



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
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Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
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Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
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Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
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Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
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Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
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Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Regina Dewdney on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — To make a personal statement, Mr. Speaker.

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

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Apology to the Speaker

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today and rise to apologize for a statement I made yesterday in the House, Mr. Speaker. In the heat of the moment yesterday, I made a statement that impugned yourself, Mr. Speaker, and suggested that you were biased.

Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to you personally and to the House. I previously apologized to you personally, Mr. Speaker. I consider you a friend. I'm sorry for the comments yesterday. In the heat of the moment we all say things we shouldn't, but it is the responsible thing to do to take responsibility for having made a statement.

Mr. Speaker, you have my respect and I sincerely apologize for having yesterday called into question your integrity. And most importantly, I hope we remain friends and I'm sure we will. And we will work together in the future, I'm sure, with a great deal of respect and credibility. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I thank the member for his very welcome comments. I greatly appreciate it. And also I'd thank the member for catching me by surprise and coming earlier. That's truly appreciated. It's been the endeavour of the Speaker to try and work with all members of the Assembly. And I know we have difficulties and challenges at the time as a result of just the works on the floor, but thank you so much to the member from Regina Dewdney.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to make a special introduction of folks that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They were here earlier today for the signing of an MOU [memorandum of understanding] between SaskPower and the brand new First Nations Power Authority, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, under our government SaskPower has said quite publicly they don't have to build and operate all of the generation in the province; rather they can purchase it from others. And First Nations businesses are interested in this

province and providing that electricity for a growing economy.

And joining us today now here in the legislature, to help mark the event and sign the MOU — and maybe I'll ask them all to give a wave as I read their name, Mr. Speaker — is Chief Eric Sylvestre from the Meadow Lake Tribal Council; the vice-chief from MLTC, Dwayne Lasas; Chief Carol Bernard from Waterhen First Nation, Mr. Speaker; Ben Voss who will be the Chair of the First Nations Power Authority board. I think Jason Pollock is . . . There he is. Jason Pollock will be the executive director for the First Nations Power Authority. Doug Richardson I believe has joined us; he's the legal counsel for the authority. And Wayne Rude, the manager of Aboriginal relations in SaskPower.

Mr. Speaker, it was an historic day here at the legislature. We thank these individuals for coming down to help sign the MOU, to make it happen, and we welcome them to their Legislative Assembly today.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I want to join the Premier in welcoming the guests in our legislature today. I will have more to say about the specific memorandum of understanding later today. I believe the Minister of Justice will have, or the Minister for SaskPower will have a few words to say later. But I just want to ensure that the members of the authority who are here today know that all members of the legislature welcome them to the Assembly, grateful to see the work that they're doing both for their home communities and for the province at large. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the opposition, we join with the Premier in welcoming them to their Chamber today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly several visitors today. They are law students who will be completing their articles with the Ministry of Justice and the courts this year in Regina.

They are Elizabeth Addabor and Andrew Reeson. They will be articling with the ministry. Elizabeth comes to us from the University of Calgary. She has also studied law at the University of Michigan and in her native Ghana. Andrew Reeson studied at the University of Saskatchewan. His volunteer activity includes working with the Legal Advice Clinic in Saskatoon and assisting legal aid lawyers in Pelican Narrows.

Andrew Davis will article with the Provincial Court. Andrew studied law at Dalhousie University after majoring in French and economics at the University of Regina. Andrew has been working as a clerk providing research to the Provincial Court. As a summer student he worked for francophone affairs branch with the provincial government.

Erin Hawes will article with the Court of Queen's Bench. Erin studied law at the University of Saskatchewan, and before that received her Bachelor of Commerce from the University of

Saskatchewan. Megan Vuksic will article with the Court of Appeal. Megan studied at the University of Toronto law school where she was an active volunteer, particularly with the Downtown Legal Services clinic.

Mr. Speaker: I'm always proud that we have a diverse group of articling students. We want to wish them all the best in their coming year and hope that most of them are willing to stay with the province of Saskatchewan, with government services. And I would ask that all members join me in welcoming them to their Assembly today.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the opposition to welcome the articling students to their new roles within two of the branches of Saskatchewan government, the executive branch and the courts branch.

And clearly I know as a former attorney general that it's always an interesting time of year when the new students come because there are a lot of tough questions that are asked and there's lots of interesting questions that give you the ability to defend what we do now, but also learn how to change things. So I know the present Minister of Justice will be quite happy to respond to any ideas that you come up with, and I can send you a few if you need them. Thanks.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of this honourable Assembly, Mr. David Chow, seated in the west gallery. David is a prominent Moose Jaw lawyer and a member of a very prominent Moose Jaw family. And I hope that all members will extend a very warm welcome to Mr. David Chow.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to join with the Premier and the member from The Battlefords in welcoming the First Nations group that is here, the leadership.

And I guess the MOU that was signed today, I got to go to it and witness it and I commend that to the leadership of the First Nations communities. Your struggles have been great but your strength, your wisdom from your elders, the wisdom in your leadership, I just want to commend the fight you have and the success you are achieving. You are truly achieving success and I just want to acknowledge you and welcome you to your Legislative Assembly. And I ask all members to join me welcome them here as they continue to fight the battle that needs to be fought on behalf of your people. Teneki.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the House, I'd like to introduce two constituents of mine that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Barry Firby and Steven

Prpich. They're both constituents and neighbours of mine and also friends. They were up earlier today with the Prime Minister for his announcement, and I was glad that they were able to come by the House and see the proceedings. So I want to welcome them here, and I hope they will enjoy their time in their House and to watch proceedings here.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome my intern, Lance Hammell. Wave, Lance. He's been in the legislature off and on in the gallery watching, but I just want to officially welcome him to the legislature today. He's doing very valuable research for me, and I have thoroughly enjoyed always participating in this program. Thanks again, Lance, and welcome today.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to, in your gallery I'd like to welcome Chris Hudyma. Chris, give us a wave. Chris is the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Oasis Centre in Nipawin, which does a very good job on helping underprivileged people and mentally challenged people. Also works with Social Services, and they do a great job. I'd like to welcome him to his Assembly.

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

Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through to all members of the legislature, I too would like to welcome Doug Richardson to your gallery today. Doug's familiar to many of you. He's one of my law partners, and I must say that Doug and the rest of my firm have been very, very supportive of me during my political career since I joined city council and the school board before that. So I'm very, very appreciative of all the support that they've given me over the years. So, Mr. Speaker, if all the members would welcome Doug to his legislature.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition of citizens concerned with the maintaining quality health care services in the province. And the petition, the government . . . They want the government to know:

That there is a need for timely access to comprehensive and quality health care services for all communities within the province, including Wakaw and surrounding areas;

And that the disruption of emergency services and in-patient services at the Wakaw Hospital will not serve the needs of the residents in this community and surrounding areas;

And that the cuts in access to timely and accurate

diagnostic and laboratory services within the community of Wakaw and surrounding areas will not serve the needs of the residents;

And that the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority budgetary reductions ought not to impede the provision of valuable, compassionate, and appropriate health care services to all citizens within their geographic boundary that require acute care, community and home care, long-term care, and public health care;

Wherefore the petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintain quality health services through the commitment of necessary funding to address critical retention and recruitment issues.

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

The many, many signatures on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who live in the neighbourhood of Hampton Village. And the petition is about the need for a new school for this growing area of the city:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that Hampton Village is a rapidly growing community in Saskatoon with many young families; that Hampton Village residents pay a significant amount of taxes including education property taxes; that children in Hampton Village deserve to be able to attend school in their own community instead of travelling to neighbouring communities to attend schools that are typically already reaching capacity.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to devote the necessary resources for the construction of an elementary school in Hampton Village so that children in this rapidly growing neighbourhood in Saskatoon can attend school in their own community.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are residents of Hampton Village. I so present.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and present a petition in support of eliminating poverty in Saskatchewan. The petitioners note that freedom from poverty is an enshrined human right by the United Nations and that all citizens are entitled to social and economic security. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan act as quickly as possible to develop an

effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of the city of North Battleford and the town of Paynton. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of residents from across Saskatchewan, concerned residents, as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to a record that includes the tabling of deficits at times of unprecedented highs in revenues and at a time of growing debt in this province — all at a time when we have these high levels of revenue. Over the last three years alone, debt has increased by \$1.3 billion and this year, in this fiscal year, \$548 million. And of course, Mr. Speaker, this comes at a consequence to Saskatchewan people now and into the future. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party government for its damaging financial mismanagement since taking office, a reckless fiscal record that is denying Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses the responsible and trustworthy fiscal management that they so deserve.

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

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of North Battleford, Prince Albert, Candle Lake, Maple Creek, and Christopher Lake. I so submit.

[13:45]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

2011 Wall of Fame Inductees

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that four deserving citizens have recently been inducted into The Battlefords' Frontier Mall Wall of Fame for 2011.

At a ceremony on March 19th, the inductees included North Battleford City Councillor Ray Fox, whose work over the years has helped to bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in our community; Edwin Wells, whose volunteer accomplishments and donations have greatly benefited The Battlefords Western Development Museum; Dr. Gordon Johnson, whose ongoing commitment in the field of dentistry has brought respect to The Battlefords on the provincial and national stage; and the late Al Gotto, whose ongoing commitment and volunteer work particularly with the Battlefords Union Hospital Foundation, has benefited many throughout our community.

The Frontier Mall Wall of Fame was established in the year 2000 as a vehicle to engage the community in honouring its own citizens by recognizing residents who have made significant contributions to The Battlefords and area in the fields of art, business, community service, education, entertainment, government, philanthropy, or sports.

I ask all members to join me today in offering our collective congratulations and thanks to the 2011 Wall of Fame inductees whose efforts give us all reason to be proud of our community and our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ambulance Firm Recognized

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm proud to stand in this Assembly and honour Parkland Ambulance Care, Prince Albert. The Canadian Forces Liaison Council, CFLC, was very pleased to recognize Parkland Ambulance Care for their support to the reserve forces.

"We are very pleased to have been recognized by the Canadian Forces for our continued support of our military reserve members," said Trevor Dutchak, general manager of Parkland Ambulance. "Our support demonstrates our continued caring commitment to our forces. "We applaud all the good work they do to safeguard our country and protect others overseas," echoed Lyle Karasiuk, director of public affairs.

Mr. Speaker, the award was presented in Regina at a luncheon co-hosted by the Rotary Club of Regina. Parkland Ambulance Care is a large supporter of the Canadian Forces since one of their paramedics, Ramsay Bellisle, recently returned from a tour with task force Afghanistan. Having Ramsay away did create a void, but allowed Parkland staff to be more connected to the situations overseas since they knew someone in the middle of the action.

Mr. Speaker, we often think of things overseas as terrible situations, but knowing someone actually in the centre of it all brings the reality and gravity of the situation to the forefront. Every day in many ways, members of the Canadian Forces work to protect every one of us. It is that great organization in Prince Albert whose mission is to care, is being honoured for supporting others who care in times of conflict.

On behalf of all government MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], I would like to extend congratulations to all Parkland Ambulance Care staff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

St. John Ambulance Celebrates Anniversary

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, for a century, St. John Ambulance has been dedicated to a single mission: to enable Canadians to improve their health, safety, and quality of life by providing community services and first aid training.

St. John Ambulance has been active in Saskatchewan since

1911 when volunteers first formed local branches in our major cities. One hundred years later, St. John has become an integral part of the first aid and safety fields by providing services through eight training centres, 11 community service groups, and 482 first aid instructors located in 146 Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, these instructors and another 24 employees offer a level of dedication and service that is measured in the thousands of lives impacted each year and the thousands of volunteer hours devoted in communities and to events throughout Saskatchewan.

St. John Ambulance is one of Saskatchewan's leading charities, with approximately 250 volunteers across the province. Events will be occurring throughout the year to mark the anniversary. Each training centre will be hosting celebrations and activities to which the public will be invited to participate. To celebrate this centennial for St. John Ambulance is to celebrate the history of Canada. I ask all members to join me in honouring this proud organization.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing more tragic than a family losing a member to a disease that is ultimately treatable when detected early. Mr. Speaker, March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in Canada.

People across the country work to promote awareness about this deadly but curable disease. In Saskatchewan, colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer in men and women. Our government has provided \$1.1 million in funding for a pilot project colorectal cancer screening program in the Five Hills Health Region.

Mr. Speaker, we are already seeing positive results from the screening program for people in Five Hills. Seventy-four individuals have had a precancerous polyp removed which means that they will not have to undergo invasive cancer treatment or surgery. Our next step is expanding the program to Kelsey Trail, Regina Qu'Appelle, and several northern health regions this spring and summer and to Prairie North and Sun Country this fall. With the addition of the five regions in the North, Saskatchewan will lead the country in providing 62 per cent of the province with access to population-based screening for colorectal cancer.

Mr. Speaker, only by raising awareness along with increased screening will we be able to beat this treatable disease. Thank you.

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

Saskatchewan Curlers Win Silver Medal

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our proud province and nation was riveted to the world curling action on Sunday morning, in fact so much so that it paralyzed our party's convention as delegates from across Saskatchewan

cheered for our team as Team Canada, led by Saskatchewan's Amber Holland, faced the Swedish national team in the gold medal game of the women's world curling championship.

The gold medal game capped an incredible run for Team Holland who became Team Canada by winning the Scotties. Team Canada began the Worlds with a bit of a slow start. But not to be deterred, the team dug deep, put their heads down, employed their world-class skills, and put together an inspirational run. Their proud run as Team Canada, exceptional tournament, and silver medal finish will not be forgotten. This story in itself has already become part of Saskatchewan and Canadian sports history and an absolute point of pride.

The Kronau Curling Club, with a proud history of its own, was showcased on the world stage. This team of community-minded Saskatchewan women are world champions in the hearts of Saskatchewan people. To Amber Holland, Heather Kalenchuk, Tammy Schneider, Kim Schneider, and coach Merv Fonger, I simply say thank you. Your province and your nation could not be more proud. I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in extending our sincerest thanks to Team Holland.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Support for Housing Programs

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our government announced an aggressive housing strategy that would benefit Saskatchewan families tremendously. Without having considered how these programs would positively address the needs of Saskatchewan families, the NDP [New Democratic Party] immediately adopted the bunker mentality of back to the Dark Ages of the 1970s. Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, more enlightened minds have weighed in on our government's approach to the challenge of housing in this province.

For example, Mr. Speaker, this morning's editorial in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* applauded our government's 252 million initiative to address the housing issues in this province. However, Mr. Speaker, that same editorial spent considerable ink on the NDP's proposals. They described the NDP's position as that "1970s' solution," which is fitting given their choice of leadership and their propensity to orange shag rugs and platform shoes. The editorial went on to state that legislated rent controls will only exacerbate an already serious problem. Yes, Mr. Speaker, government control or ownership, that's the NDP solution to everything. Whether it's rent control or royalty rates, the NDP takes a serious challenge and attempts to muck it all up.

The same editorial continued its attacks on the reckless NDP by pointing out that even economic realities aren't enough to convince the opposition. Mr. Speaker, the opposition has it wrong. I believe we got it right. Thank you very much.

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

Housing News Release

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for a 50th anniversary we give gold, for a 15th we give crystal. But

the traditional gift for a first anniversary, Mr. Speaker, is paper. So it's fitting that the Minister of Social Services marked the first anniversary of her Headstart on a Home announcement by faxing out the same piece of paper she issued one year ago. It was a gesture that sums up nicely what this government has done for affordable housing in this province over the last four years — precious little.

To gloss over their inaction, Mr. Speaker, they've just spent thousands of taxpayer dollars on a sleek brochure sent to homes across Saskatchewan with misleading claims about the budget. The brochure claims the budget will build as many as 650 rental units, while the budget itself says only 300 in 2011-2012. To paper over the contradictions, Mr. Speaker, the minister hastily threw together a cut-and-paste job of recycled news releases and program promises with no firm dollar figures attached, and called it a five-point plan.

If people in Saskatchewan are doubting this news release will create any more affordable housing than the previous ones, they have good reason. This government's promises on housing aren't worth the paper they're reprinted on.

A home, Mr. Speaker, is made of four walls and a roof, not two news releases and a brochure. As we mark an anniversary of inaction by the government, we see more than ever that this province needs a real housing strategy, not something the minister scratched down in a hurry on the back of an envelope. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Financial Management of Crown Corporations

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have been subjected to an unprecedented and unsustainable raid on the funds of our Crown corporations by this government. This government has stripped more than \$1.7 billion from our Crowns to cover off budgetary deficits, despite record revenues. This government stripped an average of \$533 million annually over three years from the Crowns.

By contrast, between 2003 and 2007, during much leaner years, the NDP transferred an average of \$211 million from our Crowns. This unsustainable cash grab and Crown borrowing has left our Crowns weakened and has offered a direct impact to ratepayers and taxpayers that are on the hook. Why is this minister wilfully damaging the Crown corporations which the people of Saskatchewan cherish and take great pride in?

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very interesting, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to talk about Crown corporations today. We're one week from the budget; there's only been two questions on the budget. I think they're trying to change the channel. But this would not be the appropriate thing, Mr. Speaker.

In the budget just seven days ago, Mr. Speaker, we announced that there will be a \$110 million dividend from the Crown corporations this year. That is the equivalent of a 30 per cent of profits, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the lowest equity profits coming from the Crown corporations to the GRF [General Revenue Fund] we've seen in history, Mr. Speaker.

That is in stark contrast to the years that that member has just referenced. It's in stark contrast certainly to the 100 per cent dividend they took in 1993, the 114 per cent they took in '98, the 181 per cent they took in 2001, Mr. Speaker. If, Mr. Speaker, if they're worried about the Crowns, I think that they better look at their record, not ours.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government use the Crown corporations to pay for budget areas such as health care and to try to cover off deficits. Yesterday this government showcased another example of off-loading spending and debt to our Crowns. So when this minister represents and says that he's only taking \$110 million, it's not accurate, Mr. Speaker.

The government is adding \$200 million to our public debt so this province can be the moneylender of choice for private home developers across the province to provide housing that doesn't even address the problem facing families. This minister is guaranteeing a loan program that wasn't guaranteed before, meaning Saskatchewan people are now on the hook, meaning it's debt, specifically the federal investor loan program and off-loading spending and debt to the Crowns. Exactly the same reckless practice that the Don Gass report exposed of Grant Devine.

Why is this minister damaging the fiscal future of Saskatchewan people by paying for government programs out of the Crowns and adding to our public debt?

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, this is very shocking coming from that opposition, Mr. Speaker. When they were in government, Mr. Speaker, the federal, in 1999, the federal government had the immigrant investor program, Mr. Speaker. It could have been hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, flowing from immigrant investors to the Saskatchewan coffers to build houses, Mr. Speaker, for low-income people, to have a program such as we announced yesterday, Mr. Speaker, where . . . Headstart on a Home. Those people, Mr. Speaker, chose not to take advantage of Immigrant Investor Fund, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has taken a far different approach, Mr. Speaker. We are tapping into what was a great program, Mr. Speaker — 400,000 from immigrant investors, 7 per cent return over five years to what was a recently revamped \$800,000, Mr. Speaker, from immigrant investors and a 5 per cent return — an excellent program that fits our needs very well. The federal government has been very easy to work with on this program, and it's going to allow us to put 1,000 new units on the market in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I suspect the federal government would have been easy to work with. What this government has done by way of OC [order in council] has created a new Crown corporation to borrow \$230 million to fund this project, and they've guaranteed the debt of this program, something that was never the case even when Grant Devine had this program in place, Mr. Speaker.

So let's look at some of the real facts, Mr. Speaker. His own budget documents show they project a \$3 billion debt increase in our Crowns by 2015. This year alone, the minister is hiking up Crown total debt by \$810 million. Through this term, we have witnessed a massive off-loading of spending and debt to the Crowns to try to cover off its deficits, adding to our total public debt, the same very stuff we saw under the last group of Tories, Mr. Speaker. The \$200 million to developers here today is but another example. It's deceptive and it's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

When is the minister going to do what's right for Saskatchewan people and stop off-loading to the Crowns and putting massive, long-term public debt on the shoulders of Saskatchewan people?

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That member is right. Their government would have never done a program like this, Mr. Speaker. They would rather talk about the problems in housing, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to solve the problems in housing, Mr. Speaker. That's the difference between them and us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if they want to talk about investments in Saskatchewan, investments in the Crown, over 16 years they didn't build a new power plant, Mr. Speaker. We inherited an infrastructure that had seen nothing but decay, Mr. Speaker. In the short time we've been government, Mr. Speaker, we have invested heavily, building new power plants, new pipelines at SaskEnergy; SaskTel, Mr. Speaker, Wi-Fi networks, the G 3 plus, now G 4, Mr. Speaker, 55 new cellular towers went up, Mr. Speaker. All of these are investments in Saskatchewan.

Now if the members opposite have a different plan, one that doesn't involve investment in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I think that's doable. And what it would take, Mr. Speaker, would be for a government — possibly theirs if they become it after the next election — that raises taxes, that drives out investment, Mr. Speaker. That is the solution they're putting forward.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, believes in investment in our future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Agreement with Saskatchewan Medical Association

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 23rd, 2011, a *StarPhoenix* article lists the costs of the new Saskatchewan Medical Association contract to be 55 million for fee increases and a further 33 million for special programs for a total of \$88 million. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is the total cost of the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association] contract \$88 million, and where is the money being accounted for in the 2011 budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we have obviously reached an agreement with the SMA. It took a number of months, Mr. Speaker, longer than we wanted to. But what I would say, Mr. Speaker, is that agreement has been reached. It has been ratified through its membership at about a 95 per cent agreement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this will be a great tool as we move forward, not only to recruit physicians but to retain the physicians that we have, Mr. Speaker. We're competitive with Western Canada, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is the place to be for many occupations, including physicians.

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

Ms. Junor: — The question is about public disclosure. Mr. Speaker, I have a copy of the SMA agreement highlights, and there are a number of items that don't have costs attached to them. In the agreement highlights it states that doctors will receive retroactive payments. It states, "Health regions will receive a retroactive payment for both 2009-10 and 2010-11 prior to March 31st [which is Thursday] 2011."

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what is the total cost of the retroactive pay and where is it located in the provincial budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the member is correct that retroactive pay was part of the negotiation process. As I said, Mr. Speaker, it took a while to get to that final agreement. But part of the final agreement was to compensate because the agreement did take longer than what we wanted, Mr. Speaker, and longer than what the SMA wanted. So, Mr. Speaker, it was only appropriate that pay for retroactive work, Mr. Speaker, done a year and a half or two years ago would be brought up to the proper standards.

The minister . . . the former minister, I guess, associate minister would know that any contract with the SMA has a number of variables, a number of parts, Mr. Speaker. One is simply the fee for service. But there are other pools of money, Mr. Speaker, that are used for premium time, Mr. Speaker, are used for on-call in rural communities, Mr. Speaker. This contract addresses many of those concerns that were raised by rural physicians, Mr. Speaker. I think most importantly it's going to retain physicians in rural Saskatchewan as well.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — [Inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, the questions relate to public disclosure — not about recruitment and retention — about how much this contract is going to cost. Mr. Speaker, this is not a finished contract. Some even suggest it has a reopener clause. There are a number of committee-related items that have no cost attached to them and will change the total cost of the contract. Mr. Speaker, there's \$33 million earmarked for special programs. The highlight agreement outlines eight special programs.

To the minister: the total cost of the contract is not transparent for the public to see. Why is the minister hiding the total cost of the SMA contract?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when the agreement was reached by the SMA and ratified by its members at a 95 per cent ratification rate, Mr. Speaker, a press release was issued that itemized where the monies were going: some for fee for service, some for programs. I don't have that press release in front of me, Mr. Speaker, as far as the exact numbers. But what I will say is that, Mr. Speaker, this contract is a contract that puts us in a competitive position with every province in Western Canada.

She's asking questions like she wouldn't have, that member wouldn't have offered a contract like this. She's questioning the contract, Mr. Speaker. I think it sends a clear signal to the health care professionals, not only the nurses which they absolutely ignored for 16 years, if they ever get back into government, they'll soon ignore the physicians as well.

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

Ms. Junor: — The minister ignored them for two years. But the question still, Mr. Speaker, is, even though the minister's dancing all over the place, it's about public disclosure. Page 90 of the Estimates book for the 2011 budget, Sask Party's budget, Sask Party's book, shows a \$69 million increase for medical services. The minister tells us that the cost of the SMA contract is 88 million, but that doesn't seem to include the many items going to committees. There doesn't appear to be enough money allocated in this budget to cover the open-ended costs of the contract. The contract is being paid for with public money, and Saskatchewan people have a right to know exactly what they're paying and what they're getting for their money.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what exactly is this contract costing the people of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, this contract is structured similar to many of the other previous contracts that the SMA has entered into with provincial governments, whether it was our provincial government this contract or previous contracts entered into by the NDP, Mr. Speaker. There are pools of money; some go for fee-for-service, some go for other programs. It goes into a pool that the SMA can also look at

fee-for-service and different fee codes, Mr. Speaker. There are many variables. It's very complex, Mr. Speaker.

But I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the contract, which again was ratified by 95 per cent of the physicians as a good contract, Mr. Speaker, will do volumes for this province as we move forward, as we graduate more medical students from this province than we've ever seen before. This will attract them and retain them to this very province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Emergency Shelters

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, three more sleeps on a soft cot in a warm building is all that the homeless in North Battleford have left. On Friday morning when these men and women wake up, they will have a good breakfast and be sent back onto the streets to find their own bed for the night. As of March 31st, the Battlefords Indian and Métis Friendship Centre's emergency shelter for the homeless will close, and in the words of the centre's executive director, we don't know where they will go next.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister Responsible for Housing announced a new loan program for builders who will provide housing for those willing to pay 180,000 to 300,000 for their new home. Will the minister today announce adequate core funding to ensure that those who will never be able to afford a new home have a warm, safe, and secure place for the night?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware that there is an issue in North Battleford at this time, and all of us know that everybody needs a roof over their head. Mr. Speaker, we have made sure that there are contingency plans to pay for, to help for temporary access to hotels during that time, and we've raised emergency rates by 80 per cent. We've increased rates to actually expand the number of shelters as well, Mr. Speaker.

And our announcement yesterday, we talked about making sure that we had more, not only more homes for people but actually had more rental units as well. We have to make sure that people can move from a rental space into their own home and make room for other people as the province grows.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that homes for people is an important issue in our province, and we're working hard with everybody across the province, with municipalities and with developers to make sure that there are places for people in our province.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The North Battleford emergency shelter has not received any provincial funding. And yet since it opened in December to fill a desperate need in the community, it has supported more than 300 stays and dealt with a multiple of issues that would have benefited from professional social workers and addictions counsellors. Mr. Speaker, the emergency shelter has built up a great deal of expertise and

experience during the short period of time that it's been open this winter.

While the minister is thinking about her responsibilities to affordable housing for Saskatchewan citizens, will she make sure she does not forget those who are working hard to ensure the very vulnerable and homeless amongst us are given the financial support tools they need to provide the help that keeps these people alive?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I do commend the very valuable work that's been done by the people in North Battleford and right across the province when you have people that are in need and people that are vulnerable. We know that Sask Housing has 623 affordable units in North Battleford, and we know that there is a need for more. But we also know that the vacancy rate has increased from 1.2 per cent to 3.7 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the budget that we just brought down meant that we removed 114,000 people off the tax roll. Mr. Speaker, people now have more money in their own pocket and an opportunity to be working and being part of our province. Mr. Speaker, we've also done things like lower the utility rate, double the low-income tax credit. And we know that on the road of work that has to be done — the very huge deficit that those members opposite left when they never increased shelter rates, when they never did anything for our seniors over a number of years — we're working on those issues. We've got more to do, Mr. Speaker, we know that. But everybody in this province is important to us.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to note that even the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] consider the emergency shelter in North Battleford a valuable asset. In fact this winter, local RCMP officers transported homeless people from the streets to the shelter because there was nowhere else for them to go.

Working with limited resources, staff members who've volunteered their time, and community support that helped provide cots and bedding and good food, the Friendship Centre saved lives this winter. The shelter will close on Friday, but they hope to open next fall. Mr. Speaker, in order to open next fall, they will require financial support from the province of Saskatchewan.

Can the minister assure us today, even though there does not appear to be any additional funding or financial support available in this year's provincial budget, the largest spending budget in the history of Saskatchewan, can she assure us that core financial support will be available to emergency shelters like the one in North Battleford in the coming year?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite and the people of this province that we are looking at

every area that we can to ensure that people have a home and they have a shelter. We actually know that increasing the emergency shelter rate by 80 per cent was an important part of expanding the number of shelter spaces we have. We also know that the people in North Battleford have been working hard with the RCMP and with Social Services to ensure that there is spaces.

Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite: the issue in North Battleford is being looked at by my ministry at this time. And it's something that I assure you, that money is important, but also is making sure that we have a place for people in the province. And we will be talking to them.

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

Monitoring of Government Website Content

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Saskjobs.ca is the government's website that gives Saskatchewan people a place to look for new job opportunities. But today a job title appeared on the website that proves this government is opening saskjobs.ca up to professions that they should not be promoting. The one-word job title on the opening was very clear — escort. Why is the government allowing a website to be used to draw young Saskatchewan women into the sex trade?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When this came to our attention, this has been removed immediately, Mr. Speaker.

Quite frankly, as a citizen, as a father, and I know we share this across the aisles, this is completely unacceptable. We are taking immediate steps to ensure that this employer is delisted, and we're taking steps to ensure that we understand what happened as far as the posting on this. And I promise the people of this province, we will be taking steps to ensure there is far greater security and checks on this.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is I understand the same thing happened to the members opposite where they were in power, and I'm sure they share the same sense of disbelief and spirit of unacceptable performance by any potential employer for something this bad.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As indicated, this was a very serious breach of and utilization of this website, Mr. Speaker, and it potentially puts the young people of our province at risk.

Mr. Speaker, immediate steps need to be taken to protect the young people of our province to ensure that young women are not lured into the sex trade in our province, and they're not lured into the sex trade in particular by a government website,

Mr. Speaker. Can the minister indicate to this House the immediate steps that will be taken to ensure that no, no opportunity presents in the future for our young people to be lured into the sex trade through a government website?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've said, like members opposite and certainly on the government side, we are sickened by this. It is unacceptable. We have taken steps (a) to remove this, (b) we are making contact with the employer. The employer is going to be delisted. We're going through the checks and protocols that are in place today. We're going to be making those far more robust.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it crystal clear that we appreciate and respect people right across this province. This was a breach of protocol. It should not have happened and we are acting immediately to ensure that this unacceptable situation is resolved.

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, after the serious situation we all saw in British Columbia with craigslist and the public outcry across the nation about the advertising on websites for the illicit use of women, Mr. Speaker, there was a great public outcry. At that point, Mr. Speaker, we should have, as should have other suppliers of websites, put in place checks and balances to ensure that we wouldn't have these types of ads appear on our website, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard the minister say that they will take steps to ensure that in the future we are not faced with such a challenge. Mr. Speaker. Could he tell the House what types of filters are going to be put in place to ensure that the young people of Saskatchewan are protected?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reiterate obviously this is unacceptable. What we've done is taken this down. We're delinking the employer, Mr. Speaker. We're also going through a thorough review and we are going to be bolstering the protocols that are in place, Mr. Speaker. We know that this has happened. It's happened to the previous administration in this province. It's happened certainly, Mr. Speaker, across the country. This is about being vigilant. This is about making sure that we have the best technology possible, Mr. Speaker, because what we want in Saskatchewan is we want to make sure that every person is able to meet their full potential. Mr. Speaker, this has been a breach. It's serious. We're taking it seriously and we're taking immediate steps to ensure it doesn't happen again.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A few months ago, the Minister of Justice for the province of

Saskatchewan made very strong and bold statements about his very strong opinions about craigslist and the implications on the people of Canada and the young people of British Columbia, Mr. Speaker, strong statements. Now we have the minister telling us that they're going to take strong statements. We've heard before as we've raised issues, assurances things were going to be done.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister undertake to report back to this Assembly exactly what steps are being taken and what steps have been taken to ensure that young people in our province are not, are not through our public websites involved or elicited to be involved in the sex trade in this province?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, quite simply, yes.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Power Generation Partnership

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer my ministerial statement. It pertains to the event this morning that took place here within the legislature. And if I could, I would just like to reinforce that we had the honour of being joined by our Premier, by Chief Guy Lonechild, a number of other First Nations leaders from across the province, as well as representatives from SaskPower and importantly, representatives from the newly established First Nations Power Authority. And this morning we announced a new memorandum of understanding to help Saskatchewan's First Nations share the economic opportunities that new power generation projects create.

Mr. Speaker, this is more than just an agreement. This is a once-in-a-generation chance to create new jobs and opportunities for First Nations peoples and communities right across the province. Saskatchewan's demand for electricity is expected to increase by about 2.4 per cent annually over the course of the next decade. This stands in contrast, over the course of the last decade it increased by about 1 per cent per annum. To meet this growing demand, as well as to help ensure that we can continue to focus on the rebuilding of the infrastructure deficit that we inherited from the members opposite, as well as focusing on new, greener, cleaner technologies, Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased to move forward with this partnership. In fact we know quite frankly that SaskPower needs new generation projects. That's why SaskPower is making a multi-year, multi-billion dollar investment into renewing the province's electrical system.

Mr. Speaker, today's agreement opens the door to significant opportunities for Saskatchewan First Nations to partner in, contribute to, and benefit from power generation projects. Many Saskatchewan First Nations are already pursuing opportunities through potentially owning and operating power generation projects, but there is a broad range of other activities that they may wish to consider, Mr. Speaker.

Today's agreement sets out a framework for a more streamlined process to help First Nations move their projects forward in partnership with SaskPower through competitive processes. But this, Mr. Speaker, this agreement is more than simply about processes. This is about people and communities. It's about making it easier for First Nations people, communities, and businesses to benefit from the economic development opportunities that go with reinvestments in our power generation projects. These are real opportunities regarding jobs, infrastructure, new business opportunities, and potentially even profit-sharing. We expect each power project that is successful within the new First Nations Power Authority process that it will benefit in its respective communities and in many ways for people right across the province.

I'd like to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that SaskPower has already partnered with a couple of First Nations to explore the development of hydroelectric power projects in Saskatchewan. And we fully anticipate, Mr. Speaker, that the formation of the First Nations Power Authority will result in even more viable, long-term, sustainable First Nations power projects to help SaskPower meet the province's growing electrical needs.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude I want to thank the members of our First Nations, as well as SaskPower, who took the initiative to work with us to form the First Nations Power Authority. I certainly commend all for their leadership and, most especially, our Premier and others for the vision in helping to ensure that we can move forward. We are proud of the partnership that has been signed today, and we know that working together we will ensure that there are many bright days ahead for everyone in Saskatchewan. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond to the minister on his statement today about the creation of the First Nations Power Authority and the signing of the memorandum of understanding. I thank the minister for supplying the opposition with a copy of his written remarks, Mr. Speaker. It is much appreciated.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, today is indeed an important day for First Nations people and for others in our community, Mr. Speaker, others who relish the idea of community-delivered power, of power agreements that are collectively based with individuals and primarily with communities throughout our great province.

Mr. Speaker, members of the New Democratic Party, myself included, Mr. Speaker, were part of the Crown and Central Agencies study of future energy needs for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this committee met with communities, individuals, and energy representatives, Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan throughout about a six-month period of time, Mr. Speaker.

Anyone who attended those hearings of the committee, anyone who read the interim or final report, anyone who had the benefit of receiving information from that committee, Mr. Speaker, knows that First Nations communities, as well as Métis communities, northern and southern communities, Mr. Speaker, had expressed a desire for SaskPower to work closely with communities for the development and delivery of power, Mr.

Speaker, particularly new power generation, whether those are renewables like wind or run-of-the-mill water or geothermal, Mr. Speaker.

Many communities have already worked with technology companies from around the world who are helping them to develop their understanding and ultimately partnerships, Mr. Speaker, to develop and deliver power at a local level, Mr. Speaker. We also learned that power generated closer to the source of its use will be the least expensive power because transmission, Mr. Speaker, is always a considerable expense. And that transmission, Mr. Speaker, is an expense of the public in the province, Mr. Speaker, where power generation becomes an expense of the beneficiary or the user.

Mr. Speaker, the statement of the minister today, the signing of the memorandum of understanding, shows us that Saskatchewan Power has accepted that there are communities of people out there, in this case the First Nations communities, Mr. Speaker, who have an economic interest as well as an environmental interest in ensuring that our lights are on in our communities, Mr. Speaker, no matter where we live in the province of Saskatchewan, and there are opportunities for economic growth outside the large urban centres.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the First Nations involved in the development of the First Nations Power Authority, and to thank SaskPower for developing and working to help develop the memorandum of understanding that ultimately will make this a better province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Private Bills met earlier today and considered compliance of the rules for the petition of Private Bill No. 906 by Bethany College, praying for an Act to amend *The Bethany College Incorporation Act, 1993*.

Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Private Bills to present its 10th report. Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills:

That the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The motion is carried and pursuant to rule 98, the Private Bill No. 906, *An Act to amend The Bethany*

College Incorporation Act, 1993 is deemed to be read the first time and is ordered for second reading on the next private members' day.

[14:30]

STATEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Members, yesterday over significant debate in the Assembly and a point of order that was raised, I indicated that I would get back to the House after looking carefully at the point of order with a statement, and I'm prepared to present my statement at this time.

On Monday, March 28th, 2011, the Opposition House Leader raised a point of order regarding the ministerial statement made by the Minister of Social Services. The Opposition House Leader indicated that the minister had announced a Headstart program over a year earlier, on March 24th, 2010. The Government House Leader responded to the point of order by stating that the minister was announcing a new housing strategy. The strategy included a similarly named program that had been previously announced but contained new details, new projects, and new programs.

Following the intervention by the Opposition House Leader, I advised the Assembly that the minister should have the opportunity to make her ministerial statement. This is in line with previous rulings where Speakers have ruled that it is difficult to determine the appropriateness of a ministerial statement as it is being delivered, and the Speaker must also balance this with the need to ensure fairness by allowing the opposition an equal opportunity to respond to the statement.

I committed to review the details and specifics of the ministerial statement. I have done this and am now prepared to rule on this matter.

The ministerial statement made by the Minister of Social Services can be found on page 6919 of *Hansard*. The minister discussed the five-point housing plan. The ministerial statement details Headstart on a Home, affordable home ownership plan, rental construction, rental housing, and renewing and expanding the partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

The Opposition House Leader is correct that the Headstart on a Home program was previously announced in a news release on March 24th, 2010. The ministerial statement presented yesterday does provide further specific details on this program. However, reviewing the record, the Habitat for Humanity program and incentives for investment in rental housing have both been previously announced. On the other hand, the housing plan announced in the ministerial statement does contain new information pertaining to affordable home ownership and rental construction, plus additional dollars for Habitat for Humanity.

I find that some of the information contained in the ministerial statement was previously announced, but there was also new information relating to housing. This creates a dilemma for the Speaker in determining whether or not the statement is in order.

I've reminded ministers that ministerial statements must focus on announcing new programs.

The question is, was there anything in the statement that might constitute a new initiative for a program previously announced? Although not a new program, should updates and new initiatives be permitted? This is a very difficult question for the Speaker. In the case of motions, if any part of a motion is irregular, that renders the whole motion irregular. It is the Speaker's point of view that in the absence of clear guidelines for ministerial statements, this principle should be applied. Because a portion of the statement contained matters from previous announcements, I must find the point of order well taken.

This is the fourth time I've had to rule on the appropriateness of ministerial statements. Our Assembly does not have a rule that details what constitutes a proper ministerial statement. We do have rules that govern the content of member statements. I think it is time that this Assembly clear up the evident uncertainty about what properly constitutes a ministerial statement. I have called on the Standing Committee on House Services to review the rules for ministerial statements. I can understand that there is confusion and that this event only underscores the need for members to consider and properly define allowable ministerial statements for all members and ministers.

On another note, on March 24th, 2010, I ruled that the response to a ministerial statement should not exceed the time taken by the minister. This is consistent with our practice and previous rulings by other Speakers. Speaker Rolfes interrupted a member due to the length of a response on June 15th, 1993. And on April the 10th, 1997, and April the 8th, 1998, Speaker Hagel interrupted a member when the response to a ministerial statement was longer than the minister's statement, and went on to recognize another member.

Members should be mindful of this practice.

Privilege

The Speaker: — I also have another statement. Earlier today I received notice from the Government House Leader that he intends to raise a question of privilege on orders of the day. The notice arrived at 11:30 a.m. in accordance with rule 12(1) and a copy was distributed by my office to the Opposition House Leader.

The Government House Leader claims that the member for Regina Dewdney made the comment, and I quote, "We have a biased Speaker." He argues that the claim is substantiated by a reference to the video record of the Assembly proceedings from March 28th, 2011 at the hour, one-hour, 13-minute, and 58-second mark.

The Government House Leader argues that the statement constitutes a breach of privilege by citing cases from the Northwest Territories and by quoting Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, Second Edition, at page 253.

To begin, I want to advise members of the applicable rules and practices of this Assembly.

Rule 50(d) states that, and I quote:

[Members should not] . . . reflect on the conduct of the Speaker or other presiding officer except by way of a substantive motion . . .

The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, 2009, states on page 313, and I quote:

Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker — an allegation of bias, for example — could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and punished accordingly.

As cited by the Government House Leader, Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, Second Edition, page 253 states, and I quote:

Any suggestion of partiality or bias on the part of a presiding officer such as the Speaker, a chairman of a Committee of the Whole, or chairman of a standing or special committee automatically shows disrespect and amounts to contempt.

On three occasions, November 17th, 1977, April the 11th, 1980, and April 24th, 1980, privilege cases were brought before this Assembly based on allegations of bias or impartiality of the Speaker. In all those cases, the Assembly found that contempt had been committed.

As Speaker it is my duty to decide whether a prima facie case of privilege, breach of privilege has been established. In doing so, the Speaker must be satisfied that the allegation is properly a matter of privilege and a sufficient case has been established to justify giving precedence over orders of the day.

It is my conclusion that the remark was indeed stated by the member from Regina Dewdney. Upon review of my own rules and practices, past cases, and our parliamentary authorities, comments reflecting on the impartiality of the Speaker are properly matters of privilege. For this reason, I find that the comments constitute a prima facie case of breach of privilege.

However, in light of the admission earlier today by the member from Regina Dewdney for having made the remark and for his full and ample apology to the Speaker and the Assembly, I find that the matter is sufficiently resolved. I remind members that page 267 of Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, Second Edition, in the section "Where a member is a subject of a question of privilege," it is stated, "An apology by the offending Member will invariably close the matter without the necessity of putting the motion to a vote." I thank the member for Regina Dewdney for taking responsibility for his actions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 951 through 961.

The Speaker: — Questions 951 through 961 are ordered. I

recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 962 to 969.

The Speaker: — Questions 962 through 969 are tabled.

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. Krawetz that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to join into the debate on the 2011-2012 budget. It is a privilege to be a member in this Assembly as we are in a historic time in our history as a province, a period of unprecedented growth, Mr. Speaker. And it is indeed a pleasure to be a member of this fine Assembly.

As many members have done and all members I'm sure, I would like to thank my family for affording me the opportunity to be a member of the legislature and a minister of the Crown. I want to thank my wife, Trish. She's a great wife and mother. My family includes Carter and Paige, a son and daughter. The years seem to fly by, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't seem that long ago that I first became a member in 2003, and I remember the kids sitting there and doing the wave when we had our swearing-in ceremony. Well they were five and three at the time, and they're probably embarrassed if they hear me say that. But now they're 13 and 11. Carter's 13, Paige is 11, and they're growing up to be a fine young man and woman. Also I'd like to thank my mom who's always a loyal follower of the proceedings here, and I know that she is indeed watching today.

I wouldn't be able to do this job without the help that we all receive from members of our staff, my constituency assistant, Marilyn. Thank you, Marilyn, for joining my staff. And those that have served in that capacity before — Travis and Brie and Beth — thank you. To those that work here in Regina in my office, again thank you for all that you do each and every day to ensure that we're able to undertake the responsibilities that we've been given. To Marlin, Jacquie, Jared, Marlene, and Annie, thank you for all that you do.

To the ministries and corporations that we have the pleasure of being responsible for, the First Nations and Métis Relations to Northern Affairs to Gaming Corporation, thank you to the management, to staff, the board members for all the work that they do. And they should take pride in this budget as well because everyone had an opportunity to participate in this fine budget and to make it what it is today, an historic budget for the people of Saskatchewan.

Having an interest in politics at a young age, I had an opportunity to sit and to listen to many speeches from many Finance ministers. I remember the speeches from Tchorzewski and from Robbins and from Andrew and from Lane and from MacKinnon and Thomson. And I remember the speeches certainly from the member from Melfort who had an opportunity to serve as Finance minister and serve very well.

I had an opportunity at a young age to listen to the radio back then. They'd put the broadcasts of the speeches on the radio in the evening. And I must admit, Mr. Speaker, if there was a P.A. [Prince Albert] Raiders game or a Blades game, that took precedent. But I did have the opportunity to listen to many speeches over the course of my lifetime. And I think it would be fair to say that any one of those Finance ministers would be envious of what they've heard this year in this budget from the member from Canora-Pelly, the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker.

Now members will know that when you come into this Legislative Assembly, you look for mentors. You want to do well. You want to do your best. And you look in both sides of the House, and you try to emulate those that you really respect. Mr. Speaker, today I want, through you, to tell all members of the Assembly that the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora-Pelly, is indeed a mentor of mine. He brings his passion to this Assembly each and every day. You know, oftentimes they talk about budgets as being boring and just about numbers. But as we saw in the presentation this year, Mr. Speaker, we indeed had the opportunity to see his passion, not only about the numbers because I think there are few that would be able to challenge that member on any number in any of the budgets, those that he's presented or those past, but he also brought the passion that was very evident here.

And it's all about making Saskatchewan a better place, making it more welcoming to people to come back to Saskatchewan, and that's indeed what the member from Canora-Pelly was able to do. He had a Roughrider loonie in his pocket and he took pride in that, in saying that Saskatchewan residents would have more loonies left in their pocket at the end of the day. Well that is indeed true. They have more loonies, more toonies, more bills left in their pockets, more dollar bills of all denominations because, as we've seen, this budget puts more money back in the pockets of Saskatchewan residents. It is indeed a budget that has done many, many things.

I think most important to me and to many members of this Assembly, we're seeing debt reduction, GRF debt reduction by some \$325 million. That is an undisputable fact. Members opposite will try to cloud the issue. They'll try to bring in Crown corporation debt, Crown corporation debt that is funding growing, thriving Crown corporations that are stronger than ever, Mr. Speaker, under a Sask Party government. And that's what they will continue to be.

Mr. Speaker, taking that debt down from \$6.8 billion — that was the debt left by the members opposite — to under \$3 billion, a reduction, Mr. Speaker, that I think we can all be proud of, that's something that we can say we have made a difference, Mr. Speaker, and that indeed we sure have.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, there are also tax cuts, tax cuts in the neighbourhood of \$200 million, Mr. Speaker. That sounds like it's a lot of money, and sometimes people gloss over on the numbers. But one fact that I think each and every family understands and knows and is proud of is that they will not be paying a dollar of tax, they will not be paying a dollar of tax until they earn over \$45,500 . . . [inaudible] . . . tax-free, the best in the country, Mr. Speaker, the best in the country, Mr. Speaker.

I know that we want people in Saskatchewan to share in this budget and that's why we say, and the member from Canora-Pelly has said, it's the people's budget. It wasn't long ago that we were in this Assembly and we heard NDP ministers of Finance stand in their place and say, it's my budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are proud, we are proud that this is indeed a budget for and with the people of Saskatchewan. It's something that we take great pride in.

At a time when other governments are running large deficits, cutting services, our growing economy and population means that we can lower taxes, reduce debt, and improve public services within a balanced and a surplus budget, Mr. Speaker.

I just had the opportunity to go back to my constituency on the weekend and talk to some people who had the opportunity to spend the winter in southern climes, to be snowbirds. And they said, time and time again people would come up to them from other jurisdictions in North America and say, how's your jurisdiction doing? And they have the opportunity to say, well we are from Saskatchewan. We have amongst the strongest economies not only in Canada but in North America, and we're very proud of the job that the government is doing, but more importantly, the job that small business and large business and business owners and employers are doing across the province to ensure that we have and continue to have a very, very strong economy.

Mr. Speaker, people choose to stay in Saskatchewan because they're coming to an area that is indeed growing. The economy is thriving. I look at my home constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs, one of the fastest growing constituencies in the province. You look at the area of Willowgrove, for example. They said that that area would fill up, some 9,000 people, it would take about 15 years. Well, Mr. Speaker, what's happening? The record growth, the record in-migration that we're having, that community will fill up within nine years, Mr. Speaker. And we're already opening up to new areas, to the Evergreen area in Saskatoon, that will continue to see growth.

More people, more taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, more money for governments, more money to pay down debt, more money to put to our priorities like health care, education, infrastructure development, Mr. Speaker — that's why people come to Saskatchewan. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy if you can provide those services and you can do so in a fair manner. That's something that is happening, and that's something, to be fair, that didn't happen under 16 years, Mr. Speaker, of NDP governments.

Mr. Speaker, this budget fulfills our government's commitment to reduce the education property tax and to make investments in school capital projects. Well under the NDP government, Mr.

Speaker, they said you couldn't do both. They said you couldn't reduce taxes and spend more money on capital infrastructure. And that's indeed what we are doing, Mr. Speaker.

I had the opportunity in March to welcome members of the public school board and the separate school board from Saskatoon into the constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs to announce two new schools for the Willowgrove area, Mr. Speaker. And again, that's why people move to Saskatchewan, move to areas, so they can have the very best education possible. And that's indeed what the role and responsibilities of governments are, Mr. Speaker. And that's indeed what this government is doing, and we are very proud of it, Mr. Speaker.

Not only building new schools — it is attractive to be able to announce new schools, and we've done that time and time again — but also to put money into restoring schools that are already there, to fix the roofs, to fix the leaks, to fix what needs to be done. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget does it in an unprecedented fashion, and I am proud to say that Forest Grove School in the Silver Springs constituency has benefited from that money as well. And also portables that come into the newer schools, and Centennial Collegiate is a new collegiate in my constituency. And again because of the growth, more money to ensure that the recent residents of Saskatchewan have an opportunity to educate their children in this fashion.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you'd say that's just what a government does. That's what a good government does. Well that is indeed what a good government does. But, Mr. Speaker, I can point to an example in the last government, the NDP government, where the people of Arbor Creek, for example, I had the opportunity to stand in my place for years and bring petitions to this Legislative Assembly about the need for a new school. Mr. Speaker, that was ignored by the previous government. And that is one of the many reasons why they are sitting on that side of the House, and will continue to do so for many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

We talk about the Saskatchewan advantage. And that is certainly something that typifies what this budget is because it is indeed an advantage to live in Saskatchewan and to be part of the opportunities that we have today. It's a budget that limits tuition costs, post-secondary education.

The constituents I represent in Saskatoon are pleased what's happening in their city. I point to a quote from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* of March 24th, and it says, and I quote:

“Across the country, we see other universities are suffering, but in Saskatchewan there is still positive investments,” said Brett Fairbairn, U of S provost and vice-president of academics.

Again quote: “We're fortunate to be in a province that is still investing [records amount of money] in post-secondary education.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what's happening in Saskatoon. Saskatoon is the largest city in the province and continues to grow and continues to thrive, mostly because of the business people that work there and those that provide the job opportunities. But you need a responsible government that

invests in infrastructure if you want to ensure that that growth continues.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to say that I'm part of a government that funded the first children's hospital in Saskatchewan. For so long we got tired of hearing that Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island were the only provinces that didn't have a children's hospital, Mr. Speaker.

The Academic Health Sciences centre, and that's something that I don't think the Minister of Advanced Education and Immigration gets enough credit for. By taking that responsibility on, by funding it fully, and to making sure that we have something that we can be very proud of, he's done that. He's done that also with the student residences, a 3,000 per cent increase in student residences in our province under that minister. I am proud to call him a colleague.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we will take different sides on this budget, and we know it's quite predictable what will happen from the opposition.

But let's look and see what people from outside our jurisdiction have to say, other leaders in the province, Mayor Don Atchison for example. You know, I know I speak for all members here that we are very, very pleased and proud when he thanks this government for unprecedented investments into the infrastructure in Saskatoon. And I'm very, very proud to say that we worked together with the city of Saskatoon and others to make sure that that growth continues.

What did the chamber of commerce have to say in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker? Well they said they would give this budget an A minus grade. They said the province has the potential for an A plus, but we're at an A minus. It says great job, but there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker.

Now I don't know what the other members would be like when they brought home a report card and had an A minus. I know what would happen in our household when I brought home a report card like that. It didn't happen all the time, Mr. Speaker, that's for sure. And I have a mother that was a teacher, so she made sure she looked at that. But I tell you, if you got an A minus, it said that you were on the right track. But again it said that there is more work to do.

And that's indeed what the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce has said. Kent Smith-Windsor, who I think anybody would agree would be a tough teacher by any means, doesn't give out A's easily. But indeed he said that our government, when you look at the overall grade, A minus. When you look at specific items like continuing the long-term strategy of debt reduction, an A from the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. Spending control, an A. Commitment to education property tax reform, that was a B. There was more work to do, Mr. Speaker. So indeed a budget like this that receives an A minus I think is something that we can all be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

You know, another person that's often asked to comment on budgets is Marilyn Braun-Pollon from the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business], and she's vice-president here and responsible for Saskatchewan. And what did she have to say? She said, "When most provinces are running deficits

and unable to provide tax relief, we're encouraged that Saskatchewan's balanced budget offers \$200 million in tax relief."

And of course she's speaking on behalf of her members, the thousands and thousands — I think it's in the 50 or 60,000 range — of members that they have in Saskatchewan. And they are benefiting from a reduction in the rate of the small-business tax rate from 4.5 per cent to 2 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And that is very encouraging for those business owners. But it is more encouraging for everyone in Saskatchewan because we know when business owners have some money, have some profits, what do they do? They hire more people. They put money back into their businesses. They employ more. They buy more services. And, Mr. Speaker, that's that self-fulfilling prophecy that we are seeing here in Saskatchewan.

I had the opportunity last Friday, Mr. Speaker, to join the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, and also the Minister of Government Services, member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, and the member from Saskatoon Northwest at the announcement of a new expanded courthouse in Saskatoon, some \$13.8 million to expand the Court of Queen's Bench so that they can undertake the administration of justice in a safe and understandable manner, improving the efficiency of the courthouse. Mr. Speaker, this is something again that judges and others have been asking for, for 15 years they said, Mr. Speaker, and finally it has been announced and it has been brought.

Yesterday in Saskatoon the Minister of Social Services announced the details of a five-point plan to add at least 4,600 new housing units to Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan citizens for a better future, Mr. Speaker, some \$252 million expenditure. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know in government you start talking about millions and you start talking about billions. But one-quarter of a billion dollars towards housing in our province, Mr. Speaker, that is a priority by anybody's standards, and I congratulate the Minister of Social Services for that money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our government's promise to municipal revenue-sharing formula is something that we take great pride in. It's a promise that was made a few years ago. It was a promise that was partially delivered. It was a promise that had to be delayed in light of economic circumstances. But at the end of the day, the members opposite and all members of this House will know that when the Sask Party government makes a promise, they deliver on that promise. And all Saskatchewan residents are indeed benefiting from those monies, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned Mayor Don Atchison from Saskatoon. He applauded the Premier. He said he was true to his word and thanks him for delivering revenue sharing to his city. Mr. Speaker, indeed that money can go to many, many projects. When we talk about bridges, when we talk about the needs of a growing infrastructure, that is indeed something that we will continue to make a priority.

Another priority certainly is health care, and I have the opportunity and the privilege to be a seatmate with the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, somebody who is making unprecedented change in our province by bringing more than

800 nurses to our province, Mr. Speaker, by administering a budget of \$4.46 billion, an increase of 6.2 per cent, an increase of some \$260 million. That again is exactly what the mayor and others have said about this budget. It is putting your money where your mouth is. It is in doing what needs to be done to ensure that this province continues to grow. Mr. Speaker, we can look at specifics under the health budget. We can look at more money for diagnostic kidney disease. Two point eight more million dollars for special services in Prince Albert and Saskatoon. It addresses the need for more quality health care in Saskatchewan.

And I had the opportunity to see members of the Saskatoon and Region Health Authority here in the legislature. And they had a smile on their face because they understand that they now have the resources, more than ever before, to undertake what needs to be done to provide better health care for Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker.

We look forward to the partnership with the STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] organization, the helicopter for medical services. It will ensure residents that we get faster medical attention and transportation to health facilities. We look forward to the more details and the good work that the member from Melfort has done, Mr. Speaker, in this. And I'm sure we'll be a source of pride for Saskatchewan residents when they realize again that health care is indeed a priority for this government, Mr. Speaker.

I have the opportunity in this legislature to talk about First Nations and Métis Relations, to be in charge of Northern Affairs and the Gaming Corporation. And I'm very, very proud about what this budget does for people across the North and certainly for First Nations and Métis individuals.

[15:00]

This budget provides \$167.2 million, an increase of \$13.1 million or 8.5 per cent, Mr. Speaker, indeed unprecedented growth, unprecedented priority for First Nations people. That's the way it should be. That's the way it is under the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're increasing the availability of pre-kindergarten programming, increasing the high school completion rate for First Nations individuals, supporting adult basic education, skills training.

First Nations leaders were very, very pleased. And I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to invite every chief from around the province, every mayor from northern Saskatchewan to come and to witness the budget. We were very pleased. We had about 600 people here even though there were trying road conditions. But they came from all over Saskatchewan. They came from northern Saskatchewan to hear exactly what their government thinks of the North and, Mr. Speaker, they were very, very pleased. They certainly had the opportunity, and I want to say thank you to those that made it.

And we can look at Chief Guy Lonechild, the chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, and he said this government has put its money where its mouth is. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what we had the opportunity to do.

I could go into much detail. I know I want to talk about the

children and youth agenda that we have in the province. I want to speak about the money that First Nations and Métis Relations have been putting towards the investment in the northern action plan, some \$1.5 million for this commitment over three years and \$490,000 this year to reduce suicides and drug use in northern Saskatchewan. And I would contend that there is no more important use of public funds to ensure that we address those concerns. We don't have any magic answer, Mr. Speaker, but what we do have is the resolve to put the resources towards that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, but I know that my time has quickly elapsed. But I want to say that I appreciate the opportunity as serving as the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs as an MLA in this legislature. And I appreciate the leadership that has been shown and the inspiration, whether it's from the Premier, whether it's from the Minister of Finance, city councillors, or other leaders in our constituencies like those that lead the way of community associations. I want to thank them for leadership, for the inspiration, and for making Saskatchewan a better place.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to say that I look forward to voting against the amendment. I look forward to voting for this truly historic budget. And once again I want to say to colleagues on both sides of the House, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to enter this debate on last week's budget which is truly Saskatchewan's advantage.

But first as is customary, there are people that I must thank. And I will start off with my constituency assistants. My full-time assistant is Rosalie Story, and my casual is Wilma Bjorndalen. And these girls do a great job of handling the affairs in the office, and I really appreciate the fact that every constituent that comes into the office is treated with courtesy and respect.

I must also thank my executive for all they do for me as well and of course to thank my constituents for the privilege of representing them. It's unbelievable that it's going on to 12 years that that's been happening, but it has certainly been a pleasure for me, and I appreciate their support. And as you would know, Mr. Speaker, the people that I represent are from very diverse sectors. They are hard working and the backbone of our economy. They and those before them have made our province what it is today and this province that we are all so proud of.

And last but certainly not least, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my family: my son Terry, my daughter Trisha, my grandchildren, Beau, Bailee, Shelby, and Tristan. They are my constant. And they give me yet another reason to be part of this government and, I must say, a government that has made and continues to make positive changes in this province. And I must also mention my mother, Mr. Speaker. I know she's watching this afternoon, and she watches us every day. And I just want to thank her for her support and for the love and guidance she's given me over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you why I will be supporting the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora-Pelly. First of all regarding the changes to the personal exemptions, basic and spousal rise by \$1,000 each to bring the exemption amounts to \$14,535. Dependent children increased by \$500, and that brings the amount to \$5,514. And, Mr. Speaker, those that have spoken before me have said it, but I will say it again because it is pretty historic, that this means that a family of four will pay no provincial tax on the first \$45,550 of combined income. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the highest threshold in the Dominion of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, during the 2007 election campaign, we made promises to the people of this province, and I'm proud to say that we have kept over 100 of our promises. But one specific promise was regarding the education portion of property tax. And this is something that has been talked about for decades in this province, talked about, but nothing was ever done. And as my friend, the member from Wood River stated on Thursday, even Tommy Douglas stated how unfair this form of taxation was and something had to be done about it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, years passed and the NDP commissioned studies. They cherry-picked from reports, and they had every excuse in the world why they couldn't act on the education portion of property tax. You know, I think the first one was amalgamation and just everything you can imagine. I think it was almost to the point where even the stars in the sky weren't aligning properly, and that's how wild it was. But they always had an excuse.

And in the 2007 election campaign, they too had a plan regarding the education portion of property tax. But in typical NDP fashion, agriculture owners, landowners did not qualify. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that got it done. Agriculture landowners will see the education portion of property tax drop by 80 per cent when compared to 2007. Homeowners will see a reduction of about 29 per cent, and businesses by about 17 per cent. And this represents the largest property tax reduction in Saskatchewan history.

Mr. Speaker, the municipal operating grants will be a full point of 1 per cent and that is something municipalities are extremely pleased about because they can plan for their future. And this is a complete turnaround from the shell game that the NDP played with them. In the *Lifestyles* magazine of March 25th, 2011, the NDP Finance critic did an interview and I will quote from the article. And it says:

The NDP is pleased to see that the Sask. Party will fully fund municipal revenue sharing this year, but . . . they would like to see some long-term infrastructure planning and funding for municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what the municipal operating grant does. It's basically a news flash for the Finance critic over there and for every member of the NDP caucus, but that's what this does is give them the stability that they need so that they can plan for the future and for their infrastructure spending.

And I have another news flash for him: that infrastructure needs are something that just haven't arisen in the last three and a half years since the Saskatchewan Party formed government. It was

just because that party, when they were in power, they never listened to the municipalities and they totally ignored the needs of rural Saskatchewan. And, I think, that was just one of the parts of the rural revenge that they had on.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture sees a commitment to fully fund AgriStability, AgriInvest, and crop insurance, and again this is a far cry from what the NDP ever did. The NDP's actions regarding agriculture . . . The agriculture file clearly proves that they didn't understand ag or didn't care or perhaps even both. They left farmers in limbo regarding the predecessors of AgStability and AgInvest. And I have had so many people approach me and tell me how nice it is to have an Agriculture minister that understands the ag file.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, this is in sharp contrast to the Agriculture minister under the NDP, Mark Wartman, who said, "Farmers make business decisions." And this was when farmers were dealing with elements, elements beyond their control, and he says farmers make business decisions. And I mean that was the epitome . . .

An Hon. Member: — He once visited a produce stand.

Ms. Eagles: — . . . of arrogance. And I do believe what my colleague, the member from Cannington said, that he thought his qualifications to be an Ag minister were that he visited a produce stand at one time. But they didn't, just didn't understand the file. And of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was the NDP that continually raised premiums and reduced coverage.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very pleased with the announcement of a satellite agriculture office in Estevan, or a rural service centre. Estevan was one of the 22 or 23 rural service centres that that bunch over there shut down when they were in government. And the people in Estevan have brought this issue up to me and of course, in his typical fashion, the Minister of Agriculture has listened and seen fit to have a satellite station out there. So that is extremely good news.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members over there, now they get up and they claim to really care about rural Saskatchewan, but the people in rural Saskatchewan will never forget how they were treated. And the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour, and that is something that they have in their minds all the time.

Mr. Speaker, in Energy and Resources, and of course that is a sector that is very important to my constituency, there were some very important announcements in this area, but the one I was extremely pleased with was the additional funding to decrease the time to review and approve licences for oil wells. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had many people in the industry express appreciation for this move. And our government understands that while you're waiting for permits to be approved and the equipment is sitting, the industry is losing money. So again this government listened and acted. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, that people in my constituency, and I think throughout the whole province, are also gravely concerned as to what the NDP are saying about the royalty rates.

And I mean, they're focusing on potash right now, and we are the highest taxed jurisdiction in the world but, you know, sometimes it's uranium. It all depends where the Opposition Leader is in the province. But the people in my constituency are aware that oil will be next on their agenda. Because they remember the oil policies of the NDP in the 1970s when Allan Blakeney was premier and all the oil people had to move to Alberta in order to put bread on their table. And the people have never, ever forgot that.

Mr. Speaker, changes to the small business tax from 4.5 per cent to 2 per cent increases the amount of after-tax funds in small business owners' pockets. And I believe that this extra funding will be invested directly back into their businesses and its employees, and I also think that moves such as this promote a culture of entrepreneurialism in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Moving over to the housing file, and you know, the minister addressed the housing shortage yesterday and gave details of what was outlined in the budget. And the rural rental incentive program will assist municipalities in their efforts to increase the supply of affordable rental housing in the province, and in 2011-2012, \$1.5 million will be provided to develop rental housing units.

[15:15]

To help municipalities stimulate home ownership opportunities, the province is providing \$200,000 for the Saskatchewan municipal affordable home ownership program. This initiative will reimburse participating municipalities for the education portion of property tax that municipalities provide to homeowners as a grant.

And there was also the Headstart on a Home program, which is expected to stimulate the construction of at least 1,000 new entry-level homes in Saskatchewan over the next five years. An additional revenue at the end of the 2010-2011 fiscal year allowed for an investment of \$33.9 million which went toward renovations of existing government-assisted housing and support for development of new housing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Is there more that can be done regarding this file? Of course there is. But, Mr. Speaker, with growth comes challenges. And the NDP discouraged growth and therefore never put any infrastructure money into place to accommodate growth. They implemented programs that drove people out of this province. In fact, it was former NDP cabinet minister Eldon Lautermilch who said, as people were exiting this province, that left more for the rest of us. And what a mindset, Mr. Speaker. And yes, even the Leader of the Official Opposition was one of those making that exodus.

Mr. Speaker, there was also investments for disability, sports, and income assistance. And I know my time is limited here, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to, just want to say regarding the seniors, that it was a Sask Party government that increased the benefits by 110 per cent, the first time there had been an increase for 18 years. So I think even the members over there can do the math of who was in power, who claims ownership of these programs, and who did absolutely nothing to address that situation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move on to health care, but I just

have to say that when I was home last weekend, people were so excited about this budget. And I will tell you that I had the honour of attending . . . Estevan has built a new events centre, the Spectra Place events centre. And, Mr. Speaker, just to tell you what kind of a community I come from, this is a \$23 million project and there's less than \$2 million owing on this project. And the generosity of the people of that community . . . In fact Friday night I went to a fundraising dinner they had and I was so honoured that the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs came down for it as well. But at this dinner there was 770 people there. My CA [constituency assistant] called them this morning and they said that they netted at least \$310,000. That's netted in that one evening. So that just shows you what kind of a community I come from, and the volunteerism and the generosity of that community is second to none.

But, Mr. Speaker, while I was at this fundraiser, you would not believe the people that came up to me and said, good on you guys. You just aced it. And the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, he was there and honestly, they went over to him and he always had a crowd around him, people just expressing their gratitude for this government's budget.

And you know, I've had many, many letters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, regarding the budget and many comments. But the one letter, it's just very, very short and simple. It was a copy of a letter that was sent to the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . you probably got a copy of it actually — that was sent to the Minister of Finance. And all it said was, hallelujah, amen, the Saskatchewan advantage. And I want to thank Gerry for that letter, and I know the members over there are aware who Gerry is because he writes them on a regular basis and he copies me on those. So I know that he is no stranger to them.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do just want to talk briefly on the health care file and I am very pleased to see a \$250 million increase in the regional health authority base funding. And this brings the total base funding to 2.8 billion — that's billion with a "b". And also the increases in funding to the Cancer Agency to address patient volumes for cardiac care and diagnostic image are very welcome.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to go back to the regional health authorities for a minute. And throughout this session and the session prior to this, the NDP Health critic, the member from Saskatoon Eastview, has mentioned many times how she's toured the rural areas last summer and how she's visited hospitals and wellness centres. And well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know of 52 that she couldn't visit, and those were the 52 hospitals in rural Saskatchewan that that government shut down in the '90s and that's not including the Plains.

So when that member gets up now . . . And the member from Riversdale's chirping, she'll get her chance. But when that member gets up and boasts about how she cares for rural Saskatchewan, they are not buying it. She can save her breath. And I honestly don't know how she even has the nerve or the audacity to go out in those constituencies and try to discuss those issues, because the people of rural Saskatchewan will never forget Roy's rural revenge. It's still happening out there and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, on your account.

An Hon. Member: — Roy was your guy.

Ms. Eagles: — Roy was your guy. He wasn't ours.

Mr. Speaker, I also listened to the member from Battlefords and his response yesterday. And he spoke of priorities, and he was specific about the hospital that he wants in North Battleford. And he was specific about a Highway No. 4 North, Highway 378, and he said they should be priorities. He said Highway 378 hadn't had support for 40 years. Really? Who was in power most of those 40 years?

And regarding that hospital, he was the minister. Couldn't he convince his premier of the day and his cabinet to support him? And you know, he talks about how we have to have our priorities straight, and I guess I have a few of the NDP priorities. Rather than build the hospital in North Battleford or look after highways, their priorities were SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], Navigata, Channel Lake, Clickabid, Retx.com, mega bingo. And the list goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, amounting to hundreds, hundreds of millions of dollars. And their priorities are having an effect yet today because they chose losing investments over hospitals, housing, or highways.

Mr. Speaker, I was very happy with our government's investment regarding the STARS program, and that is regarding the new helicopter ambulance service. And I think I mentioned this in my speech last fall, how I had the pleasure of touring that facility in Calgary. I was accompanied by the member from Thunder Creek and his wife, Linda, and also the wife of the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford, Heather Chisholm. And those girls are both RNs [registered nurse] so I mean they were more aware of what was happening there than I was, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they were amazed and in fact we all were. It is an amazing, it's an amazing facility, an amazing program.

And, Mr. Speaker, time is so critical when tragedy strikes. And I know that local doctors and nurses, EMTs [emergency medical technician], and everyone involved are very, very competent, but sometimes the clock is against you when you have to transport a patient to a specialized facility. And to have a trauma team and unit come out is probably one of the greatest gifts the people who live a distance from a hospital or a specialized facility can receive. But I want to be very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I know the local medical staff are very competent and dedicated, and I would like to thank them for that.

And yesterday I was appalled when the member from Wakamow and the member from Eastview, the Health critic . . . And just a short time ago, when my colleague was giving his speech and mentioned STARS, the member from Riversdale was chirping. And these are all people that live within a city setting . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You'll have your chance; just wait. These people are all living in an urban setting, and they don't have far. They don't have the worries that people in rural Saskatchewan have.

But I would like to ask those members, especially the member from Wakamow and the member from Eastview: have they ever sat in a hospital and comforted their daughter while their granddaughter was being worked on by every doctor in that facility, trying to stabilize her enough to get her to Regina, a two-hour trek? I ask them that. You put a price on that. Put a

price on it. I've done it, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll just close by saying Saskatchewan used to be next year country, but our time has come. I'm proud to support this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't aware I'd get such an applause for simply getting to my feet to enter into the budget debate, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to at the start of my remarks just take a few minutes to thank those who make it possible for each of us to be here in this Assembly. Start by thanking my family for their support over the years — my wife, my children, and of course my extended family.

Mr. Speaker, we all are here by the grace of those who support us and, Mr. Speaker, we should be thankful every day that we get to be here representing the people of Saskatchewan. Because, Mr. Speaker, there's no higher calling than being able to represent the people and to bring forward the ideas and the aspirations of the people of Saskatchewan to this Assembly and act on their behalf. So, Mr. Speaker, for the many years we've been here, many of us in this Assembly, we should be thankful for the opportunity to work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan because there's no greater calling.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm up today to speak about a budget, a budget brought down by the government. And, Mr. Speaker, that budget leaves many, many people of Saskatchewan questioning what their futures might be. Mr. Speaker, we see significant increases in affordability over the last 24 months, Mr. Speaker — inflation and issues of food and rent in particular, gas, Mr. Speaker — leaving many people who once were able to afford to live with a standard of living that was more comfortable looking to see which bills they can afford to pay, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a Saskatchewan that is leaving people behind.

Mr. Speaker, a vibrant economy like we have in the province of Saskatchewan is good for many, Mr. Speaker, but our challenge as members of the legislature is to ensure that it's good for everyone. Mr. Speaker, those who are left behind in any community are those who we as legislators have the greatest responsibility for and to because, Mr. Speaker, we make the decisions that affect their lives. And we have a responsibility to help those who need our help the most, Mr. Speaker, and to those people I would wish to make my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a vibrant economy. We have not seen the type of increase in expenditures we've seen I think ever in our history. Mr. Speaker, over the last four years we've seen, in four consecutive budgets, about a 40 per cent increase in expenditure, Mr. Speaker. We are spending now more than \$4 billion than we did in the last 2007 budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party would have you believe that the economy and everything started the day, started to grow and we became, for lack of a better word, a have province, the day they became government. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite, I want to remind the members opposite that

we were a have province in 2004; 2004 we became a have province. We became a have province as a result of building a base for an economy that's today flourishing.

[15:30]

But before the economy can flourish, you have to build the base. And you have to take the time to do it, and you have to make sure that base is inclusive of all the people. And, Mr. Speaker, that it's solid. It's not built on a sand base, Mr. Speaker, but it's built on a solid base that allows that economy to grow. And, Mr. Speaker, I think there was a number of decisions that were made in the early 2001, 2002, Mr. Speaker, and some before that that are really the catalyst that have moved our province to its current economic level. Mr. Speaker, the royalty changes made in 2001 to the oil and gas sector were instrumental in our economy being what it is today.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, those who say that we believe in changing the royalty structures in oil and gas, Mr. Speaker, industries, are absolutely wrong, Mr. Speaker. In the oil and gas industry, where we represent a very small portion of the world market, Mr. Speaker, we don't have the luxury of being able to be instrumental in setting the world market. And, Mr. Speaker, so those who say that an NDP government would change the natural gas and oil royalty structure in Saskatchewan are absolutely wrong. We put . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And our leader does not say that. He does not say that. In fact he has emphatically, he has emphatically said that oil and natural gas would not be changed. And it would not be changed for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to again say that in 2001 the very difficult decision was made that allowed the significant growth in our oil and natural . . . particularly in the oil sector in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that boosted our economy to a new level.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out and, Mr. Speaker, when you make a royalty change like that, it takes four to seven years before you see the economic benefit of that change in most cases. It takes time for that economic benefit, it takes time for that economic benefit to move into the economy, Mr. Speaker, so that it becomes part of the base of the economy of the province.

Now those in the oil sector in our province understand that. They do. And, Mr. Speaker, I think if we were honest with one another, we would know one of the reasons those changes weren't made is because when you first make those changes, Mr. Speaker, you get less revenue. You get less revenue for a period of years. And we're elected on four-year cycles, Mr. Speaker. The members of this Assembly are elected on four-year cycles, and the risk of losing money during that four years, Mr. Speaker, made it difficult for governments to make those choices.

But in 2001 that choice was made, Mr. Speaker, and that played a pivotal role in the development of the base of our economy, Mr. Speaker. And then several years of business tax breaks or cuts, Mr. Speaker, which put our economy on a much safer, more prosperous, and more forward-looking base, Mr. Speaker, made a big difference to change the economy.

And by 2004 Saskatchewan became a have province. And by 2004 we started to see continual years of more revenue coming in than expenditure, Mr. Speaker. We saw that base implemented in a manner and taken up by the business community. And yes, Mr. Speaker, the business community, the business community took that opportunity and they expanded. We had growth, Mr. Speaker, and from 2004 on we saw an economy that was growing, was prospering, and we became a have province. And, Mr. Speaker, that's good. That's good. By 2004 we were a have province, and we've continued to grow.

And, Mr. Speaker, the population, the population started to grow as well, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the population began to grow as well. Because the population, Mr. Speaker, grows as the economy grows. As there's work and as there are opportunities, people shall come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite do not want to ever, ever admit that the economy in fact reached the pivotal point in 2007, Mr. Speaker. Population was continuing to grow, Mr. Speaker, and this province was doing extremely well. So they inherited a province with, Mr. Speaker, a very hot economy — \$2.3 billion available to them, Mr. Speaker, from the previous government, Mr. Speaker. And they had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to move our province forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to point a few things out. Today in this prosperity, Mr. Speaker, debt is rising. Mr. Speaker, they will tell you or try to convince you that debt isn't rising. But, Mr. Speaker, in their own budget documents, Mr. Speaker, in their own budget documents on page 61, Mr. Speaker, it shows very clearly that public debt, public debt this year is not going down, Mr. Speaker. Total public debt is going from eight point three — Mr. Speaker, I need to get my glasses just to be absolutely precise — \$8.368 billion, Mr. Speaker, to eight point eight five three point eight billion dollars. So to \$8.853 billion, up from \$8.368 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's their document. This isn't an NDP document. This is a Government of Saskatchewan document, Mr. Speaker, showing an increase in debt of a half a billion dollars this year alone.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, they can pay debt down in the General Revenue Fund, but if you increase debt in the Crown corporations, total public debt is still increasing. You can try, you can try, Mr. Speaker, to make the people of Saskatchewan believe otherwise, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is, debt's on the rise. And we saw this once before. We saw this in the 1980s where a government tried to convince the people that debt was going down when in reality debt was going up.

And, Mr. Speaker, for a period of time you can fool people, Mr. Speaker, because people do want to hear good news. And all of us like, all of us like to look forward and be optimistic about the future, Mr. Speaker. That's life. We want, we want to look to the future and look to the future with pride and look to the future with optimism. But, Mr. Speaker, we want the best for our families. But the reality is debt is going up, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about that in context to our accounting principles, Mr. Speaker. If you go to page 7 of the Estimates of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, you will see here very clearly laid out under accounting policies, for

those people of Saskatchewan who want to go to the Internet and look because, Mr. Speaker, these documents can be obtained through the Internet, Mr. Speaker. And they'd have to go to page 7. And it says this, Mr. Speaker:

The financial statements and schedules in the Estimates are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles for senior governments as recommended by the Public Sector Accounting Board of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants with the following exceptions [Mr. Speaker].

So what they're saying is, yes, we follow most of the rules. But we don't follow them all, and we're the only government in Canada that doesn't. Mr. Speaker, we have a government that believes they can make their own rules. And, Mr. Speaker, what does that do? It takes debt off the books.

Mr. Speaker, goes on to say: "Transfers to and from the Growth and Financial Security Fund are included in the determination of surplus for the year." So they're artificially putting dollars in to determine surplus.

"Pension expenses are accounted for on a cash basis." So pension liabilities no longer show up in the debt of the province, Mr. Speaker. So the liabilities for a pension show up only as the cash expenses for that year, Mr. Speaker, not as their liability that has to be paid over the long term as a responsibility in debt of the government.

Mr. Speaker:

Transfer payments from the federal government to the Province are recognized as revenue when the transfer is authorized by the federal government and the Province meets the eligibility criteria. Similarly, transfers from the GRF are recognized as an expense when the Province authorizes the transfer and the recipient meets the eligibility criteria [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker:

Debt Servicing Costs . . . Crown corporations be recorded as interest revenue (rather than netted against debt servicing costs). The exception to this is where debt is specifically borrowed on behalf of a Government Business Enterprise, such as SaskPower.

So, Mr. Speaker, they're changing how debt servicing costs are featured in our Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we don't . . . As a government, we should live by the rules every other government in Canada has to live by, Mr. Speaker. We should live by the same standard as every government of Canada has to live by. We should be open and transparent, Mr. Speaker. We should tell the people of Saskatchewan what the true debt situation is, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, what is that true debt situation? If you go to page 61 of their book, Mr. Speaker, their book, and it shows growth of debt from 2009 to 2015 being more than \$3 billion. Now, Mr. Speaker, if you would have taken this same graph a year ago, that would have been more than \$4.2 billion, Mr. Speaker.

So the question is, Mr. Speaker, is the change as a result of them looking at less borrowing into the future, Mr. Speaker? Or is it just not wanting to show the true situation that we will face in the coming years? But nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter. Debt is on the rise in the province of Saskatchewan, and by 2015, we will be more than \$10 billion in debt again. More than \$10 billion in debt. And, Mr. Speaker, it's right here. It's right here on page 61 of their budget book, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the responsible thing to do, the responsible thing to do is to take and accept responsibility for your actions, is to accept responsibility for your actions and admit. Earlier today I stood in this House and apologized for something I did yesterday, Mr. Speaker, because I had done something I shouldn't have done, and you take responsibility for it. Mr. Speaker, that is what you do. That is what you do as a professional individual, Mr. Speaker. You take responsibility for what you do. You admit if you make a mistake. You put, Mr. Speaker, the truth. And, Mr. Speaker, this book, clearly a budget document, shows the debt, debt is on the rise, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know the true financial situation of their province. They have a right to know the obligations and liabilities the government's putting in front of them on their behalf. Because, Mr. Speaker, there is only one taxpayer in this province. It's the people of the province of Saskatchewan. Governments don't have money that don't belong to the people, Mr. Speaker. We don't work for ourselves, Mr. Speaker. We're here on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And we are accountable to the people of Saskatchewan, and we have an obligation to put the true facts, the true facts before the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I started a few minutes ago talking about affordability and our obligation and responsibility to the people of Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker, affordable housing in this province is becoming a more serious and more crucial issue every year. And, Mr. Speaker, we have a budget before us that puts 1.7 billion, or one point — pardon me; I wish it was \$1.7 billion, Mr. Speaker — \$1.7 million towards affordable housing. And in one place in the budget, Mr. Speaker, they say it will build 300, provide 300 housing units. In another place, Mr. Speaker, the same money's supposed to supply 350 housing units, Mr. Speaker. And then in their glossy pre-election pamphlet they sent out to every Saskatchewan citizen, it says 650, Mr. Speaker, 650. Not 300, not 350. Now which document are we to believe? Which document are the people of Saskatchewan to believe, Mr. Speaker?

Well the people of Saskatchewan are only going to receive this glossy little pamphlet talking about the great things that they believe the government is doing. Mr. Speaker, this is a pre-election pamphlet by any standard, Mr. Speaker. And the accuracy, the accuracy of this pamphlet needs to be questioned, Mr. Speaker, because it says 300 in the budget and it says 650 here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, integrity and credibility is important. The government shouldn't be putting in its budget 300 housing units and 650 in its pamphlet. Mr. Speaker, they shouldn't be putting different numbers in their pamphlets, Mr. Speaker, than their budget says. And, Mr. Speaker, it's important that the people of

Saskatchewan truly know what their government's going to do, not what they say their government's going to do.

[15:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, we see this government today adding debt to the Crown corporations for things that should have been funded through the General Revenue Fund, Mr. Speaker, so that they can claim to the people that they're paying debt down to the General Revenue Fund. A great example, Mr. Speaker, is something that I think every member of this Assembly supports. It's not that we don't support a children's hospital because we damn well do support a children's hospital, Mr. Speaker. I think every citizen does, and I think every member of this House does, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, that's something that should have been funded through the General Revenue Fund, Mr. Speaker, not through the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, and then debt is added to the province, to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we all support the hospital. That's not the issue. But it's how you do it, Mr. Speaker, and whether you're transparent, whether you're honest, and whether you show truly, truly the financial picture of the province, Mr. Speaker. And they're not doing it. They're not doing it, Mr. Speaker. And for members opposite to suggest we don't support the children's hospital, they're being disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, because they know. The member from, Mr. Speaker, the member from Greystone knows fair well that every member in this province, in this Assembly supports the children's hospital. They do. They do.

Mr. Speaker, it was an initiative of our government. It's an initiative of their government, Mr. Speaker. It is something that's right for the people of Saskatchewan. We all agree on that. And where we agree, Mr. Speaker, why do we try to have people say we disagree? Because we do agree. We agree on a children's hospital. Everybody knows that. It's a fundamental, fundamental piece of infrastructure that we all agree on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was dealing with the issue of reporting of debt and reporting of where the debt is. And, Mr. Speaker, the only thing we are concerned about at all with the children's hospital is the fact that, Mr. Speaker, the money came from the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, and the Crown corporations then borrow money to carry on with their operations so that the government didn't have to take the money from the General Revenue Fund where it should've come from.

So, Mr. Speaker, they can try to tell us they're paying down debt, and the reality is they're increasing debt. Total public debt on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan's going up this year by over a half a billion dollars and, Mr. Speaker, over the next three years, Mr. Speaker, more than \$3 billion. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a concern. That is a concern. It is a concern and we've seen this before. We saw this in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, and it worked for a period of time. You can fool people and tell them that the situation is other than what it really is, but eventually it catches up with you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out as well that the costs for servicing our debt are going up this year, Mr. Speaker. And why are the total costs of servicing debt going up? They're

going up because total debt's going up, Mr. Speaker. If we go to page 61, Mr. Speaker, we are going to see that public debt is forecast to increase by \$485.3 million in 2011-12, Mr. Speaker. That's total public debt. Mr. Speaker, that results in an increase in debt servicing cost. And, Mr. Speaker, that's debt that the people of the province of Saskatchewan have to pay for. There isn't somebody other than the people of Saskatchewan who magically pay for that debt, Mr. Speaker. There is only one group of people who pay and that is the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And in good times like we have today, Mr. Speaker, if debt is going up, how can the people of this province believe that this government can manage the province when things are tougher, when the economy isn't as vibrant as it is today? And, Mr. Speaker, we're at the top of a windfall right now, Mr. Speaker, and things are going very well in many . . . in our economy, Mr. Speaker, except for those who are being left behind by the government.

But at this period of time, Mr. Speaker, at this period of time the total cost of debt is going up. The total cost of servicing debt in 2010-11 was \$657 million, and today it's \$663.5 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have used my allotted time in the budget speech. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that I've had the opportunity to shed some light on the true picture of the debt for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment and not supporting the original motion on the budget, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — I recognize the hon. member from Lloydminster.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a few comments I'd like to make today about this budget, but before I get into them, as I do every year, I'd like to give a few thank yous.

First off, to the people that work in my office in Lloydminster. I've got three ladies, Caren, Marilyn, and Rachelle, and they do a great job. They serve the people of Lloydminster and as a team I think that we are a very good representative of our government in Lloydminster. So thank you to them.

I would also just like to mention that the people we work with here in Regina are an excellent bunch. The ministries that I deal with are professionals that again have the best interests in Saskatchewan in mind each and every time, and it is a pleasure to work with such professionals.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that I really want to do properly . . . I've gotten some grief the last budget speech I made. I talked about my wife. And I'm a little nervous sometimes when you start speaking on the floor of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, and as I was speaking of my wife, I said, you know, we've been through thick and thin. And I have not heard the end of that line, Mr. Speaker. Thick and thin, she tells me. And you know, I'm prone to misspeaking on occasions, and she's prone to letting me know when I do. So this time, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say I've got a very beautiful wife who is a great partner. We've got a couple of lovely kids, and I love them all very much.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn to the business of this budget. This is the best budget in Canada, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of standing behind the best Finance minister in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And I think that our province is poised for greatness.

Before I get into the details of this budget, there is just something that I think needs to be acknowledged. What we just witnessed, Mr. Speaker, the speaker before us, it was fantastic to get a treatise on the oil industry from the member from Dewdney, Regina Dewdney, downtown Regina, Mr. Speaker, was explaining how the oil industry works to the member from Cannington. We've got the member from Weyburn and the Weyburn from Estevan. I represent Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker.

So I learned a lot and I hope that my fellow members were paying attention because we could, from a member with a background in the oil industry like that, we could certainly learn a great deal.

I think only a socialist, Mr. Speaker, would understand that they are in fact the expert and, you know, if only we were running the potash industry or if we could just take over the oil companies and start Saskoil, everything would be great. It's funny. The member beside me, Mr. Speaker, says they did that once in the past.

One of the comments that the former speaker, the member from Dewdney, was making was that his leader never said they were going to review oil royalties, oil and gas. He said it, and we may have said, yes he did, Mr. Speaker. And he again repeated it: his leader, the leader of the NDP, never was going to review royalties, Mr. Speaker.

In the 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker, from his speech until now, with very little research I can tell him that CKRM radio, December 13th, his leader, the leader of the NDP, Mr. Speaker, did an interview. In that interview with Craig Wallebeck he said, "NDP leader Dwain Lingenfelter wants full review of Saskatchewan oil royalty rates on oil and potash."

Now, Mr. Speaker, it says right here. The quote is oil and potash. That is what Craig Wallebeck, Mr. Speaker, had to say. Then the leader of the NDP, Mr. Speaker, speaks up and says, "If I become Premier in November of 2011, I would institute a review of all royalties in the province, whether it's potash, uranium, oil, gas." Mr. Speaker, he was unequivocal that he was going to go after the oil companies. He was going to go after the gas, potash companies, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen this story before. We've seen it in oil when they started Saskoil and took over the industry. We've seen it in potash when they devastated that industry and set our province back for decades, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, just a couple weeks ago he went up north, Mr. Speaker. I guess they thought that the uranium mines would have some difficulty if the NDP ever become government. It got to be a bit of a problem. I'm guessing that his northern members representing their constituents said to the leader of the NDP that this is not even reasonable. Mr. Speaker, I'm certain that he said to their leader, we cannot have this kind of talk. We can't have the leader in northern Saskatchewan

knowing that we're going to review royalties on uranium and likely set that industry and northern Saskatchewan back for decades. So what does the Leader of the Opposition do? He goes up to northern Saskatchewan. He gets on the radio station, and what does he say? He says, we will not review royalties on uranium.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he says one thing in northern Saskatchewan. He says one thing in southern Saskatchewan. He makes a commercial that says something else. He will say whatever he thinks people want to hear. But I think the reality is, Mr. Speaker, we've all seen this before. When he has the opportunity, he will raise taxes. He will raise royalties. He will try to nationalize industry. The only time that he deregulates and denationalizes industry, Mr. Speaker, is when he then gets a job with a company that he sells off. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have seen it. They've seen it from that member in particular and they will not, will not, Mr. Speaker, let that happen to Saskatchewan again.

Mr. Speaker, I just, I want to start with a few of the fundamentals of this budget. Income tax cuts, Mr. Speaker. An income tax cut is across the board. It's a pay hike for every working person in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Every month you get your paycheque and government takes a little bit less. That means there's a little bit more in your pocket.

Debt repayment, Mr. Speaker. That is a retirement plan for every single person in Saskatchewan. Debt paid down today pays off for everyone tomorrow and every day following, Mr. Speaker.

Corporate income taxes, Mr. Speaker, that's one of those things that I think might get lost in a bigger picture, but it is our duty to highlight it. And coming from Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, where we are on the border and businesses make decisions every day as to where their companies will operate, where their head office will be, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan wasn't as competitive as Alberta on corporate income tax rates. And I have friends, Mr. Speaker, that started businesses in Lloydminster and made the conscious decision that when they start their business, when they invested in equipment, machinery, property, Alberta offered a more competitive royalty tax rate.

What we've done here, Mr. Speaker, in this budget, what our Finance minister has brought forward on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan is a corporate income rate on small business. It is not just competitive but one of the most competitive income tax rates on small business in the country.

Mr. Speaker, another item broad based across the entire province, property tax. Every single property owner in our province will see a reduction in property tax again this year, coming to the full commitment from our campaign, Mr. Speaker. And that is something that farmers will see a reduction, business people, house owners, Mr. Speaker, cabin owners. It's good for our province. It's good for property owners, and it's a competitive issue, Mr. Speaker, that makes us more competitive.

I would like to talk, Mr. Speaker, about a couple of the ministries in which I am minister of, Mr. Speaker. The first is

the Crowns. Crown corporations in this year's budget announced that they will have a dividend this year of about . . . of exactly \$110 million, Mr. Speaker. That is about 30 per cent of profits, Mr. Speaker, 30 per cent. That is a extremely conservative, a modest dividend to GRF.

It allows the Crowns to build up cash, Mr. Speaker. We have some Crowns . . . We have SaskPower that is paying zero dividend, Mr. Speaker. They are reinvesting every cent of their profits, Mr. Speaker, as they did last year, back into the infrastructure. And that is extremely important. SaskPower has some challenges, nothing that our province isn't up to, but, Mr. Speaker, challenges. It's a position we were put in by 16 years of non-investment.

When they became government, Mr. Speaker, in 1991, the former government left them a brand new power plant at Shand, Mr. Speaker, one of the largest, most modern power plants in the world, built right here in Saskatchewan, finished in 1991. From that date there was a meagre, Mr. Speaker, a meagre reinvestment in SaskPower as there was in the other Crowns, but that one is where it is glaringly obvious, that 16 years of neglect.

We find ourselves in 2007 in a situation where companies are looking at Saskatchewan optimistically, that we see growth and we see a infrastructure, a base of power, that isn't going to keep up. And our government views that our province will have growth, that we will increase in capacity, that we'll need more power production, Mr. Speaker. And our party is going to drive an aggressive investment agenda in SaskPower, in SaskEnergy, Mr. Speaker, in SaskTel.

[16:00]

That is another area, Mr. Speaker. In the last year we've seen a large rollout in towers. I believe it's 55 towers. We've rolled out the G 3, the G 3 plus, and I believe now it's even G 4, Mr. Speaker, that allows Saskatchewan to have one of the most modern Wi-Fi cellular networks in North America. And, Mr. Speaker, that costs money. The alternative, Mr. Speaker, is to not spend the money, and that, that was the plan of the former government. We can look at that as an option. I don't think it's an option for this side of the House, but the members opposite, they advocate that position on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker.

They say that, why would we want to run up debt? Why would we want to invest in our future? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is saying that that isn't accurate, Mr. Speaker. We hear it every day. We heard it today in question period that our government is going to invest heavily in the Crowns. And I think the option, Mr. Speaker, is how would you set up an economy in Saskatchewan where you didn't need that sort of investment?

Well I could think of a couple of moves that a government — our government will not, but the former government if they ever get the opportunity — if they raise royalties, Mr. Speaker, on potash, if they raise royalties on oil and gas, that will have people leaving in droves, Mr. Speaker, and there will not be the requirements for growth that there currently is.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, when he was in

government, raised taxes on the citizens of Saskatchewan seventeen times. Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of moves that will again have people leaving this province in droves. And when people leave and our power requirements go down, Mr. Speaker, if they ever get in power again, I guess they won't have to invest as heavily as we will or are planning on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. But that isn't a future we're looking forward to, and it's not a future I think Saskatchewan's going to choose for itself, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to discuss the beer discount. That is something . . . Mr. Speaker, last night I had the opportunity to speak at the hoteliers' association last night, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you the people in that room had nothing good to say about the NDP, Mr. Speaker. They talked about the history with the NDP, that they saw their margin reduced year after year after year since 1993, Mr. Speaker. While other players in the industry had a percentage remuneration, the beer discount was a fixed price, Mr. Speaker, and it eroded each and every year.

And, Mr. Speaker, that needed to be addressed to ensure that we have a distribution arm in many communities where SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] doesn't have distribution. It provides a service in communities where we do have a distribution, Mr. Speaker. They provide different hours, Mr. Speaker, than SLGA.

But the people in that room reminded me that in 2003 that government, Mr. Speaker, when they were government in '93, in the budget not only did they not rectify the year-over-year reduction, they actually tried to claw back \$5 million, crippling the industry. Now the industry made a very strong case at that time. They tried to reason with the opposition. It wasn't until they got the Sask Party MLAs, Mr. Speaker, to make this a major issue, to stand up for hoteliers, to stand up for the hospitality industry that the NDP backed down and actually reinstated that money, Mr. Speaker. But if they had had their way, they would have crippled the hospitality industry like they did so many other industries in Saskatchewan through those dark, dark years, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I had a very interesting conversation last night. One of the members that's on the board, he's a Vice-Chair of the Saskatchewan Hospitality Association, Mike Billard. He's invested in Saskatchewan. He's got some properties here. He's a hotel owner. And you know what he did, Mr. Speaker? He looked around and he saw that Saskatchewan is growing, and it's a place he wants to be further involved. He identified that Eatonia is a place that had a bar that closed down in 2006, Mr. Speaker. I can imagine it was a time in the industry when again the NDP was in power, that the NDP wouldn't listen to the hospitality association, where people were probably leaving the province in droves as they did under . . . the entire time the NDP were in government. And they closed the bar, Mr. Speaker.

Four short years later, Mr. Speaker, the town is growing, the prosperity in our province. They want a pub. They want a meeting place in their community. And Mike and his family have identified it as a good investment for their business. They're opening the bar as of April 1st, Mr. Speaker, which coincides with the date that the beer discount is . . . and this budget, Mr. Speaker. It coincides with this budget's coming

into effect.

Making this bar a go, Mr. Speaker, he told me that his son is moving back to Saskatchewan to manage it. When the former bar owner closed it, Mr. Speaker, he actually took out all the innards. He took out the equipment, the stoves, the dishwashers and hauled it away because at that point it wasn't expected that it would ever open again. Well with Mike's investment and interest in the community and in the industry and his optimism in Saskatchewan, he actually went out of province again, Mr. Speaker, and found a facility that was closing. He bought up all their equipment. They loaded it in a Sea-Can. They've hauled it to Eatonia, Mr. Speaker. They've set up a bar. And within days, it will be open and serving the community and serving as a meeting place for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that is a very positive thing.

Mr. Speaker, for my city of Lloydminster, I spoke a little earlier that the corporate income tax rate is something that will be felt very directly in Lloydminster. But a couple of other things, Mr. Speaker, that will be felt very directly. New schools. Last year we were able to announce a new school for the Catholic school division, Mr. Speaker, very much needed. The public school division, Mr. Speaker, it was announced in this year's budget that the public school division will be getting a new school, Mr. Speaker. Again, a very welcome and a very good news story, Mr. Speaker.

But a couple of other things, Mr. Speaker, that will be felt very directly: new schools. Last year we were able to announce a new school for the Catholic school division, Mr. Speaker, very much needed. The public school division, Mr. Speaker, it was announced in this year's budget that the public school division will be getting a new school, Mr. Speaker. Again a very welcome and a very good news story, Mr. Speaker.

The town of Hillmond, Mr. Speaker, a town that has a hockey rink. It's the home of Wade Redden. I would guess a population of probably less than 100 people, but it is a vibrant community. It is in the centre of the oil field. It is a ranching community. They needed a new gym, Mr. Speaker. Their gym had some . . . floor was heaving. It had some health and safety concerns with air quality. In this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, a new gym in Hillmond. Mr. Speaker, raising NHL [national hockey league] calibre hockey players, I think they need a good sports and recreation facility there.

Mr. Speaker, I am drawing close to the end of my time, but there are a couple of things that I would like to just point out, just for interest for my colleagues. It's something that the Leader of the Opposition, this weekend at their policy convention, talked about their policy book as a beacon of light. And that struck me, as soon as I heard it. Beacon of light, isn't that what *The Globe and Mail* called our budget last year? And it is.

So I looked it up, Mr. Speaker. This is March 25th, 2010, and it is *The Globe and Mail*, and this is the quote: "Amid the ruin that has devastated most governments' balance sheets, Saskatchewan stands as a beacon of light, tabling another balanced budget yesterday." Well, Mr. Speaker, last year's budget was a fantastic budget, and this year's budget, I think that our province has outdone itself.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that all of us on this side of the House believe that it isn't our government that enabled this budget to look as it did, it is the people of Saskatchewan — the people working on the drilling rigs, the service rigs, and the potash mines, Mr. Speaker, the farmers, the nurses, Mr. Speaker. We've got people, the hardest working people in Canada that is driving this economy, driving this budget, Mr. Speaker, and that is where the credit is due.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have expressed many of the things . . . I think any of us could go on for a substantial length of time of the good news in this budget and the positive outlook the people of Saskatchewan have for our province. But I will leave that work to my colleagues, and I thank the House for their time and the people of Saskatchewan for their hard work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wyant: — I'm pleased to stand today to speak to the 2011-2012 budget, Mr. Speaker. But before I begin, there's a few people that I need to thank. I'd first like to thank my constituency assistant, Kelly Merriman. Sometimes it's a thankless job that they do. She keeps me very, very well organized, so I owe her a great debt of gratitude.

I'd also like to thank my constituency association and my executive for all their help and support. It's been a busy, it's been a busy eight months for us, Mr. Speaker, and they've stepped up and taken the time to make sure that we get the job done in our constituency. We just had our fundraiser last week, Mr. Speaker, and I wanted to thank all the members of my constituency that came out to support us, and members of the legislature, some of my colleagues that were there as well, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank my constituents for giving me the great honour of representing them in the legislature. It's a humbling experience, Mr. Speaker, and I'd owe them a great debt of gratitude as well.

Also wanted to thank my colleagues here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker. I felt welcomed, and I very much appreciate all the support that I've received from them. It's an outstanding group of men and women, especially . . . And not to single anyone out, Mr. Speaker, but I feel it necessary just to thank the Minister of Finance for delivering an outstanding budget, a historic budget. And I'm very proud to be able to stand today, very proud to be able today to stand up and support the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my family. We all know that theirs is the sacrifice, Mr. Speaker. And I very much miss being with my family every day, my children Allison, Stephen, Jeremy, and Kayla. And my brothers as well, those that live in Saskatchewan, they've always been very supportive. I've often said, Mr. Speaker, I've got four heroes in the world. They're my brothers, and I can't help but stand and thank them very much for all their support over these many years.

And I especially want to thank my wife. Obviously you can't

say enough about your spouse and all the support that they give. She's a terrific woman. She stood beside me for many years, and I do adore her for all that.

Mr. Speaker, to the budget. This budget continues to improve on Saskatchewan's health system by allocating \$4.46 billion in this year's budget. In addition to meeting our election commitment of hiring more than 800 nurses and providing better care to patients, this year's health budget includes funding for physician positions and other important health initiatives.

The 2011-12 budget continues with education, recruitment, and retention efforts for health providers, including an additional 1.5 million for the clinical and medical teaching units at the University of Saskatchewan and Regina General Hospital to ensure students have access to appropriate training and an additional \$800,000 for four faculty positions at the College of Medicine to ensure a stable supply of pediatricians.

Other important incremental improvements to the budget include much-needed investments of \$10.9 million to address increased volumes in diagnostic imaging services, cardiac care, and chronic kidney disease; \$4.2 million for bone marrow transplant patients to undertake treatments in Saskatchewan and help reduce the number of patients being transferred out of province and out of country, Mr. Speaker; \$493,000 to the Ombudsman to establish a dedicated health care unit within the provincial office; \$1 million for autism spectrum disorder assessments, intervention, and training as part of the government's child and youth agenda; \$600,000 for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention, diagnosis, and supports as a part of the government's children and youth agenda; and \$2.8 million for additional specialist services, some of which will be located in Saskatoon; \$2.4 million for electronic medical record expansion in the physician's office which is very important, Mr. Speaker; and \$2 million for kidney transplant program revitalization to recruit more specialists and resume deceased donor transplants in Saskatchewan.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, our government fulfills its commitment to fully fund the construction of the children's hospital in Saskatchewan. The children's hospital will serve our province's sick children and will be a hub of research, knowledge, and learning for professionals dedicated to children's health. This funding was announced in the 2008-2009 budget, and our government delivered on that promise.

And, Mr. Speaker, I was one of the founding directors of the Children's Health Foundation of Saskatchewan, and our goal was to see that facility built. I'm proud to be part of a government that recognizes the need for such a facility in Saskatchewan, something that's claimed by almost every other province. And our friends across the way had 16 years to fulfill the promise, we had many meetings with them. Our government has fulfilled that, Mr. Speaker.

[16:15]

Our government also has taken considerable steps to introduce the first ever children's and youth agenda budget. The purpose of this important new step in the children and youth agenda is

to identify funding and programs across several ministries that address common problems facing children and families at risk. This cross-government agenda will result in a targeted and comprehensive approach that challenges of lower education levels, unemployment, and substance abuse.

As part of this new approach to a long-standing issue, this budget includes funding important initiatives, initiatives such as \$1 million to develop a 24/7 intensive family support model to prevent children from coming into care. And, Mr. Speaker, \$2 million to establish a task force on First Nations and Métis education and employment to provide recommendations aimed at eliminating the education and employment gaps; \$7 million for adult basic education and provincial training allowance targeted to First Nations and Métis students; \$2.9 million to increase high school completion rates and improve achievement for First Nations and Métis students.

Our government has also taken the bold step by investing in Saskatchewan people in need of affordable housing, income assistance, and disability services. More importantly these investments will support the need of our growing population while at the same time ensuring that our government fulfills its responsibility to protect our most vulnerable citizens.

To support those needs of housing, the province will invest \$1.7 million into housing initiatives. Another important housing measure will be the Saskatchewan rental incentive program which will increase the supply of affordable housing throughout the province. In this budget, \$1.5 million will be provided to develop nearly 300 rental housing units, and this budget will address the interests of all Saskatchewanians.

Another important measure will be to address the housing supply in this province as the government's Headstart on a Home program. This valuable new program should stimulate the construction of at least 1,000 new entry level homes in Saskatchewan over the next number of years. And, Mr. Speaker, additional revenue from the 2010-11 budget allowed our government to invest \$33.9 million in renovations of existing government-assisted housing as well as supporting the development of new housing.

This year's budget also includes \$2.3 million for the ongoing development of the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities program which provides additional support to those who qualify. Our government is also taking important steps to support families with individuals who have intellectual and cognitive disabilities. In this budget we provide \$14 million to provide specialized residential and day programs for people with intellectual disabilities. Its investment will significantly address the wait list for those waiting for such services.

Our government also provided \$27 million for this province's income assistance programs, including Saskatchewan assisted program, transitional employment allowance, Saskatchewan rental housing supplement, and the child care subsidy. Mr. Speaker, these investments will work toward the goal of ensuring that our province's most vulnerable people receive the supports they need.

Another important aspect of this budget, Mr. Speaker, is that our government will keep post-secondary education and

training accessible and affordable for students. Our government is doing this by eliminating the cost of tuition and improving educational opportunities.

We have also provided significant investments in education and employment for First Nations and Métis people. As part of our government's \$125 million investment to ensure post-secondary affordability and accessibility, we've done the following: \$24.6 million to limit tuition increases to an average of about 3 per cent at Saskatchewan's universities, SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], and regional colleges; \$3 million for a new Saskatchewan advantage scholarship for a total provincial investment in scholarships of \$5 million; and \$97.8 million in support of students through student loans, scholarships, grants, bursaries, provincial training allowance, the apprenticeship training allowance, the skills training benefit and the graduate retention program.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also taking significant steps to improve the opportunities for First Nations and Métis people. We will provide \$7 million for basic adult education and provincial training allowance to target First Nations and Métis students, \$2 million dollars to establish a First Nations and Métis education and employment task force aimed at eliminating the education and employment gaps, and we've designated the apprenticeship funding of \$600,000 to improve outcomes for First Nations and Métis apprentices.

Northern students will also benefit from this budget, Mr. Speaker, as we have allocated \$1 million for the International Centre for Northern Governance and Development at the University of Saskatchewan to help northern students study, stay, and succeed in their northern communities, and \$600,000 for SIAST to enhance supports available to First Nations and Métis students to improve completion rates.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, our government has made significant strides in advanced education. We've increased registered nursing seats by 170 in 2010, meeting our election commitment of 300 new seats. We have made key changes to Saskatchewan student loans, Mr. Speaker. We removed the restrictions on vehicle ownership; allowed students to work as many hours as they wish during their studies; reduced student loan repayment to prime rate; and increased the post-secondary funding this year by 5.1 per cent — the second highest increase among all provinces — a total of over \$2 billion post-secondary education funding since taking office, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to immigration, Mr. Speaker, our government has made important advancements in improving net migration, both interprovincial and international. Our province's \$14.7 million immigration budget includes \$1.8 million in new funding for settlement and integration supports. The Ministry of Education will provide \$2 million in new funding to support new students in the classroom and their teachers through English as an additional language program.

In agriculture, Mr. Speaker, record crop insurance coverage and funding in the 2011-12 agriculture budget will protect Saskatchewan producers against risks such as excess moisture. The Government of Saskatchewan has increased its agriculture budget by \$32 million to \$418 million in 2011 and 2012. This

is the second largest agriculture budget ever announced in this province's history, Mr. Speaker, next only to the budget in 2009-2010. More than three-quarters of this year's budget will fully fund business risk management programs, including crop insurance, AgriStability, and AgriInvest.

Our government will be leaving more money in the hands of Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers by implementing phase 2 of its education property tax reduction plan, which will reduce education property taxes by up to 80 per cent on agricultural lands compared to 2007. Mr. Speaker, this is the largest educational tax reduction in the province's history. This year the mill rate will be reduced from 7.08 to 3.91 on agricultural land.

The 2011-12 agricultural budget will also include expanded agricultural extension services with the opening of seven new satellite offices in Meadow Lake, Lloydminster, Assiniboia, Moosomin, Estevan, Shaunavon, and Wadena. Our government will continue to provide funding for the Crown land sales program, the wildlife damage compensation program, the gopher control rebate program, irrigation infrastructure, the farm and ranch water infrastructure program, the farm business development initiative, and other programs that benefit producers.

In the area of highways, Mr. Speaker, the 2011-12 budget will continue to improve Saskatchewan highways and transportation system with an investment of \$556 million. This brings the total transportation spending to \$2.2 billion over four years, Mr. Speaker. This year's highway and infrastructure budget will improve 1400 kilometres of provincial highways. The budget includes \$285 million of capital construction, the largest capital investment in the province's history.

Highlights of this year's construction program include \$54.6 million to support major, multi-year projects including the opening of twin lanes from Highway 11 from south of Hague to north of Duck Lake, and north and south of Macdowall — new lanes will also be upgraded from north of Duck Lake to south of Macdowall — completing the Highway 1, Lewvan Drive interchange at Regina; continuing work on the west Regina bypass to support development of the Global Transportation Hub, and continued work on the new St. Louis Bridge. Ninety-one million dollars to upgrade 160 kilometres of rural highways, Mr. Speaker.

In the area of education, Mr. Speaker, the new education budget fulfills our government's commitment to reduce education property tax while making important investments in school capital projects, student achievement, improving educational outcomes for First Nations and Métis students, and a continued commitment to child care and pre-kindergarten. The overall funding for school divisions will increase by \$36 million or 2.3 per cent in this budget. Our government has also committed to covering increased costs for the teachers' collective bargaining agreement when a new one is reached.

This budget includes \$19.9 million for capital projects, including \$13.9 million for school capital, \$4 million for school-based child care capital, and 2 million for pre-kindergarten capital funding. The 2011-12 capital investment is in addition to the more than \$402 million our

government has committed since November of 2009 for 29 major school capital projects across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is also continuing the commitment made in the 2010 Throne Speech to increase the number of licensed child care spaces and pre-kindergarten programs. This budget provides \$2.1 million for 500 additional child care spaces. In addition there'll be 40 new pre-kindergarten programs for vulnerable three- and four-year-olds.

The budget includes \$2.9 million for initiatives that are part of a broader government commitment to work with First Nations and Métis stakeholders and the federal government to close education and employment gaps for First Nations and Métis people.

The 2011-12 budget fulfills the second phase of our government's education property tax plan, reducing education taxes by a further \$55.6 million. Education taxes have been reduced by approximately 20 per cent on residential properties and 80 per cent on farm lands as I said, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's much more to speak about on this budget, and I'll leave that for some of my colleagues. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support a budget that delivers lower taxes which strengthens our economy, and that's the Saskatchewan advantage. I'm proud to support a budget that improves quality of life by increasing support, that improves quality of life by increasing support for health, housing, and families. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan advantage. I'm proud to support a budget that lowers government debt. I'm proud to support a budget that is balanced. That's the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget continues the positive momentum Saskatchewan people have created; this moves us forward. Saskatchewan deserves nothing less. Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting the budget and voting against the amendment.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to enter into the debate on the 2011-12 budget. Before I begin, as is customary fashion, I have a few people that I want to thank. Of course, my family. I have . . . As a mother of young children, I think the only people who allow me to be able to do this job really well is my support system. I have a wonderful husband who's taken a leave from his job and is able to come with me here to Regina . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . SEIU [Service Employees International Union], as a matter of fact. My husband's a union rep, if you were asking. But I appreciate my husband and all the support he provides me.

I've got great kids. My 13-year-old . . . I'm now the mother of a 13-year-old. You'll notice that my hair's a little greyer than it was last week. She turned 13 on Friday. So my daughter Hennessey and my daughter Ophelia, who is three, help me. My daughters are the big reason why I do this job. I look towards the future and see what this future might hold for them. My kids are my motivating factor for putting my name forward and letting my name stand as a candidate in Riversdale. My kids are my motivating factor.

I also just want to thank my mom and dad who make it a little bit easier for me to do my job as well, and my sister Michelle. I have a great staff person in Yvonne McCowan, who serves the people of Saskatoon Riversdale very well and helps to make sure that people have what they need. Yvonne is a tremendous help and a support. And so I just want to make sure that they know how much I really appreciate all that they do for me.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's many issues I'd like to discuss today but I'm going to keep my focus fairly narrow. I'm going to talk about some budget items that fall short and fail the people of Saskatoon Riversdale and the whole province, for that matter. I'm going to talk about some housing, some health and safety issues, and care issues in particular. And I'll talk a little bit about the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, for which I have a responsibility as an opposition member to follow and understand.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister began his speech last week by acknowledging his family in the audience — his wife, his son, his daughter-in-law, and grandchildren — and ended his speech a bit choked up telling a story about a Saskatchewan-born daughter and her family who now get to come back to Saskatchewan because of this wonderful place this province now is and all it has to offer.

And I understand. I too have those sentiments sometimes of being a bit choked up. But when I think about my daughters' futures here in Saskatchewan, I don't actually have tears of gratefulness that they may be here because I genuinely am concerned about what this province will look like for them in a few short years. Will we be able to afford tuition with the few dollars we've managed to put away, or will the cost of an education continue to increase, making it inaccessible for so many? How will my daughter be able to even own a home here in Saskatoon? My 13-year-old talks about becoming a doctor. What kind of health system will remain if she chooses to go down this career path? Will our commitment to public, not-for-profit health care remain, or will our system be so eroded by a government that chose not to invest in the public system?

[16:30]

I think about my daughters' peers, including the growing number of First Nations and Métis children in our province. Will they and their families have received the supports they need to overcome a legacy left behind by residential schools and systemic racism?

Mr. Speaker, these fears aren't baseless. I chat with people on the doorstep, at my community office, at events, and out and about who share stories that illustrate they are being left out of the boom and that we do have reason to be concerned and to ask these kind of questions. We have growing numbers of citizens here in Saskatchewan who are relying on social assistance, record use of food banks in Saskatchewan, and working people struggling to make ends meet. Many people long for the day when they won't have to live paycheque to paycheque.

So just a few weeks ago in the back-and-forth banter that goes on in this place, I was trying to make the point to the member

from Kindersley that there were a lot of people left out of this government's so-called boom, and I made the comment that I had people coming into my office on a regular and frequent basis who are struggling with the rising cost of living, who actively make the choice between paying for their housing, rent or mortgages, and paying for other necessities. The member from Kindersley shot back with something to the effect of, Danielle, that is just not true. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the member from Kindersley was just trying to get my goat. I must admit my goat is fairly easily got. But I wonder, is this the sentiment of the government, that every boat is rising with the tide? Unfortunately this just isn't the case, and many people are being swamped by rising costs and lack of resources.

I'm close to completing my master's in public policy, which I'm quite proud of. It's been a bit of a struggle. And what I've learned from this and from my experience as a mother, as someone with a social work degree, as someone who's been a reporter, is that there is no issue for which there is a silver bullet, a quick or instant fix. The problems we all face today are multi-faceted and require many different policy approaches.

The approach governments take to solving problems should not be ad hoc one-offs. Rather, I think for the major issues that confront our citizens, we owe them the long-term visioning and a comprehensive plan. I don't think people expect us to solve all issues, nor do they expect them resolved instantly. But they do want to see what our plan is, when and how we'll deliver it even if it's in stages, and what the road signs are all along the way indicating that we're getting there. Unfortunately this government is not offering us any of this long-term planning on some of the tough issues facing families today.

One of these tough issues for families right now is housing — rather, the lack of affordable housing. Doesn't matter where you go in the province, it is an issue. Might look different in southwest Saskatchewan than it does in northeast Saskatchewan, but talk to anyone on the street throughout the province and you'll hear about housing struggles of one sort or another.

It's odd that on an almost \$11 billion budget, the only housing mentioned in the \$147,000 mailer that's landing in all our mailboxes is, and I quote, "Up to \$1.5 million in up-front provincial incentives to apartment builders to offset the cost of education property tax on as many as 650 new units per year." And I quote, "Support for Municipal Affordable Home Ownership programs that provide homeowners with grants for home purchases."

Mr. Speaker, this is a drop in the bucket, and not to mention it's a contradiction with a budget that says there'll only be 300 rental units in 2011 and '12. This government has been given so much and has done so little with these vast resources we now have in this province.

The Minister of Social Services' announcement yesterday of an affordable housing plan is a bit odd, even more odd than the limited amount of money announced for housing in the budget. You'd think if you'd planned to put a strategy in place, you would have put it in your budget document and you put it in your promotional document as well, especially considering how housing — or rather the lack of affordable housing — is one of

the key problems facing us all over Saskatchewan today. We've experienced housing prices that have made home ownership unattainable for many and skyrocketing rents in the last three years. And I'd like to ask too, isn't this government in the middle of a consultation process that will culminate in a housing summit in just a few weeks? Why would you announce a housing strategy before your consultations are wrapped up or before you've brought everyone together to discuss the issue thoroughly?

The government has tried to dress up a few items in a fancy package but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, this isn't enough for families who are suffering from rising costs of housing right now. People need help, not in a year from now, not in two years from now. Their suffering is immediate and needs to be addressed immediately. I hear frequently from people whose rents have gone up 30 to 40 per cent in the last four years, and they are being forced to make difficult decisions, as I've said before, like prioritizing rent over food or medication and other necessities in life.

This should not be happening in Saskatchewan where our government has a budget spending close to \$11 billion. I think that the question people need to ask themselves, is life really that much more affordable now than it was for them four years ago? What is their quality of life? For many people in Saskatoon Riversdale and other parts of the province, it has diminished. They ask, as my colleague from Regina Rosemont has asked, the boom for whom?

In the same election propaganda that's in our mailboxes, the government goes on to say, I quote, "We are investing in public safety." I am the daughter of a police officer and live in a community where safety is definitely on people's minds. I'm glad for the investments in the gang database and this government carrying on the former administration's investment in police positions. But again this government has picked winners and losers, this time putting our health and safety at risk.

The story in today's *StarPhoenix*, "Ambulance gaps found," highlights this issue. Ambulance employees in Saskatoon are alarmed the province has chosen to ignore the needs of the province's land ambulance services and paramedics in the budget despite warnings there are urgent public safety risks that need to be addressed. There were a group of paramedics from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, here just a few weeks ago, explaining to MLAs their concerns, and they have met with the Ministry of Health in the fall to ask the government to heed recommendations from a report this minister commissioned in 2008.

Right now in Saskatoon, there are an increasing number of zero alerts, which means there are no ambulances or paramedics available to respond to emergency calls in Saskatoon and area. Zero alerts are happening for more than 40 minutes a day on average, which equates to 11 full days a year. There are no ambulances available to respond to emergency calls because all ambulances and paramedics are often attending to existing calls or delayed transferring patients at hospitals. These zero alerts are especially dangerous in emergencies such as heart attacks, serious accidents, and respiratory distress when minutes can mean the difference between life and death.

The minister said he would respond to these recommendations in the 2010-11 budget, but the government has yet to supply funding on any of these 19 recommendations.

According to these paramedics, EMS [emergency medical services] is in a real crisis. This government has chosen to fund STARS, a helicopter-based ambulance service, to the tune of \$5 million in this budget, as the minister said, “to supplement our existing air and ground ambulance services.” Well it sounds like our ground ambulances need more than supplementing right now, Mr. Speaker. In our conversation with these paramedics, they were totally in favour of STARS and acknowledged it was one of the government’s promises, but they want people to understand that road ambulance services are the core of our system and need to be fully functioning as citizens expect first.

For example, in Saskatoon right now there is no helipad, and there will not be one until 2015 with the building of the children’s hospital. So people from rural areas can be transported to Saskatoon via helicopter, but they will be sitting at the airport right now waiting for the ground services ambulance to pick them up. Hopefully STARS won’t land at the airport at a time of a zero alert. STARS may be a good idea, but it doesn’t fix the entire ambulance system, and this government has ignored major concerns of land ambulance providers to the detriment of our citizens.

As a mom of young children who has often the opportunity to be in contact with many other young parents, I would be remiss if I didn’t talk about child care. In this budget this government has promised 500 new child care spaces to the tune of \$2.1 million. Mr. Speaker, this is not enough. I’m coming from the perspective . . . I’ve been an at-home mom and I’ve also been a mom who has worked outside of the house. I’ve needed child care, and I’ve not needed child care. I’m a big believer that there’s multiple ways to support a family, again that multi-pronged process or a vision. It’s not either family cares for the children or the state. It’s not an either/or. It can be both. And I think our NDP policy document talks a bit about a multi-pronged strategy to support families.

The reality is we are about 28,000 spaces behind Manitoba, and Manitoba doesn’t think they’re where they need to be, and we are the lowest in the country according to a recent YWCA [Young Women’s Christian Association] report. Unless we have real investment in this area, we will continue to lag so far behind and fail our children and their parents.

I also just have to point out when you increase spaces, you also have to increase the resources to support these spaces. The spaces have been increased, Mr. Speaker, but the government positions that support the licensed child care spaces haven’t. So if a child carer has a question or an issue or needs help with something around regulations, the response time from the ministry is far longer than it should be. So our children and those who care for them are not getting what they need to do their jobs well.

Mr. Speaker, I’ve talked a bit about housing and a bit about health and safety and supporting families. I’d like to take a few minutes to discuss the budget for the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. In particular, Mr. Speaker, I want to

talk a little bit about heritage, an area this government on the surface seems to have supported in the budget with an increase to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, which undoubtedly they appreciate. I want to go to the document, the plans for 2011-12 that outlines this ministry’s key priorities . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I would ask members if they have a debate they want to get involved with other members that they either go either behind the bar or find another location so that we can hear the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. The member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So again I want to talk a little bit about heritage. So we look to this government’s plans for 2011-2012 and look at the key priorities: “identify ways to strengthen practices in heritage conservation,” and, “support heritage stewardship and heritage conservation in Saskatchewan.” How about funding the Heritage Foundation to what they really need? And how about — and this is the most important one, I think, or a biggie — not simply signing off on the de-designation of a heritage property because it will make renovations easier and because perhaps another minister or the Premier told you to make it happen.

I’m referring specifically, Mr. Speaker, to the whole mess of St. Peter’s and Carlton Trail. Last spring, last spring, Mr. Speaker . . . We talk about supporting heritage. Let’s not de-designate a heritage property at the whim of some renovations happening when the support could be provided to make those renovations happen and still stick to the heritage guidelines. At St. Peter’s last year . . . Well *The Heritage Property Act* states that the minister can de-designate without consultation, but it also suggests that a minister could consult. I wonder what the people in the ministry were recommending to the minister? I would bet that it wasn’t to go ahead and de-designate without consultation.

This was a total mess at St. Peter’s. An elevator has been added, and not that the elevator isn’t necessary, but it could have been done in a heritage-sensitive manner. And before they even got to the windows, Mr. Speaker, the property was de-designated as a heritage property. The people in the community had no say over this. The minister just expedited the process when asked to do so, who knows by whom. Was it the Minister of Advanced Education? Was it the Premier who had this request? Because I can tell you I’m sure the ministry wasn’t asking for this. Who thought this was a good idea? This was coming from a previous . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, to ask leave for introduction of guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Greystone has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly I'd like to welcome Ms. Zeba Ahmad to her Assembly. She's back. She was just here a few days ago. She makes a terrific contribution in the corporate community. She's working with John Hyshka at Phenomenome and obviously she's known across the province for her commitment to community development and philanthropy. And we just want to say how much we appreciate her efforts, especially in Saskatoon but extending well beyond that.

And I had the honour of running against her in the last election. It was a very dignified campaign, and it was difficult for me.

An Hon. Member: — We were rooting for Zeba.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — And my colleagues say that probably it was touch and go on their support which way it was going. But all kidding aside, Mr. Speaker, we just want to say how pleased we are to have her in her Assembly, and I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Zeba Ahmad to the Legislative Assembly today.

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

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. Krawetz that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So as I was saying, the people in the community had no say over the de-designation of St. Peter's as a heritage property. The minister sped up the process when asked to do so, again by who knows whom. It wasn't the Minister of Advanced Education or the Premier who thought this was a good idea. And as I was just saying, this was from a previous minister who stated in estimates that he had a great interest in built heritage. Goodness help the person or program who becomes of interest to the same minister next time around.

[16:45]

I also want to talk about the once-thriving film and television industry. In a budget document for TPCS, Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, the plans for 2011-2012, one of the key actions was "building on the work of the film industry task force." Well if you want to build on the work of this task force, you should start by listening to the recommendations and consider implementing them.

The industry just a year ago was reeling from a recession, and it

still hasn't recovered, and the loss of a key pillar of the film and television industry when we had the SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network] fading to black, then privatization last year. So the film and television industry had to believe in this task force process that was launched last spring and was set to report in October. They were positive and optimistic, and the government led them to believe they could believe in it.

It was incredibly collaborative effort. I mean, this is how consultation should be done and work should be done. It was collaborative between the government and the film industry leaders. And it wasn't just about asking the government for money, but it was about how do you grow, how do you continue to support and grow an industry that has provided so much out-of-province investment, jobs to our skilled youth, and much to be proud of?

Then the report came out in October, and the film and television industry hoped for and expected action. They were told that they had to wait for the budget despite the fact the industry was asking for the immediate implementation of no-cost items, like enhancing the series incentive and simply restating the existing tax credit relative to how other jurisdictions are marketing theirs. They waited for the budget, Mr. Speaker, and this government didn't deliver.

Manitoba, a similar province, spends about three times as much on their film agency as we do at SaskFilm. This includes equity and development funding. We didn't see any sign of this in the budget despite the fact there should have been some savings from the privatization of SCN. There was about \$3 million actually, Mr. Speaker, that could have been put back into the ministry to support arts and cultural organizations, including the Sask Arts Board, including SaskFilm, including more to the Heritage Foundation. This \$3 million from SCN could have been rolled back into the same ministry, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that the film industry is concerned about, last spring the ministry announced a Saskatchewan series incentive which waives the rent on our sound stage for a pilot for the first year of the series. This was great and it brought the film *InSecurity* here, but the film industry has been asking this government to enhance or expand this to other productions. This came out of the task force report that the government was an active participant in. It doesn't cost a thing, particularly if the sound stage is sitting empty, which it is.

And I think that that leads to some concerns that this government is not supportive of the film and television industry and hasn't been in this budget. And I know this is speculation and fear, but people are thinking that this sound stage is sitting empty so in a short year or two the government can say, oh well, that's clearly an NDP white elephant, and let's sell it to private investors. Whether or not that's the case, that's how people are feeling, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is the film and television industry saw five consecutive years of production values well over 60 million. Then the recession hit, and it tanked, and it hasn't recovered. Last year's production values dropped to 17 million, a 70 per cent drop, and are expected to be even lower this year. Other jurisdictions, including Manitoba, stepped up to the plate last year to support their film industry to help them remain

competitive, and it has paid off in increased production, jobs, retaining skills and talent — all these things the government says it wants to do.

So this is not the budget that the film and television industry had hoped for. And quite contrary to this government's stated desire to attract and retain skilled young people, this inaction means we'll be losing more young people.

I just want to, I know my time's coming to a close here, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to touch on the cultural and arts sector in general. So arts organizations all got a 1.5 per cent increase across the board. So the reality is, Mr. Speaker, everyone, all these organizations are getting squeezed. This 1.5 per cent increase basically covers off human resources obligations, increases in things like rents and other annual costs, and it isn't really going to the organizations.

And we have to look to a government here who last spring announced a policy that they're very proud of and one that we'd anticipate they'd put legs on it. That's the Pride of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the first cultural policy they've said in 20 years that they've touted and seem to be very proud of. But this budget doesn't seem to be putting legs to this policy, Mr. Speaker. Rather than you're seeing a trend towards special, we're all seeing a trend towards special initiatives. They're going away from providing core service delivery in, again, that comprehensive way and going towards one-off initiatives.

Again for me, going back to my comments about the need for a vision, again this isn't a big vision and a long-term plan that I see this government using or embarking upon with the arts sector. If you think, if this government thinks one-off programs are going to be enough to implement policy, we should be very afraid for our arts. So again overall funding to arts organizations in constant dollars is not keeping pace, and our arts and culture organizations are suffering, Mr. Speaker.

So winding down here, I've spoken a bit about housing, about health and safety care, and about some issues from Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. I think that the thing that stands out for me about this budget is how could you have access to so much revenue, almost \$11 billion, and manage to produce such an uninspired budget lacking overall policy vision? So for this reason, I will be supporting the amendment, and I will be voting against the budget. As well actually that's not the only reason. I don't believe that this budget addresses the needs of the people of Saskatoon Riversdale or the rest of the province. So again I will be supporting the amendment and will be voting against the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in my place on behalf of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy and speak in favour of the budget, in favour of the '11-12 budget and against the amendment put forward by the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be serving the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy. It's a great honour — as I think we all will agree that it's a special honour for a four-year term of

government — to be one of only 58 people in the entire province of Saskatchewan, 1,055,000 people and growing, and to have the honour with 57 other people from across the province to be able to stand and speak on behalf of the people that I represent.

So I want to first of all begin by thanking the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy. And I look forward to a vigorous campaign in the hopes of returning to this place after November.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also join with colleagues that have spoken before to thank first of all my constituency assistants. Mr. Speaker, members, many members on this side of the House will know Marcie from my office. She has been the constituency assistant for the MLA for Weyburn-Big Muddy for over a decade now, nearly 11 years, Mr. Speaker. And Marcie continues to do an incredible job in my absence, but also in serving the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy and the people that contact our office.

We have a very busy constituency, Mr. Speaker, and it's such a valuable asset to have somebody like Marcie that helps our constituents. As well, Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of months we have added some part-time help to our office, and Sheila has been a very quick learner to the office of an MLA, Mr. Speaker, and does a very good job on behalf of the constituents that I have to serve.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my ministerial staff here in the office as Minister of Environment, Mr. Speaker. Kelly and Krista work out front and they do a tremendous job each and every day, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly appreciate the hard work that they put in on my behalf and on behalf of the Ministry of Environment, as well as Drew and Cam who work for me, Mr. Speaker. And they are just a tremendous asset to me as minister, Mr. Speaker. And coming into this role, it's a very steep learning curve, and so it's been very helpful for me to have their capable assistance each and every day. And I just want to express my appreciation to them.

Mr. Speaker, as well to the ministry staff, my deputy and all of her executive team and all of the people, nearly 1,000 people that work for the Ministry of Environment throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, they have been . . . work very hard each and every day for the people of Saskatchewan. As well, Mr. Speaker, I also have responsibility for the Watershed Authority, and I'll speak a little bit about that later, as well as SaskEnergy and SaskWater. And I just want to offer my thanks to those organizations and to the management, and in the case of SaskWater and SaskEnergy, to the board that oversee the management and oversee the good work that they do in this province each and every day, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to thank all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also as well thank my family and thank my extended family for all of their support. It certainly means a great deal to have your family behind you and supportive of something that, you know, we never know how long we're going to be in these positions. And so they're demanding positions on our time, and so it's very . . . Obviously none of us could do this without the support of our families. And, Mr. Speaker, of course I do want to thank my wife, Amanda, for all

of her love and support.

Mr. Speaker, members and my colleagues will know that, Mr. Speaker, members will know that my wife's a musician. She's a very talented musician, a singer and a songwriter. And, Mr. Speaker, members will know that . . . I think in the Throne Speech there's a quote that, when I think of my wife, it sticks in my mind and it goes something like — and I said this in my Throne Speech reply — that she wasn't where she was, she wasn't where she was going. But she was on her way.

And, Mr. Speaker, little did I realize that just over the last few months since the Throne Speech, she has sure been going on her way and has been very successful. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I could just take a moment and just recognize her hard work as singer and a songwriter. She recorded her first album of her own music, and that was released in late December. One of her songs has been picked by Sask Music to be on their compilation CD [compact disc] of Saskatchewan artists. And in fact that song in late April will be released to national airplay on radio stations across Canada. So, Mr. Speaker, she's had a very successful trip here recently to Nashville where she did some songwriting and some recording. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very proud of her, and her biggest, biggest fan. And I think the best is yet to come, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as we're looking to this spring, and if I can just briefly talk about some of the work that we're doing as government, I think everybody knows that last year was a very wet year for the province, and this year and this winter has been a very . . . We certainly had a lot of snow all across the province and we were starting to, Mr. Speaker, worrying a little bit about what the spring may hold, and if we have a very quick start to the spring, there could be a lot of water all over the place. But as people will know, you know, we've had snow over the last couple of days throughout the province and so well, we're worrying about a quick spring. I think a lot of us are thinking let's just get on with it, you know, this winter has dragged on long enough, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to recognize the work of the Watershed Authority. Mr. Speaker, as we identified over the winter that this could possibly be a very wet spring, Mr. Speaker, the Watershed Authority quickly put in place a program to help municipalities and communities and individuals across the province, a \$22 million program, a cost-sharing with municipalities, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, the Watershed Authority for all of their work. In fact over 200 individual farm landowners have already applied to the program, 124 communities, Mr. Speaker, have put their application . . .

The Speaker: — It now being 5 p.m., the Assembly will recess until this evening at 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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