



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



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Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

**MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY
(BUDGET DEBATE)**

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantfoer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Yates.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order. It now being 7 o'clock, we are going to resume debate on the budget motion and amendments. I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased tonight to enter into the debate in front of the House, the debate around the budget and, Mr. Speaker, a debate that has a motion by the government and an amendment by the members of the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, I declare my bias in advance of my comments that, Mr. Speaker, my comments will not favour the budget but will show support for the amendment in front of us.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to be transparent. I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, to be accountable because that's how you build trust, Mr. Speaker, amongst the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I was first elected to this Chamber in 2003 and before I am finished my remarks tonight, I am going to have a little look back to my first year in the Chamber. And, Mr. Speaker, because I've been here since 2003, I've also been here through the three budgets now of the Saskatchewan Party under the leadership of the Premier, the member from Swift Current. And I have a few comments to make also about the collective budget matters over the course of the last three years, Mr. Speaker.

But just before I begin those comments about the budget, just a second to say hello to my wife Cheryl who I know is watching tonight on the legislative channel and who, like me, is lamenting the fact that we've lost with this budget SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network], the Saskatchewan television network, Mr. Speaker. We are very sad, Mr. Speaker, for the loss of SCN and what it's been able to provide the province. And it's important, Mr. Speaker, the potential of what SCN and the people behind it have brought to our wonderful province.

I also want to say thank you to the people of The Battlefords, the city of North Battleford, the town of Battleford, residents there who have supported me through two provincial elections. And who continue, Mr. Speaker, to support me as we review how activities, directions, policies, and practices of the current government, Mr. Speaker, are affecting the lives of the people who live within the boundaries of The Battlefords. So I thank

them for their continued support.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say a few things tonight about The Battlefords and about how this budget affects The Battlefords. I'm also going to speak a little bit about the budget in general. I do want to talk about how this budget affects our future because of debt and future spending considerations or expectations. And because we know, Mr. Speaker, that the public is very concerned about health care, the delivery of health care, I'm also going to say a few words about health care.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm also going to talk a little bit about the next couple of years. What should the public expect in the next two years, Mr. Speaker, through the next provincial election, and the commitment that I am making now and will continue to make to support the community of The Battlefords and people throughout Saskatchewan through the next election and into government, Mr. Speaker, after November the 7th, 2011.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's just have a quick look at where we're at and this whole question about earning the trust of the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. Trust comes by doing what you say you're going to do, saying things that are consistent from one day to the next, giving people the straight goods, Mr. Speaker. Where are we at? What are we doing? And what does it mean to you?

Mr. Speaker, the first budget that the current government, the Sask Party government, brought in after the 2007 general election, Mr. Speaker, was entitled *Ready for Growth*. *Ready for Growth*, Mr. Speaker, and that budget did a number of things. But, Mr. Speaker, here we are three budgets later and a number of things that the communities are telling us is that this province still isn't ready to deal with the growth that's taking place here. And I'm going to refer to that in a couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about how school boards and health districts and municipalities are managing the growth that's taking place in the province.

This budget, Mr. Speaker . . . Remember I just said the budget after 2007 election was entitled *Ready for Growth*. It created expectations in the Saskatchewan public and, Mr. Speaker, those expectations three budgets later still haven't been met. Mr. Speaker, this budget is called *Balanced, Forward-looking, Responsible*. The unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, is the more we look at it, the more we realize this budget is neither balanced, forward-looking, or responsible.

And as a result, Mr. Speaker . . . and I'll explain some of this in my remarks over the course of the next couple of hours, Mr. Speaker. No, maybe not that long. But, Mr. Speaker, I will outline how it is that, if you're saying something to the public and you aren't meeting up with the expectations of the public, it leads to a lack of trust in what it is that you continue to say. So the fact that we had these difficulties going back to the budget after the 2007 election, Mr. Speaker, gives us reason to doubt what's taking place in this budget today.

So let's just do a quick review, Mr. Speaker, of how we got to where we are today. Remember, Mr. Speaker, this budget delivered on March 24th of this year, 2010, this budget shows that this government's revenue projections for the year and

what they're based on. Spending this year, Mr. Speaker, is close to \$10 billion. Okay, let's keep that in mind.

Now I was elected, Mr. Speaker, in 2003. The very first budget that I had to deal with in the province of Saskatchewan was delivered on March 31st, 2004. Mr. Speaker, this was a budget that focused on health care, education, and youth. If you go back and take a look at the documents surrounding that budget and the delivery of programs during the course of the year, you know that it focused on health care, education, and youth.

The total revenue in 2004 for the 2004 budget, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan, the New Democratic Party government of Lorne Calvert as premier, had a total to spend \$6.5 billion, Mr. Speaker, and delivered a series of programs that met public expectations on health care, education, and youth.

A year later, on March 23rd, '05, Mr. Speaker, the government, the New Democratic Party government of the time, delivered record levels of funding to health and education. Record levels. Never before in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, in 2005 delivered, up to that point, record levels of funding to health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, the media at the time were saying that this budget builds on the province's strong economic momentum, Mr. Speaker, the momentum in the province. The economic boom that we were to see in 2008 and '09, Mr. Speaker, was already being noticed by the media in the 2005 budget, Mr. Speaker. The debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] forecast at the time was 28 per cent compared to a high of 69 per cent in 1993. Saskatchewan government debt in 2005 saw paydown by the NDP [New Democratic Party] of \$180 million, and it was at its lowest point in 14 years during that budget year.

Mr. Speaker, in 2005 the NDP government put in place 600 new affordable housing units and, Mr. Speaker, new residency seats at the College of Medicine. Mr. Speaker, that 2005 budget was a forward-looking budget, preparing the province for growth and, Mr. Speaker, meeting the responsible needs of the province. How much revenue did the province have in 2005, Mr. Speaker, and ended the year with a surplus? Seven billion. Seven billion, Mr. Speaker. So '04, 6.5 billion; '05, 7 billion, continuing to meet the needs of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

In '06 we delivered a budget, the NDP, April the 6th, 2006. This was a big budget for the province of Saskatchewan. There were tax cuts for businesses, more training opportunities for young people, a freeze on tuition fees, support for vulnerable citizens across the province, and another \$102 million in debt was paid down, Mr. Speaker. How much revenue did the province of Saskatchewan take in in the 2006 budget year — \$7.7 billion, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — A billion.

Mr. Taylor: — A billion dollars, 7.7 billion, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Saskatchewan at that time was able to meet the needs of education, health care, municipalities, more funding for municipalities under revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. There was money put into the pool for education property tax relief.

And the total revenue, 7.7 billion, Mr. Speaker.

And the last budget before the '07 election, March 22, 2007, a new program in health care, Mr. Speaker, a universal program — \$15 senior drug plan in Saskatchewan — the first major program start, the first major health care program in the province's history in many, many years, Mr. Speaker. There was record investment in provincial infrastructures, more than \$500 billion at the time, and Mr. Speaker, tax cut. Tax cut, cut the PST [provincial sales tax] by 2 per cent in '07. Mr. Speaker, how much revenue did the province take in in that year — \$7.8 billion, Mr. Speaker.

So what has happened in the Sask Party years, Mr. Speaker? First budget in '08, 9.3 billion. March '09, 10.6 billion. And this year, Mr. Speaker, March 2010, almost \$10 billion. We're looking at almost 30 billion in three years, Mr. Speaker, and very little advancement to the public eye of any of our programs.

And this budget, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing jobs cut, layoff notices, programs cut, taxes increased, Mr. Speaker, and we're looking at revenues that have exceeded anything that the NDP ever had to work with, Mr. Speaker. There's been growth in the province — started in 2005 — and, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party found this money in the pot. Not only did they have \$30 billion to spend over three years but, Mr. Speaker, they found two and a half billion dollars in a paper bag at the beginning of their term.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just say, to set the stage, set the tone for the debate on the budget, Mr. Speaker, this isn't about, this is not about whether or not you're committed to something or care about something. It's about what you tell the public and what you can deliver with what you've got to work with, Mr. Speaker.

So the serious tone, you've got 1, 2, 3, 4 times 7 is 28 — almost, almost \$30 billion in four years, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP had to work with. The Sask Party has had more than \$30 billion in three years. And, Mr. Speaker, as you'll see in a few minutes, this budget continues to attack people and, Mr. Speaker, we are as far from being ready to grow, for growth as you could imagine in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the context in which I want to make some remarks. First, Mr. Speaker, with regards to . . . Well before I do The Battlefords, there's one more context I think we need to put into place here, and that is the public is concerned about health care. So we've got to a look at what's happening in health care, Mr. Speaker.

There's still record spending being done in health care, Mr. Speaker, but the health regions, despite the fact that the government has more money than ever to spend, Mr. Speaker, the health regions in fact are seeing freezes on their budget. The small amount of . . . the 2 per cent transfer this year, Mr. Speaker, is not meeting the needs of the health regions. Health care is important for Saskatchewan people, and we need to concentrate a lot of efforts to meet the needs of people through health care.

[19:15]

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, the public's taking a look at, they've had a couple of years to view the Saskatchewan Party government. They saw mismanagement last year, and now as evidence is coming forward in the debate on this budget, more mismanagement is being detected, Mr. Speaker: not caring about health care; mismanaging the funds that are available to us; and the third issue that's important to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, affordability.

We're seeing a government that doesn't understand the needs of people who can't deal with the growth that's taking place around us, Mr. Speaker, because there's no place to live. Their wages aren't keeping up. Their pensions aren't keeping up, Mr. Speaker. Those people on fixed incomes, seniors across the province, Mr. Speaker, they cannot, they cannot manage, Mr. Speaker, in a growing economy. And you have to judge this government on what it's doing to help those who are the most vulnerable when there are so many things wrong around us.

So, Mr. Speaker, the context again. This government has more money than any government previously except the government of last year, Mr. Speaker. This year's government has more money than ever to spend, Mr. Speaker. They've got more needs to deal with than ever, Mr. Speaker. So what are they saying in this budget? Well let's have a quick look at this and how does this budget suit the needs of the people in The Battlefords who are trying to deal with growth — ready for growth in the business side, ready for growth from those who are the most vulnerable and not being able to manage all that well.

Well here we go, Mr. Speaker. Let's just take a look at The Battlefords and what that means to the people that I represent. Mr. Speaker, this is very important because those people don't have a voice in this government unless it comes through me, Mr. Speaker, because obviously, from what we're seeing here, is that whatever's been told to members on the other side has not been listened to or has been considered unimportant.

Mr. Speaker, I think the most significant issue throughout The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, is the ongoing commitment to the Saskatchewan Hospital and to those who suffer from mental illness, Mr. Speaker. The community in Saskatchewan that is concerned about people who have mental health issues for whom the Saskatchewan Hospital and the services that it provides was designed, Mr. Speaker, they can't understand how it is that this government that has more revenues than ever can't deliver on this commitment for this facility, Mr. Speaker.

The minister on several occasions . . . In fact he was in, the Minister of Health was in The Battlefords the other day, Mr. Speaker. After questions were raised in the House, he shows up in The Battlefords to say, our commitment is still there. The budget comes down, no reference whatsoever. None. No reference. So, Mr. Speaker, what we've got is in 2007, Mr. Speaker, on a revenue-based budget of \$7.5 billion, New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, were finding money to pay for a new Saskatchewan Hospital.

The election intervenes. The new government comes in. And with, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The Minister of Health has made this argument before. Not a cent there, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to address that. I'll address that for him, Mr.

Speaker, and he can ask the Minister of Finance any time he wants because we've been through this, Mr. Speaker, in committee. And we've been through it in committee with the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker.

No government, Mr. Speaker, advances 100 per cent of a project to a health region before there's planning done, before there's any of those things done. Mr. Speaker, this government in 2007 left \$2.5 billion in cash for that government to spend, Mr. Speaker. And they spent it, but didn't meet any of the commitments, Mr. Speaker. The money was not advanced because that's not the way the Provincial Auditor would want it. And the Minister of Health . . . It's foolishness to throw money out the door when you have these other abilities of government to manage interest and debt with that funding, Mr. Speaker.

So the commitments were there. The money was in the bank; the minister committed to it. The next year he finds 2.5 billion in the bank and an extra \$2 billion in revenue, and he still can't build this hospital, Mr. Speaker. Now, the minister also said in the House, the Minister of Health said, that he recognized I was minister of Health for two years. He said he has done more for the Saskatchewan Hospital in his two years as minister than I did in my two years as minister.

[Applause]

Mr. Taylor: — Now I want the public to know they're clapping and cheering for that statement, Mr. Speaker. Will they also cheer for this? In the two years that I was minister, Mr. Speaker, the site was chosen, all the preliminary studies were done, and the design was finished, Mr. Speaker, and two public meetings in the city of North Battleford to outline what the facility would look like when it was completed. The only thing that was next to be done, Mr. Speaker, was to finalize the design for the architect to complete the project for going to tender.

And the Minister of Health opposite could not move that project to tender, Mr. Speaker. In two years I took that project to design phase, Mr. Speaker. In two years, in two years the minister opposite hasn't done one thing, not one thing, Mr. Speaker. He talks about 600 or \$450 million advanced to Prairie North for design. They haven't reached an agreement in a full year on what to do with that money. That money has not been spent yet in a full year, Mr. Speaker, because this minister hasn't cared enough about it to advance that project forward.

Mr. Speaker, you can turn this on its head. I did more in two years than the minister opposite has done in two and a half years on the Saskatchewan Hospital project. And to make matters worse, Mr. Speaker, the hospitals in the constituency of the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford . . . And I can't see him putting pressure on the Minister of Health to get this thing done, Mr. Speaker. We are caring. We are concerned. And, Mr. Speaker, with the amount of money that this government had to work with, over all the money that previous NDP governments have had, surely to goodness they could have advanced this project one more step, Mr. Speaker, in the process.

That's just one thing, Mr. Speaker. There were businesses in The Battlefords who saw this progress that was being made. They went to the public meetings. They saw the diagrams of the

modules that were being created by the designers, Mr. Speaker, and they started to invest in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. They started to dig holes in the ground and build new hotel rooms. Mr. Speaker, they bought restaurants. Mr. Speaker, they bought gas stations. Mr. Speaker, there were investments because this financial commitment by the province of Saskatchewan in the community of The Battlefords preparing it for continued growth, Mr. Speaker, it was there. The community was responding to this commitment by government.

And now for three years, Mr. Speaker, and all the evidence is it's going to be another year before we hear about it again — Mr. Speaker, election year — it's going to be another year before we hear from it again. These business people have had their investments sitting there, Mr. Speaker, because this government was not prepared for the growth that that would bring for the community, Mr. Speaker.

And there's more, you know, there's more, Mr. Speaker. We know that we have other commitments to people in the health care field in The Battlefords, and other commitments as government actually to the delivery of government services in The Battlefords. The Minister of Health knows because he's toured it, the regional care centre, the long-term care facility in Battleford, Mr. Speaker, is also in need of considerable renovation or replacement, Mr. Speaker. The regional health authority has made the Saskatchewan Hospital the number one priority. Mr. Speaker, another priority when the money is released for Saskatchewan Hospital is to pursue that regional care centre.

Mr. Speaker, for the last four months, the Minister of Health is aware that the elevator in the regional care centre, four floors, Mr. Speaker, hasn't been working. They've been carrying people in wheelchairs downstairs by hand, Mr. Speaker, for four months because this minister can't find a way to make that elevator work. Now I realize he's not a technician and he doesn't have the right toolbox, Mr. Speaker, but he is responsible, he is responsible for the care of the people at regional care.

Mr. Speaker, there are people, there are people who are missing doctors appointments in Saskatoon because they can't get from the fourth floor to the main floor to go out the door, Mr. Speaker. This is abhorrent. It's the sort of thing when you see a government with \$10 billion to spend, \$3 billion more than was there a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker, and they can't find a way to make this work. Commitment to people, patients first. Which patients, Mr. Speaker? Not the patients in Sask Hospital regional care in The Battlefords.

And there's another project the Minister of Justice would be interested in, Mr. Speaker, or the Minister of Corrections. The Battlefords correctional facility, Mr. Speaker, is another facility on the Sask Hospital grounds that has been reviewed by the departments for several years for replacement, Mr. Speaker. When are we going to see some action take place there? There's an opportunity to put that capital together — regional care, Sask Hospital, Justice, the correctional facility. You've got two other correctional facilities on those grounds, Mr. Speaker. There's an opportunity to talk about that and prepare that community as one of these service centres, Mr. Speaker. Is the government thinking about it? Not at all. Were we thinking about it two and

a half years ago, Mr. Speaker? You bet we were. We were thinking about it. We were talking about it.

Mr. Speaker, on top of that, Mr. Speaker, on top of that we were also talking about developing that area as a new psychiatric nurse training program, Mr. Speaker. That training program used to exist in The Battlefords. It was removed from The Battlefords for a time, Mr. Speaker. With a brand new hospital, it's time to bring that program back to The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, ready for growth. Talk about forward-looking and responsible, that's the sort of thing that the government should be doing if they want to remain true to the context of the arguments being raised in their budget documents, forward-looking and responsible.

Mr. Speaker, in order for a community to be ready for growth, it needs to have some place to house people who are coming into the community to work. Mr. Speaker, we have a horrible record of this government's response to housing needs in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. A commitment before 2007 for \$3 million worth of funds. Mr. Speaker, that money hasn't even three years later been fully committed. In fact, Mr. Speaker, at this point, half the money has been committed. But what happened? The government bought some houses that were already built, didn't contribute, Mr. Speaker, to new units, new facilities, new places that could be considered affordable housing in The Battlefords to meet the needs of people, young people with families who are moving into The Battlefords to take jobs that are being created there. Mr. Speaker, to be ready for growth you need to ensure that you've got a place to house these people.

We have an immigrant nominee program in this province, Mr. Speaker, and we're all proud of it. It started before the last election. The new government's been carrying on with some things, Mr. Speaker. But we in The Battlefords embrace this concept of immigrants coming in to our community. Well, Mr. Speaker, about 10 per cent of the program found its way into The Battlefords. We have a larger immigrant population in The Battlefords now taking advantage of jobs in the northwest part of the province. Mr. Speaker, there's no place for them to live. We've got support organizations and church groups trying desperately to find places for these people to live.

Mr. Speaker, we've also developed training programs at the regional college, Mr. Speaker, to help First Nations people coming into the community to take advantage of jobs that are there. Mr. Speaker, those First Nations people are not coming in now to go to school because there's no place to live. There's just no support for the vulnerable people, low- and medium-income people, Mr. Speaker, or young people going to school. There's no, no support, Mr. Speaker, for them to deal with this growing economy.

So what does this budget do, Mr. Speaker? Just prior to this budget, let me say that we've had a number of important signing ceremonies in The Battlefords. The Aboriginal economic development program, Mr. Speaker, this government and previous governments who designed this program have had signing ceremonies. The regional college is a partner in the Aboriginal economic development program. The health region is a partner. The city of North Battleford is a partner. The First Nations high school there, Sakewew High School, is a partner.

Mr. Speaker, we've got, I think it is now 12 . . . a chamber of commerce, Mr. Speaker, the Battlefords Chamber of Commerce, a partner in Aboriginal economic development. This is important for The Battlefords with 10 First Nations communities surrounding the community of The Battlefords.

Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal economic development is very important, engaging Aboriginal people in our economy. And, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that we're working with the Aboriginal people to do this right has always been important in The Battlefords. What does this budget do, Mr. Speaker? It tore up every one of those contracts signed by ministers of this government in the last couple of years, tore up every single contract under the Aboriginal economic development program. Mr. Speaker, tore it up, pulled the funding out and said, it's not working. We're not going with that. We'll do something else.

[19:30]

Where's the trust, Mr. Speaker? The trust that those people had signing those agreements and saying to this government, hey, this is a good idea. It'll work in the community. We want to work with Aboriginal people, First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we are building an economy that benefits everybody. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a critical piece to be able to work with the First Nations and Métis people in our community because in all, the populations are growing.

So we've got an immigrant program, Mr. Speaker, that's not working. We've got an Aboriginal economic development program that's nonexistent now, can't be working. We've got a college program that can't keep up because there's no housing, Mr. Speaker. We've got young people moving in; they're moving out again because they've got no place to live. And, Mr. Speaker, we've got seniors on fixed incomes who are seeing their buildings, their apartment buildings being bought up by out-of-province landlords. And because they're buying, those buildings are being purchased with leveraged money, Mr. Speaker, the rents have gone up extraordinarily — 40 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in some of the buildings in The Battlefords. Those seniors on fixed incomes, number one, can't afford to stay there. Number two, they've got no place to go because, Mr. Speaker, there's no other affordable accommodation.

Growth, Mr. Speaker, we encourage growth. We want to see growth. We want to continue the growth in this province and throughout The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. We support the initiatives that are going to do that, but we also have to have the programs that ensure that everybody will, number one, benefit from that growth and, number two, will not be disadvantaged by that growth. Government has a role to play there and this government has failed in their actions, programs, policies, and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, in this budget.

One of the other key things, Mr. Speaker, that this government came out with right after the election in 2007 — Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This was going to help us to manage the growth going forward. Enterprise Saskatchewan moved out into rural Saskatchewan and throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. They got rid of the regional economic development authorities that were quite local — local people involved, local money moving in.

Mr. Speaker, the regional economic development programs were done away with, but enterprise regions were created. They're larger. There wasn't really any need to buy in. People have been struggling in rural Saskatchewan to actually figure out what this enterprise region is supposed to do, how it's supposed to provide a benefit.

But there's been a lot of dedicated people in our communities, Mr. Speaker, who have dedicated themselves to making economic development on a regional basis work. And, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that they have very little support from the province of Saskatchewan, the Sask Party government, they've been trying to make it work, Enterprise Saskatchewan.

Well what does this budget do, Mr. Speaker? Cuts the funding for those economic development regions, Mr. Speaker. Cuts the funding, so that there's now people who didn't know what they were supposed to be doing, who are doing things that are providing some benefit, and now they're being told, oh we don't have the money to help you continue to do the things that need doing.

There's disappointment. There's frustration and, Mr. Speaker, the expectations that this government has created amongst the people who are going to deliver this at the local level, the expectations have been dashed, Mr. Speaker.

Actually there's a lot of expectations that have been dashed. If you are a person with chronic back pain, Mr. Speaker, you expected your government to continue to support your chiropractic care. This has indeed, Mr. Speaker, been a program that is a copayment program, Mr. Speaker. Our health care, our health insurance program has always sought to improve on the number of services that are insured. This government in this budget has decided to actually remove an insured service as opposed to adding to the insured services.

Throughout my time in government, Mr. Speaker, I saw a number of new insured services added to the mix. This is the first time, Mr. Speaker, I've seen a service that was taken out of insurance, Mr. Speaker. So if you have chronic back pain or you've been seeing a chiropractor, Mr. Speaker, your expectations about government protecting your health services, your expectations have been dashed, Mr. Speaker. This government had a contract. It had a contract negotiated, and with this budget, Mr. Speaker, it tears up that contract and says, you're on your own.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities had a contract. They negotiated a deal with this government, the Sask Party government. Municipalities had a deal, Mr. Speaker, that said we recognize that with fluctuations in the economy for example, like maybe potash prices might not be what you think they are, Mr. Speaker, they put together a negotiated deal whereby something not affected by resource revenues — the PST — could be used as a formula, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the municipalities had stable funding. So, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities agreed, we'll take a percentage of the PST. If the economy fluctuates somewhat and there's a drop in retail sales and PST revenues drop, we'll take a drop, Mr. Speaker.

But the province was growing and the municipalities wanted a deal that said, with the province growing, we need to feel that

the province's revenues will grow with us. So they reached a deal: 1 per cent of the PST. Not a big deal to the government, Mr. Speaker, but a big deal to municipalities. They had the deal, Mr. Speaker. This budget dashes their expectation of having that deal completed. Mr. Speaker, they are now waiting another year for this government to decide what to do. Record, record revenues, Mr. Speaker — again, \$10 billion in revenue, Mr. Speaker — and they had to cancel this deal.

In my own city, in my own city of North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, night before last, city council met. They've determined they need about 4 per cent more revenue to balance their budget — \$600,000 to be exact, Mr. Speaker. Because this government couldn't keep its word, couldn't be trusted to keep its word, Mr. Speaker, property taxes in The Battlefords are going to go up as they are, as we know, in Saskatoon, Regina, and elsewhere.

So the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, there was a deal on Aboriginal economic development that this budget throws out. There was a deal on chiropractic services. This budget throws it out. There was a deal, Mr. Speaker, on municipal revenue sharing. This budget throws it out. What about school boards, Mr. Speaker? There's been discussions over the years, Mr. Speaker, to try and build equity between the various school divisions and, more importantly, between the Catholic schools and the public school system. Mr. Speaker, this government has been in those negotiations and they made a promise, Mr. Speaker, that they would deal with this equity issue. Well, Mr. Speaker, their expectations — the school boards' expectations — on this budget, again with record revenues, that it would be fixed. Bottom line, Mr. Speaker, this budget dashes their expectations. That equity issue is not being fixed. And more importantly, Mr. Speaker, these school divisions are left with the uncertainty, the uncertainty of how are they going to get through their year with the revenues that have been allocated to them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we learned in question period this week is that teacher salaries currently being negotiated are not included in this budget. Not included in the budget, Mr. Speaker. And so either the teachers are not going to get a raise or a salary incremental increase, Mr. Speaker, or two, the deficit of this budget is going to increase before the end of the year. Those are the only two things that could happen. I think that because this government says this budget is balanced, but they've kept a lot of funding away from this budget — teachers' salaries in particular — this budget really, Mr. Speaker, won't be balanced by the end of the year.

Telling the public . . . I see you standing, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order. The member from North Battleford has the floor. The other conversations are distracting. I'm finding it difficult to hear what he has to say. If you have conversations you'd like to carry on, I'd appreciate it if you'd go behind the bar.

The member from North Battleford.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So for all intents and purposes again, there was a deal in the making with the school boards, a pending deal with the teachers. The expectations are dashed, but by golly, Mr. Speaker, I think the bigger issue is that the promise to Saskatchewan people that this

budget is balanced, and the public is now told the teachers' potentially negotiated settlement isn't included in the budget — well for all intents and purposes that means this budget really isn't balanced. We know it's not balanced on the summary financial statement, and we know that it's not going to be balanced when all these issues are thrown into the mix.

So, Mr. Speaker, again we're down to the area of trust. Can the public of Saskatchewan, after reviewing all the items in this budget, trust this government to deliver in the best interests of Saskatchewan people? The bottom line is, of course, no they can't.

Another matter, Mr. Speaker, we rely on government to support our municipalities in a number of ways and sometimes in ways that we wouldn't even think about, Mr. Speaker. And sometimes the little things are really important to people.

The last couple of years, Mr. Speaker, everybody in this province has had a concern about West Nile virus. Mr. Speaker, there have been people in North Battleford and other parts of the province who have found themselves in the intensive care unit of our hospitals. Mr. Speaker, near-death experiences with West Nile. Mr. Speaker, where does West Nile come from? It comes from mosquitoes. From the mosquito, Mr. Speaker.

And who takes care of the mosquitoes in the province, Mr. Speaker, but our municipalities. Our municipalities do a spraying program. Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget, if you can believe it, at a time when West Nile is a concern to the public, this budget significantly reduces the mosquito control program in the province of Saskatchewan. The city of North Battleford has already said in a news release today that they will not be spraying as much this year as they have last year because they're going to be short funds because the province has cut the mosquito control program. Indirectly, Mr. Speaker, to save a few thousand dollars in a \$10 billion budget, the public could be more susceptible to West Nile disease. Mr. Speaker, this is another expectation that the public has, that the government is going to think of the things that are important and then not delivering on those things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see that my time is wearing down here. And while I still have quite a few more things to say, I want to indicate to the people in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, who may be watching here tonight, that there's a number of issues that they need to pay attention to that go beyond The Battlefords. And while I won't have time to go through lots of them, Mr. Speaker, I want the people in The Battlefords . . . members opposite are already aware of these, Mr. Speaker.

We've got to watch what's happening to the debt and the deficit in the province of Saskatchewan. We've got to watch what's happening to the privatization of our Crowns and our health care system. Mr. Speaker, we've got to listen carefully to the words that are used by ministers of the Crown and the way in which they describe what's happening. The most recent example, Mr. Speaker, is the Finance minister speaking to the chamber of commerce in Saskatoon and saying, we've got to look at a harmonized sales tax and then coming outside, Mr. Speaker, and saying to the public, oh, no, I probably could be misinterpreted. Well if you read the comments that the minister made inside the meeting of the chamber of commerce, there's

no room for misinterpretation, Mr. Speaker. He realized, or he was told by the Premier, he realized that what he said to that group of people, where he felt comfortable, couldn't be said to the public. And so he changed his tune, Mr. Speaker.

And to give the Minister of Finance credit, he didn't say, I was misquoted or I misspoke myself. He said, I could be misinterpreted. Bottom line was, he said there's room for a debate on the harmonized sales tax.

And then, Mr. Speaker, let's watch for a number of other things. The budget also says that, for example, when I talk about the Crowns, we've got to be careful what's going on there. The budget, and I want to point this out on page 19, "... SaskPower intends to partner with the private sector to ensure the reliability and long-term security of the system." Mr. Speaker, we welcome new power generation in this province. We've always supported SaskPower. They've got expertise that goes beyond anything that exists anywhere else in this country.

[19:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, we can't be sending profits intended for redistribution in the province of Saskatchewan, we can't be sending those dollars outside the province of Saskatchewan simply because the idea of partnering with the private sector is something the government members want to do.

And on health care, Mr. Speaker, we've had a chance to have surgeries done outside the hospitals for a number of years in this province, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health has deferred for so long the surgical care centre that was planned for the city of Regina that could be duplicated in the city of Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has deferred this for so long that now he's in a panic mode and he wants to privatize surgical stuff. He had the audacity, Mr. Speaker, to stand in the House here; he had the audacity to stand in the House and say that the public could care less about this process of privatizing the health care system.

And then today, Mr. Speaker, he says, well I only meant the ambulance service, Mr. Speaker. They're privatized already. But let's keep in mind a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. If you're getting in an ambulance, you aren't going to a day surgery centre, Mr. Speaker. You're not going to a day surgery centre. And number two, ambulance services were not universally insured. They weren't a universal insured service, Mr. Speaker. They've always been a copay. The minister is misleading the public, Mr. Speaker, the public, when he talks about he only was referring to ambulances when in fact he's privatizing the surgical or the intrusive part of the health care system. And we have to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, to listen to the words of the ministers opposite.

So, Mr. Speaker, just given the time, I want to conclude by saying that, Mr. Speaker, this was an interesting budget in that it fails to deliver on the expectations of Saskatchewan people. It shows continued mismanagement of the provincial economy — a growing economy that we all support.

And, Mr. Speaker, it fails to deal with the most vulnerable in our communities, Mr. Speaker. I could say a lot about housing across the province. The member from Saskatoon Centre started

on that in his remarks earlier today.

And I said, Mr. Speaker, this was an interesting budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is even more interesting when you add it to the previous two budgets and you start to see the pattern developing, and that's what I mean by saying I want to conclude with remarks about the future of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very positive outlook, that is New Democrats and the people of Saskatchewan, a very positive outlook for the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there's so much opportunity and ability here. Mr. Speaker, we were able to ensure that health care, education, the vulnerable people in our communities, Mr. Speaker, were able to feel a part of our wonderful province when the revenues were six and a half billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. This government now has \$10 billion and nobody feels included. Nobody feels included. They feel that the government is turning their backs, Mr. Speaker.

So what about the future? Mr. Speaker, this government will, based on the direction set by this budget, will mismanage their way through the next 12 months. We will be looking at Public Accounts a year from now with the government saying what went wrong. We know what's going wrong, Mr. Speaker. Their spending projections are completely out of whack. Their priorities are completely out of whack.

And next year, Mr. Speaker, they'll come in with the last budget intended for an election, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to try to rebuild expectations in Saskatchewan people. Those expectations, Mr. Speaker, have already been pushed down to the level whereby people are saying, can we support the New Democrats in the 2011 election? Mr. Speaker, you bet they can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I was listening carefully to the member from The Battlefords as he made his presentation tonight, and I notice the use of the words, misleading the public. And according to Beauchesne's, on page 146, "Misleading the public" has been ruled unparliamentary language. I would invite the member from The Battlefords to withdraw his comments.

Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, on your advice, I withdraw and apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Our thanks to the member. The debate continues. I recognize the member from Saltcoats.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this budget. I've sat many years on that side in opposition, and we went through budget after budget watching the NDP in government, and it's amazing in a period of two and a half years how this province has swung around.

We had the member for The Battlefords here a few minutes ago saying about all the wonderful things they did in health. He designed so many of the new hospitals in the province, but they forgot one thing — they forgot to build any of them, Mr. Speaker. Well our Health minister has changed that, turned that around, and there's some good things happening in the health care system. And the member from The Battlefords should

watch closely because he was the Minister of Health and did nothing for the North Battleford hospital, absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, so many good things happening in this province right now, and I think one of the best indications of that positive attitude out there is the population of this province is growing at a rate that we've probably never seen in the past, Mr. Speaker — over 30,000 new people in this province in the last two years. The last time there has been growth like that I believe was 1929, 1930. Now there's probably a good reason for that, Mr. Speaker, because in the years between the majority of the time the NDP or the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] were the government, and there was no way this province was going to grow under that government and under that leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we go and watch the things happening in Saskatchewan, we see that there's more jobs now than there ever has been in the past, in the history of this province. We have so many reasons, Mr. Speaker, to be optimistic in this province right now and I want to talk about a number of those things. This province has so many resources and we're so fortunate.

We've gone through the recession, and in this province we've felt the recession, but nothing like other provinces have. We see budgets coming down with big deficits right now, Mr. Speaker. Ontario alone is envious of what's happening here in Saskatchewan, when they used to be a leader in the country in Canada and we were at the back of the pack under the NDP. All of a sudden we're at the front of the pack and, Mr. Speaker, this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget, the last couple of budgets are preparing for growth and for the future, and I think that's why we're seeing this.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have potash and diamonds, uranium, oil, gas, coal, and then we have a vibrant agriculture sector in this province that drives about 20 per cent of our economy. So many good things, Mr. Speaker, going for us.

Mr. Speaker, we have a balanced budget this year, something that would also be the envy of every province in this country. Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward and we come forth with a responsible budget, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to work in that direction. But at the same time we've cut spending about \$121 million, Mr. Speaker, and I think that was a worthwhile exercise to go through this time. Dollars were tighter in this process and every one of us on this side of the House felt the belt-tightening situation and have dealt with it in a team effort with people of this province, and I think people expected far worse than this budget brought forward. And I think to a great degree people in this province are satisfied that we're heading in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about infrastructure, highways and roads, because they're near and dear to me. And I want to thank some of the ministers here, municipal government, highways — \$632 million of infrastructure, 177 million for municipal projects, 302 million for roads and highway projects.

Mr. Speaker, there's been some of the members of the opposition, I've heard them talking about the cuts to municipal

funding. Well I want to give one example and I think it's timely because a number of us have heard about the funding for Regina in the last couple of weeks, month, and I just want to remind people — members opposite and actually members on this side to bring it to their attention — that in the last budget for the NDP under '07-08, the revenue sharing for the city of Regina was \$16 million. Now I want to highlight the cut that we've done to revenue sharing for the city of Regina. It went from 16 million to 26 million. Some cut, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a \$10 million increase just for the city of Regina.

We have cities like Saskatoon and municipalities and smaller cities around the province who also have shared in the good fortune of the additional dollars that we've put in into municipal government, and it's been a long time coming. They've been waiting a long time. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they've been waiting 16 years, from the downloading of the NDP to what they saw in the last two and a half years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also think I would be remiss to if I didn't talk about the education tax. Well the member for The Battlefords wants to talk about the debt. Here's a government that was there for 16 years, and do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The debt was exactly the same or higher when they left office as when they came to in 1991 — not one cent.

Mr. Speaker, they used to have, when the NDP was in government, they had the rainy day fund. We've got the growth and stabilization fund. The difference, Mr. Speaker, is there was no money in the rainy day fund. So every time they were short of dollars and pulled money out of the rainy day fund, the debt went up, Mr. Speaker. We saw that on how many occasions? And they used that rainy day fund and raised the debt to try and balance their books, Mr. Speaker. We actually have money in our growth and security fund and it'll be there for future, our kids and into the future, Mr. Speaker. And it's dollars, I think, that are put away for times ahead.

Mr. Speaker, education tax on property, it's something the previous government didn't deal with for those 16 years. Mr. Speaker, it was something that farmers, property owners right across this province had asked us to deal with. They'd asked them and got nowhere. They'd had some band-aids put on and then ripped off. Mr. Speaker, we've dealt with that last year. The Minister of Education dealt with it last year. The member for Rosetown went around the province to see how we could work this out, and we've set the mill rate to 7.09 mills.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter where I go out there; people would like better programs in agriculture, and we're working to do that. But the one thing I think everybody is consistent out there about is they say thank you for the education tax relief on farm land because it was the most unfair tax there was. So, Mr. Speaker, when something like that happens and we're leaving more dollars in the producer's pocket, I think it's very, very worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just talk a couple of minutes about health care and the job our Health minister is doing. Mr. Speaker, this is the largest Health budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, and the Health minister has dealt with a number of issues out there in this budget. Autism's one, where there's

two and a half million dollars for a pilot, and I think that's been needed for a long time. Isn't going to solve all the problems out there, Mr. Speaker, but we need to start dealing with problems like that right across the province.

But the minister has talked about addressing surgical wait times. He's also talked about doctor recruitment, nurse recruitment. In fact, nurse recruitment, he's done a tremendous job in that forefront. I think we're, what, over 600 nurses that we've brought into this province, and adding.

There's something, Mr. Speaker, that goes back, I would say it goes back to 1991 and 1992 and I think many of the members here remember this. When the NDP opposite closed 52 hospitals, chased nurses out of this province, chased doctors out of this province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Moose Jaw is criticizing me for remembering back. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know. I think for the full 16 years they were in power they talked about Grant Devine and blamed him for all of their woes. And she's criticizing me two years later for remembering some of the things they did when they were in power.

Mr. Speaker, they didn't stop at 52 hospitals. Does anybody remember that big hospital just out here in the southeast corner of the city? It was called the Plains. Now it was good for Regina but it was very, very good for southern Saskatchewan. You could see it miles back. You knew where you were going. You didn't have to park about 20 blocks away to get to the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, what did they do? They closed that hospital on top of the 52 others, but at the same time created the shortage of doctors and nurses in this province by chasing them out when they closed those hospitals. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Minister of Health for a number of good initiatives that he's done in health care because my constituency is reliant on our health care just like every other constituency in this province.

Mr. Speaker, just speaking of health care, I just want to read you a couple of quotes that were in this morning's *Leader-Post*. And I don't often quote Murray Mandryk unless it's something favourable about me I like to quote, but this is about the Health minister. And I think this is worth listening to, Mr. Speaker. Murray goes on to write a number of things here, but I get into some of the quotes. And I quote:

With some 28,700 Saskatchewan people on the surgical waiting list (as of Dec. 31) including 4,300 who had waited longer than 12 months and 1,700 who'd waited longer than 18 months, we clearly need to do something differently. After all, it would be dumber to repeat the same things that haven't worked in the past.

I rest my case from the previous government. I go on to also quote Murray in this morning's paper, Mr. Speaker.

A "surgical reference guide website for patients and physicians to help them choose the most appropriate specialist" is smarter. "Building electronic medical and health records" is smarter. "Expanding the Surgical Information System to maximize operating room time" is

smarter. "Improving how operating time is allotted" is smarter . . . "Making better use of acute-care beds through timelier patient transitions to long-term beds" is smarter.

Now I believe if Murray says it, it's got to be smarter. I agree with Murray, Mr. Speaker. And I hope Murray's up tonight and Murray's listening because we need a favourable write-up on agriculture in the province, and I expect Murray to do that.

[20:00]

But Murray doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker, he even goes on. And I was so impressed, I was reading the second page of Murray's article this morning. Murray goes on to say and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

Remember that defeated NDP convention resolution a few years ago that would have required Saskatchewan doctors to ignore test results provided by out-of-province private MRIs — even [even, Mr. Speaker] if they indicated a brain tumour or cancer? That simply wasn't smart.

Mr. Speaker, I won't talk anymore, I won't talk anymore, Mr. Speaker, on health care. I rest my case. Murray and I are happy with where we're going, and I think that's the right direction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite might want to go to coffee right now because I'm sure they're not interested in this. I'm going to talk a little ag here tonight. And I think, well I just have to look around at my colleagues on this side of the House, and I think we represent every rural riding in this province and then a little more. But, Mr. Speaker, agriculture was ignored for so many years in this province, it was high time, I think, that there was a government change. We started to work with producers, whether you're on the grain side or the cattle side out there, in designing programs but paying more attention to agriculture when we come to budgeting.

And, Mr. Speaker, as everybody knows, last year was the highest budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan for agriculture. Mr. Speaker, this budget this year — due to less costs for AgriStability, lower grain prices, and then the cost for crop insurance drops accordingly — has dropped somewhat, but still the third highest budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are paying attention to rural Saskatchewan and to farmers right across this province. AgriStability program, Mr. Speaker, \$125 million for AgriStability. Crop insurance, \$127 million, Mr. Speaker. These are the second or third highest budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan for programming, Mr. Speaker. AgriInvest, \$32 million. Mr. Speaker, that brings it to a total of \$283 million for farm programming for producers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think that shows we're paying attention. Have we solved all the problems out there? Not for a minute. I'd be the last to say that. But, Mr. Speaker, we're working to improve on programming.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the farm, ranch, and water program a little bit. And I remember back, it was only two years

ago that the Southwest had a drought right across the Southwest. Hadn't had much rain for three or four years, and the members opposite totally ignored the Southwest. The Ag ministers wouldn't go out there. They wouldn't take a look at how bad it was. And, Mr. Speaker, when we come in as government and I was named Ag minister, I did go out there and tour. And I've never seen drought like that in my life. I'm from the east side and we have droughts there, but nothing compared to what the Southwest had. And they had absolutely no attention paid to them from the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, we brought in the farm, ranch, and water program. And again didn't solve all their problems but, Mr. Speaker, we're digging. I think we're up to about 70 community wells. We're working with RMs [rural municipality] and farmers out there right across the province, but the majority are in the Southwest. Those wells are going to be there for the next 30 or 40 years, and we may go two or three or four droughts in that period of time. Those wells are going to be there to help with that problem.

On-farm wells, there's many, many on-farm wells being dug through that program, and many, many dugouts, Mr. Speaker, being dug. And the positive part, Mr. Speaker, two years ago, dugouts were dry out in the Southwest, and we're hearing in a number of areas out there this year that some of the dugouts that have been dug and some of the dugouts that were there, are full to the brim. And that's one of the best signs I can see for southwest Saskatchewan that we have seen for many years.

So, Mr. Speaker, in agriculture we're also going to bring some efficiencies to extension services. I want to remind the members opposite and compare our budget to previous budgets. Our budgets, we've added, we added actually an office to Kindersley. We added one to Watrous. We added one to Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. So now we're up to 10 extension offices in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now that's comparable to budgets past when the members opposite closed 22 rural service centres in one budget . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well there they go again, Mr. Speaker. The member for Moose Jaw, really hitting a nerve over there tonight because she doesn't want us to remember what they did. All I'm doing is comparing ag budgets today to ag budgets of the past. Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just the 22 rural service centres. One other budget they came in, they closed nine more. So you add them up, Mr. Speaker — 31 rural offices closed around rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's not paying attention to the producers in this province and farmers and ranchers around the province. That to me is ignoring them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order. I'm having trouble hearing what the member is saying. I was particularly interested to see if there was more water programs for the Southwest. The member from Melville-Saltcoats has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker. Really, actually I don't have any more water programs, but I have a coyote program. I have a coyote program that will work for the Southwest, Mr. Speaker. And why I mention that tonight, Mr. Speaker, is because I think it was the Leader of the Opposition said the coyote program is silly. Now I want to explain the program because, Mr. Speaker, I don't

think there's too many farmers and ranchers out there that are losing calves and lambs and sheep that thought that program was silly.

Mr. Speaker, last year on an average, just the average take out in harvest, was just over 16,000 coyotes were taken out of this province. Right now with the coyote control program, Mr. Speaker, we're getting upwards of 40,000 coyotes. And that's a silly program? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I know it's something the NDP wouldn't have done because again, you'd have to pay some attention to rural Saskatchewan to actually know there was a problem out there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know that again, it isn't going to solve all the problems with wildlife. So we've gone one step further, Mr. Speaker, and we brought in the wildlife compensation program. About a week ago we announced this program. And I hope the Leader of the Opposition doesn't think this is silly because I know every producer in this province that has trouble with wildlife is very appreciative of that this program was brought in place.

Now if a producer out there, Mr. Speaker, loses a calf, a cow, or a sheep producer loses an animal, now we will pay for 100 per cent compensation for that animal. This is the first time in history there's been a program like this put in place, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

And the howls can come up from the other side, but I notice for 16 years, that's the loudest noise that has come out of the NDP when you're talking about rural Saskatchewan and farmers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on top of the 100 per cent compensation for deaths out there, we will also pay 80 per cent if an animal is injured and needs services of a vet. We'll pay up to 80 per cent of the value of that animal for vet services, and I think that'll be needed in a number of cases, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the wildlife compensation program doesn't really stop there either. We have a predation program where we actually doubled the funding for that and it really deals with the same problem, except the exception, it wasn't working that well in the coyote situation.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can make fun of this, but I guess when you ignore agriculture in rural Saskatchewan for so long, it actually is a laughing matter. Because I think we saw over on this side of the House, by the representation that the members on this side of the House have, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan in rural Saskatchewan know full well how much attention was paid by the NDP in the last 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, it's not that I have anything against coyotes and gophers, but gophers are on the list for southwest Saskatchewan and the rest of the province too. Mr. Speaker, another problem that they had out there when I toured out there, and I couldn't believe the damage that gophers were doing in southwest Saskatchewan, especially when the drought was on. So we brought the gopher rebate program in, Mr. Speaker, where now we'll pay 50 per cent of the cost of bait for producers to deal with the problem. Again, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't solve all the

problems, but I think it'll help a little bit out there and help producers in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I think, and I won't go on here for long, Mr. Speaker, but I think one of the biggest differences between the members opposite . . . and I think we heard the member for Nutana when she was commenting on one of the Bills — *The Agri-Food Act*, I believe it was — and she was talking about the cattle association, the new Saskatchewan cattle association and she was saying, well all they are is just buddies of the Sask Party, and really we're paying all that attention to them.

I might tell her tonight, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan cattle association actually represents every producer in this province that pays a check-off. So if we're paying attention to them, actually we're paying attention to every livestock producer in this province. And again, Mr. Speaker, I think it highlights the fact that the members opposite do not understand rural Saskatchewan, but even more importantly, do not understand agriculture and ignore it and find it easy to ignore.

But I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when the members opposite get up to discuss a Bill like this, they would probably be smart to do a little research and just find out what agriculture's about and find out, actually check with the organizations like the cattle organization before they get up and criticize them and say they're nothing but buddies of the Sask Party. I will tell her one thing — they're probably now, after she spoke, very good supporters of the Sask Party if they weren't before, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd love to go on tonight, but I know a number of my colleagues want to get up and speak. I know the member for Kelvington's going to get up, the member for Canora-Pelly, so many good things to say over here, Mr. Speaker. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I certainly will be voting against the amendment, and I will be supporting this budget and proud to do so, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've spent the last couple of days listening to speeches that my colleagues were giving in the House and also kind of planning the things that were important and I felt I wanted to point out. But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and his comments, I just have to add a few things.

You know, the minister talked about what a wonderful job he's done in Agriculture but forgot . . . and did a very quick run over the fact that they're removing just about \$93.5 million out of the income stabilization program. And the reason? He said, well commodity prices are lower, and he just kind of skimmed over it.

Well the livestock industry is having trouble. Pork industry's pretty well gone in this province, Mr. Speaker. It's a struggle and has been for a while, and the minister's so busy patting himself on the back saying, what a wonderful job I've done. So, Mr. Speaker, he needs to look in the mirror and maybe have a look at some of these programs a little more closely before he starts taking an awful lot of credit. And in fact he was having

such a hard time with this budget, and he knows how bad it is, in many cases, Mr. Speaker, he didn't even talk about the budget. He talked about 16 years ago.

Well, you know, whatever happened 16 years ago, he's in government. Do you know what? He's in government almost three years and what has he done? Not much, Mr. Speaker, not much.

And, Mr. Speaker, do you know I'm very pleased, I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to stand up and add my comments about the budget that was just tabled in the House. But first, Mr. Speaker, before we get into that, I truly want to pass along a thank you to my staff in the Moose Jaw office. They have been with me for a number of years. They hold down the fort and address the concerns of not only the Moose Jaw Wakamow constituency, but others. When constituents come into our office, we try and help them as much as we can, whether they live directly in the constituency or not.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say to my staff, Stacey and Charlene, thank you very much for the work that you do on a day-to-day basis.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many of the previous comments that have been made have talked about whether this budget is balanced or whether it isn't, how big the deficit's going to be. And I mean we know by the government's own documents that we're running at about a \$622 million deficit in this budget. And the questions have also been asked about, what's the debt? How much is the debt going to grow in this, just in this year alone?

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the government's own documents — not mine, not the member for Regina Dewdney's — but they're the government's budget documents, and they're quite clear. Even though they put out a press release, and in every one of their speeches they stand up and they say, the budget's balanced, it's a balanced budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, we need to look at their own documents. And it says right in the summary financial, it says there will be a summary deficit of \$622.7. Oops, I forgot the million, Mr. Speaker. It's kind of big figures, but it's millions, \$622.7 million deficit.

[20:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the government's own documents — province of Saskatchewan, that's the one. Doesn't have the wheat sheaf on it anymore, Mr. Speaker; it has the coat of arms. You'll be well aware of these documents, Mr. Speaker, because they've changed from the wheat sheaf. That was another thing they said they weren't going to do, was get rid of the wheat sheaf and go to the coat of arms but, lo and behold, it's everywhere. We know it's been done by stealth like many other things.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the summary statement of debt and it gradually increases — well not gradually, it increases substantially over this next year — when we look at 2009 summary debt for the province of Saskatchewan of 7,946.3 billion, and when we look at the estimated summary deficit for 2011, we're up to \$9.1 billion. So, Mr. Speaker, I guess that's what the documents say, but if the government says it's balanced and debt isn't going up, who am I to argue with

their own documents, Mr. Speaker? But, Mr. Speaker, we will leave that . . . well I have one more comment before we leave it.

The Minister of Health, and on a number of issues over the past couple of weeks, has got up and said, well every other province does it, all nine plus two provinces. I think that was Sask Party math. He kind of got it screwed up one question period. He said all nine plus two provinces, but there's only ten. But we'll give him credit. Maybe he was having stress that day. You know, you never know.

But anyway he said, well other provinces do this. Other provinces do that. Well, Mr. Speaker, just a word of advice to the Minister of Finance. Other provinces use summary financial statements. So maybe instead of playing this cat-and-mouse game and the government playing fast and loose with the numbers in this bit of a shell game, why don't they just go to a summary financial system? That's the way the reporting's done. Citizens of this province would see an overall financial statement that's clear and accountable, Mr. Speaker. And that's one thing this government ran on, but I think that's one of the promises that they've kind of forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, we'll leave the whole debate about whether it's balanced or not, and whether the debt of this province is growing. And there is a couple of things that I do want to touch on because I feel it's very important. And I think one of the things that struck me first and foremost was the lack of openness and accountability in this budget. And that's very concerning, and many taxpayers in this province also feel that it's a huge concern. And it's a total lack of openness and accountability by this government.

And what we've seen is really burying numbers and spinning numbers to their own advantage, and not being upfront in discussing the impacts of this budget with the citizens. And it's impacts that citizens of this province will feel, may not be right away, but I know that before the end of this session we will hear many, many, many complaints and concerns expressed from citizens as they begin to feel these kind of knee-jerk piecemeal cuts that have been made in this budget with very little thought to what the repercussions will be. Very little thought to the overall picture and, Mr. Speaker, detrimental to Saskatchewan families. And that's the concern. It's a big concern.

So, Mr. Speaker, we won't get into the whole debate on the debt. I will say to people, look at the government's own documents and you make up your own mind — the summary financial sheet for one, and also the backgrounder. For anyone that has a computer at home, you can go on to the government website. You can check on the backgrounder documents if they haven't pulled them down yet. And it says quite clearly the revenue for this year is 9.95 billion and the expenses are 10.12 billion. Revenue, 9.9; expenses, 10.1. Mr. Speaker, in my books, that's a deficit.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will move on, and we will start to look at some of the other issues that are in this budget. And I made a quick comment just about how shaky this budget truly is and the part about burying numbers. And what's soon going to be a very huge problem for this government, and it's some very big items and big issues that this government, this Sask Party

government, has totally ignored in this budget. And, Mr. Speaker, this isn't issues that I just think they should have paid more attention to, maybe put a little more money towards or changed a program, these are items that they actually ignored like they didn't exist and didn't put in the budget at all.

So I guess the big question is, is so where's the money come from for bargaining with 25,000 health care workers that have been without a contract for two years? Where's the money come for bargaining with health sciences, health care professionals that provide some very important services right across this province? Or doctors, through the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association]?

Mr. Speaker, we've seen an increase of 3 per cent to the Department of Health, with 5 per cent going to the health districts but, Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing accounted for in the budget. And if we just look towards the last few months, I know that the health district in Saskatoon is running a deficit. They're running a deficit and yet they're expected to hold their costs. They are running a deficit, expected to hold their costs, but yet there are negotiations and more costs coming. They are running a deficit. They're expected to hold their costs. There's negotiations on the way, but yet their day-to-day operating costs are going up. So, Mr. Speaker, in anyone's book, that doesn't work.

And we heard from the head of the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, and she said quite clearly that they were going to have to make \$24 million in cuts to stay viable in this next year. Well you can't tell me that \$24 million cut out of one health region that's a provincial health region or provincial facility in the health region, that that isn't going to be felt by citizens right across this province. Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't cut it. And this government has just ignored the fact that these issues are there. They have not accommodated them. But yet they send out press releases saying, well aren't we doing wonderful. Our budget is balanced, and look at the great job we've done. But yet they're just pushing all their costs out.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that they have ignored big time is Saskatchewan teachers are going into contract negotiations. And I believe the minister may have said the other day that negotiations had already begun, but there's absolutely nothing in the budget, Mr. Speaker. Nothing. There's no line item. There's absolutely nothing to accommodate what changes may be made.

Well, and then when the minister was asked about it in question period the other day, he said, well when it's negotiated, we'll take care of it. Well how does that work? Isn't your budget supposed to account for the expenses of the province for the coming year? Well obviously it's just the expenses that the Sask Party wants to include in the budget, not all of their actual expected expenses.

So, Mr. Speaker, and then the minister is out in the rotunda, and I'm told that he says, well why would they actually put this in the budget as a line item when this contract may not even be settled this year? Why would you account for something that might not even come about? Well now I don't know how long the Minister of Education's been around, Mr. Speaker, but normally when you go into . . . I think he's been around a long

time, quite a long time. You've been around here longer than many of us. But he should know that just because the contract isn't negotiated in that year, there are still costs that will accumulate to that contract. There are still costs that are incurred by the Government of Saskatchewan.

And these are employees that the government has and they have a responsibility. An employee comes to work for the Government of Saskatchewan and, really, puts their services for hire. The government, as the employer, is expected to pay fairly for those services. So just because you don't negotiate a contract, it doesn't mean there isn't any expenses for that year. They'll come, Mr. Speaker. They'll come. And you can't just ignore them in the budget, figure you'll look after them somewhere down the line if there's a contract settled. You still have to account for them.

Now I guess, Mr. Speaker, maybe I'm being a little bit enthusiastic about this. Maybe I shouldn't be assuming that there will be increases when it comes to collective agreements. Maybe I shouldn't even be taking that view, and maybe that's what the Sask Party did. They say, well we're going to hold them to zero, no increments, no benefit changes — nothing. That could be their strategy. I don't know. Maybe I'm just being a little overenthusiastic.

But obviously the Sask Party felt that increases were in store last year for their own political staff. So I don't think it's out of line for me to expect front-line working people in this province that provide the services — whether it's looking after our children or our parents or grandparents in health care, or whether it's teaching our children and our young adults in post-secondary or training across this province — I don't think I'm being out of line when I would say there should be expectations of some increases in this area, that let these important people in the productivity of Saskatchewan, the productivity and operation of Saskatchewan . . . If the Sask Party's political staff deserve a raise in their increments on a regular basis, well, Mr. Speaker, then they really should sit down and do some honest-to-goodness negotiations with these folks, and they should account for it in the budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look at various health care negotiations that are out there, various negotiations that are yet to come or in the early stages with teachers, and all of these costs have been ignored in the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance. So if we're looking at a \$622 million deficit already, add these costs in. Add a portion of these costs in and tell me what the deficit's going to be mid-term. Mr. Speaker, we could be in for a bit of a shock . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I think it's going to be considerably higher than what the government documents say. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say again these aren't fluff. These aren't optional expenses. These are obligations and responsibilities of the Government of Saskatchewan. So it's not like you can just ignore it and it will go away, because that won't happen.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we can get back on the whole debate about, or non-debate about deficit budgets or balanced budgets. But I know one thing for sure. This Sask Party government has stood a number of times and talked about what a tough budget this has been. What a tough budget, and they've had to make some tough changes. Well whoop-de-do, Mr. Speaker. I mean, you

look at in the last NDP budget in '07-08, we had total revenue into the province of \$7.7 billion. Last year, in '09-10, this Sask Party government had a budget almost \$3 billion higher. It was \$10.6 billion.

So the Minister of Ag stands up and says we've been able to do this, and we've been able to do that. We could have a debate about how well he's done it and the difficulties in the agricultural sector right now. The Minister of Environment stands up last night and gives us a whole list of all the things they have done. Well you know, Mr. Speaker, they should darn well be doing them. They were spending billions of dollars. What did they think they were going to do? Just throw it out the window? I mean that was 3 billion of taxpayers' dollars that they spent last year. Well actually more than that because they ended up with a billion dollar deficit last year plus the money that they stripped out of the Crowns.

So to sit here and say we've done a wonderful job, much better than any previous government . . . Well you've had substantially higher revenues than any previous government, and if you had used them wisely, we wouldn't be in the situation we are now.

So anyway, Mr. Speaker, they put out a press release. Oh, they've trimmed their spending. They have just sweated over this budget, Treasury Board, and have trimmed their spending, \$123 million. Well, Mr. Speaker, 100 of that came out of the Department of Agriculture, so 23 million is pretty small pickings when you're looking at a \$10 billion budget. And they just said, well they really worked, you know, and they trimmed back their spending.

Well, Mr. Speaker, their whole problem has been overspending, and all you have to do is go back to the comments by Eric Howe, the economics professor at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] who said last fall, "These guys don't have a revenue problem." And they don't. It was a nice handy tool to hang it on potash, blame it all on potash. But they had historic revenues to deal with in this province, and they still couldn't do it because they can't control their spending.

[20:30]

They spend, spend, spend on everything. There is no long-term vision. There is no, there is no rhyme or reason to some of the spending that goes on, Mr. Speaker. But so here they are. They went all out, and they tried to cut back their spending while they managed a measly 123 million out of a 10-plus billion dollar budget, Mr. Speaker. And it wasn't even a good attempt because we still have a deficit this year, Mr. Speaker, and the haphazard cuts that were made in this budget were not well thought out. They were not well thought out at all.

Well, Mr. Speaker, so they got their \$123 million cut, and they talk about what a wonderful job they have done. But I tell you, Mr. Speaker, there are many across the province who are going to pay and pay big time for the spending of this government, for the out-of-control spending of this government.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen over the last couple of weeks how this government went through the façade or the charade, I guess, of bargaining with the chiropractors even so far as to having a

press release drawn up on the agreement and then wouldn't sign it and wouldn't send out the press release. And then as we waited till budget time, here they ripped up the budget that they had negotiated.

And, Mr. Speaker, I guess we're maybe more used to it because we've dealt with this government maybe a little more closely in the Assembly, but it's typical of the way they have done things. Victoria Park Capital, don't want to negotiate, don't like the way they operate, so we table legislation to kill their agreement. Health care workers, well we don't want to go through a tough session of bargaining with health care workers because we may not be able to get everything the way they want. So the first things they table was Bill 5 and 6. And we all know the problems over that and the comments that have come back from the ILO [International Labour Organization] and the United Nations.

But, Mr. Speaker, here we are with chiropractors. And people told this government over and over again, and the chiropractors made the point that if you take away support for people and the chiropractic visits, they will just revert to going to the health system. They will go to the doctors and clinics. They will go to the emergency ward. They will go to the hospital. And all you're doing is off-loading from the support that was given by this province to chiropractic visits. That \$10 million went into the government's pockets so they could say, well, we saved that. But that money is just off-loaded onto the health system, Mr. Speaker. It's not going to save anything. It's just bury the cost and hide it; we've saved \$10 million. Well it doesn't work that way. They have just shifted the cost and they've loaded it over onto a different side.

And yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we heard the Minister of Health stand up, and he talked about private clinics doing day surgeries — and this after two and a half years. Now this, the Minister of Health was a critic for Health for probably four years. He had all the answers then. He's been the minister for two and a half years and he's been pretty quiet, hasn't really done too much. And this is the best he can do? He's going to contract out surgeries to private clinics. Four years in opposition, two, just about three years in government, and that's his big solution? That's the best he can do?

And, Mr. Speaker, so that's fine. If he hadn't canned the surgical care centres a year and a half ago, we could have had this money invested in the health care system in the province of Saskatchewan, built infrastructure that could be maintained into the future, and provide service to Saskatchewan residents. But no, they had to kill the idea. Now he's scrambling to try and figure out how he's going to deal with this backlog. Mr. Speaker, if he hadn't have cancelled the surgical care centres, we wouldn't be going through this whole debate today.

But anyway he decided not to invest in the medical system, the publicly owned system here in the province of Saskatchewan. He's made this knee-jerk reaction of wow, we've got to run off and we've got to privatize these surgeries, send them out to private clinics. And he takes the easy way out. Heaven forbid he'd have to do some work and actually put some thought into this, do something a little unusual that wasn't being done in some other province but anyway . . . Hope is eternal, Mr. Speaker. We'll just keep our fingers crossed and hope maybe he

does some reading or something.

But, Mr. Speaker, this minister doesn't seem to care about long-term solutions or benefits for the residents of Saskatchewan. And here too we need to ask, okay, the minister says this is our big plan. Two and a half years he's been the minister, this is our big plan: we're going to contract out the day surgeries.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's see. He's put in place I think a 3 per cent increase for the Department of Health. Health regions, some of them are running a deficit. They have to hold the line on their costs because they're less than status quo on their budget and the money that's been allotted to them. There's going to be reductions in health regions. We've seen this government put up the cost of electricity and power. Rates have gone up. Property tax, all the regular operating costs have all continued to climb. And the . . .

An Hon. Member: — Contract with doctors.

Ms. Higgins: — Oh right, the doctors' contract is still out there, health sciences, health care providers, all 25,000 of them. And the minister says, well the big solution is we're going to contract out these day surgeries to private clinics.

But, Mr. Speaker, where's the support service that goes with these day surgeries? Where's the physio that's required? When you're doing scoping, there's still care. Who deals with these patients if there's an infection or if there's problems? I don't see any corresponding increase to services in the health care system, Mr. Speaker. Or is he saying to them too, suck up your deficit. Suck up the costs you're going to incur for any type of negotiations and suck up any cost you're going to incur caring for the services that need to be provided to a patient that's been to a private clinic.

Mr. Speaker, that's one example of how short-sighted this government is. They don't look at the big picture. It's just knee-jerk reactions, and there is no comprehensive holistic plan to follow through with. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are going to be the ones to pay.

Mr. Speaker, well it is frustrating, Mr. Speaker, to hear. You know, I keep seeing . . . I have this press release laying on my desk and it says balanced budget, you know, aren't we doing wonderful. Well their books are balanced on the backs of the health districts, Mr. Speaker; that's how they're balanced. Because they couldn't make the tough decisions and balance their own budget, they've off-loaded it onto the health districts.

And, Mr. Speaker, one other area or just one of many other areas where they have off-loaded some of these difficult decisions and moved them off the government balance sheet . . . you don't have to look any farther than the municipalities. And you know, the minister can write as many letters to the editor as he likes, but it's the truth, Mr. Speaker. It's because of this government breaking their promise and not following through on the promised revenue-sharing formula that . . . Now you know, they . . . Well, you know, the minister thinks it's kind of funny, and she's tired of maybe hearing it. Well do you know what? The work that went into this process to put together a formula that this government decided on . . . PST was what it

should be attached to because PST doesn't fluctuate. Well, Mr. Speaker, the PST didn't fluctuate. It's on a gradual incline.

But this government decided they didn't like it. Because they had overspent last year, are overspending again this year, they couldn't follow through on their promise. It's got nothing to do with PST. It's got nothing to do with the needs of the municipalities. It has to do with this government, pure and simple, spending too much money and not knowing how to budget, Mr. Speaker.

So what's going to happen? They off-load onto the municipalities, and the municipalities, struggling to meet the demands of citizens, will have to increase property tax to citizens in their communities. Now and over the next month, over the next month we will see . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you know, the minister says, well 64 per cent and, Mr. Speaker, do you know what? They didn't even have the decency and the respect for the municipalities to move to the new year of PST. You know, I thought maybe what they would do is give 90 per cent of 1 per cent of the new number. No, they left it at 90 per cent of the old number. They couldn't even cut them a break, give them some slack even though they had treated them so poorly, broke their promise, told the them in the media, Mr. Speaker, which was rather underhanded.

An Hon. Member: — The Premier had to apologize.

Ms. Higgins: — Yes, and the Premier's got to go apologize. He's sorry. But it was planned that way because the minister said after, those were all planned leaks of the budget. They were just floating balloons. So I mean, well so I mean, how sincere was the apology, Mr. Speaker? How sincere was the apology? It wasn't. So, Mr. Speaker, who pays for this government's mismanagement and lack of fiscal budgeting? It'll be the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, that's who it'll be. It'll be the taxpayers.

And also we're seeing the off-loading onto the school divisions. There's been a minimal increase to funding to school boards. And, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is go through some newspaper articles, look at the comments that various people have made. This government made a promise of stable funding to school boards. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's gone. Minister says oh gee, it's going to take me longer. He toasts the old style of funding because he doesn't like it, but with nothing in place. That's not particularly good planning, Mr. Speaker.

So here we see another broken promise, and school boards are left wondering what's going to happen them, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, who pays when it's the school boards? Well it's families and it's children. That's who pays for this government's financial mismanagement and broken promises is children. That's who pays.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess we're going to have to wait and see what the actual deficit will be because I truly don't believe that it will end up at 622 million. And I think debt will even go higher. They have taken pretty well every cent they can out of the Crown corporations. There is nothing left to take, so now they may actually have to start making some tough decisions.

But I hope they don't do it the same as this budget with these

knee-jerk reactions of little bits here, little bits there and thinking they have done such a wonderful job because I mean the final bill . . . Hey, last year, first quarter we knew this budget . . . well we knew the day it was tabled it was a disaster. By the first quarter, everybody in the province knew we were on the downhill slide. By mid-term, well it was all over but the music. I guess all over but writing the big cheque where we had to pay back the potash companies, Mr. Speaker. But it's been a bad year, and I guess there's not a lot of confidence out there as to what else could go wrong with the budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a couple things that I want to touch on before I take my seat. And what I always look at, Mr. Speaker, is how the budget affects my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And there's a couple areas that are quite problematic when we look at the whole issue of Moose Jaw and what this budget does for Moose Jaw. And, Mr. Speaker, when I first went through the document and it was a nice little document that was listed behind — I think it was hooked on to the press release — that talked about this wonderful balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. And what I found in there was a million and a half dollars cut out of Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, there's 230 residents with disabilities that live in Valley View Centre. Many are high needs, and it's a facility that gives great care to these folks. And we've had an ongoing debate about what should happen to Valley View Centre and if there should be a new facility built, something on a different scale because this facility has quite a few less residents in it than what it did when it was first opened. And probably at its highest point, there was about 1,500 residents. Well it's considerably smaller than that.

But these people, these residents are aging. They need more care. And, Mr. Speaker, what do we see just out of the blue? We see a budget that says, well we're going to take a million and a half dollars out of there. So what that means, Mr. Speaker, is we are going to cut services and provide staffing, even less staffing for people who have, in many cases, no voice, no voice and no alternative but to accept the care that's given.

And I'm telling you, Mr. Speaker, for many of these staff this is difficult because there are relationships that are built with the residents at Valley View Centre. Many have known each other for years. They trust each other. And this is not an easy decision and it's just difficult and it was quite a surprise, Mr. Speaker.

[20:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, there was also the line about . . . oh, I have to find it now, Mr. Speaker. I know I've got it in here somewhere. But there was the other line in here that talked about savings, this nice little document that says, savings, and just knocks the heck out of so many programs. It says, "\$400,000 in savings through the elimination of funding for three Neighbourhood Development Organizations."

Well one of those was in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, and it is called Connecting as Neighbours. And it's a tough one to have cut, Mr. Speaker. I have to find my papers here; I'm sorry. But there's . . . Both of these projects, whether it's the money out of Valley View or whether it's Connecting as Neighbours . . . When Connecting as Neighbours first was structured and

opened up in Moose Jaw, it actually worked on developing housing, affordable housing for families in our community. And they were very successful at it.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the Sask Party government was elected, they turned around and they said, well no, we don't want you to have anything to do with housing. There's got to be something better you can do. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think they turned them into more of a community development organization and supported low-income families to be able to build better lives in our communities. So I don't know why . . . At the bottom of the article, I have to say, under the former NDP government, Connecting as Neighbours, used to focus on housing co-operatives. But when the Sask Party was elected in 2007 their focus was shifted to economic development.

So, Mr. Speaker, there was some question as how you could go from co-operative housing to economic development as a small, non-profit community organization. And that argument aside and that debate aside, why you would ignore housing when we knew — and we still know — that there are very low vacancy numbers right across the province? And Moose Jaw is no exception. Why would you take one of the community organizations out of the mix when you are able to provide or to work to provide options for families living in our community?

So, Mr. Speaker, this organization, I hope they can survive. But when they are looking at a cut of more than 100,000 per year, the executive director . . . they have called an emergency meeting, Mr. Speaker, to be able to see because there was no warning, no consultation. Good heavens, if we had consultation with this government I think we'd all be speechless, Mr. Speaker. But the executive director is worried, doesn't know if they'll be able to survive. But we'll see after their emergency meeting.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Valley View, the \$1.5 million out of Valley View, the article says there will be a few people that no longer call Valley View their place of employment, and this is saving 1.5 million at the Moose Jaw Valley View Centre this year, and they'll do it by becoming more efficient. Well, Mr. Speaker, what they've done so far, there's no plan in place. They're just starting to work through what employees will be gone at this point in time.

And the interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, is a number of the employees and jobs that are being reduced are considered essential services. So I don't know how you cut a job when . . . How can they be essential on one hand but dispensable and disposable on the other hand? Mr. Speaker, if you're essential, aren't you essential all the time? If the government's spent too much money and can't afford to hire you, are you not still essential?

And, Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that I do want to clear up. I know I've been on my feet for quite a while. But, Mr. Speaker, I was looking in my Moose Jaw newspaper and online today, and I heard the Minister of Health say this yesterday when he was talking about privatizing surgeries and using private clinics and going to a two-tier medical system. And what the minister said, and I quote:

“There would be no queue jumping or paying out of

pocket for these procedures,” said Health Minister Don McMorris. In fact, he said it's the NDP that is responsible for private delivery.

“They introduced x-rays and lab testing offered by private companies within the public system. We're just expanding that.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't use the language I would like to on that quote because you would have to call me out of order and I know it. But, Mr. Speaker, I will say that is incorrect. It is a distortion of the truth, and the changes to the X-ray and the lab procedures were put in place by Mr. Devine. And if the Minister of Health does not know any better, then maybe he should sit down and read a little bit of history on the Department of Health and pay a little more attention to the work he's doing and being truthful to the people out in the communities.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm on the edge, but, Mr. Speaker, this is my community. These are people that I spend many hours representing. They are people who deserve the respect and the truth from the minister. And this needs to be clarified and it's inappropriate to have a minister of the Crown distorting the facts and the information to citizens across the community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will do more with this to the media in Moose Jaw. I will address the people that are in my constituency, and I hope others do the same across the province because this seems to be a common comment coming out of the minister's mouth. And, Mr. Speaker, it's inappropriate for a minister of the Crown, I must say, to be distorting information and not being accurate and sincere when speaking to people.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, as we . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, if folks don't like the information, well maybe they shouldn't put it out there. Or if they don't like the response to the information, then maybe they should be accurate when they put it out there and be more careful making sure that citizens of this province have accurate information and can rely on the information that comes from the minister. You know what? Playing politics in here is one thing, and we do a fair bit of it back and forth. And I will not apologize for any of that, or I will not make apologies to my constituents for that. But when we are dealing with the people of this province who elect us and expect us to give them straight-up information, we should. We need to have that kind of respect for citizens of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not happy with the effect of this budget on my community of Moose Jaw. I'm not happy with the comments that have been made in a number of areas, but, Mr. Speaker, I do encourage people, go on the website, have a look at the budget, have a look at the information that's been put out there. And, Mr. Speaker, I have to say when I look at all of this budget and how it's referred to in the books, they say balanced, looking-forward, and responsible. Well in my opinion it's not balanced and, Mr. Speaker, I encourage citizens to have a look and come to their own decision. And when we talk about looking forward, Mr. Speaker, last year the Premier stood in this House and said that, oh, no more next year country, this was the year for Saskatchewan. It was here, man.

Well now we're back to next year country because we've spent so much and didn't pay attention to what we are doing, don't know how to budget. Now we're got our fingers crossed waiting for next year country. We got our fingers on next year country hoping we've got some money mid-term to pay the teachers' salaries when the negotiations are done. We've got our fingers crossed hoping for next year country when we look at the school boards and the health districts, hoping they make the tough decisions and balance the spending that these folks went just crazy on last year. Now they can't pay their bills and keep their promises to the people in this province, that the school divisions and health districts will have to make the tough decisions.

And, Mr. Speaker, they got their fingers crossed, and they're really hoping that there is some extra money come mid-term so that they can cover off some of these expenses that they darn well know is coming and they ignored in the budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the last it says it's responsible. Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget is nowhere close to being responsible. In fact it's irresponsible. And it's just a continuation of last year when we saw irresponsible spending, reckless spending, and we're paying for it, and the citizens of this province are continuing to pay for it this year and will for many years to come as the debt increases.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment, and I will not be supporting the budget.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed again an honour to rise in the Assembly and address the budget, our third budget, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very proud to be part of the government and a cabinet that has moved forward, that has moved Saskatchewan forward in a direction that will ensure that we continue grow, that we continue to be prosperous, and that we continue to achieve great things not only in the province of Saskatchewan but within Canada as well.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of being on a bit of a vacation in Vancouver during the Olympics, and I took the time, Mr. Speaker, to go over to the Saskatchewan pavilion. And, Mr. Speaker, it was remarkable to listen to people right across the world, Mr. Speaker. I listened to people talk about the new Saskatchewan, about how great Saskatchewan was. They were interested in the development, Mr. Speaker. And in fact there were people that were in the Saskatchewan pavilion who were actually considering looking for jobs and looked at the website to see what opportunities were available, Mr. Speaker. And they were surprised. They were surprised at the tremendous potential of our province, so it was an exciting time. It was an exciting time I think for everyone who had planned the outcomes of a pavilion, not always known, Mr. Speaker.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that on one rainy day in Vancouver during the Olympics, it was great to be in the Saskatchewan pavilion because next door to the Saskatchewan pavilion was the Quebec pavilion. A nice big space, nice big space, cost a lot of money. It was called the Cube, Mr. Speaker. But they forgot something, Mr. Speaker. They forgot to actually

put a roof on the pavilion and, Mr. Speaker, on a rainy day you can imagine — well over 9,000 visitors to the Saskatchewan pavilion — not so many to the Quebec pavilion during a rainy day.

But, Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the Minister of Finance on this budget and all of the members of Treasury Board from our government side who worked diligently, who worked very hard to put together a budget that would address a number of concerns, would address the fact that the amount of revenue available to government had declined considerably and, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we were still going to meet certain goals.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are three things that I think not only affected the provincial budget but also affected the budget for education. And, Mr. Speaker, the very first news release that I'm going to comment on is February the 11th of this year, when a news release indicated that 2009 marked the highest number of live births in the province in 17 years. Mr. Speaker, 14,465 babies were born in Saskatchewan in 2009 — the first time ever over 14,000 people born in 17 years. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's going to be . . . That's a great accomplishment, I guess, Mr. Speaker. I'll begin by saying that to those families that have grown.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be a challenge. It's going to be a challenge because as our province moves forward, we know there are going to be requirements for daycare facilities, Mr. Speaker. There's going to be a requirement for pre-kindergarten programs. There's going to be a requirement for much more as a result of that record-setting birth.

Mr. Speaker, then on March 25th we saw that Saskatchewan was a province growing at the fastest pace in nearly 80 years. Some members have already made mention of that, Mr. Speaker, the fact that in a two-year period in the province of Saskatchewan, these last two years, we have grown at a rate that hasn't been matched for 80 years — also, Mr. Speaker, a tremendous accomplishment. I think that shows exactly what people see in the province of Saskatchewan. We're getting immigrants coming from outside of Canada, but also we're seeing Canadians who may have left Saskatchewan once before, when the NDP were good at driving people out of the province, and now they're returning, Mr. Speaker. And we're seeing that growth.

[21:00]

Mr. Speaker, one of the other numbers that has made a significant change is the total enrolments of schools in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, in 2009 — and, Mr. Speaker, for those who may not understand what numbers are used by the Ministry of Education, of course they're the statistical numbers of September 30th of the previous year — in September 30th of 2009, Mr. Speaker, there were 159,818 students in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the first time that that number had indeed grown from the previous year, again, Mr. Speaker, in 17 years. Mr. Speaker, when the NDP took over in 1991, there was nearly 200,000 students in the province of Saskatchewan, and that number now has declined to 159,818. But, Mr. Speaker, that's the first growth that we've had in a long, long time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many times in the province we've heard, Mr. Speaker, that school boards have been faced with problems; school closure is the result of enrolment declines and depopulation, Mr. Speaker. But you know, Mr. Speaker, now the province is turning, turning around, Mr. Speaker. And I do want to say that this is just a small increase, and I hope that it is a trend that is going to start us in the right direction.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn specifically to of course the Education budget because, Mr. Speaker, we made some very significant changes a year ago in our budget. So, Mr. Speaker, this was a continuation of, Mr. Speaker, this was a continuation of last year's initiatives where we indicated that it was necessary to ensure that funding of education, a far greater source of funding to education came from the General Revenue Fund. And, Mr. Speaker, we made that change last year. We made the changes to the mill rates where we reduced the mill rates. And, Mr. Speaker, we also enhanced the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I think there's a couple members have a dialogue going between them, and if they could take it behind the bar, it would be appreciated. I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure exactly what point of my comments I was at but, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that last year we made a very significant change. Mr. Speaker, we also ensured that for the first time the funding of education by the General Revenue Fund of government changed from about 51 per cent to 63 per cent. Mr. Speaker, a very significant change.

And, Mr. Speaker, we added \$243 million to the budget for the 29 school divisions. Mr. Speaker, that was to cover the loss of revenue from the tax side. But it was also, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we addressed a concern that has been around for years, Mr. Speaker. The amount of dollars that boards of education were allocated through the old foundation operating grant, Mr. Speaker, was something that was referred to as recognized expenditures. And, Mr. Speaker, the problem that boards of education faced was that recognized expenditures were always smaller than actual expenditures. The board had to make that difference up by going to the taxpayer because governments in the past did not recognize that. And, Mr. Speaker, that was a problem.

So as a result of the change last year, Mr. Speaker, we added \$243 million to the sum of money that was provided to boards of education so that we would correct that once and for all, Mr. Speaker. And now, Mr. Speaker, for this year we actually are using the actual budget of the previous year of each and every school division.

Now I know the member, I believe it was the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow said, well you know we threw out the FOG [foundation operating grant] grant and we didn't have anything to replace it with. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not quite accurate because we're in fact using the last year's FOG grant which was in place, set by the former government. And we took those expenditures, Mr. Speaker, and we added to them for the costs of the teachers' salary increase last year, the cost of

inflation, and we produced a budget that is for the school year '09-10, Mr. Speaker.

And I also want to clarify, because many people don't understand, that there is quite a difference between a taxation year, a government fiscal year, and a school division fiscal year. Of course the taxation year, we all know that. That's January 1 to December 31st. That's the actual calendar year, maybe sometimes referred to in that respect. The other year, Mr. Speaker, is of course the government fiscal year, and the government fiscal year is April 1st. In a couple days, we'll be beginning our new fiscal year, and it will last to March 31st of next year.

School divisions follow a different fiscal year, and that fiscal year begins on September 1st to August the 31st. So, Mr. Speaker, the boards of education are currently within their fiscal year that will last till August 31st. And our budget this year allocates dollars for the new fiscal year for school divisions, which is going to start on September 1st of 2010.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done this year is we have taken last year's budgets and we recognized three concerns. We recognized that there were some enrolment adjustments that needed to be taken into account. Last year we didn't do that. We had just used the previous year's budget, but there were some school divisions whose enrolments had declined significantly, and there were others whose enrolments had increased significantly. So there needed to be a balancing. There needed to be the assurance to boards of education that in fact the costs that were reflected at the board level were met. So that was one of the conditions, Mr. Speaker.

The second condition was that we needed to account for grid recognition. And grid recognition, Mr. Speaker, means that in the teaching profession there are teachers who are at levels years 1 to 10, and then of course there's another grid that comes into place at year 15. And in those 11 grids, Mr. Speaker, there are teachers in every school division, I'm assuming, that would be at probably at each and every grid level.

But what we did, Mr. Speaker, is we took the actual teachers that were in each and every school division on January the 15th and we applied the grid to each teacher that would have an applicable increase if they stayed in the teaching profession effective September 1st, 2010. So we accounted for that, Mr. Speaker. And then we accounted for inflation on the rest of the costs to boards of education. Mr. Speaker, on a school division year. That means that those costs are about \$18.6 million, a very significant amount of money. And that is the amount of dollars that have been allocated to the school boards for their fiscal year 2010-11.

Now, Mr. Speaker, overall that is a significant amount of money. The dollars that will come from the school operating grant through government is of course 976.5 million. And the other sum of money that will produce that dollar figure for boards of education is 639.6 million, which comes from the taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. That means that for boards of education for the fiscal year '10-11, they will have budgets that will total nearly \$1.7 billion, the largest number ever for boards of education. And that's the sum of money that will be allocated in those areas, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the changes that we had to make of course was that when we talked about education property tax rates, we indicated that we were going to follow a rebate program for four years, and then at the end of our term, we were going to put in place a long-term solution. Mr. Speaker, we made that change faster than the four-year term. We made that change last year, as I've indicated, when we changed to mill rates, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to clarify for everyone, who will not only see these remarks in *Hansard* but those who might be watching, is that across Saskatchewan the mill rate for agricultural land was set last year at 7.08 mills. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's the same mill rate for agricultural land whether you're in the southeast corner of the province, the northwest corner of the province, it doesn't matter. Agricultural land will be treated the same way.

Mr. Speaker, we're also doing that for residential properties. So residential properties will have a mill rate of 10.08. They had that mill rate set last year in effect for the calendar year 2009. And that means that whether you have a residence in Yorkton, Saskatchewan or whether it's in Moose Jaw, or whether it's out in Loon Lake, Mr. Speaker, the mill rate assessed to your residential property will be 10.08. And, Mr. Speaker, the commercial mill rate is the same. There's a tiered system, and the average of the tiered system for commercial mill rates is 15.42. And, Mr. Speaker, we had indicated that we would follow through with another phase of reducing the taxes this year.

And, Mr. Speaker, I made this comment a number of months ago when I was asked the question by the media that said if there's a balance that needs to be drawn and indeed there will not be significant — sufficient, not significant; I guess the word is sufficient — dollars for the education sector, will I as minister be supporting the continuation of the property tax reduction, or whether or not I would be looking at those dollars to be provided to education? And, Mr. Speaker, at that time I said if that was the end result, of course it would be to education. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, this year we are not continuing with the \$53 million reduction of property taxes, but we are ensuring that boards of education are provided with sufficient dollars so that they can indeed continue with the programs that they have.

So, Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of things that have fallen through in education. One of the second areas that I want to talk about is early learning and child care. Mr. Speaker, in the area of early learning and child care, we have made significant progress over these last few years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to everyone that in the short two and a half years that we have been in government, Mr. Speaker, we will have allocated \$74 million to funding of child care in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that is a 34 per cent increase by March of 2011. So, Mr. Speaker, tremendous growth.

Mr. Speaker, we will have increased the number of child care spaces by 2,900 — 2,900 spaces, Mr. Speaker. That will bring our total to 11,650 spaces, Mr. Speaker, a huge increase from the time when the NDP left in 2007, late 2007 when they left. Our government has recognized that child care spaces are required, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing is that other people are recognizing this as well. Mr. Speaker, I received a letter, Mr. Speaker, I received a letter from the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union Childcare Centre Chair. And the quote from this letter is this, Mr. Speaker:

We believe that the current Saskatchewan Government has made extremely admirable and progressive steps forward by integrating childcare and early learning in the Province's Ministry of Education and, ultimately, through the provision of significant financial support for the refurbishment and development of childcare centres throughout Saskatchewan [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, a comment from the University of Saskatchewan child care board that says as a province we're moving forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's been a great pleasure serving as the Minister of Education responsible for child care because I've had the opportunity to be in so many places, Mr. Speaker, to announce new child care spaces. You know, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure just not so long ago being out at Little Souls Daycare. Little Souls Daycare here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, is a brand new facility where there are 60 spaces being provided. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a group that has taken over, in fact it was a church that had gone into receivership and the building wasn't being used. And they purchased the building, and with donations and tremendous volunteer support, they've converted Little Souls Daycare into a great program.

[21:15]

Mr. Speaker, one of the other new announcements that we just did here a week and a half ago was at the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association]. Mr. Speaker, a brand new, a brand new daycare was announced with 90 spaces at the YWCA. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a really interesting project. They took over some space that had been a seniors' centre that was no longer needed. And they've modified that seniors' centre and they've turned it into a program where now they're going to have 90 children.

Mr. Speaker, the announcements have been far and wide. I had the pleasure of being in the constituency of the member from Melville-Saltcoats last week out in the community of Churchbridge. Mr. Speaker, in Churchbridge there is currently a 23-space daycare. And, Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing in Churchbridge is, as I said, Mr. Speaker . . . In Langenburg — I'm sorry, I did say Churchbridge — it's actually Langenburg. Because I don't want to get that wrong because, Mr. Speaker, one individual came up to me in Langenburg and said, you know, Mr. Minister, in Langenburg right now there are 19 ladies who are expecting. They're pregnant — 19, Mr. Speaker, and this was at this current moment. So, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that they need an expansion to their daycare.

But the way that community has addressed that, Mr. Speaker, is a great thing to see. They had a small daycare, an older daycare, a 23-space daycare. We're adding 18 to make it a 41-space daycare, Mr. Speaker. And with donations, Mr. Speaker, donations coming from Mosaic, from an individual anonymous family donation, Mr. Speaker, of \$50,000 will enable this community to build a facility that's going to be valued over

\$800,000. And they're moving forward, Mr. Speaker. Because we were there on Friday to do the sod turning, but already there was a basement dug, Mr. Speaker. That's how energetic these people are, and they want to move forward because they know that that is something that they're very, very proud of.

Mr. Speaker, what we also have indicated in the budget is that we have allocated \$2 million for additional child care spaces in this year. Mr. Speaker, there is a need. There is no question there is a need to address not only child care but also pre-kindergarten spaces. So, Mr. Speaker, \$1 million will be the funds provided for 18 new pre-kindergarten programs across the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of need. We have identified many, many communities but, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be focusing probably in the two cities, the two larger cities of Regina and Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, we're also going to be focusing in northern Saskatchewan to address some concerns with First Nations and Métis students because we know, Mr. Speaker, that to address the concerns in the area of the North, we believe that the sooner we can introduce an education program to young children, there will be tremendous benefits. So that's where we're going to focus those 18 pre-kindergarten programs.

And, Mr. Speaker, this additional \$1 million now that is made available to early learning and child care for new spaces will mean that we'll be adding 235 new spaces over the course of the fiscal year '10-11. So, Mr. Speaker, again tremendous growth in the area of child care. There are many projects that are required. There are areas that need to continue to grow and, Mr. Speaker, we're taking small steps, but we're continuing to be aware that we must address those concerns of so many people.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other areas that I am responsible for is of course the library system. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue ensuring that the single integrated library system, the one card, one library motto in the province of Saskatchewan is going to be continued with.

Mr. Speaker, I want to explain the SILS [single integrated library system] program to everyone so that they understand it. In Saskatchewan we have 306 libraries and, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is implementing a system, and we have done that now in 4 of the 10 regions. The 306 libraries fit into 10 regions, and 4 of the regions have already moved forward with a single integrated library system.

Mr. Speaker, what this means is that with my library card, I can go here to a library in Regina, and I can look at materials. And if it's not available here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, let's suppose it's available in Yorkton. Then on my way home, Mr. Speaker, through to Yorkton, I could, using my card, ask the Yorkton library system to send the material that I want to my small library in Invermay, Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, I could use that, I could pick that material up in Invermay. I could use it. I could bring it back here to Regina, and I can return it to the Regina Public Library. Mr. Speaker, this is going to be tremendous for everyone. It's going to ensure that people right across all the province . . . And the other six regions will be fully implemented by the end of this fiscal year.

And, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to speak to the National Congress on Rural Education, to the delegates that were attending that conference in Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, there were, I guess it was nine provinces in attendance. Prince Edward Island was not in attendance, but there were a total of nine provinces and two territories. And, Mr. Speaker, there were inquiries about how this system is working. Why is it going to be such a great benefit to all of Saskatchewan people? So, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud as a government to ensure that we can continue moving this forward, and the dollars will be provided to ensure that SILS continues to be implemented in all 306 libraries.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of my favourite topics in education is of course dealing with capital, Mr. Speaker, because we know that capital, Mr. Speaker, in the area of capital we know that the former NDP government left a huge deficit. And as a result of that deficit, Mr. Speaker, we know that the environment that students are forced to work in, that teachers are forced to work in, that that is not conducive necessarily to a great education. So, Mr. Speaker, we've been working very, very diligently and very quickly at addressing some of the concerns.

So, Mr. Speaker, the budget that we currently have before us is allocating an additional \$17.2 million to the area of capital. Now, Mr. Speaker, while that's not a huge amount for this year, I do want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that since the fall of 2007, this total number that we have allocated to capital for school construction and renovation and repair is going to be well over \$328 million. Mr. Speaker, that is unprecedented.

Mr. Speaker, under the former government, the NDP, that would have been about 8 or 9 or 10 years of capital investment because they did not see education as a priority. They did not see this as an area that they needed to address even though, Mr. Speaker, over 70 per cent of our schools are built before 1969. So, Mr. Speaker, there is a deficit. There is a huge deficit and we are moving forward with many, many projects, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at an announcement that I made last week with the Premier — no, I guess it was the week before — the Premier made an announcement where we announced that six additional projects are moving into what is called the detailed design stage. It means that we will have 28 major school capital projects under way right now. Mr. Speaker, that means that projects like the Nutana Collegiate and the E.D. Feehan High School in Saskatoon in both Saskatoon Public and St. Paul's are under way and will get completed. That means that a project like the Porcupine Plain or the Oxbow School or the St. Anne School in Prince Albert or the Stobart Community School in Duck Lake, Mr. Speaker, these projects are all under way.

Mr. Speaker, the school at Maple Creek High School, or the school right here in Regina, the Arcola School that we announced with a sod turning ceremony just a few days ago. And Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to listen to the Chair of the Regina Public Board at the sod turning, and she made this comment to the parents and the students and everyone that was gathered there. And she said, Mr. Speaker, that the project at Arcola School was going to be the first construction of a new school in Regina in 10 years. Mr. Speaker, 10 years since the last new school was built by the Regina Public Board of Education in the city of Regina.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are many things that are happening out there regarding capital. We're very, very proud of the fact that capital dollars are being spent. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the other projects that I think is — actually there's a few projects that are of great interest to the province — but the one out at Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, the Humboldt Collegiate Institute is a project that is funded by both St. Paul's Separate School Division out of Saskatoon and the Horizon School Division. These are two school divisions that jointly operate the Humboldt Collegiate, Mr. Speaker. And there's a project there, Mr. Speaker, that involves not only a brand new high school, but will involve also a regional college component. There are going to be, because it's of course, Mr. Speaker, going to be added on to the Humboldt community centre, it's going to be a tremendous addition to Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, nearly a \$20 million addition.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other projects also that we're getting involved with which is different than what has been the past practice, Mr. Speaker, is the provincial funding of a school that's going to be constructed or is being constructed — it's under way already — at Turnor Lake. Mr. Speaker, Turnor Lake school is going to be a school that's being built on reserve. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no school that is near, so we're going to build a school on reserve. It's coordinated by INAC [Indian and Northern Affairs Canada]. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to contribute, as a province, we're going to contribute over \$3.7 million to that project.

So that will mean, Mr. Speaker, that's going to mean that we're going to have a first-rate school in northern Saskatchewan to address the concerns, not only of students that are on reserve, but those that are off reserve. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very proud to be involved with that project and I know that the Northern Lights school board is also very, very excited about the future of that project.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for a while now in this Assembly we've listened to the members opposite talk about different things. We've listened to them make remarks about capital. We've listened to remarks about daycare. We've listened to remarks about the funds that are provided by the ministry to both public and Catholic boards of education.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to, I want to clarify a couple of things because the people in the province need to understand. And, Mr. Speaker, to set the context for those comments, I'm going to quote from *Hansard* of March 23rd of this year. And, Mr. Speaker, these are the remarks of the member from Saskatoon Nutana. And I quote:

I asked the minister if he could provide me with an updated list of school capital and in fact, Mr. Speaker, he did not provide me the list for 2009. He provided me a list for 2008."

And there's a number of comments because this was in response to a ministerial statement.

Also further on, on page 4413, the member also said this:

So, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister that when people submit written questions from the opposition, could the

minister please provide the latest information in the ministry, and accurate information, so that we can all do our job on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, isn't it interesting, isn't it interesting that the member who asked those questions doesn't even know what her own caucus is doing. And for the benefit of the member opposite and the House Leader opposite, I'm going to, I'm going to . . . I don't have to table them because of course they're government documents. They're in the proceedings of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, on October 29th, '09, the member for Regina Dewdney, the House Leader, asked question no. 150. And it says this, "To the Minister of Education: What was the order of priority for the capital lists for schools as of October 1, 2009?"

[21:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, October 1, 2009, is the date that the member is asking for information. Mr. Speaker, the information of course is the list that was put together in the summer of 2009. That is the list, Mr. Speaker, that we provided to him. That is the list, Mr. Speaker, that is hidden away on the website of the Ministry of Education. It's the list that still exists on that website today because, Mr. Speaker, the next list will be developed in the summer of 2010 and then it will be updated.

So, Mr. Speaker, that was question 150. Now, Mr. Speaker, question 153. And I want to put this one on the record as well because this is the same member asking the question, and he says this, and again this is the member for Regina Dewdney and he says, "To the Minister of Education: What was the order of priority for the capital lists for schools as of January 1, 2000."

Now, Mr. Speaker, January 1, 2000, that's way back when, when the NDP were the government and they're asking for the list of their government. So, Mr. Speaker, we provided them, after researching it, we provided them with the list of June 1999 because that was the current list for that particular year.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's take you to November the 16th, 2009. A question is again asked by the member for Regina Dewdney. It's question no. 500. "To the Minister of Education: What was the order of priority for the capital lists for schools as of January 1, 2009?"

Now, Mr. Speaker, I hope I've helped the member for Regina Rosemont and others understand that when you ask a question that says, I want the capital list for schools as of January 1st, 2009, that the most current list for January 1st, 2009 would be the list for summer of 2008. Right? Mr. Speaker, that's, you know, common sense. So, Mr. Speaker, we provided the answer to the member that said, here's the enclosed list for 2008, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12], major capital projects.

But, Mr. Speaker, that isn't the half of it. Mr. Speaker, two days later, two days later the member for Saskatoon Nutana enters question no. 536. And it says, "To the Minister of Education: What was the order of priority for the capital lists for schools as of January 1, 2009?" Mr. Speaker, these are the identical questions. The member for Regina Dewdney asked the question 500, said, "What was the order of priority for the capital lists

for schools as of January 1, 2009?" The member for Saskatoon Nutana asked the question by the way, 36 questions later, two days later. She says, "What was the order of priority for the capital lists for schools as of January 1, 2009?"

So we provided that list, Mr. Speaker. It was the list for 2008. And, Mr. Speaker, the member stands in this House and she says, but I asked you a question and the question was, provide me with the information as of January 1st, 2009. And we did. And she read from that list, and she said, oh, but Mr. Minister, you tried to trick me. You tried to trick me. You read, you read the schools from the 2008 list, and those weren't the schools that you announced in Saskatoon. The Premier announced schools from the list of 2009.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's what she asked for. I can't read her mind, even though it's probably pretty easy to read. For a member who hasn't . . . who's been in this Assembly a lot longer than I have, who's a former Minister of Education, and she doesn't know that that list that is current today is on the website. She doesn't know that, Mr. Speaker.

So all of a sudden I'm supposed to have secretly produced a new list, the list that the member for Regina Rosemont had last year when he was the critic. Because he knew what that list was, and he was always asking me about projects in Regina, when we were going to move forward with Douglas Park and Arcola. But you know what? The member for Regina Dewdney forgot to give the answer to the member for Saskatoon Nutana. And of course she couldn't ask. She couldn't ask her own colleague to provide her with the list, and heaven forbid going to the website to actually find out what the list is.

So, Mr. Speaker, when she makes the comments in this Assembly that suggests that the Minister of Education has not provided what she wanted, Mr. Speaker, it's just not, not accurate. She asked for the list. We gave her the list. Member for Regina Dewdney asked for the list. We gave him the same list. You know, Mr. Speaker, there was a list asked for on October 1. We gave them that list.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if by chance they don't have access to a computer and they've lost the copy that we sent them, we can give them the list. It's the 2009 list that lists the projects under priority 2: project no. 1, St. Joseph School and Holy Trinity; project no. 2, Willowgrove in Saskatoon public; project no. 3, Willowgrove in Saskatoon Catholic; project no. 4, St. Thomas in Lloydminster. And, Mr. Speaker, I think you can see that this is the current list. This is the list that we follow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that I still need to bring up, Mr. Speaker, because you know the day, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it was the day that I was in Saskatoon with the Premier announcing the projects, and the Minister of Health responded to some questions. But this is also from *Hansard*, on page 4322 of March 18, and it says this: the U of S — in parentheses, of course, the University of Saskatchewan — campus daycare, and by the way I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker, from *Hansard*, it says: "The U of S [University of Saskatchewan] campus daycare doesn't accept children until they're two and a half." Mr. Speaker, not true. Not true. The centre is licensed for six infants, that is, between the age of six weeks to 17 months, and 10 toddlers between the ages of 18

months to two and a half.

So, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Nutana rose in this Assembly and asked, not asked but suggested that in fact a daycare didn't have any children in it at all under that age. Mr. Speaker, that's not accurate. And, Mr. Speaker, that's something that that member should apologize for because she cannot accuse somebody of making sure that the centre has indeed students.

Mr. Speaker, my final comment about the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I know the member for The Battlefords would love to hear more about his, you know, his colleague, but we'll restrict it to a letter that was sent from the . . . The letter was sent to me, dated February 11th, from the member for Saskatoon Nutana. Mr. Speaker, the context of this letter is the member is asking for clarification on how teachers are hired in the Humboldt Collegiate Institute.

And as I indicated, all members would know that the Humboldt Collegiate Institute is a collegiate that is operated by both the Horizon School Division and the St. Paul's, in other words, a public and a Catholic board. And she asks questions about whether or not there's a clause in the agreement as to who should be hired and who's exempted. But, Mr. Speaker, the paragraph that is of great interest to teachers across the province is this paragraph, and I quote, word for word:

I also have been told that teachers are being hired into positions to fulfill this requirement. I'm told that many of these teachers are unaccredited. I am told that we already have difficulty with our school achievement scores. People knowledgeable in their subject area, particularly in large centres, might assist our province in improving learning outcomes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just by that paragraph alone people may say, oh, what does that mean? You know, accredited. I want to indicate to people what accreditation means. Accredited teachers are teachers who can give their own final exam to grade 12 students. In other words they determine the mark for all grade 12 classes. They're referred to as accredited. Mr. Speaker, there are four conditions that teachers need to achieve to become accredited. One of them, Mr. Speaker, is they must hold the Saskatchewan Professional A Certificate. Number two, they have to have a university standing with a major in that particular subject area. So what that means, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to be accredited in mathematics, you have to have a major in math. If you're going to be accredited in English, you have to have a major in English. The second thing, the third thing, Mr. Speaker, is that they have to attend an accreditation seminar which is held in the summer for teachers who are interested in becoming accredited. But, Mr. Speaker, the fourth and very critical piece of information is that you must have at least two years of teaching to become accredited.

So, Mr. Speaker, now think about the paragraph that the member from Saskatoon Nutana wrote and she said our declining achievement scores are due to the fact that boards of education have hired unaccredited teachers. Mr. Speaker, that's a slap in the face of every College of Education graduate. Because, Mr. Speaker, a College of Education graduate who has a major in mathematics and goes to a school to teach in year

one and year two cannot be accredited. And, Mr. Speaker, that member has suggested, that member has suggested that the achievement level scores that are declining are due to the fact that boards of education have unaccredited teachers.

Mr. Speaker, that's appalling. That's appalling that a member who is, indicates that she's a teacher, Mr. Speaker, she indicates she's a teacher . . . She's been a Minister of Education. She knows what the accreditation criteria are and she suggests that the achievement levels in our schools are due to the fact that boards of education hire unaccredited teachers. Mr. Speaker, isn't that something? Isn't that something, that the member opposite would believe that teachers who are not accredited should not teach grade 12?

An Hon. Member: — Oh, give me a break.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Because that's what she says, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is saying give her a break. Give her a break. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's her letter. It's her letter that says that the achievement levels are not good enough because there have been too many unaccredited teachers hired.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is something that the teachers of this province need to understand. They need to understand the position taken by that member and, in fact, that entire opposition regarding education. The fact that education isn't a priority, never was. The fact, Mr. Speaker, that they don't respect teachers. The fact that teachers who are unaccredited are contributing to lower achievement scores, Mr. Speaker, that's what this opposition is putting forward, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Nutana stands in this Assembly, she has to have her facts right, Mr. Speaker. She has to understand that there are people that look at those remarks. They look at those remarks and they bring them to our attention and say, did the member really mean this? Did she mean that we shouldn't be hiring those teachers?

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many things that we could talk about today. Mr. Speaker, there are many, many things. But I know, Mr. Speaker, that there are other members that want to participate in this debate. Mr. Speaker, I hope that I have clarified a number of things for people in this province so they would understand how we're moving forward with capital, how we're moving forward with early learning and childcare, how we're ensuring that there are enough funds for boards of education to provide adequate education. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I will not be supporting the amendment but will gladly be supporting the budget of this government.

[21:45]

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, you know I've witnessed a couple of things in this Assembly in the last week. I've witnessed the Premier last Wednesday in this question period totally out of control in front of 600 people and I must say, Mr. Speaker, I've never seen a Premier act like that, ever, on budget day. And then, Mr. Speaker, I just saw the Minister of Education . . . I dropped out of the House just to get a coffee and I looked at him on television and I think if people

were watching they would be concerned that this was a man that was also out of control and about to have a heart attack, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education didn't talk about the budget and I think I know why. I think I know why he didn't talk about the budget, and that's because the budget will create a number of problems for school divisions in the province. But before I begin to talk about schools I want to make this point. This 2010-11 budget is a dishonest budget put together by a bunch of incompetent men and women in the Sask Party. This is a dishonest budget just like last year's. Just like last year's. Last year the Government of Saskatchewan, the Sask Party government, put into the revenue projections \$1.9 billion in potash. And, Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition indicated to the people of Saskatchewan that putting all of your eggs in one potash basket — 20 per cent of the budget — was a serious problem. And it was, Mr. Speaker. So serious that they did not meet their revenue projection and, in fact, they have to pay the potash, repay the potash industry over \$200 million in royalties, Mr. Speaker.

Now can you imagine, can you imagine that this happened? This happened because of their fiscal incompetence, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they didn't listen to the officials in Finance. No, they didn't listen to the officials in Finance. They wanted to increase spending and they needed to figure out how to match the revenues with their increase in spending and so they plucked \$1.9 billion in potash revenues out of the hat.

And what did we see, Mr. Speaker. Well how did they "balance the 2009-10 budget?" Well they moved \$755 million out of the Crowns, cash out of the Crowns, and they moved over \$510 million from the growth and fiscal stabilization fund, Mr. Speaker. They moved \$1.3 billion in cash to deal with their fiscal incompetence. And, Mr. Speaker, that is indeed the truth. That is the truth and those are the facts.

Now when this operation came to government in November of 2007, what did they find? They found \$1.2 billion in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and \$1.1 billion in CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. Now, Mr. Speaker, what is incredible on budget day during the lock-up for the MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], I asked the CIC officials how much money is left at CIC and here's what they told us. This is it. CIC used to have over \$1 billion. Here's what they told us: \$195 million for the children's hospital and \$40 million for clean coal. Mr. Speaker, this group of men and women have wiped out all of the money over at CIC to deal with their spending spree, Mr. Speaker. And it speaks to their incompetence, Mr. Speaker, because the question is this. They had a deficit this past year, '09-10. They are projecting a deficit this year, 2010-11, and they're projecting a deficit in the following year, election year. So here we have a group of men and women, four-year term, and they will have had three out of four deficits. And they have cleaned out, they have cleaned out every nickel we left them, Mr. Speaker, and that speaks to their incompetence.

Now this is a group of men and women that increase spending by 32 per cent. And Eric Howe who is an economist at the University of Saskatchewan, who also considers himself to be a Conservative, stated very eloquently that this is not a

government that has a revenue problem — far be it from that, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that has a spending problem. And they've increased spending in this province over \$2 billion since they came to government, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sorry, you cannot spend more on a long-term basis than you're taking in. And if you do that, you increase the debt of the province, and that's exactly what these men and women are doing.

So, Mr. Speaker, this budget is a dishonest budget and it's a budget that was put together and they're quite proud of it. But I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, this budget was put together by a group of incompetent people who have not listened to the officials in the Department of Finance or officials anywhere else, and they certainly aren't listening to the people of Saskatchewan because . . . [inaudible] . . . that people don't want to go back to the Grant Devine days where year after year after year deficit budgeting, deficit budgeting and long-term debt.

Now they say we can't go back. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is their third budget and it's their second deficit budget, Mr. Speaker. And you know, let me say this. They have deficit budgets at a time when we are experiencing record revenues, Mr. Speaker. They have deficit budgets. Now these folks like to brag about the statistics and how well the province is doing. I just want to say this: we have some charts that we've put together and I think they're very interesting. The public needs to know this.

In 2007, how many barrels a day of crude production took place in the province of Saskatchewan: 427,752,000. How many in 2009: 423,387, Mr. Speaker — a reduction under the Sask Party.

Now let's talk about oil well completions — 2,182 in 2007. How many in 2009: 1,338 wells.

Then let's talk about natural gas production — 678,500,000 in 2007. And how many in 2009: five hundred and eighty-five thousand, nine hundred . . . thousand, Mr. Speaker, a reduction.

Gas well completions in Saskatchewan — this is interesting — 2007: 1,217. How many in 2009: 330.

Now let's talk about land sales. Let's talk about land sales — 2007: 250.3 million. 2009: 118.2 million.

Let's talk about building permits — 2007: 5,332. How many in 2009: 4,401, Mr. Speaker.

Now let's talk about apartment vacancies. This is something that my constituents are interested in. 2007, Regina, 1.7 per cent. Regina, October 2009, point six per cent, Mr. Speaker. And here's an interesting one — Lloydminster, point three per cent in October 2007. What's the vacancy rate in October of 2009? 8.8 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Now let's talk about the average rents. This is kind of important. Saskatoon, October 2007, \$693 for a two-bedroom apartment. October 2009, \$905. Who lives in apartments, Mr. Speaker? Mostly working people on service sector jobs, Mr. Speaker. And have they seen an increase in minimum wage that wasn't scheduled by the NDP under this operation? Absolutely not.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about seniors waiting for housing. September 2009 in Saskatoon, 235 seniors are waiting for housing, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about SaskPower rates. Oh, this is interesting. February 2007: \$15.31. August 1st, 2010: \$19.57. And don't they have . . . Aren't they proposing to increase power some more? I think that's going to be coming.

And then we have . . . This is very, very interesting. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the government that said that they were going to reduce waiting lists in the province. Now December '07, there were 26,883 people sitting on a waiting list. Now you'd think it would have gone down because they've certainly promised that they were going to go down, and they've been in government for over two and a half years. What was it, December '09? Now this is according to the surgery wait list initiative. I think I did find this on the computer, and it was 28,672. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's practically 2,000 more people on the waiting list since these men and women have been in office.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here is an interesting one. You know, they like to brag a lot about how they're doing. And I remember, I think it was my colleague asked the Minister of Social Services to tell us how many people are sitting on the social assistance caseload. And apparently she wasn't going to do it, but finally she told us. Well, Mr. Speaker, since they've come to government we've seen an increase of 1,700 cases, Mr. Speaker, 1,700 cases since this group of men and women came to office. There are more people on social assistance than there were when they came into office.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other . . . And they laugh. Well I don't think if you're someone who is experiencing unemployment, it's not very funny to have to be involved with social assistance.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here's another interesting fact. In 2007 the average farm expense per farm was \$142,288. What is it today? \$166,539. Mr. Speaker, there has been a significant increase in the average farm expense in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now I'll say it again because I know there's a lot of people that are interested in this because they represent a lot of farmers. Average farm expenses per farm was \$142,288 in 2007; 2009, \$166,539. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's over \$24,000 increase with this group of men and women. And then of course the expenses on farm inputs in 2007: 4,904; in 2009, 5,879. Now that is per million, Mr. Speaker.

Then this is an interesting one. In 2007 there were 1.349 million hogs in the province of Saskatchewan, and how many are there today? 780,000 hogs. Hog production in the province of Saskatchewan has been cut in half under this group of men and women, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, I know they like to think all's well. But here's what's interesting, they like to think that there's been just a miracle that's happened in the province of Saskatchewan since they came to office.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at production of commodities, production has not changed. The miracle has been that in 2008 the commodities that were sold in the province of Saskatchewan were at its pinnacle. And I think these group of men and women thought this was going to last forever and they could spend

money like there was no tomorrow. And in fact that's what they did.

[22:00]

When you come into office with \$2.3 billion in cash, commodity prices in the stratosphere, I guess you think that you don't have to drive Chevy Impalas anymore; you can drive Jeep Libertys, Mr. Speaker. I guess you think you don't have to put up with Grant Devine's old furniture in your cabinet office; you can go out and get new stuff. You don't have to put up with the old carpets that Grant Devine put into this building; you can go out and get new stuff. Oh, you don't have to put up with old drapes; you can go out and get new stuff.

And that's exactly what's happened in the province of Saskatchewan. These men and women have spent money like there's no tomorrow. And, Mr. Speaker, we have had a deficit last year, and they still cleaned out the Crowns and they still took money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And they still had a deficit. And, Mr. Speaker, they're going to do the same thing this year.

Now what's really a laugh, a joke, they say they decreased spending by \$125 million. Well, Mr. Speaker, they didn't. Mr. Speaker, mid year they decided they better try and rein in some of this spending, so they stopped some of their projects. They pulled back some of the money. I think the nursing homes they pulled back. They pulled back some schools, you know, that sort of thing. And they said, oh we've got spending under control. But in fact if you look at this budget, over what they actually spent last year, they're increasing spending.

Now where this budget is dishonest, Mr. Speaker, is here. This is a group of men and women who have just told us that they're going to increase health care spending by 5 per cent for the health regions, but they are estimating that health regions will run deficits. And in fact this fiscal year that's just going to close out here in a couple of days, according to their forecast, those health regions have run \$136.9 million in deficits this year. And they're projecting they're going to run another 76 million.

Well I bet. I bet. Because here's what they said last spring with the budget: they said those regional health authorities would have a surplus of 11.7 million. And what did they really have, according to their own budget book? A deficit of 136.9 million. And they're projecting a further 76 million, and I suggest it's going to be a lot higher than that, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at their own budget book, summary statement of surplus, they're projecting a deficit of 677.5 million. Their forecast for last year, even though they took money out of CIC, 755 million; even though they took money out of the fiscal stabilization fund, over 500 million; 1.3 billion they took out of our savings account, Mr. Speaker; they're still going to have a deficit of close to a half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker.

So in two years, in two years, these group of men and women called the Sask Party have increased the debt by over \$1 billion and they took out \$1.3 billion in cash, Mr. Speaker. Now that is not competence, Mr. Speaker. That's not competence. And I know they like to think they're competent and I know that they think that they've been doing a very good job. But the reality in

the province of Saskatchewan, we've gone from having \$2.3 billion in savings to now having over \$1 billion in debt at a time when there are record revenues.

And you cannot continue to spend money like there's no tomorrow, like there's no budgeting, just because you want to. You have to be fiscally responsible. And I say to the people of Saskatchewan, this group of men and women have not been fiscally responsible with this third budget. And next year they're projecting another deficit, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think the thing that is most troubling is contained on page 25 of their budget summary. And for all of those citizens that are listening tonight, please go to page 25 because this is the most, this is one of the more troubling aspects of their budget. And on page 25 at the top of the page, they say this:

There has been a change in how the Province funds capital acquisition by Treasury Board Crown organizations. Rather than provide the TB Crown an upfront capital grant, the Province will fund (and expense) the capital as it is amortized by that TB Crown. This change effectively amortizes and expenses TB Crown capital acquisitions in the same manner that it amortizes its own capital assets.

And that is a change. Now, Mr. Speaker, who are Treasury Board Crowns? What group of organizations have they put under Treasury Board Crowns?

Now what the citizens of Saskatchewan should know is boards of education are now under Treasury Board organizations. Mr. Speaker, health regions are under Treasury Board organizations. And, Mr. Speaker, historically what we've done when we've funded a school, we had the money for the school. When we funded a health facility, we had the money for a health facility. And, Mr. . . .

An Hon. Member: — Absolutely not.

Ms. Atkinson: — Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, absolutely. We did not amortize that over a period of years. We did not do that. And the Minister of Health, I know he likes to have his little rages. We witness them regularly. But in fact that's how it happened. You might have phase one, phase two, phase three, phase four, but you funded it with a grant. And, Mr. Speaker, the worry is that they will announce this capital and the organizations will get finance that capital and the government will amortize it and pay a grant to those organizations over a 25- or 30-year period. And, Mr. Speaker, we don't want to go back to those days.

Mr. Speaker, there's an organization called the Global Transportation Hub Authority. This is their global transportation hub out here on the outskirts of Regina. This has the potential to have a very significant capital investment by the province of Saskatchewan. In the past what we would do is, we would finance that as the project was being built. Now, Mr. Speaker, on page 25, they're going to change that. And that is a worry, Mr. Speaker.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we know that this is the government that's very interested in a domed stadium. And there is the

possibility that a Crown corporation could be created for the domed stadium. And how would you fund it? Well the organization could borrow the money and the government over 30 years or 35 years could be amortized and pay for it.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this is a very difficult problem because we don't want to go back to the bad old days when we didn't know in the province of Saskatchewan how much money was coming in and how much money was going out. And I would say to the people of Saskatchewan that this is a shell game. And it's a game that we should worry about, Mr. Speaker, because they are changing the accounting rules, not at the beginning of a new cycle, but in the middle of their mandate, Mr. Speaker. And we find that unacceptable in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that our health regions apparently have received a 5 per cent increase. I represent one of the ridings in the city of Saskatoon. The health region in Saskatoon has indicated, and most people will know, that this is a provincial health region because a majority of the patients that go to that health region come from across the province. And our CEO [chief executive officer] Maura Davies has advised us that they're going to have to find about \$24 million in operating reductions, Mr. Speaker. And this is a health region that is running a deficit this year.

They have notified . . . In the paper today, they've indicated that they are no longer going to have retired nurses who are on pension return to the health region to provide services. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that there are a number of nurses in the health region that I represent that are extremely worried that, while the minister is talking about 600 new nurses, there's been a lot of the holes filled by nurses that have retired and come back on a casual basis. And they're very, very concerned that they will not have enough nurses to do the work that needs to be done in the Regina Health Region, Mr. Speaker, or in the Saskatoon Health Region.

The other area of concern in Saskatoon is what's going to happen with our two school boards. And, Mr. Speaker, both the financial officers for our two school boards have indicated that this grant that the government is providing our two school boards amounts to about a 1.2 per cent increase. And they've indicated that — based on their contractual obligations, utilities, their service contracts, and so on and so forth — all of those bills that are constant exceed the 1.1 per cent increase that's coming from the province of Saskatchewan.

Garry Benning, the chief financial officer for the Saskatoon Public board said, based on the number that they've received, that there is a shortage. And, Mr. Speaker, I should tell the public that school boards in this past fiscal year used reserves in order to balance their budget. And that also shows up in their information.

Last year school boards apparently had a surplus of about 107.8 million, and this year they're looking at 31.9 million. And I guess they're expected to use their reserves to continue to deal with operating shortfalls from the province, Mr. Speaker. But Garry Benning has indicated that the increased grant from the province works out to about 1.16 per cent for the school year which is less than the increases that the school board in Saskatoon, the Saskatoon Public School Board is facing. And

Don Lloyd who is the chief financial officer over at the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools says that they're going to have to reduce expenditures to meet their budget as well, Mr. Speaker.

So the government, the Sask Party government can say that the one point — to give them some faith — 1.2 per cent increase is enough, but I can say to the public that the school officials are looking at reductions as a result of this government.

And, Mr. Speaker, what's I think a bit troubling is that in the past, if governments got themselves in difficulty and had to reduce expenditures to schools, the grant coming from the province, school boards had some place to go. They no longer have that capacity because this government took away their ability to tax, and so now they are totally at the mercy of the provincial government. By law they're not able to run deficits, and so in order to balance their budget, they're going to have to get out the chopping knife and cut off some expenses to meet the money that's coming from this government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's some other things in this budget that are very disturbing. Mr. Speaker, I find it very problematic that the Early Learning Centre here in Regina had more bad news, and a grant that they had received from the Ministry of Education through Community Solutions has been cut. That's \$57,000 a year grant that the Early Learning Centre received to provide preschool support for highly vulnerable preschool children and their families. As well, Mr. Speaker, other Regina agencies have received a cut to their funding. The McKenzie Infant Care Centre, the Circle Project, and Stepping Stones have also received cuts.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, every community-based organization in the province who had access to the central vehicle agency used the vehicles to transport children or the women that they worked with. That is now cut. So for instance, Transition House in North Battleford, Saskatoon, Regina used to have access on a cost-recovery basis to CVAs [central vehicle agency] and they no longer do. And what those . . . Well you know they talk about Warman, but for the women who work with those vulnerable, abused women and their children every day, having access to a van to take those little kids to school or daycare, or to take those women to the police station, the hospital or to wherever they have to go, those vehicles are no longer available, thanks to the Sask Party government.

[22:15]

And I would have expected at the very least, Mr. Speaker, I would have expected at the very least that the women in the Sask Party caucus, the women in the Sask Party caucus would have stood up to the people, to the men in their caucus and said, you are not cutting the CVAs to the transition houses in this province because they need to have those vehicles to transport the little kids and the vulnerable women. But did they stand up and say no? They did not, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's shameful, Mr. Speaker, absolutely shameful, absolutely shameful.

They stood in this House and they went on and on and on about women services when they were in opposition. But could they stand up, could they stand up and say no, you are not cutting those CVA vehicles to those transition houses, Interval House

in my constituency? Absolutely not. They couldn't do that, Mr. Speaker, and they're saying, oh well we've given a 1 per cent increase. We've given them a 1 per cent increase, and they should be happy. But, Mr. Speaker, they can't drive their own vehicles. They can't drive their own vehicles, they're going to have to find vehicles, and that is going to be more than 1 per cent. It's going to be more than 1 per cent.

So I find it absolutely shameful that the women over there did not stand up for Interval House, Transition House in North Battleford, Transition House in Moose Jaw, Transition House in Weyburn, Transition House in Regina. They did nothing, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely nothing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I think that this government over here . . . it speaks to their meanness. It speaks to their meanness. It speaks to their meanness. There's some groups they like, and there's other groups they don't like. We had neighbourhood community development organizations in Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, and Saskatoon, and what did they do? They cut those organizations, Mr. Speaker. And why did they cut these organizations? That's a very good question. They cut the Regina learning centre. I don't know why. But there are all of these organizations that work with vulnerable people, help them to become independent, help them access housing, help people get into housing. And these people cut.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think when this budget sort of sifts it way down, when we get to the bottom of it, we're going to find that it was death by a thousand cuts. That's what we're going to find. They cut transition houses and women having access to CVA vehicles. They cut a grant to the Early Learning Centre here in Regina — the Mackenzie infant centre here in Regina. They cut grants to the very groups that look after our most vulnerable children and most vulnerable women, Mr. Speaker, and we find that shameful, Mr. Speaker.

On top of that, I mean . . . And I asked this question on budget day. I asked, is there any government in Canada that has a deficit, across the country, that has given up its broadcast licence? And the answer from the officials was no. Now please tell me this. What kind of thinking went into cutting SCN and a government giving up a broadcast licence? What kind . . . Who was thinking over there because I can tell you that you're not going to get that broadcast licence back. That's what I can tell you. And why a government would give up a broadcast licence, when they're so difficult to get, is beyond me, Mr. Speaker. It's beyond me. Why would a government give up a broadcast licence that helps the film industry in this province, film and television industry, survive because they have access to SCN and support from SCN?

And, Mr. Speaker, you know on budget day or soon thereafter, there was a group put up on Facebook to save SCN and I think they have over 3,500 people in the province of Saskatchewan that have said, let's save SCN. And I would really encourage the government to rethink this one.

You know, you can go after lots of groups. You know, you might not like them for political reasons or whatever. You might not like the people that work there. You might not like the people that are on the board, or you might not like — I don't know — the executive director. You might think they're just

not good people. But for heaven's sakes, why would you give up a broadcast licence? Why would you do that because it makes no sense if you're thinking logically and rationally which then . . . I guess it speaks to the competence, Mr. Speaker, because a competent group of men and women would not give up a broadcast licence in the province of Saskatchewan, and so I guess this speaks to their incompetence.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard the Minister of Agriculture talk about the great things that have occurred in the province of Saskatchewan in agriculture. I do note, I do note and I remember his budget speech last year where he talked about close to half a billion dollars in the Ag budget. And he was pleased as punch, and he thought that this was the best thing since sliced bread. And I do note this year that the largest cut . . . Guess which budget it's in? It's in Agriculture. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I do note this. I do note this. I do note this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh and Bob says I'm going to get myself in trouble. Bob says I'm going to get myself in trouble. No, I'm not. Oh pardon me, the member from Saltcoats says, I'm going to get myself in trouble.

But you know, here's what's so interesting about the last NDP budget. How much did we put into AgriStability, CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization]? One hundred and eighteen million bucks. And how much is the Sask Party putting in this year? One hundred and four million dollars. Oh why is that? What a surprise, Mr. Speaker, what a surprise.

Oh and he says it's because prices have gone down, prices have gone down. Oh. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting how times change. It's interesting how times change. Now that he's been in government for a couple years, you look at the experience of the program and they've cut \$97 million out of his budget because it wasn't spent, Mr. Speaker. And if he was sitting on this side of the House, he would be railing away, and we would hear him all over the Legislative Assembly. But now that he's sitting on those benches, he's prepared to go with a 97 . . . He's prepared to sort of keep his counsel — I guess I'll say — his counsel and just suck it up because his budget took the biggest hit of all the ministries in government. His budget took the biggest hit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is very surprising because this is a minister that, he was the Ag critic for a very long time. He's been their only Agriculture minister, and I would have thought he would have fought hard to keep his budget intact. But obviously, Mr. Speaker, he was overcome by all of his colleagues, and they needed that money desperately to move into some other area. And so now we have, now we have a budget that is very, very small relative to what that minister talked about last year.

And you know I noticed that the minister, he talked about gophers and he talked about the coyote program and he talked about the well program, but he really didn't talk about any new programs for Agriculture this year. And I think the minister knows that this is going to be a very tough year on the farm. Oh, I think it is. I think it's going to be a tough year, and farmers are predicting it.

Now he can say, no it's not. He will say, no it's not going to be a tough year. But it's going to be a tough year. If you look at the

price of commodities, things are down and things are down significantly. And farmers aren't feeling all that optimistic about prices. And a lot of people are hanging on to what they had last year, hoping that the prices are going to go up, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have spent quite a bit of time on this budget, but I will say this. This is what I predict: I predict that health boards in the province of Saskatchewan are going to run some significant deficits this year because they cannot do what this government wants them to accomplish on a 5 per cent increase. I predict that.

I predict that the Education budget is going to be much larger than what they put in this book, and so their deficit is going to be much larger because they haven't included teachers' salaries.

I predict the health regions are going to spend more and have larger deficits because \$100 million of this budget increase to the health regions is for nurses' salaries. We were told that on budget day: \$40 million apparently for the 600 new nurses, and another \$60 million to implement their 40 per cent wage increase over four years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I predict significant deficits in our health regions. And the Education budget will be much higher than the minister is telling us today because they have not taken into account teachers' salaries. And in fact the Minister of Education told those boards on budget day that LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreements might be included as well in new funding that might be coming mid-year or later on, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'm glad to see that the Minister of Education is back. And I just have one closing note, I have one closing note for the Minister of Education. You know, Minister, on budget day, you insulted a lot of people in your budget briefing when you took on the people from the Regina Catholic school board. They've never seen anything quite like it. And, Mr. Speaker, when the Regina Catholic school board came to this Assembly, that minister when he sat down, he stared up into that gallery and tried to intimidate those citizens. And I will say here, that this is unacceptable behaviour coming from a minister of the Crown to try and attempt to intimidate citizens that come to this Assembly with their issues, Mr. Speaker, as behaviour unbecoming of the Minister of Education in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I hope next year, if he's still the minister and when he meets with his stakeholders, that he will have the courtesy to treat those stakeholders with respect. Because it was not appreciated by the people who had to witness him reaming out the Regina Catholic school board in front of hundreds of people, not only at Queensbury Downs, but people who were watching through video conferencing across the province. And it was said to me that they had never seen anything like it, that if you have a pupil you want to discipline, you don't discipline them in front of the whole crowd, Mr. Speaker.

So the minister can slap me around all he wants, but I would just ask him, slap me, but please don't slap citizens in this province that are trying to have their voices heard in this Assembly . . . [inaudible] . . . elected representatives in this

Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the minister can go after me all he wants. I'm a big girl. I've got thick skin, but please don't slap around the citizens of this province that come and want their voices heard through their elected members of their Assembly.

And they can be offended all they want. They can phone out to, you know, whoever and say, you better not, you better not talk like that. You better not talk to the opposition. You better not come to the House because we're going to be in power an awfully long time and . . .

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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