Mr. Speaker. Not only that, there are jobs going begging on the job sites that we run electronically on the Internet. But having said that, one of the other things that we can do as we commiserate with low-income earners is allow them to keep more money in their pockets.

Now the Saskatchewan Party government is doing what members opposite, really, had 16 years to accomplish but never bothered. Today 80,000 people in Saskatchewan are exempt from paying provincial income tax because of changes we made through the largest ever increase in the basic personal exemption.

To the member of Regina Elphinstone: why did the former government refuse to increase the basic exemption for the working poor?

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, you know, we couldn't get an answer out of the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, so maybe the member from Cypress Hills would care to try answering. How is it that, if they're doing such a great job by the poor people of this province, that the food bank use numbers are up? How does that work? If all these great things that they're doing over there are having such a marvellous impact on the communities of this province, how is it that we've got more people than ever going to the food bank?

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — During the session, we learned of 3,300 women who were turned away from one shelter under the Sask Party's watch. To the member from Qu'Appelle Valley, why do Saskatchewan women and children have to pay for the price of the Sask Party's incompetence?

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

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, and I appreciate the opportunity to answer this question. The member opposite had

an opportunity to enter into the debate. And as a new member, I know she probably enjoyed the opportunity to be able to stand up . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. The 75-minute time has elapsed.

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**The Speaker:** — Before we move forward on the agenda, I want to lay on the Table, pursuant to section 31 of *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act*, table the Children's Advocate annual report for 2008.

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

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 609 — *The Whistleblower Protection Act*

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak on this Bill, Bill 609, *An Act to Provide Protection, Rights and Remedies for Certain Employees*. Mr. Speaker, I'll be moving second reading at the end of my remarks on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important Bill for our province, and long overdue, Mr. Speaker, on this Bill. But, Mr. Speaker, what this Bill . . . Perhaps better words may have been spoken by the member from Saskatoon Southeast, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, he brought forward this Bill, this exact same Bill. We've left out a couple of sections, Mr. Speaker, but the Bill is similar to what the member from Saskatoon Southeast has done.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's been two years now that they've had an opportunity to bring in a Bill like this. The Bill, short title known as *The Whistleblower Protection Act*. And there is nothing but silence over there, Mr. Speaker. And you wonder, with the amount . . . And perhaps I should just give you a flavour of some of the, what to me at the end of the day, what this member was saying when he brought forward this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

And this is from *Hansard*, April 16th, 2004, Mr. Speaker. Now at that time, what this member was saying, and he said:

It is an opportunity for the New Democratic Party to show willingness to work with the opposition. It's an opportunity for them to ask what they would do in this position and how they feel they can address a problem by working together with the opposition as well.

More significantly [he went on to say] . . . it's an opportunity for members of both sides to show the public there's a willingness to work together and do something productive. It will show the public that the members of this House are willing to do something else than bicker, [Mr. Speaker] heckle, and an opportunity for them to . . . discuss something productive.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say as well, "We've heard a lot of debate on issues relating to health and who's going to pay . . ." And the gist of this, the flavour of this, Mr. Speaker, is that the member was falling all over himself in trying to get this Bill through, get co-operation from the opposition, talking about how important it was for employees in this province to bring things forward.

Now I don't know what's happened since that time, since these high words that the member spoke of, that he spoke that this was an improvement on the legislation that was in the labour standards since the 1990s. He talked about that. He talked about where you would report the wrongdoing to; where you'd report. He had thought it through well. He didn't want to politicize it. He said they shouldn't go to the opposition or the media, Mr. Speaker.

And now what has occurred? What has occurred now, Mr. Speaker? And I'm wondering, as I watched the other day on the ponies from the Bronson Forest, and the member from Saskatoon Southeast, the member from Lloydminster turned, and they had a discussion about an amendment that we were putting in. We were putting in an amendment, and the member there gave him some advice. And the member from Lloydminster stood up and he made arguments why the amendment should not go in.

But before that was done, lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, there was a play sent in from outside, and they voted, Mr. Speaker, they voted for the amendment. Now I'm wondering, I'm wondering since the member from Saskatoon Southeast is so close to the member from Wood River there, if that's what happened in the instance where the member from Wood River disciplined an employee, Mr. Speaker, disciplined an employee or suspended and sent an employee home after that employee brought forward information, information that was then that they accused us of using in this House.

And I'm wondering if the member there from Saskatoon Southeast reached over or leaned over to the member from Wood River and said, you know, I don't think this is the thing to do. I don't think it's the thing to do because, you know, we believe in whistle-blowers' protection. We believe in all these things I said in 2004. It's in the record, Mr. Speaker, in *Hansard*. We believe in those things, and I don't think this is right.

But maybe what happened, Mr. Speaker, is that the member from Wood River overruled that member from Saskatoon Southeast. Maybe he overruled him as he was overruled when he gave advice to the member from Lloydminster. Now this is, perhaps the member from Saskatoon Southeast is feeling rather lonely over there, in terms of nobody is listening to him when he was bringing this Bill forward. So is this a policy of the Sask Party government? Or is this simply some musings of the member from Saskatoon Southeast, because he does go on here in very clear language, of how his Act would be the solution to the problems of how people should feel, how employees should feel safe.

[12:30]

Well let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the things that we are hearing

now. At that time he was talking about receiving brown envelopes from people concerned and, Mr. Speaker, this what drove this member to put forward this Bill, to put forward his Bill. And that time, Mr. Speaker, it was Bill 201, *The Whistleblower Protection Act*, he was calling it.

Mr. Speaker, now we see a complete reversal, a complete reversal of actions, because no sooner, Mr. Speaker . . . Also the member, the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety was also making gestures. And I sit by the member from Regina Dewdney, and it was quite clear to me each day the questions that were being asked, have the police come to see you yet? Have the police come to see you yet, and making gestures with his hands as if he was going to be in handcuffs.

And the member from Saskatoon Southeast, I wonder what he was doing when that was happening. Because in 2004 . . . And they loved to, Mr. Speaker, they loved to go on about the NDP's record. They love go on about the NDP's record and this was done and this was done. But here was a Bill. Here was a Bill. Here was a Bill, Bill 201, that the member from Saskatoon Southeast had brought forward. And he spent considerable amount of time, Mr. Speaker, and if I had enough time, I would read all of this into the record because we should all hear the words that he said here.

But I wonder what is happening over there because, Mr. Speaker, the word hypocrisy comes to mind. The word hypocrisy, because there's a lot of talk, but where's the action? Where do we see the action? Where's the action here on this Bill? There are people now who are too frightened to come, after they saw what the member, what the Minister of Corrections has done. There are people frightened to speak up. They're frightened and they're coming to us to do that. And we are putting in a Bill now, Mr. Speaker. We're putting in a Bill.

And I wonder what that member from Saskatoon Southeast who sits so close to the member from Wood River, perhaps he could just say, you know we should talk about this. We should talk about this because I'm really concerned about that. And I wonder if he has. Maybe he has talked to him. But the same as the member from Lloydminster, when he tried to help the member from Lloydminster, he got shut down. He got shut down, and they said, we're not going to follow what you're saying. So perhaps that's a lonely member over there amongst the rest of them.

Now this Bill is an important Bill. And I would like to on the record go, instead of using that member's words. It is an important Bill because we need this Bill so that people can come forward. So that people can come forward and not feel that there will be reprisals. But I'm not certain. I'm not certain, now that there is a chill out there. There is a considerable chill out there from what that member, what the minister from public corrections has done — on the record, on the record having to apologize for that.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is important because the Minister of Public Safety and Corrections is the province's . . . he is the minister that stands for the police. He is the minister that stands for that area. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day. It's a sad day for us all here. It's a sad day.

So we have these words on paper here, Mr. Speaker. And that's not so long ago. We're not talking about many years ago. This is in April of 2004, so not a lot of time has passed since this member was talking about.

Some of the other things, and these were . . . He criticized, he criticized the former government at that time that there was no strength in the legislation as it existed in labour standards. He went on to say how important that was and that people should be protected. At the heart of this, this is about to take away the fear.

But what they have done, Mr. Speaker, is instilled fear, instilled fear in the Public Service Commission, in the public service of this province. That's what they have done. And they've sent a message out. They've sent a message out to everyone. If you do this, here's what'll happen. And the facts speak for themselves.

We had an employee who was on suspension, on suspension. And not only, Mr. Speaker, on that, there was also an issue of not . . . And this is a clear issue of public safety, Mr. Speaker, a clear issue of public safety that that party, and I would dare say all conservatives across the land, that rally. And I wondered, Mr. Speaker, at that time, had we been in government and there had been a sexual offender on the loose, what outcry there would have been from that other side. And I wonder what those people, what that government, and what their supporters thought.

But not a word. Not a word. What did we get in reply? What did we get in reply, Mr. Speaker? What we got instead was gestures of handcuffs and have the police come to see you yet? Have the police come to see you yet? That was the reply. I wonder how safe public employees feel in terms of raising issues. I wonder how safe they feel.

So my question, my question again is, when there's been two years now, two years — two years of talking, two years of Bills, and I still don't see a whistle-blower protection Act here now — was the member not sincere about this? Was he not sincere? Was the member not sincere when he put this Bill forward? Or has he been voted . . . Has the cabinet told him no way, we're not going to do this?

And so I would encourage that member, I would encourage him to live up to the words that he spoke in April of 2004. Live up to, live up to what you said and put it forward. Put forward a Bill that deals with, that deals with, Mr. Speaker, deals with this legislation. Because he's got problems on that side; he's got problems on that side with ministers. And who else knows what else is being told to people when they raise issues? Who else, Mr. Speaker?

So at this, Mr. Speaker, we put this Bill in. And as that member from Saskatoon Southeast at that time said, we were trying to, we are trying to make it so that they can work with us to make this palatable for them. In fact, this is their Bill. This is his Bill. In fact he went on to say how this would not cost any money. This would not cost any money. And I think for those members opposite and for the Minister of Finance, this is important these days, that it wouldn't cost any money because they're broke. They're broke.

But I'll tell you, here's an Act. Here's something they could do. Here's something they could do and which that minister could do is bring forward *The Whistleblower Protection Act* so that all employees in this province . . . Because the signal that they have sent . . .

And I think they would be very interested in bringing forward something like this to put to rest the notion, not only the notion, to put to rest their actions that they have taken, and to say to the people of Saskatchewan who are in the public service of Saskatchewan, you are safe to bring forward your concerns, safe to bring forward without being threatened that the police will visit your home, safe to bring forward your concerns without gestures of handcuffs. That's what you'll be safe to do. And they should do that. They should do that, Mr. Speaker, because this is a serious issue.

And are those members concerned? Are they concerned with issues here of the public service being able to speak up? I don't think so because right now what we're left with is the actions of some ministers over there. Now I ask again, that member from Southeast, was this just some self-righteous rantings, or was he really serious about what he was saying? How is he squaring this one? Now I know they try and do some real creative math around the budget and how we are not in any difficulties. I know they will try and do that, Mr. Speaker. But how is he, I'm interested to know, how is he doing it?

So I'm thinking that perhaps he has been voted down, voted down. And what is that saying about that Sask Party government? What is that saying about that Sask Party government who would say that it is okay to threaten, have the police visit at your home, and to make gestures regarding being handcuffed? Now that's the picture that is left, so I'm wondering what they're going to do to remedy that situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the Bill, and there's so much more that I would want to say, but I wanted to get particularly on the record, on the record the position of the member from Southeast, and my questions, I guess the questions. And I will be speaking more on this, Mr. Speaker, so perhaps the member will be given some time over the Christmas break and the months to reconsider, reconsider to have some times after listening to this and understanding that it is his Bill, his Bill that we are for.

We are for that member from Saskatoon Southeast if he could just find the courage, Mr. Speaker, find the courage and tell that Sask Party government that this is not on, that it's not on. He should be front and centre to say this is not on, and I'm putting forward this Bill, even if he has to do it by himself. I think it would be the honourable thing to do. The honourable thing, Mr. Speaker, to do is go on the record and say, this is what should occur. Because it leaves the impression that for two years nothing has happened. Two years nothing has happened.

People, to me, are starting to question when they say, ask the member from Saskatoon Southeast. He'd probably support you in this Bill. He'll probably support you. So perhaps I'll be doing that, Mr. Speaker, and asking him to support me on this Bill as I bring this forward and attempt to help him out with that government, with the Sask Party government to get this Bill through.

Mr. Speaker, there's so much more, so much more that we can say, that we can say. So much of this is an important area. It's an important area to not only us, but it's an important area to the entire public service and their families so that they would feel safe, so that they would not have to go home and sit and allow . . . Let the public service be proud of the work that they do, Mr. Speaker. Let the public service be proud of the work that they do so that they can speak out because they want to feel proud.

They want to feel proud of the job that they do, Mr. Speaker. They want to feel proud of the job that they do. And when they see something wrong, they don't want to, Mr. Speaker, hide it. They become complicit in that hiding. That's what they become and nobody, Mr. Speaker, nobody wants to live that way. Nobody wants to do a job in that fashion. These are real and basic concerns of people.

Now as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, there's so much more, so much more to say, so much more to do, but as I spoke earlier, when I began . . . I would now move second reading of Bill 609, an Act to provide protection, rights and remedies for certain employers, the whistleblowers protection Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Fairview has moved second reading of Bill No. 609, *The Whistleblower Protection Act*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, certainly we would take all the comments into account, and we will spend some time thinking and talking in our caucus about this Bill, but we don't have time today because the Lieutenant Governor is going to be coming in. So I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Biggar has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. Carried. I believe His Honour is here for Royal Assent.

[12:45]

## ROYAL ASSENT

[At 12:45 His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills.]

**His Honour:** — Please be seated.

**The Speaker:** — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly in its present session has passed several Bills which in the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour and to which Bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

**Clerk:** — Your Honour, the Bills are as follows:

Bill No. 116 - *The Traffic Safety (Drivers' Licences and Hand-held Electronic Communications Equipment) Amendment Act, 2009*

Bill No. 99 - *The Emergency 911 System Amendment Act, 2009*

Bill No. 606 - *The Protection of the Wild Ponies of the Bronson Forest Act*

**His Honour:** — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

[His Honour retired from the Chamber at 12:47.]

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

**Hon. Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask leave to make some remarks about the season before we adjourn the House.

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to make a few additional comments before House adjournment. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

## MOTIONS

### House Adjournment

**Hon. Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker and colleagues, it's an opportunity and a special time of the year to express, I think, a special bit of gratitude to the people that are near and dear to us as we take our leave of this Assembly and return to our families and our constituents.

You know, Mr. Speaker, on many occasions in the past people have always said that their families are what makes it possible for them to conduct themselves and discharge their duties as members of the official opposition and of the government. Mr. Speaker, I think at this season of the year when we go home to our family and friends, it's particularly important to renew and put on the record our appreciation for our loved ones for helping us discharge our duties in the ways that we do.

Very often we get in the heat of debate, and we say things that we sometimes have reason to regret. But I hope that, and sincerely, that when we do those sorts of things, we get ourselves grounded again when we go home to our families and remember why we're really here, which is in the service of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

You know, at this special season of the year when we think of peace and joy, of Christmas, I think it's important to remember that that peace and joy was epitomized by a child in a manger who came to the world to give us that peace and joy so that we might move forward in service to our brothers and sisters. And so, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I wish all members a very blessed and a holy Christmas and have a very enjoyable time in the comfort and arms of your family. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn.

**The Speaker:** — Before placing the question, I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask for leave to make a statement as well.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Regina Dewdney has asked for opportunity to make a statement as well. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Government House Leader in asking all members of this Assembly to have a very merry and joyful Christmas.

As he indicated, it's a very special time of year. It's a time to spend with our families and our friends to reflect upon the very important reasons why Christmas is the holiday that it is — the fact that others have sacrificed around the world to make our country as great as it is, the fact that this is a very holy period of time in our religious holidays in most people's religions around the world, Mr. Speaker. And it is a holiday that's celebrated by the majority of people throughout the countries of the world.

It's a special time, and we all should take some time to spend with our families and friends, renew our own vows and beliefs in what we stand for, Mr. Speaker, and take the opportunity to share our feelings about the Christmas season with our constituents and those that are important to us.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to wish everybody on both sides of the House a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**The Speaker:** — Before placing the question, allow me just an opportunity as well to extend my appreciation to the members, to extend greetings at this special time and, as well, the greetings to include those who serve us: the Clerks at the Table, the Pages who have been with us for this fall session, the staff in my office, the staff throughout the building. We certainly, as was indicated last night, had the privilege of having dinner with them and just letting them know how much we appreciate them.

And so as a Speaker of the Assembly, I extend to each and every one of the members a very special and blessed Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy and prosperous New Year.

Having said that, the member, the Government House Leader has moved adjournment of the Assembly. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:52.]

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