



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

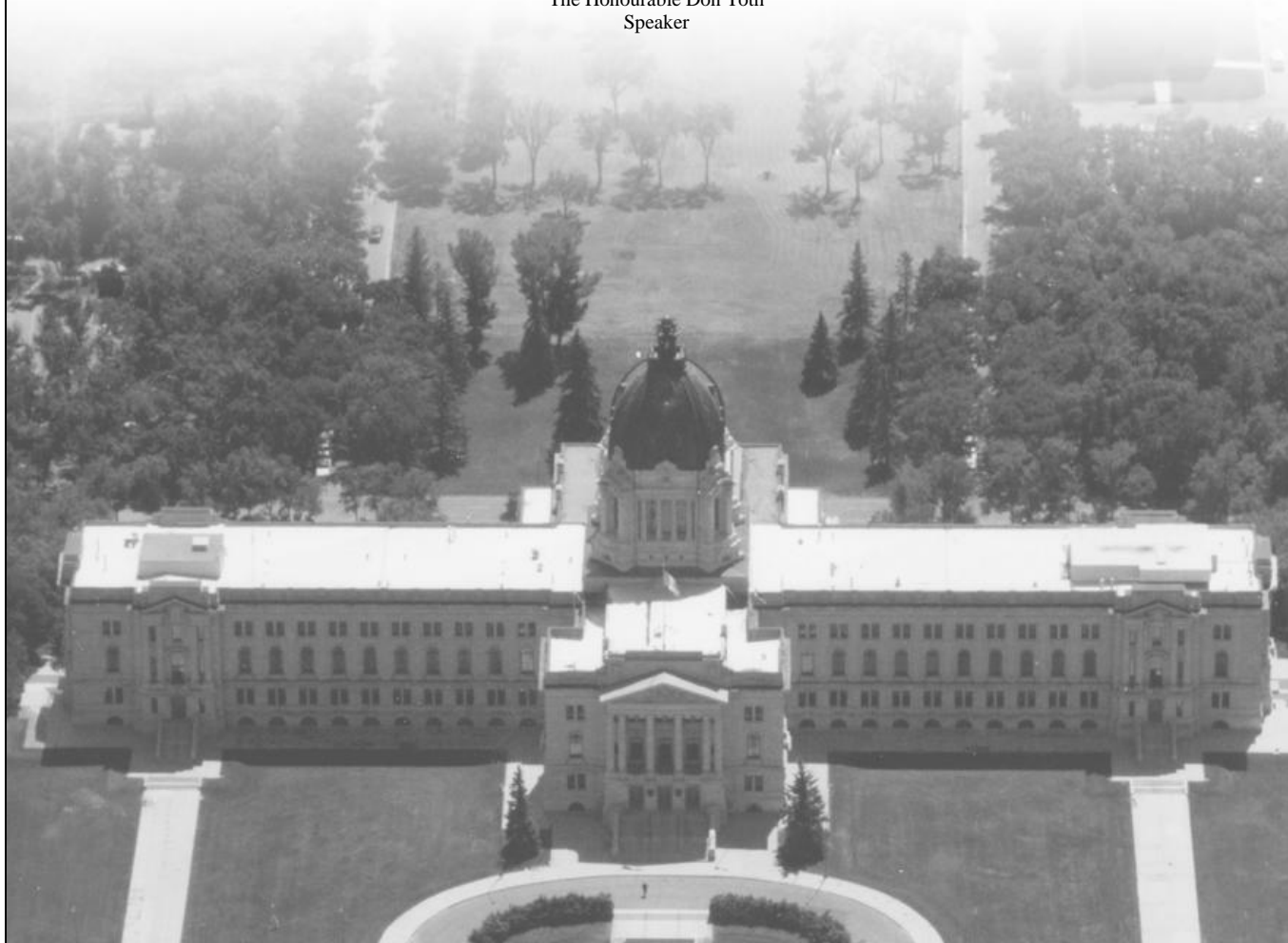
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Don Toth  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. If I could have members' attention before we move to introduction of guests, I'd like to lay on the Table in accordance with section 30 of *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act*, its 38th annual report. I so lay on the Table.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to the members of the Assembly the Leader of the Saskatchewan Green Party, Larissa Shasko who is with us in your gallery. Larissa, if you'd just stand up and give a wave. I just wanted to introduce Larissa as the Leader of the Green Party. She has been very active in the politics of Saskatchewan, having been a candidate I think once or twice.

And I just want to wish her all the best. Good luck but not too much good luck, Larissa, in the next election. But welcome, welcome to the Assembly today.

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in being able to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly a group of 54 grade 10 students from Winston Knoll Collegiate. And this is located in the constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. They are here with their teacher, Michelle McKillop.

Winston Knoll is a wonderful school with great students and staff, and I will be meeting with the students later this morning for pictures and for an opportunity for them to ask questions and find out a little more about the Legislative Building and the facility and what goes on here. I hope they enjoy question period today and that they will be enlightened by the proceedings they observe today. Please everyone join with me in welcoming this fine group of young students from Winston Knoll.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly a group of citizens that have come from across the province to see a petition that they've been involved with entered into the official record of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, these folks are concerned about nuclear development in the province, and in particular they would like to see legislation concerning the storage of nuclear waste.

Mr. Speaker, they are here to have all members of the Legislative Assembly hear their voice, and I would like to welcome them to the Saskatchewan Assembly this morning.

**The Speaker:** — Members, before we move on, I would also like to acknowledge, and I apologize for not doing that immediately, Mr. Kevin Fenwick, the Provincial Ombudsman, and his staff who have joined him this morning.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present petitions on behalf of people who are citizens of Saskatchewan, supporting maintaining quality health care services. And the signatures on these petitions are from over 40 people from Wakaw, Saskatoon, Domremy, Hoey, Rosthern, and Prince Albert. I so present.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today signed by over 4,500 people who are concerned about the nuclear industry and in particular about nuclear waste and storage in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, these people have come to the Assembly to ensure that their voices are heard by all members of the Legislative Assembly. I so present.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to present a petition concerning the need for hospice and palliative care:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to enhance and increase publicly funded and administered hospice and palliative care, including in-home hospice services and residential hospices, in order to ensure that all Saskatchewan people have access to high-quality end of life care.

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

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to a record that includes the running of deficits and increasing of debt at a time of record highs in revenues in this province. That record includes the increasing of debt to the tune of \$1.3 billion over the past three years and \$548 million of debt being added to the people's public books here this year alone, Mr. Speaker. Of course this has consequences, not only for now but also well 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 today are signed by concerned residents of Weyburn, Sedley, Saskatoon, North Battleford, and Radville. I so submit.

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Remembering Lisa Rendall

**Ms. Chartier:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the Assembly today to pay tribute to the life and work of Lisa Rendall, a former C95 broadcaster who died yesterday after a long battle with cancer.

Diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer at the age of 35, she fought for over 10 years, not only for herself but also for the countless other women diagnosed — sorry, Mr. Speaker — but also for the countless other women diagnosed with breast cancer and their families and friends. By telling her story, she helped put a human face on the disease and bring courage and hope to the many affected by it.

There are many noteworthy chapters in this story of courage, Mr. Speaker. Lisa Rendall was CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Saskatoon's Citizen of the Year in 2010. She was awarded the YWCA's [Young Women's Christian Association] Woman of Distinction Award. And in April of 2009, she was one of 19 women honoured for their achievements at the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast in Saskatoon.

But again, Mr. Speaker, Lisa's story was not about herself but about the others who shared her fight against breast cancer. Her advocacy and fundraising efforts made her one of Saskatchewan's true champions in this battle. Just last year, the 11th annual C95 Marathon for Breast Cancer raised nearly a quarter of a million dollars for breast cancer research. Over 2.5 million has been raised through such efforts as this marathon and the Lisa Rendall Golf Classic, ensuring that the search for a cure will go on.

April is Cancer Awareness Month, Mr. Speaker, and so I ask all members to join with me today in paying tribute to Lisa Rendall, a voice for cancer awareness that will never be silenced.

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

**Mr. Wyant:** — Mr. Speaker, April is National Cancer Month. During this time, many initiatives are enacted that not only raise awareness of the disease, but promote fundraising for research,

treatment, and finding a cure. Cancer is a terrible disease that manifests itself on a global level as well as locally in our community. There were approximately 2,500 men and women in Saskatchewan diagnosed with cancer in 2010. Tragically, 2,400 individuals have lost the battle to cancer in the last year. Mr. Speaker, these people are our neighbours, friends, family members, mothers, and sisters.

One of those just lost yesterday was Lisa Marie Rendall. Lisa was the Saskatoon radio personality best known for her number one morning show: Rob, Lisa, and Rambling Dave on C95 in Saskatoon.

Lisa was tirelessly campaigning on behalf of breast cancer victims and their families. To date, over \$2.5 million has been raised for breast cancer research at the Saskatoon Cancer Agency through events such as the C95 Radio Marathon for Breast Cancer Research and the Lisa Rendall Golf Classic. Since her diagnosis 10 years ago, Lisa worked tirelessly to make us all more aware.

Mr. Speaker, we have lost far too many loved ones to cancer. We must honour them and keep their struggle in our hearts and minds by making their struggle our own. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Beauval Resident Works Around the World

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honour a constituent of mine and a resident of Beauval, Saskatchewan. John Granberg has worked in the rail line industry for over 40 years. He has worked in the industry not only in Saskatchewan, but also all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, John worked for CNR [Canadian National Railways] for 35 years. He retired in 1989; however, I struggle to call it retirement. After his alleged retirement, he began working for Harsco, a rail line servicing and installation company based out of South Carolina. This work enabled John to travel the world. Not bad for a small town guy from northern Saskatchewan.

In 1990 he began machinery servicing for rail lines in India, and throughout the '90s he worked all over India doing machinery work and servicing. And he was able to experience the work environment and the cultural riches that India has. John believes his time in India has been his most satisfying work and life experience.

In 2000 he began similar work in Japan, again doing machine and servicing work in one of the world's premier railway jurisdictions. These opportunities provided John the chance to share his expertise as well as learn more about his craft and countries advancing within the industry.

While in Canada, John was able to work everywhere from Montreal to Vancouver Island. Not bad for someone with a grade 10 education. Although John believes strongly in education, he also thinks that, as he said to me, "It doesn't matter how much education you have if you don't also have the life experience to go with it."

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and recognize this northern constituent, John Granberg. And it's proof that if you're passionate about whatever it is you do, it can take you places you've never imagined. Thank you.

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

### Carrot River Hosts Drama Festival

**Mr. Bradshaw:** — Mr. Speaker, on April 1st and 2nd, students from around the Northeast gathered in Carrot River for this year's region no. 7 drama festival. Carrot River hosted this year's event after winning provincials last year.

I would like to congratulate all the participants on their success and mention the awards that Carrot River Valley constituents received. Cheers award went to Chantelle Delorme of Tisdale, Jocelyn Beyer of Carrot River, Taylor Nickel of Nipawin, and Jesse Rogalski and Matt Auger of Hudson Bay.

Certificate of Merit for acting excellence: Brookelynn Allan, Tisdale; Kathy Manzini, Nipawin; Jared Lokken, Nipawin; and Jordan Wouters of Carrot River.

Certificate of Merit for technical expertise: Taylor Nickel, Nipawin; Sara Woolsey, Nipawin; Natasha Stasiuk, Nipawin; and Emma Weighill of Carrot River.

Best Stage Manager Award: Kelsey Haugen, Hudson Bay. And the Best Technical Crew Award went to Kelsey Pashell of Hudson Bay. Nakesh Madhar of Tisdale received a Technical Award of Merit, and Kelsey Pashell of Hudson Bay won the Best Technical Crew Award. Bob Hinit Technical Performance for set design was won by Jade Bokinac of Carrot River.

Sam Kozun of Carrot River walked away with the Mary Ellen Burgess Performance Award for acting excellence. Chris Deboth of Hudson Bay received the Acting Award of Merit. Dean Armstrong of Carrot River won the best visual presentation, with Leah Demmans of Nipawin runner-up. Leah Demmans won Best Technical Production Award, with Dean Armstrong placing second.

Carrot River actually ended up winning the competition, is heading for Regina to the provincials, May 8th, 12th, and 14th.

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

### Miss Teen Saskatchewan

**Mr. Furber:** — Mr. Speaker, last week Melissa Menzies won, from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote, was crowned Miss Teen Saskatchewan finalist. Many family members and friends proudly watched as she received her honour. Melissa will now participate in the Miss Teen Canada World finals in Toronto in July where she's looking forward to representing Prince Albert and Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Melissa is a 14-year-old youth and attends John Diefenbaker School. She's been very active on her school's student council and volunteers in many school events. She

enjoys sports and plays volleyball, basketball, and softball. Additionally she's a dancer. Having started at the age of five, she dances ballet, jazz, lyrical, modern, and tap. Melissa also volunteers at the Vic Hospital where she visits with patients. Her supervisor there reports that residents and patients are always happy when she comes to visit. They enjoy her bright smile, friendly attitude, and her compassion.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to acknowledge Melissa's success because I know her very well. Her mother, Nicole Rancourt, is also a very active volunteer in our city, and she and Melissa are often present together volunteering at many events in P.A. Northcote.

Melissa is passionate about her community and feels that being involved with Miss Teen Canada World will help her be a positive role model for other youth. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in congratulating Melissa and offering our best wishes for a successful competition in Toronto. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[10:15]

### Consistent Support

**Ms. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The leader of the NDP [New Democratic Party] is notorious for his many flip-flops on many issues, but he's been consistent on one issue. It's his support for uranium development and nuclear energy.

On the issue of uranium development, the NDP leader said, and I quote, "If Tommy Douglas were here today, it would be exactly what he would be doing." Just a few years ago the NDP leader delivered a speech to the North Saskatoon Business Association where he indicated that nuclear energy would, and I quote, "provide at least a third of the energy for the oil sands." In that same speech, he also had an Al Gore moment when he said, and I quote, "I'm not talking about debating the pros and cons of nuclear power. That debate is over."

In a 2008 CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] radio interview, the NDP leader also said, and I quote, "Nuclear energy is and will continue to be part of the global solution to our energy problems." And, Mr. Speaker, in an interview with *The Sheaf* he said, and I quote, "I think it's immoral to say I want to mine uranium, but I don't want to make power from it."

Mr. Speaker, we thank the Leader of the NDP for being crystal clear about his ongoing support for the uranium industry and nuclear energy in Saskatchewan.

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

### Saskatoon Council on Aging

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I attended the 20th anniversary party of the Saskatoon Council on Aging, SCOA. Mr. Speaker, in 1988 a group of older adults and agencies met to strategize how to meet the needs of older adults. Their vision was to have a one-stop resource centre and

to address major issues of concern to older adults such as abuse, isolation, health, and caregiving.

The first board was elected in 1991, and the resource centre was launched.

Today the Saskatoon Council on Aging, as a non-profit organization, provides community leadership in the promotion of dignity, health, and independence of older adults through programs, services, education, and policy advocacy. The council is operated by a board of volunteers, the majority of whom are older adults, and has two main functions: operating a resource walk-in centre to enhance the quality of life for older adults; and working with local agencies to initiate, implement, and evaluate projects useful to older adults in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the founding board members who received awards from the Lieutenant Governor. I also want to congratulate the current president, Candace Skrapek, all board members past and present, and all volunteers past and present who have made the council such an enduring success. Thank you.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Out-of-Province Medical Coverage

**Ms. Junor:** — I barely got to sit down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In December the minister announced the creation of an arm's-length committee to review government decisions on out-of-province and out-of-country medical coverage. The minister said the committee would be operational by early 2011.

To the minister: what is the status today of the committee, and will government decisions about out-of-province and out-of-country medical coverage made before the creation of the committee be able to be reviewed by the committee; in other words, retroactive?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after we reviewed the out-of-country coverage by the Ministry of Health — coverage that had been in place under the former NDP government, Mr. Speaker, adopted by our government — we realized that there was some deficiencies, Mr. Speaker. There wasn't a great appeal process, I guess you could say, so we set up this committee.

The ministry right now is talking to people that will be sitting on that committee. We would hope that those names will be able to be put forward in the very near future. I will say that this has taken a little bit longer than I wanted it to take, Mr. Speaker, but the committee is under way. We are contacting people as I speak, Mr. Speaker, to populate the committee so that it can do its work as we move forward.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Guess it's difficult to find populating committees. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Tchorzewski and his family are in the gallery today because in 2009 Mr. Tchorzewski was diagnosed with prostate cancer and referred to the Cancer Agency where it was recommended that he undergo radiation therapy instead of surgery because he was too old.

Because of the history of aggressive prostate cancer in the family, Mr. Tchorzewski and his family frantically looked elsewhere for treatment options. He went to the Mayo Clinic where it was determined that the cancer was much more advanced than thought, and he was operated on immediately.

Mr. Tchorzewski went out of country, and it saved his life. He's a 72-year-old pensioner, and it cost him almost \$60,000, a bill the minister has refused to pay. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will he reconsider, do the right thing and pay the \$60,000 it cost to save Mr. Tchorzewski's life?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to say that the vast, vast majority of people that need health care are able to access that health care here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. There is the odd case where people will have to go out of province. There is a protocol to be followed when people go out of province. It needs to be pre-approved, Mr. Speaker.

There has been the odd case where government has covered people that have been out of province where the protocol wasn't followed. Most of the time they have been reviewed by the Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker. The Ombudsman has made his recommendations, and after those recommendations, Mr. Speaker, government has looked at those, at an individual case and covered most of them, Mr. Speaker, as far as I'm concerned since I have been the Minister of Health.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we have set up this external, arm's-length committee that will begin in its work in the very near future, Mr. Speaker, once we have the people in place in order to conduct those reviews. It wouldn't be appropriate for me to comment on any one case in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, but we are certainly willing to look at all cases that come forward.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Tchorzewski didn't have time to jump through the hoops and wait for the bureaucracy to save his life. He acted on his own and because of that he is alive today. Due to unusual circumstances, uncertain diagnosis, and particularly the urgency because of the history of aggressive prostate cancer in his family, Mr. Tchorzewski needed timely treatment that was not being offered in Saskatchewan. Mr. Tchorzewski needs to have the circumstances of his case reviewed.

Mr. Speaker, the minister covered out-of-country medical treatment for Doug Bonderud, Jeff Lukye, and a man referred to as Christopher, due to what the minister described as special circumstances. Will the minister agree that Mr. Tchorzewski's case also has special circumstances and review it and pay him?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are putting this committee in place, Mr. Speaker, that will review those situations. But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that as we move forward . . .

[Interjections]

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, as I said, as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard in the health care system to make sure we have the proper complement of health care professionals.

I will say that for the first time in many years, the province is looking at waiting lists being actually reduced, Mr. Speaker, in this province. For 16 years, for 16 years the government oversaw the longest waiting lists in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're seeing those wait-lists come down. In fact CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] named Saskatchewan the only province to see reductions in wait-lists of the five categories they looked at, Mr. Speaker. More work to do, but certainly a much better track record than the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Access to Grazing Land

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, a proud, fourth-generation rancher, Jack Bryce, from the Moose Mountain region was banned from grazing his cattle in the provincial park for the coming year for alleged non-compliance. I had the opportunity in late November after the ban had been issued to meet with Mr. Bryce and tour the land in question in the Moose Mountain hills. This decision and judgment of this government have a great impact on Mr. Bryce's life and his livelihood. As such Mr. Bryce should be provided a fair process to share his side of the story. To the Minister of Parks: does he agree?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister responsible for tourism, parks, resources, and culture.

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We welcome the member's question. I am aware of some of the circumstances of this particular situation. And I know that some of our ministry officials have been in constant contact with the individual, and we would welcome further discussions on this matter, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, all Mr. Bryce wanted was a fair process to tell his side of the story. I raised this matter in person with the Agriculture minister last year in December. I've raised it with the Parks minister's office multiple times. I've discussed it in person multiple times with his local MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], the member from

Cannington, and I've raised it with the Premier's office.

Mr. Bryce could not get a meeting with his MLA for months despite many efforts. He couldn't get a response from the Ministry of Parks. Finally in late February, he was promised a hearing by his MLA and by a ministry official. He waited patiently. That hearing was promised to occur at the start of April, but it has never occurred despite continued requests.

He needs to plan for grazing the herd this spring and this summer, right now as we speak. This decision has a great impact on his livelihood. He feels he's been treated unfair. To the Minister of Parks: why has Mr. Bryce not had a chance to share his side of the story?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We welcome the member's question. My understanding is that Mr. Bryce has had a number of opportunities to share his opinions with both the ministry officials and with his member of the legislature.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I would ask the members to allow the minister to respond. Give him the same privilege as the member had to pose the question. I recognize the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, we will resume our comments. Mr. Bryce has had ample opportunity to discuss his issues with the ministry officials, and in fact toured with the member from Cannington on a snowmobile recently to look at the situation face-to-face with his own representative.

We welcome further opportunities to engage in this discussion, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, unbelievable answer from that member. The member from Cannington got on the snowmobile and went through the hills three months after he had been contacted many, many, many times in his office. And he hasn't contacted or returned a call since then, Mr. Speaker. But at that meeting he promised a hearing to Mr. Bryce, and fairness. That hearing was promised; hasn't occurred. It was not only promised by the member from Cannington, it was promised by a ministry official. And it was supposed to occur at the start of April.

Mr. Bryce, who's with us here today in our Assembly, Mr. Speaker, deserves some answers, and he deserves a fair process. In fact Mr. Bryce has continued to call the ministry looking for answers. They've in fact, as I understand, started to block his calls and actually hung up on him yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I've called the Premier's office. Mr. Bryce has contacted the Premier's office. All the Premier's office does is direct us back to the Parks minister who doesn't respond.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Bryce has been stonewalled by this government. He's here today in the city looking for answers. His 76-year-old father and his wife are covering off calving here today, and he's looking for answers. Mr. Speaker, will the Parks minister finally show some accountability? Will he meet with Mr. Bryce here today and provide the hearing that's been promised? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we can clear up the confusion on the part of the member who's asking the questions. At one point he says Mr. Bryce has met with this member. The next instance he says he hasn't met with this member. We confirm that he actually has met with this member, the member from Cannington.

We're also setting up a review process right now I'm told, Mr. Speaker. An email has already been sent out to Mr. Bryce. And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I'd be delighted to meet with the gentleman today at his convenience.

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

### College Merger

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Advanced Education. And let me be very clear with the minister: I'm not asking for what the *Canadian University Guide* says about our universities. Instead my very specific question is this: how much money are Saskatchewan families paying for the various investigations and audits into his pet college merger project?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The talks began, Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite were in power, Mr. Speaker. We know that.

Mr. Speaker, what we've seen is an independent process. There was a proposal submitted last June, an independent process, Mr. Speaker, that then came forward, Mr. Speaker. That process then made a series of recommendations, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the recommendations — which said no to the merger, Mr. Speaker, which we then ruled on and followed compliance with, Mr. Speaker — then we said there were a series of outstanding questions. Those questions, Mr. Speaker, are being followed up by Meyers Norris Penny, Mr. Speaker. That specific work, Mr. Speaker, is about \$100,000. Have there been additional costs incurred? Yes there have, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that at Carlton Trail and St. Peter's, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province will have a full accounting for where those dollars are.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister's deflection will not work. Everyone knows that this merger was his project. From

the St. Peter's College winter newsletter, "The provincial government is encouraging the merger." From board minutes, at which the minister sent his ADM [assistant deputy minister] and a senior ministry official, the minutes say direction has been given from Minister Norris to proceed. Everyone knows this is his project.

Mr. Speaker, so far at least \$402,000 of taxpayers' money has been allocated to the various investigations and audits of the minister's pet college merger project: \$172,000 for Meyers Norris Penny; \$70,000 for KPMG; and \$160,000 for Deloitte & Touche, including over \$50,000 per month for one individual. Talk about a stimulus fund for accounting firms, Mr. Speaker. And this \$400,000 doesn't include the expenses of the Ministry of Justice or the minister's own political staff who are now acting as private investigators.

To the minister: does he think it's acceptable that over \$400,000 of taxpayers' money has to be devoted to getting to the bottom of the mess that he created?

[10:30]

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite made some reference to the minutes, Mr. Speaker. As I've said previously on numerous occasions, the minutes, Mr. Speaker, are actually being checked with references back within the ministry. And, Mr. Speaker, the full reference to that . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I recognize the member from . . . Minister Responsible for Advanced Ed.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Ed.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And the reference we have from the ministry is that we would proceed with due process as we promised last year, Mr. Speaker. That due process began, Mr. Speaker, when the proposal was submitted. That was submitted in June. I've accepted, Mr. Speaker, that has taken too long. But when the final recommendation came in, we followed that recommendation, Mr. Speaker — no to the merger.

Along the way, there were a series of questions. Essentially what we have, Mr. Speaker, what we have, Mr. Speaker, are a series of allegations . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I remind members that when the Speaker's on his feet, members are to come to order. There have been a couple of members in the back bench of the opposition that have been continually trying to respond when



the minister's actually been recognized. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Ed.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and so what we have are a series . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. The member for P.A. Northcote will come to order and allow the response. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Ed.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So today, Mr. Speaker, what we have, an independent process that determined, Mr. Speaker, an independent process made the recommendation that the merger not proceed. We took that, Mr. Speaker. We made that decision. There were also a recommendation from Meyers Norris Penny that outstanding questions then be investigated.

Mr. Speaker, we know that those allegations, and today that's what they are . . . We are ensuring that there are a number of accounting firms on the ground to ensure that taxpayers', that taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker, will be accounted for and that all of this will . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I guess I would like to know if the opposition would like to hear the response or allow the public to hear the response. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education to finalize his response.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So what we have today, we have a series of allegations and audits under way, Mr. Speaker. We are certainly making sure that every taxpayer dollar is going to be accounted for, Mr. Speaker, and most importantly that the students remain a priority for the people of this province.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, what the minister just said is not correct. He said that the due process, so-called due process began when the proposal was submitted. Meyers Norris Penny did not start their work until November, and the proposal was submitted in June. Moreover, how much are we paying now for people to sift through minutes to check whether or not they are correct? Thousands and thousands of dollars.

Let's not forget about the \$400,000 allocated to the investigations and audits is not even close to the full extent of public money that has been dumped into this mess. We know of another \$408,000 of taxpayers' money that flowed from the public college to the private college for things like furnishings, equipment, and so-called market research. And over \$9 million of taxpayers' money was funnelled toward the minister's project through the knowledge infrastructure program. Millions of taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker, and that's before any, any of the financial irregularities are even taken into account.

Again to the minister: does he think it's acceptable that taxpayers have to spend over \$400,000 to investigate a mess in

which they've already poured millions into?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite references the knowledge infrastructure program, Mr. Speaker. And I'll just give you a small example of the benefits that that infrastructure program that has been supported by the federal government and certainly supported here, Mr. Speaker. We know that there's more than \$117 million invested in post-secondary educational infrastructure right across the province, 21 different projects.

Mr. Speaker, we know that students in Estevan are going to be benefiting from that. We know that students in Swift Current; we know that students in Nipawin, Mr. Speaker; we know students here in Regina; we know students in, certainly in Prince Albert; in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker; and indeed, Mr. Speaker, we also know in Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, where there's a joint-use facility, Mr. Speaker, and we wanted to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we are maximizing those federal dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I find it a little bit peculiar that the member opposite would criticize this government for working with Ottawa to get those federal dollars on behalf of our students.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, what I find peculiar are the minister's answers. The minister talks about knowledge infrastructure money flowing to private institutions. The minister ensured that \$9 million of funding went to St. Peter's College, a private institution. Briercree College, a private institution, does anyone know how much they received? Fifty thousand dollars, Mr. Speaker, a huge imbalance. This minister clearly had a plan, and he was greasing the wheels. He knew what he was doing.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister completely redefined the Westminster parliamentary convention of ministerial responsibility when he said that it amounts to letting the chips fall where they may. Well he's absolutely wrong. It's about the minister being accountable and being responsible. He is the one who directed the transition board to proceed with the merger, but he will take no responsibility. He is the one who received emails and at least one fax, none of which he shared with his officials. In fact his own deputy said she only heard about rumours. He didn't even tell her about the documents he received. But he will take no responsibility. He poured millions of taxpayers' dollars into his pet merger project, and now over \$400,000 is being spent to investigate that mess, but he will take no responsibility.

To the minister: since he doesn't understand the convention of ministerial responsibility, will he at least take personal responsibility for the mess he created and the millions of taxpayers' dollars he has put at risk?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, as we have come in, we have found an enormous infrastructure deficit not simply in post-secondary educational institutions, but right across the province, Mr. Speaker. It's one of the reasons that we moved forward with \$2.8 billion, Mr. Speaker, in order to support our students and our scholars, Mr. Speaker.

Just one example, Mr. Speaker. Just one example, Mr. Speaker, is where we have moved forward on the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, a project, Mr. Speaker, that was started under the members opposite but, Mr. Speaker, they refused to finish it. Mr. Speaker, what they did is threw the tarps up, and therefore our researchers, in an institution that is known across this country, didn't have the benefit of actually seeing that project finished. Mr. Speaker, it was the knowledge infrastructure program, and the investments made by . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Ed.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, just one example where the members opposite put in jeopardy the reputation of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. They didn't fund it, Mr. Speaker, not to be completed. We were able to do that, Mr. Speaker, with the knowledge infrastructure program, a project that had been initiated years before. We took the tarps down and got it done so that the students and people right across this province and across Western Canada can benefit from the research and work that's under way there.

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

#### Arrangements for Office Space

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the minister, when we've seen spending increase almost 40 per cent by this government, I'm glad he could point to one instance where the money had been put to good use and not the questionable actions that have been happening at Carlton Trail.

Mr. Speaker, it's great to see Saskatchewan businesses expanding and constructing new buildings. And I think we will all agree that it's great for the economy. But, Mr. Speaker, the problem is when privately owned buildings are constructed using taxpayer-guaranteed leases while other private businesses use their own money. Mr. Speaker, that's clearly picking winners and losers. And that's what this government is doing with the Hill family tower in downtown Regina by guaranteeing the government will be the largest tenant for the next 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government going against everything they've said, picking winners and losers and pledging Saskatchewan taxpayers to a 20-year lease?

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the interests of the Saskatchewan taxpayer are best served when there is a competitive marketplace. And at the present time,

there isn't a competitive marketplace in commercial real estate. In fact in Regina, the vacancy rate is under 2 per cent. And government's participation in Hill tower, even though it is less than 30 per cent . . . So the member opposite states that we are the largest; we are not the largest.

So we are less than 30 per cent of the total space being provided, will help create a competitive marketplace. And in a competitive marketplace, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayer of Saskatchewan comes out the winner.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, if the government is going to play favourites and use guaranteed leases paid for by the taxpayers to allow private companies to build new facilities, it should at least be open about it. In this day and age, Saskatchewan taxpayers expect and deserve some real transparency. So far we've really seen precious little of that from this government despite election commitments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, since this minister has committed to helping build the Hill family tower, at least she could do is tell taxpayers how much we are spending and she is committing taxpayers to over the next 20 years.

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at present our policy is consistent with what the other Western provinces have in place. And, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to talk to commercial realtors across the province. And I had a wonderful conversation with Dale Griesser.

And in regards to . . . And this is what Dale has stated:

In regards to disclosing specific information regarding lease transactions, that information in most cases is confidential between the landlord and the tenant. As such our policy is not to disclose specific details to the public without authorization from the parties we represent.

In regards to leases in new buildings, the industry norm or preferred process is no longer initial terms like . . .

Sorry, excuse me.

. . . or preferred process is initial terms of likely 15 to 20 years. And this is due to the underwriting requirements for the developer . . .

**The Speaker:** — Member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, on the first day that we raised this issue, the minister said this was a policy that they would review, and it's purely a policy, Mr. Speaker. How businesses interact and do business with the Government of Saskatchewan is policy defined by this government.

Mr. Speaker, then she went on to say, well other provinces do it. Well please review: you don't care what other provinces do when it comes to the Human Rights Commission; you are destroying that whole facility. Mr. Speaker, they don't care what other provinces are doing in a number of other areas. And, Mr. Speaker, they need to do what's right for the province of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan taxpayers expect transparency. When is this minister going to change her policy and address the issues of taxpayers' dollars?

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite states that we don't care. Well we do care. We care that this province is moving forward, that we are encouraging more head offices to choose to locate here. We care that more jobs are being created here. And we also care to ensure that we had a balanced budget, something that most other provinces were not able to do. So, Mr. Speaker, we are moving this province forward. That's why it's called the Saskatchewan advantage.

[10:45]

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

#### Royalty Rates

**Mr. Stewart:** — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. If I could have the members' attention for a minute. We're having a bit of a problem with the clock here, if members would just give us a minute. Order. I'd ask members to come to order. We'll proceed with the 75-minute debate. I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure for me to stand in this Assembly and speak about mineral royalties, royalties that this province charges to potash mining companies, oil and gas companies, and uranium mining companies, Mr. Speaker.

A lot of rhetoric has been bandied about recently, all of it coming from the opposition benches, Mr. Speaker, about the province not getting maximum benefit out of the royalties we charge these resource companies, Mr. Speaker. And I want to go on record with some stats and a brief history of the development of particularly potash royalties, Mr. Speaker, but I want to put some facts on the record about all of our royalties.

In the North . . . There's terrible inconsistency from their benches, Mr. Speaker. They say one thing in one part of the province on this royalty issue and something quite different in another part of the province, Mr. Speaker. When they're in the North, they talk about oil and gas and potash royalties and how they should be increased. They don't mention uranium when they're up there, Mr. Speaker, because they know and northern

people know that increasing uranium royalties would kill thousands of jobs in the North. So they don't talk about that when they're in the North.

But then they go down to the Southeast maybe or to the west side of the province in the oil and gas producing areas, Mr. Speaker. And when they're there, they talk about increasing royalties on potash and on uranium. They don't talk about increasing royalties on oil and gas when they're in oil and gas producing areas, Mr. Speaker. They say what they think will sell as well as it possibly can to the people they're talking to. They don't seem to have any real principles or desire to do the right thing for the province as a whole.

The only thing they are consistent about is increasing potash royalties, and so I will focus most of my remarks on potash, but they apply equally, Mr. Speaker, to oil and gas and uranium as well. My remarks will underscore inconsistencies between their actions as government and what they are talking about doing now, leaving no other conclusion, Mr. Speaker, than the NDP are willing to throw the economy of Saskatchewan and thousands of jobs — mostly union jobs, Mr. Speaker — under the NDP campaign bus, not, Mr. Speaker, to win an election but to attempt to consolidate something of a far left wing base upon which they hope to be able to build their political fortunes in the future sometime, Mr. Speaker.

In the 1990s the potash industry came to the government with concern that the tax burden on the potash industry was such that it was next to impossible to justify new investment. An analysis confirmed that the maximum marginal tax rate at that time of the industry exceeded 80 per cent. When considering its total tax burden, including federal and provincial corporate income tax and corporate capital tax resource surcharge, average tax rates on profits from potash operations exceeded 50 per cent then, Mr. Speaker.

In 1998, of course, under the NDP, the following changes were made. The highest profit tax bracket, 50 per cent, was eliminated, leaving 35 per cent as the top profit tax rate. The maximum base payment rate was frozen at its 1997 level, \$12.33 per K<sub>2</sub>O [potassium oxide] tonne. The four different categories of mine capital were consolidated into one, giving a 35 per cent depreciation rate. The categories of research and development costs eligible for a 40 per cent tax credit were broadened and their treatment made more consistent. The tax treatment of various other costs and revenues were clarified with a number of housekeeping measures.

A provision was made that in 2001, the first profit tax bracket, 15 per cent, was expanded from \$35 to \$40 profit per K<sub>2</sub>O tonne.

In the early 2000s, the industry came back to the government with a concern that the tax burden was still too high to justify new investment in the industry. And this had become an issue as potash markets were growing rapidly and new investment was needed in order to meet increasing demand. The industry said, and rightly so, that potash divisions operated within larger corporate entities and had to compete with alternative investment opportunities that existed in other divisions.

In 2003 the following changes to the PPT, the potash

production tax, were implemented in regulations under the previous NDP government. The profit tax portion of the PPT was removed on sales of potash that were above the producer's average of sales in '01 and '02. Producers were given an accelerated depreciation rate, 100 per cent, for capital investment in the year that was in excess of 90 per cent of the producer's capital investment in 2002.

After the 2003 tax changes were implemented by the NDP, the government and the industry agreed to discuss possible ways to further improve the system. And in 2005, also under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, the following changes to the PPT were implemented in regulations. Producers were given a 10-year holiday from the base payment portion of the PPT for potash produced from approved expansions of productive capacity. The accelerated depreciation rate for capital investment in excess of 90 per cent of the producer's capital investment in '02 was increased from 100 per cent to 120 per cent.

In 2010, Mr. Speaker, due to 2003 tax changes that removed the profit tax on sales in excess of the producer's average sales in '01 and '02, a situation was created where a new entrant to the Saskatchewan potash industry would not pay profit tax as it would not have had sales in '01 and '02. Of course there had been no new entrants up to that point in 40 years. Existing potash producers were concerned that new entrants were not subject to the same base level of tax as they were, would have a significant advantage in potash markets.

The new system created a base minimum . . . The only changes made by our government were made in 2010 to rectify this untenable situation. And in 2010 the following changes were made to the PPT. For existing producers, base tonnes subject to profit tax or average sales in '01 and '02, the equivalent base tonnes of a new entrant are set equal to 75 per cent of its sales in the year until 75 per cent of sales exceeds 1 million K<sub>2</sub>O tonnes. In the year that this occurs, the base tonnes of new entrants are set permanently at 1 million K<sub>2</sub>O tonnes. When new producers enter the industry, the base tonnes of all producers will be adjusted downwards. The total industry adjustment is 65 per cent of new entrants' base tonnes and is distributed among producers according to their proportionate share of total industry base tonnes. For both existing producers and new entrants, there's now a floor on taxable tonnes equal to 35 per cent of a producer's total sales. So the only substantive change to the royalty structure introduced by this government was instituting a tax for new entrants equal to 35 per cent of a producer's total production.

Revisions have been made over time to improve Saskatchewan's potash industry competitiveness. And full credit has to be given to the previous NDP government for taking measures that were necessary to keep the industry in Saskatchewan and enable further investment by the industry in the province.

To put our royalties in context, Mr. Speaker, they are quite simply the highest in the world. To raise them risks killing the industry in the province, and certainly would cancel announced new investments by the industry in the province and eliminate the possibility of any new investment. This would translate into the loss of thousands of jobs in Saskatchewan, and probably in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion in revenue to the province

every single year over the long term. It would kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

Mr. Speaker, potash resource royalty and tax payments to the province are made up of three charges: Crown base royalty on gross potash sales, 2 to 3 per cent; corporate capital tax resource surcharge on gross potash sales, 3 per cent; potash production tax on potash profits, three-year average '08 to '10, at 20 per cent. Add in corporate income tax — the total marginal tax rate for potash mining companies is about 45 per cent, Mr. Speaker, not the 5 cents on the dollar that the NDP are bandying around union halls and coffee shops in this province, not even close, Mr. Speaker. When all taxes are considered, the potash mining companies are at four to five times the tax rate of any other jurisdiction in the world.

I have in front of me, Mr. Speaker, a graph from the CRU Group, which is a well-respected United Kingdom-based mining industry research company, Mr. Speaker, and it points out the potash royalty and production taxes paid by, paid in the 13 potash producing jurisdictions around the world.

The jurisdictions charging 1 per cent or less include China, Russia, Spain, Germany, and Belarus. Jurisdictions under 5 per cent, Mr. Speaker, include Israel, UK [United Kingdom], United States, Brazil, and Chile. In the jurisdictions that charge more than 5 per cent, Mr. Speaker, we have a Canadian one, New Brunswick, at 6 per cent. We have Jordan, that engine of international economic growth, at 11 per cent, Mr. Speaker; and Saskatchewan, the highest in the world by more than double Jordan, the second place finisher, at 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan, in short, receives a much larger share of potash revenue than any other jurisdiction on this planet.

The public policy has been successful. Significant investment in mine expansions are still to come. We are only now seeing the first greenfield mine built in Saskatchewan in 40 years. The industry estimates 12 billion in expansion expected from now through 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I have before me three pages. It's a list in fine print of potash projects around the world. And, you know, while Saskatchewan is home to 50 per cent of the world potash reserves, due to the size of overall world reserves, significant expansion potential exists elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP makes much of the point that we have half of the world's reserves so we should be able to charge anything we darn well please, Mr. Speaker, in taxes and royalties, and get away with it. The serious flaw in that argument, Mr. Speaker, is that, because we have 50 per cent of the resource in the world, implies that 50 per cent exists elsewhere, Mr. Speaker. The NDP haven't seen through that one yet.

But I have, as I mentioned, three pages in very small print of potential potash expansion and greenfield projects in other jurisdictions in the world. Currently under the current royalty regime and for the next two to five years, significant capital investment writedowns will suppress, to some extent, government revenues. But there will be significant, Mr. Speaker, growth in revenue in the long term. And if any of those members opposite would undertake to study our royalties,

which were developed under the NDP governments, they would know this, Mr. Speaker.

I know the Leader of the Opposition understands how they work, but he continues to advance his pre-election rhetoric regardless of the facts and at the expense of our potash industry and our oil and gas industry and our uranium industry and mainly, Mr. Speaker, at the expense of thousands, it would be tens of thousands of jobs in the province, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP destroyed the royalty structure in all of those industries.

In recent years, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Alberta raised oil royalty rates in the neighbourhood of 20 per cent in an effort to extract more government revenue from the oil industry. The net result was a loss of billions of dollars in oil industry investment in Alberta, the loss of billions of dollars in oil revenue for the people of Alberta, and the loss of thousands of jobs in that province. As well substantial investment moved from that province to Saskatchewan because our oil royalties here remained stable.

The Leader of the Opposition recognizes that did great harm to the oil industry and the province of Alberta, but he now advocates doing the exact same thing in the potash, uranium, and oil and gas industry in this province, Mr. Speaker. He knows full well that action would devastate the economy of the province and put us back into have-not status for a very long time. He knows this action would leave no revenue for investment in health and education and social services and housing and roads or debt reduction. He knows these things from experience, and yet he advocates destroying Saskatchewan, for the foreseeable future, for short-term political gain as we approach an election, Mr. Speaker, in which it appears that he will be humiliated and his party devastated.

[11:00]

Mr. Speaker, I now would like to take the opportunity to read the motion into the record. The motion reads, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly condemn the opposition, especially its leadership, for attempting to drag Saskatchewan back to a have-not province with policies that raise uranium, potash, and oil and gas royalties.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member from Thunder Creek:

That this Assembly condemn the opposition, especially its leadership, for attempting to drag Saskatchewan back to a have-not province with policies that raise uranium, potash, oil and gas royalty rates.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to enter into this debate. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to start by stating that nothing could be further from the truth that the New Democratic Party would be prepared to become a have-not province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the people of Saskatchewan

that we became a have province and we were very proud of becoming a have province because of the policies of the NDP Party in this province. And we're proud of the fact that we brought this province from the state of bankruptcy that the former Conservative Party, their colleagues, Mr. Speaker, brought us to the point . . .

[Interjections]

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Unfortunately there's too many people who want to get into the debate. There will be . . . You will have your opportunity. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I stated earlier, we were very proud to put the foundation in place and make Saskatchewan a have province, Mr. Speaker, and it was very, very, a very proud moment for all of Saskatchewan in 2005 when we became a have province, and we're extremely proud of that record, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a simple question of the members opposite and I guess to the people of Saskatchewan: why wouldn't, why wouldn't the people of Saskatchewan want a fair return for their resource, Mr. Speaker? Why wouldn't the people of Saskatchewan want to see the benefit that a fair return for that resource would achieve for them, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I have many, many questions as to why the members opposite wouldn't want to see a fair return from their resources for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. Is it because, it is because if they got a fair return for the people of Saskatchewan for those resources, Mr. Speaker, they might get less in political contributions from those same companies to their political coffers, Mr. Speaker? Or could it be that maybe if they got a fair return for the people of Saskatchewan for that resource that they wouldn't get, if they decided to leave politics, cushy jobs with those same resource companies, Mr. Speaker?

Those are the questions I have to ask because, Mr. Speaker, why would any, why would any member of this Assembly elected to represent the people of Saskatchewan not want to maximize the return for the people of the province of Saskatchewan? That is the role of the government, Mr. Speaker. The role of the government is to get the very best, the absolute best that they can from our resources on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now we're not talking about going to a level that hurts resource companies to the point where they can't operate, Mr. Speaker. That's what they'd like, that's what they would like to portray. That's what they'd like to make the people of Saskatchewan believe, Mr. Speaker, that if the resource companies paid a little bit more that they wouldn't produce in our province, Mr. Speaker, or they would shut down, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is what they would like you to believe, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, they very much have forgot that, Mr. Speaker, their role is to represent the people of Saskatchewan, not the resource companies, Mr. Speaker. Their role is to get the very best deal for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, not represent the interest of the resource companies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't blame the resource companies. I don't blame them at all for bargaining tough and getting the best deal they can, Mr. Speaker. I don't blame Bill Doyle, Mr. Speaker. I don't blame any CEO [chief executive officer] of a company for doing his job well, Mr. Speaker, and getting the very best for the company. That's what he's paid to do. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is paid by the people of Saskatchewan to get the best deal for the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, 5 cents on the dollar, Mr. Speaker, isn't good enough. It's not good enough.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan expect their government to represent their interests, just like the shareholders of the corporations, Mr. Speaker, doing business in Saskatchewan expect the CEO to represent their interests. But they don't expect, the people of Saskatchewan, that the Premier would put the interests of the large corporations ahead of their own interests, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't blame Bill Doyle. I don't blame any corporation for trying to get the best deal they can. What I do though, Mr. Speaker, is blame a government who doesn't try to get the best deal at any point in time for the people of the province of Saskatchewan from their royalties.

Because, Mr. Speaker, let's just take a step back and look at what the people of Saskatchewan clearly understand but maybe the government doesn't, and that is that the people of Saskatchewan own the resources, Mr. Speaker. Those resources are owned by the people of Saskatchewan, not by the government, not by the companies who pay to mine them, Mr. Speaker, but the people. And the people need to get a fair return for their resources. And why would any government argue against reviewing royalties, reviewing royalties to ensure that you maximize the benefit or potential of the people of the province in which you represent?

Mr. Speaker, many professionals and economists have entered into this debate, Mr. Speaker. Jack Mintz from the University of Calgary describes the province's current potash royalty system as just wrong. It's not good for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. Sylvain Charlebois, a former U of R [University of Regina] business professor, said a review of the province's royalty structure is dearly needed. Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with reviewing royalties and maximizing the potential for the people of Saskatchewan?

And, Mr. Speaker, common sense has to apply in those royalty reviews as well. Mr. Speaker, we have vast minerals and resources in our province, Mr. Speaker. They're not all the same. We don't have the same strategic advantage in some that we have in others, Mr. Speaker, so you have to apply common sense. And you have to look at the royalty structure in a way that sees the benefit of the province of Saskatchewan and the industries in which they're involved, and the marketplaces in

which each industry is involved. They're not the same, so you have to apply common sense.

Members opposite want to create fear and say, well reviewing will shut the door and companies will leave, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just use a simple analogy. If the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, a leading company around the world and a great producer of potash in our province, a company we should all be proud of, and we all are . . . Mr. Speaker, we're proud of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. It started as a Crown corporation. It started as being owned by the people, and today it's a privately owned corporation, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of that corporation and the business it does here.

But they made \$1.8 billion last year, Mr. Speaker. And the people of the province of Saskatchewan made 76 million, \$77 million, Mr. Speaker, from their resource. Mr. Speaker, no. If the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan made \$1 billion last year instead of \$1.8 billion, they're not going to shut their doors. They're not going to shut their doors because no profitable company making \$1 billion is going to shut their doors. Anybody that tries to make you believe that is fearmongering, Mr. Speaker. They're doing no more than trying to create a fear in you that, if some change occurs, that the world's going to fall apart, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, hope always — always — beats fear, Mr. Speaker. Hope always triumphs over fear, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, all that we are saying is the people of Saskatchewan have a right to maximize the return for their resources, Mr. Speaker. To create a fear that if the Potash Corporation made less money that they would shut the doors and walk away — let's say hypothetically if they only made \$1 billion profit — is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. Because I can tell you there's companies all over the world who would like to have a bottom line of \$1 billion, companies all over the world. And the captains of industry over there, those who claim to be the captains of industry, fully understand that. They understand that. No company's going to walk away that's making \$1 billion profit, Mr. Speaker, so let's not create a fear that doesn't exist.

What is wrong with reviewing royalties to maximize the potential in the province of Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, when the Potash Corporation was privatized, the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan said it was done to maximize the potential and profitability for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and that we need to review our royalties and we need to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan get the maximum benefit.

So, Mr. Speaker, reviewing royalties, being accountable to the people of Saskatchewan, representing their best interest is something that's in the interest of all the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, you need to do that if you're a prudent leader, if you're a prudent government, on a regular basis. There's nothing wrong with that. And you know, lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, you might review one industry every few years and another one only every eight or nine or ten years, Mr. Speaker, because they're not all the same. The profitability isn't the same. The bottom line isn't the same, Mr. Speaker. The marketplace isn't the same.

But, Mr. Speaker, the idea of reviewing your royalties to maximize the benefit for Saskatchewan people shouldn't be something that anybody's afraid of. It shouldn't be something that you try to create a fear in the population over, Mr. Speaker. It should be something that a prudent, responsible government should do as a good business case, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise in this debate. And I will be enthusiastically supporting the basis laid down by the member from Thunder Creek, and I would thank him for that.

Mr. Speaker, we have the Leader of the Opposition making numerous statements about our existing royalty structure. In fact he sounds like a big fan of our government when he honestly reflects on our existing royalty rates. At the Economy Committee estimates of April 20th, 2010, the Leader of the NDP said this, and I quote:

... the stability in Saskatchewan under the Romanow leadership, and Lorne Calvert, and now our Premier leaving it in place has led to a stability regime that is really known across the country. And to give credit, and I do give credit to the minister for the fact that he didn't change and hasn't proposed changes to the royalties that were in place when this government was elected in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, that was his stance. That was his statement, 2010. Mr. Speaker, that was less, less than a year ago.

On that same day he also said, "And I think there was a huge flow of investment into Saskatchewan after the Stelmach government made their ill-advised royalty changes." Mr. Speaker, that again from the Leader of the Opposition.

That leader is fully aware of the negative impact of tinkering with complex royalty rates for political expedience. Mr. Speaker, this is political short-sightedness of the worst kind. In fact you might use that big word; you might say it is disingenuous. And it shows contempt for the intelligence of the people of this province.

What does this NDP flip-flop on royalty rates mean for Saskatchewan? Mr. Ken Rasmussen of the Graduate School of Public Policy said on this, on CBC Radio March 9th of this year:

If you want to collect more royalties you can, but you will be limited to the existing levels of production. You won't see much new investment, and you won't see the kind of growth that we've witnessed in the potash sector. So it really depends on what you want.

This public policy analyst with expert experience in this province is essentially saying this province has a history of losing investments to other provinces and countries because our rates were too high. "Once a new mine is built here, it will mean more revenue to the province for decades."

Well how does Mr. Rasmussen's quotation jive when the

Leader of the NDP tells the *Leader-Post*, and I quote:

To make it clear, the royalty increase I think in no way would jeopardize anything that was going on because the companies would be making more profit even with a royalty increase that they ever planned.

[11:15]

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is it doesn't. The Leader of the NDP has flip-flopped ever since he returned to the Saskatchewan politics. He is desperate for support so he will say anything to anyone. Unfortunately his strategy of flip-flopping isn't actually winning support.

A letter from the Saskatchewan Potash Producers Association had this to say, and I quote:

Saskatchewan's healthy economy and the increased global demand for potash from 3 to 4 per cent per year have allowed current, ongoing, and future expansions of all 10 mines. Growth is a priority for all our companies. Saskatchewan has the largest potash industry in the world and accounts for over 50 per cent of the global reserves. This gives us a competitive edge.

After reaching a productive arrangement with the former NDP government, the industry went ahead with over \$12 billion in investment over nine years.

However, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Potash Producers Association ends their letter, addressed to the Leader of the Opposition, with a dire warning, a dire warning. The association warned that the dangers of pursuing a reckless policy for short-term gain, and I quote:

Unfairly increasing the overall tax rate on potash, which significantly decreases the margins on expansion projects, could dramatically affect expansion already under way or still to be initiated. Those projects could be delayed or cancelled, which would result in severely impacting the GDP growth and provincial jobs. Changing the rules partway through the game would have an adverse effect on Saskatchewan as an investment jurisdiction.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the industry has very real and significant concerns about the NDP's flip-flop on the issue of royalty rates. What is even more disconcerting is the NDP leader's experience in the resource sector. He must know that when a company considers investing billions of dollars in a region, they need to know that taxes and royalty rates are stable. We don't even know how much potential investment he scared off with his reckless flip-flop on royalty rates. We can only hope that no one in the industry takes him seriously since his flip-flops seriously undermine his credibility.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just the industry that is alarmed by the NDP's reckless flip-flopping attitude. Saskatchewanians continue to be concerned. The mayor of Humboldt, after carefully outlining the positive impact that the current royalty rate has on investment in the region, had this to say to the Leader of the NDP. I quote:

We believe there is a need for a period of stability to support the growth and development of the potash industry in our province and allow our communities to attract the interest and confidence of new residents and new business ventures. Discussions regarding changes in royalties and taxation policies should not be brought forward in the midst of this significant growth phase.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here we have a community that would be directly impacted by the NDP's latest flip-flop, and the NDP just wants to plow ahead with reckless policy without consulting the industry and the public. These are the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. They are united in their unambiguous dismissal of the NDP's job-killing resource tax.

So let's look at the facts. We have two scenarios, and in both of them we know that the stakeholders are absolutely opposed to the NDP's flip-flop on royalty rates. So, Mr. Speaker, in one scenario the NDP consulted with the public and industry, didn't like what they heard but went ahead with their job-killing resource tax as they ignored the concerns of the people in this province. In the second scenario, the NDP did absolutely no consultations yet are proposing a reckless proposal that would dramatically reshape Saskatchewan's socio-economic landscape for the worst. Mr. Speaker, either of these scenarios are unacceptable. And that's why the NDP's latest flip-flop with the stability will be ignored by our government and the people of Saskatchewan.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise that the NDP's flip-flop is not a new phenomenon. It is their continual practice, and that's what they're building on. And the one I really like is they keep saying we inherited \$2 billion from them, and yet when you ask them why they didn't build schools and hospitals they say, we had no money. We couldn't do it — flip-flop.

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the question today is about fundamental fairness for the people of Saskatchewan and for the people of Canada because both Saskatchewan people and Canadian citizens have an interest in the share that they receive from the resource in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start with a quote from a place that might be a little bit unusual. But in North Dakota, our neighbour to the south, the state senate is looking at the issue of potash taxes. And there's a Republican state representative down there named Glen Froseth, and he said, "We have a resource that's non-renewable and that's becoming a scarce commodity. It took us 500 million years to get it. I don't think we should just give it away."

Now, Mr. Speaker, this issue of fairness about our resource revenues is a fundamental one for Saskatchewan. We have many needs that are here to be met. And we need to make sure we get a fair share of the resource that's there.

We know that many prominent spokespeople have talked about the resource rent or resource allocation for the public system that we have in Saskatchewan and basically call it wrong. Jack Mintz who, when we were in government, we worked with him

on a number of taxation issues, he says that the province's current potash royalty system is just wrong. So, Mr. Speaker, we also have Sylvain Charlebois who studied this whole area quite carefully when he lived in Regina. And he now lives in Ontario, and he says that a review of this royalty structure is dearly needed.

I think the problem that the people of Saskatchewan, whether they're leaning towards the Sask Party or whether they're New Democrats or Conservatives or wherever they fit, the fundamental question for everybody in the province is if many people who have looked at a complicated system say that there's something not quite right with it, then when we have a government that says, we're not going to look at it at all — we're not going to touch that; we're not going to do anything with it — a lot of questions are raised. And so, Mr. Speaker, the real, the question here today is why would this government end up being so definite in their sense that this is all the way it should be and not accept the fact that there should be a review. I'm not certain what the issue is.

I know that I was recently looking at a book called *Calculating Political Risk* by Catherine Althaus. It's a new book. It talks about how as politicians our job is to look at uncertainty in the world and try to sort out how we make a response to those uncertainties. And it's very clear that resource revenues, the issues around the values of resources, was one of the most uncertain aspects of our political life because we rely on some source of . . . we rely on this source to provide revenue for us as we move forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you have a leader, whether it's a Premier or a minister who's in charge of this area who just say, well we're not going to do anything — we're not going to listen; we're not going to look at the political risk, the risk that's involved in this pricing then, Mr. Speaker — we know that we have a problem. Because the role of anybody who is in leadership is to continually assess the uncertainty and then the risk that comes with that uncertainty as you move forward.

And we all know that there have been changes. Some of the risks are natural catastrophes like earthquakes or big storms or floods or things like that. But other risks relate to what role we play in the worldwide economy as a supplier of resources. And, Mr. Speaker, for the Premier and for the minister and others on that side of the House to just say, we're going to put our heads in the sand — we've got these rules; we're not going to do anything for the next number of years — that's wrong. And the people of Saskatchewan know that it's wrong because they have many needs that need to be met. And the ability of the individuals and the businesses, especially in this province, to fund the kinds of things that we need to make sure our community works is limited unless we have access to revenues from these resources.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other aspect of this whole situation relates to our long-term relationship with the federal government around the sharing of resources and of the appropriate share that we should be getting. We know that the Premier, when he was elected in 2007, took a calculated risk that his friendship with the Prime Minister would allow him to accomplish the same thing or something similar as the lawsuit that we started against the federal government as the NDP



Government of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, three and a half years later, we have very little or nothing from that whole area of the Saskatchewan people getting an appropriate share of the resource revenue that should there for them. And using the information that was provided by a number of economists and scholars who have looked at this, there's up to 20 years of revenue at — using Mr. Lukowski's numbers — 800, 900 million a year that are not, they haven't been part of what's gone on in Saskatchewan. We all know, whether it's the present government or previous governments, with that kind of cash available to deal with many of the issues that we had in Saskatchewan, we'd be in quite a different spot on our education system, our health system, our roads — a whole number of areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier and the government opposite make these decisions to back away from those resources that are rightfully Saskatchewan people's resources, we have the definite right to point it out. We also have the right to say it's wrong. And, Mr. Speaker, when they're making decisions about that particular lawsuit and dealing with the federal government, they've been wrong.

Now maybe we'll have some change on May 2 which will assist in dealing with some of these issues. I'm not certain. But it's quite clear that in Newfoundland, we have all the parties making the same kind of promises that were made to Saskatchewan in 2006 about dealing with these resource issues. Whether anything comes of that will be interesting. We also have the same kind of promises being made to the province of Quebec.

And so where does Saskatchewan fit into this? Bringing all this back to our uncertainty about the future of the pricing of the resources that we do have in this province, I think that we need to make sure that the Premier gets off of this fixed position of not looking at how we share in the long-term depleting resource that we have in this province.

[11:30]

And, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm going to quote again our friend from North Dakota. He says, "We have a resource that's non-renewable and that's becoming a scarce commodity. It took us 500 million years to get it. I don't think we should give it away."

What's he talking about? He's talking about that extension of the potash that's very abundant here that also extends into North Dakota. We know that in the Bakken oil field and all the things that have happened in Montana, North Dakota, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, that that's been a positive thing for all of these communities.

We need to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we as the citizens of Saskatchewan are getting our fair share of the rents from these resources. And, Mr. Speaker, we want to be in a position where we have a Premier who shows leadership around looking at this on an ongoing basis. To get stuck and say that we're not going to do anything for 16 years is just dead wrong. And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan people believe that.

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

**Mr. Michelson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use my best radio voice today, and I'll tell you why. Because when you talk about the review of the royalty rates, it's very upsetting. It's very upsetting to the people of Saskatchewan that we would consider jeopardizing where we are as a province and the fortunes we have right now.

We've come a long way, Mr. Speaker, from being a have-not province. We are a have province now and we don't want to go back. There's a new generation in Saskatchewan, a new attitude. It's a positive attitude. We're ambitious, with foresight and accomplishment and pride.

There's a lot of optimism in this province. We pay less taxes. We're higher weekly earnings, improving in health care, and upgrading our schools and building new schools. There's more opportunities to grow and to invest in this stable economy. This is partly attributed to the revenue that we get from our gas and oil and uranium and potash, and we don't want to jeopardize that in any way.

This is the new Saskatchewan, and it wasn't always so. For a long time we were sending our kids away because the people were oppressed in here. They were depressed. There was no optimism in here. That has changed around and it's largely because of where our natural resources are from, are taking us to, Mr. Speaker.

Back in the old Saskatchewan, hospitals were closing, schools were closing, the College of Medicine was on probation, and the infrastructure was at a real deficit. We've changed that. We're growing; we're coming alive. This is now a have province and a lot of that comes from the royalties we receive from our province, from our resources. And messing with that kind of a royalty structure with a review or upgrading them will take that right back into a have-not status. We don't want to go back there.

That government did a lot of things that kept us in a have-not status. They had the oil, the Saskoil, the land bank. They even had a law that would take over the potash industry. We can't do that. They lost over \$200 million in investments that cost every man, woman, and child in Saskatchewan at least \$200, so if you had a family of six there's \$1,800 right out of your pocket just because of bad investments they made.

But now we've changed all that. We're getting royalties to help reduce taxes. We're letting business do business. Now Saskatchewan is leading the country in economic, most economic indicators. We've got more jobs. We have higher revenues from our resources. We have less taxes, lower unemployment, and we've just reached a new record in our population. This is a have province. We don't want to be dragged back with raising royalties that would be detrimental to our growth. And yet there's a group of people on that side of the House that would want to do this. They would raise royalties.

We learned from Alberta that when you start messing around with those royalty reviews, you can deter a lot of investment.

And the member that was just speaking prior to me, from Regina Lakeview, mentioned something about a review, somebody from Alberta talking about a review that we're giving it away. Well that's easy for them to say because they lost a lot when they started messing with it.

I've got friends that I just saw a week or so ago, about 10 days ago, that said that we should redo the review because they want to stimulate people to move away from Saskatchewan. That's not what this party stands for. This is not what this province needs. We heard them talking about the resources we have that they do belong to the people of Saskatchewan. Absolutely they do. But they're going to do no good to the people of Saskatchewan if they're left in the ground and not developed, and this is what we want to do. That's why we want to keep the royalties that are competitive and giving a good return to the people of Saskatchewan.

The member from Thunder Creek went over this very well and talked about the rates that are for potash. We have a 22 per cent royalty rate in Saskatchewan, not 5 per cent that those members would try and let us think that is current. It's 22 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the highest royalty rate in the world. The next highest is 11 per cent. And in New Brunswick, it's 6 per cent. So are we getting a fair return? I would think so. From a market standpoint, 22 per cent is very fair, and it's more than competitive. The people of Saskatchewan appreciate the returns that the potash revenues are giving us.

The investment in potash has been so well that there's expansion in every potash company in Saskatchewan. There's new companies wanting to come in. The whole potash industry is growing very strong. It looks very good. And the potash industry likes stability. That's why they're looking at Saskatchewan even though our royalty rates are double anywhere else in the world. They like that. Any kind of messing with that equation will . . . They won't close what they've got, but they may not expand. They may not find the locations they want for in Saskatchewan. They may look for investment opportunities anywhere else in the world, and that's where the money will go. And when that's done, they will be there for a long time. There will be thousands of jobs and millions of investment dollars that this province will lose, and it won't be regained. And the potash can stay in the ground, but it doesn't do any return for the people of Saskatchewan.

That's what the opposition would want. That's what the Leader of the Opposition would like. And the Leader of the Opposition will say a lot of things and flip-flop in a lot of ways. And I know my learned friend from Thunder Creek went over this a little bit. But in an interview in the Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation out of La Ronge, the Opposition Leader told a reporter he was not sure whether an increase in uranium royalties was needed; however — that's what he said — and yet however, in a television commercial that they had stated and I quote, in this television commercial it says, "Here are some things government needs to do: charge more royalties on potash and uranium."

Mr. Speaker, when the leader is talking to the people in north Saskatchewan, he isn't sure whether an increase in royalty rates is needed, but in his own television commercial, he promises to do just that. Yes, he does. And then the member from Regina

Dewdney, even in his budget speech, stood up in this House and made this statement, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, so those who say that an NDP government would change the natural gas or oil royalty structure in Saskatchewan are absolutely wrong. And our leader does not say that. He does not say that. In fact, he has emphatically said that oil and natural gas would not be changed.

And this from *Hansard* on page 6988. That was the member from Regina Dewdney.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when we look very closely . . . And it didn't us long to find a transcript of an interview with the Leader of the Opposition, the NDP leader, on CKRM on the 5 o'clock news in December 13th of last year. And here's what he said, and I quote, "If I become premier in November of 2009, I will institute a review of all the royalties in the province with the industry, whether it's potash, uranium, oil, gas."

Yet the member from Regina Dewdney stood in this House and denied that the Leader of the NDP ever called for a revenue, a review on oil royalties. In fact, that's exactly what he was calling for. And now in this debate just a short while ago, he said, why wouldn't people want higher royalties? Well yes they would, Mr. Speaker, but there's one thing that he didn't, he's omitting, and he's not doing good calculations. Higher royalties will jeopardize the investment. It'll jeopardize the jobs and jeopardize the new mines and the expansions that we're facing, and taking away thousands of jobs for generations.

And he talked about a professor from Calgary said that that would be just wrong. Well of course they're going to say that because they want some unrest in the province of Saskatchewan to regain what they lost when they messed with the royalty structure in Alberta. Can't they figure this one out?

Mr. Speaker, there's so much you can say. They would mislead the public. They don't know what they are talking about. And I'll say that again, they don't know what they're talking about.

They would take us back. Any fluctuation in the structure of royalty review and rates would lose us billions of dollars in investment. It would take away thousands of jobs, and it would put Saskatchewan back in have-not status. We'd have higher unemployment rates. Right now we've got the highest population. We've got the lowest unemployment rate. Saskatchewan is moving along. It's doing very well. We never, never want to go back to an era that we are a have-not status. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate in listening to the member from Moose Jaw North who has . . . probably should check his own articles that he's written in the Moose Jaw papers surrounding the children's hospital before he starts talking about other quotes.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I would like to add to this debate is the issues around how important the potash is to the people of

Saskatchewan. In terms of the potash debate that we had last fall, I took the opportunity to go door knocking in my community, in my constituency, and they . . . One of the things was, don't sell our potash cheaply and don't sell our company. Don't give it away. And people were passionate about owning and believing in their potash resource. I've never seen anything like that, Mr. Speaker. Door to door everybody was passionate about their potash.

And in amongst those members in my constituency are the miners who work in the potash mines surrounding Saskatoon. And to a person, when we talked about people and royalty reviews they said, don't believe the nonsense that people will be saying about the companies leaving. They're spending millions of dollars on expansion as a result of the royalty reviews that we brought in, and it's nonsense that they would leave. There is money. These people who work in the mines told me that they believe in the royalty reviews, and that we should be going forward with those royalty reviews.

So as the Moose Jaw North, some of the other previous members who spoke, and spoke of that, it's as my colleague from Regina Dewdney said, nothing more than fearmongering and keeping this . . . They talk about keeping the province in a backward state. That's the kind of thinking that'll keep this province in a backward state, Mr. Speaker.

The other point I'd like to raise is the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], the member from Lloydminster, said that they will not review royalties not only now, but up to four terms of government. That's 16 years, Mr. Speaker, that they would not look at this. That's, I believe if my math is right, that's 2027. And, Mr. Speaker, that type of approach to having this province move forward is shameful, Mr. Speaker, because the kinds of things that I also heard people talk about on the doorstep was what they could use this potash royalty money for and that they could use it.

And what could they do? Affordable housing. One of the biggest things that's on the agenda for this province now is affordable housing. And this is what people want money to be used for. This is their potash. They understand the link between receiving the royalties and receiving the proper income from their resource.

And they are saying to us each day, Mr. Speaker, whoever you might ask, yes it's good to have a review. It's good to have a review because we own this resource. And that they understand — and there's no question about that — maybe more so here than anywhere else in the country where people understand that.

The farmers, the rising input costs. Improved health care. All across rural Saskatchewan we hear of concerns of people having to put in, municipalities having to put in their own money to do that. Yet right next door are the mines, are the potash mines.

[11:45]

And they see members of their own communities going to work in the mines. And those people who work in there, Mr. Speaker — I'll bring you back to that — that they are saying that yes,

we need a review of those royalties to make sure that we receive, that we receive what's appropriate. And they are not, they are not off because backed up by that, and we've had many people from universities weigh in on this argument, weigh in on the argument and say, yes, it is time for a review.

Jack Mintz, who has been quoted in here, describes the province's current potash royalty system as just wrong. Now there is somebody that has come out and has put his name forward and said, here's what we think; here's what should be done.

Erin Weir, Saskatchewan native and senior economist with the International Trade Union Confederation, and he just simply put it straight forward. He says Saskatchewan is collecting far too little revenue from potash.

With this type of debate going on in the community, and not only in the constituencies in our province and my constituents but in our universities, surely we should see, we should see beyond the blinders, the ideological blinders, and say it is time to review this. Review it for the province, review it for the people, and come to some arrangement and say, this is what is right for our province. This is what is good for our province.

So what do we have? We have people from the Sask Party government saying, if you touch this everybody's going to leave. And they're going around the province and saying that. And I wonder who, who it is that they're saying this to. Do they go to their own constituents?

Because in terms of this, I believe the people of Saskatchewan are speaking loud and clear, they say we would like to see a review. And the government is saying no, we don't want that. On whose side is the Saskatchewan Party government on? Are they on the side of the people of this province, or are they on the side of the potash corporations?

And, Mr. Speaker, anyway there's nothing wrong with the potash corporations being here. There's nothing wrong with them extracting the potash, and there's nothing wrong with them making a profit. The problem, Mr. Speaker — as people who work in daily lives, as people who struggle in our economy, as people who are struggling with whether it'd be housing or child care or any of the other things that people do on a daily basis — they all see. And it doesn't take not necessarily somebody who has done a lot of study, perhaps like Sylvain Charlebois in the universities or any of the other people who have entered into this debate, economists. They know. They know at a level in their daily lives that there is something wrong here, that this is our potash resource, that the potash has gone . . . that it's different now than when originally it was brought in by the NDP, that those things are absolutely different, the situation.

For example just recently in Israel, which just has point five per cent of the world's potash, is not afraid to sue its former Crown corporations for unpaid royalties and to pursue a royalty review. And Saskatchewan has 100 per cent more potash than Israel does, but there is a government that's standing up because they are doing what's right for the people.

And the people in Saskatchewan are saying loudly and clearly

that we should have a review. It is time. It's time for a review. And to say, well what is it that we would want? What is it and how much would it be? Because I hear the members want us to go on record to say how much. Well that is why people ask for a review. They ask for a review because they know. They know that there is something out of balance, Mr. Speaker. There's something out of balance when they hear and they see the kinds of money, when they hear and they see the kinds of money that are paid to CEO salaries. They see and they know that there's something wrong when they hear records of the billions of dollars that are being made by potash because they also see, in the expansion, the miners that work in the mine, the expansions that are being done, and the millions of dollars that are going in whether it's into new mine shafts, whether it's into equipment.

They have never seen anything like that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they've never seen the amount of workers on the sites and the expansions that are being talked about, and they know that there is money that these companies . . . Anybody who believes that these companies are now going to say, we're going to leave, and that's going to be it is unbelievable. And it's quite, quite perplexing in some ways that these members are saying that there should be no review because it's a . . . To me, who exactly are they talking to and who are they getting the advice on this? And why are they doing that? When all around the world people are saying and saying to their governments, if we own that resource, it is our resource; we should have a fair return. And so, Mr. Speaker, it is that way, that it is in some way surprising that they would bring this motion forward.

What they should be doing is work in getting ready for a review, seeing how they can do that, seeing how they can get a fair return on our resource for the people of this province. And that's what this government should be doing instead of fearmongering.

**The Speaker:** — Time has lapsed in 65 minutes. I recognize the member from Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Potash Producers Association has responded to the NDP's reckless call for a job-killing resource tax by saying, and I quote, ". . . [it] would result in severely impacting GDP growth and provincial jobs."

The Saskatchewan Potash Producers executive then offered to meet with the NDP leader. And to the member from Saskatoon Fairview: what was the outcome of that meeting with the Potash Producers Association?

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — I'm certain that the potash producers would like more. That is their job. They are here to make a profit.

The issue is, the issue is, is how much and who is standing up for the people of this province? Who is standing up for the people of this province so that we can get a fair return from that? And I think that's what they should be concentrating on, Mr. Speaker, and not backing and not being in bed with the potash companies of this province.

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Thunder Creek. Mr. Speaker, the potash resource in the province of Saskatchewan belongs to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. Is the member from Thunder Creek, when they're arguing that there should be no review of royalties in potash, Mr. Speaker, is he saying that the people of Saskatchewan should never review what their share is?

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for that question. Now I'm pretty much on the same page as the Leader of the Opposition was a year ago — a year ago today roughly — when he said these words. He said:

I was invited by John Lau and his wife Heather to come to the sod-turning of the new office building in Lloydminster a couple of weeks ago. [And he said] And while I was there, the president and CEO, John Lau said, I want to say one thing where I give the Premier credit — that he didn't change the royalties that were put in place by the NDP government. That's what he said.

So on the issue of energy royalties, I think we have a pretty good track record . . .

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

**Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, we've listened to the NDP during the course of this debate advocating in favour of raising royalties. I do find it interesting, though, that the NDP leader is on record as condemning the royalty review and the changes in Alberta. He actually called it ill-advised, what Alberta did, because I think he understood the problem that it had on the Alberta economy and investment. So I'm wondering if the member for Regina Dewdney could explain why the NDP believe that a royalty review and changes was wrong for Alberta but right for Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my speech, when you're reviewing royalties, Mr. Speaker, you have to look at each industry and the marketplace in which you're in, Mr. Speaker. And what happened in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, is, they decided to review their royalties when the price of oil had dropped from \$140 a barrel down to \$45 a barrel, Mr. Speaker — not very good timing, Mr. Speaker.

So you have to look at each particular mineral or each resource, Mr. Speaker, its marketplace. You have to put it in context, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite don't want to put anything in context; they want to look at it black and white.

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I know that the member from Batoche is a good businessman and he's worked many years in his business. And I want to ask him specifically if he has ever, in his business career, set a price for 16 years and not looked at it?

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Mr. Speaker, according to the Saskatchewan Potash Producers Association, the current potash royalty system led to significant new investment and job creation in the Saskatchewan potash industry — new creation investment. So, Mr. Speaker, if we allow new investment, new mines, maybe even some day we might even see that mine in Kamsack.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that consistent messaging is not a strong point for the members opposite. The member from Regina Dewdney's budget address provides another example of NDP flip-flopping and I quote, "Those who say that an NDP government would change a natural gas and oil royalty structure in Saskatchewan are absolutely wrong, and our leader does not say that." Unfortunately for that member, he did not stay tuned in to CKRM when his leader was on the radio saying, and I quote, "If I become premier in November 2011, I would institute a review of all royalties in the province with the industry, whether it is potash, uranium, oil or gas."

So my question is to the member from Regina Dewdney: when will your party show consistency in regarding your job-killing policy regarding royalty rate increases?

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. I'm just wondering when the members of the government are going to start standing up for the people of Saskatchewan and not for the major corporations, Mr. Speaker.

The question that the people of this province want to know is when is the government going to maximize the return for the people of Saskatchewan rather than worrying about the profits of the corporations. Mr. Speaker, we don't condemn the corporations for going out and trying to get the very best deal they can on behalf of their shareholders. But we do condemn the government when they don't try to get the best for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — To the member from Batoche, because I, in terms of defending the Potash Corporation, when in fact is he going to do this job and defend the hard-working people of this province and get a fair return and not say that he will not do anything for 16 years? When is that going to happen?

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to an independent survey, we already are the highest paid royalties in the world. So you want to go still higher? You're not going to accomplish anything when another mine, also in Canada, is at 6 per cent and we're at 22. I think it's time to wake up and smell the coffee.

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

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Mr. Speaker, the silence of the two members from northern Saskatchewan has been deafening on the issue of hiking royalty rates on uranium. This is very disappointing to the residents of northern Saskatchewan.

To the member from Saskatoon Fairview: do constituents from the North not deserve a strong voice that would help encourage economic development in the North instead of the members representing the North that are muzzled by the Leader of the Opposition and told to fall in line with poor NDP policies that will destroy the economy of northern Saskatchewan?

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a stuck record. This is a stuck record. It is unbelievable that you would come out — whether it's the minister or those members who are now singing from the same song sheet — to say, for 16 years, we're not going to do anything, that things don't change in potash.

When they changed, and we decided to expand them, the NDP did that. Now we're reaping the benefits, and it's the NDP that did that. We are telling them, because obviously they don't know, to look at the royalty reviews because that's what we would have done. And they are stuck in the same place. It's like a stuck record, Mr. Speaker, that is skipping, and they can't get off of that. And as business people, it is alarming that these people would say 16 years, no change. Sixteen years, no change. Amazing.

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member from Moose Jaw North. My question is this: were all of these canned questions created in the Premier's office or in the Minister of Energy? And why don't they ask the questions that the people of Saskatchewan want, is when are we going to get a fair return on our resource?

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

**Mr. Michelson:** — Mr. Speaker, I think in November of 2007 the people of Saskatchewan did answer a lot of questions. They said that we were in the position. These questions come on behalf of the people that elected us and made us a government. We're leading the government very well.

And when we're talking about return on investment, the 22 per cent that we get from our royalties is far more than any other place in the world. And if we should jeopardize that, we'll leave it in the ground, and there will be no benefits, and we'll go back

to the have-not status. Mr. Speaker, we need to continue Saskatchewan moving forward, and we will. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very disturbing to look at the history of the NDP and the present Leader of the Opposition because they say one thing in one part of the province and another in the other. The Leader of the Opposition has said in the North when he's speaking to northerners that they won't raise the royalty rates. And in the rest of the province, he's talking about raising royalty rates right across the spectrum of the resource sector. And that's leaving a very . . . I mean the people of Saskatchewan and the business community do listen to that, and they're very disturbed by those types of comments, Mr. Speaker. They flip-flop constantly. And if we go back to when the Leader of the Opposition was in the private sector, there's even more glaring examples of flip-flops, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll ask the member from Saskatoon Fairview again: what really is the NDP Party's policy on resource royalties?

[12:00]

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — What the policy isn't is hugging Bill Doyle. That's what our policy isn't; I'll tell you that because we are for the people. We've listened to them, and the people are saying they want a royalty review, Mr. Speaker. That's what they want.

**The Speaker:** — Time has elapsed in the 75-minute debate.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

#### SECOND READINGS

##### **Bill No. 624 — *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act***

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise in the Assembly and address a number of issues that have come about in the past number of years actually, Mr. Speaker, and has really moved the opposition to table the private members' Bill, *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill is small, but it covers some fairly wide-ranging areas. And when we look at the Bill itself, we can see contractors also includes subcontractors because that's very important, Mr. Speaker, and we'll get into that in more detail later. In interpretation:

“government” means all Government of Saskatchewan

ministries, Crown corporations, all Saskatchewan regional health authorities, all Saskatchewan publicly-funded school districts and all third-party agencies that receive a portion of funding from the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that covers a wide swath across the province, but it is important to this Bill, and it is important to the transparency and accountability of the Government of Saskatchewan. It also defines:

“public agreement” [which] means an agreement between the Government of Saskatchewan and any other party where a portion of the funding is from the Government of Saskatchewan or guaranteed by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, part of this . . . Something that I've carried around with me since the last election, actually, is a picture of the front cover of the Sask Party election platform. And, Mr. Speaker, on one of the pages in very bold letters it says, a more accountable government. And it goes on to say, and I quote, “A Saskatchewan Party government will provide Saskatchewan people with more transparency and accountability than any other previous government.”

Now Mr. Speaker, we need to keep that in mind because the words are easy to say, but actually following through on that kind of a commitment takes some effort. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's effort we have not seen from this government; in fact we have seen exactly the opposite.

And I guess many people may comment on, why is it important? Like why is it important that we are kept informed of what the government is doing? And I guess one of the most basic reasons is that, Mr. Speaker, this isn't the money of the Saskatchewan Party. It isn't the money purely of the Government of Saskatchewan. It is the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, it's their money. It's reliant on that money, the services that are provided to taxpayers and how the province moves forward. So there is an interest.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it moves beyond that because when we look the issue of transparency and accountability, it really gathers in many other concerns and many other issues that we are worried about and concerned about and talk about, Mr. Speaker. And I want to read a quote. I did a bit of research online and at other areas, looked at what other governments are doing when it comes to transparency and accountability, what initiatives have been put forward. And there was a quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to read it to you:

Government accountability means that public officials — elected and un-elected — have an obligation to explain their decisions and actions to citizens. Government accountability is achieved through the use of a variety of mechanisms — political, legal, administrative — and designed to prevent corruption and ensure that public officials remain answerable and accessible to the people they serve. In the absence of such mechanisms, corruption may thrive.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's important. And when you look at it and you think about it, in this day and age we worry about

citizens being disconnected from the democracy that is here to serve them. And I've heard many people say that the style of government, the system of democracy that we may use may not be perfect, but it's the best anywhere in the world. And, Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that. And we need to make sure as elected officials that we encourage people to be involved.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in some of the research I found a number of comments, and the one really strikes home:

... citizens [need] to know what their government is doing. A transparent and accessible government is essential to a successful free society, and fosters trust and confidence in government.

A lack of government accountability and transparency undermines democracy and gives rise to cynicism and mistrust.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think we could lay this out any clearer than what those comments do. And I go back to this government's commitment during the election campaign to be the most transparent and accountable government ever in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. But we haven't seen anything — any legislation, any policies, any regulations, any debate, any comments even — about how this government sees itself moving forward and being the most transparent and accountable government in the history of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we can find numerous examples in other provinces. Newfoundland or Newfoundland-Labrador have gone and put in a number of transparency and accountability Acts proclaimed. It covers a number of areas, and I'll just touch on a few of those, Mr. Speaker. I believe it was two Acts that were put in place in Newfoundland by the former premier, Danny Williams. And maybe, Mr. Speaker, this really speaks to the issue of why Mr. Williams was the most popular premier right across Canada. The accountability and transparency Act ... [inaudible interjection] ... The member from Kindersley says guess who is now? Well kind of like by default, Mr. Speaker, because the other ones all retired. So I guess if we keep weeding them out long enough ...

But anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, accountability and transparency Act touched on planning and annual reports; budgeting and forecasting; approval for borrowing, Mr. Speaker, which is an important part; incorporation of new entities, that would be novel for this government; and also performance contracts, Mr. Speaker. Also they made some significant changes to government purchasing agency, making it stand alone and answerable to a chief operating officer with all kinds of accountability, clarified the public tendering process and how that needed to be reported and be open to public scrutiny. And, Mr. Speaker, these are important.

We see, so as I say, we see other governments across Canada that have made steps. There is also in Ontario there is a number of steps that have been made. But we haven't seen anything from our provincial government here in Saskatchewan. And you really have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that that lack of a government accountability and transparency undermines democracy and gives rise to cynicism and mistrust.

So, Mr. Speaker, what's the issue? I know the government will say life is wonderful, things are moving along great, people don't need to worry. Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things.

And I know my colleague from Nutana brought up a number of issues about a new private, long-term care facility that is being built in Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, right from the very beginning, this facility raised a number of concerns. Were any of them answered? Not really, Mr. Speaker. And a majority of the information that was released was blacked out, and all in the name of confidentiality. But, Mr. Speaker, it is questionable when we look at the details of this whole agreement.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Wall government really put taxpayers' money at risk for what many ... Oh, the Premier. Oh, the Saskatchewan Party. Apologies, Deputy Speaker. I used the Premier's name. The Sask Party government really did put taxpayers' money at risk on this deal that was really, really questionable and that many felt was an insiders' deal that benefited a number of Saskatchewan Party donors and immediate family members.

So, Mr. Speaker, for sure, why would you even want to put your government in that kind of a position when you've made the commitment to be transparent and accountable, but we've still seen this questionable deal move ahead? And I think all of us know that for many years, for decades, new health care facilities in our province have been built by community contributions. There has been a great deal of planning, community conversations on what's needed, what should be done, and the community has been involved, Mr. Speaker.

But here what we seen in Saskatoon was, a building was already tendered out. We think it was tendered out, Mr. Speaker. I've heard that, but I don't think anyone has ever seen any documentation on it. And it was being built, a private long-term care facility that had some direct connections to the Premier's office through his chief of staff and another family member that was involved in the Amicus Foundation or corporation that was putting forward this proposal.

So when it's being built, we start to look into details. We start to look at the issues. And here it turns out that the Government of Saskatchewan has in effect provided a \$27 million loan guarantee for a private long-term care facility to be built in Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, this even more appalling when we see communities across the province, when the Minister of Health over two years ago announced 13 long-term care facilities to be built in rural communities. Mr. Speaker ... [inaudible interjection] ... Well hear, hear. We will hear, hear, Mr. Speaker, when they actually start construction because out of 13 of them, Mr. Speaker, one has started construction.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know the members are ... [inaudible interjection] ... A few catcalls. But you know what? Two years ago these were announced. The year after, they were set aside because the government had over-projected potash revenues in their budget and had gone ahead and decided this was the amount of money they were going to commit, and they had to start scrambling and cutting projects to actually get close to meeting their budget. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the projects that was set aside was these 13 long-term care facilities.

And, Mr. Speaker, so time goes on, and I believe this year, they were re-announced again, that these 13 long-term care facilities would go ahead. But I believe the other night in estimates, the Minister of Health finally admitted under questioning that they were unfunded. So people can look in *Hansard*. You don't have to take my word for it, but the *Hansard* comments are there. The minister was not anxious to admit this, so how are they going to be funded, Mr. Speaker. That leaves many communities asking the question and wondering what's going to happen down the road.

But, Mr. Speaker, so while communities across Saskatchewan that are waiting for long-term care facilities that were announced over two years ago, in the meantime this Amicus deal goes ahead in Saskatoon with a \$27 million loan guarantee from the province of Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's fine, but there was zero dollars had to be put in place and put up front by Amicus.

So why they were treated differently than communities across Saskatchewan and taxpayers across Saskatchewan leaves a number of questions. When we asked questions, the minister avoided them. And, Mr. Speaker, the interesting part was this deal gets more and more tangled as you look at it.

And the question is out there: did this deal come directly from the Premier's office? Because, Mr. Speaker, the construction of the Amicus facility was started before the Saskatoon Health Region even gave approval for the project. So we have to ask, how does that happen, Mr. Speaker? How does it happen? Because that's unusual across the province. As I said, the communities are always involved. There is consultations with the municipalities, with the cities, with the proponents that are behind the facility. Is it what matches the needs in that community? These are all important questions, but not with this facility, Mr. Speaker. It receives a loan guarantee from the province of Saskatchewan. And before the Saskatoon Health Region even gives approval for that project, it's under construction, Mr. Speaker, and got a big sign up on it.

[12:15]

Mr. Speaker, there's also other questionable areas when it has to do with the company that was awarded construction, Miners Construction. And that name comes up in a couple of other areas, Mr. Speaker. And also we look at the owner of Miners Construction sits on the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, Mr. Speaker, who would have accepted this project to move ahead.

And then as we look farther, we also hear from the Minister of Health that the Amicus facility will be given special treatment — special treatment, again — over and above all other long-term care facilities in the province of Saskatchewan. They will be given a higher per-resident fee every year than any other long-term care facilities. So if there's a long-term care facility in Moose Jaw, Amicus will receive higher per-resident funding from the Government of Saskatchewan than any other facility. Why is that? Why is that, Mr. Speaker? And Amicus had to put up zero cash to get into this deal. They didn't have to put up the new 20 per cent. They didn't have to put 30 per cent.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's always been between Regina and

Saskatoon are considered provincial hospitals while Moose Jaw is regional, other communities are considered regional hospitals. We still, as a community, contribute our portion to a health care facility. I think the Minister of Health even said we appreciate them more when we have to kick in some money. So that's, whatever, it's a requirement that's been there for a long time. But Saskatoon and Regina for hospitals don't, because they are considered provincial hospitals that provide services to all of us across the province. And many of us have travelled to Regina or travelled to Saskatoon to receive some kind of service or medical procedure, so we understand that.

But why does this long-term care facility, this private long-term care facility fit into this basket of provincial services? Because, Mr. Speaker, it isn't. It isn't. It's a special deal that has some awful connections to the Saskatchewan Party government and, Mr. Speaker, it just leaves a bad taste in everyone's mouth, and it leaves many questions outstanding.

So, Mr. Speaker, I mean my question really is to the Premier: how do you see this deal with Amicus being open, accountable, transparent? It doesn't. It absolutely doesn't. And it does a disservice to Saskatchewan taxpayers who actually are looking at the processes through the Ministry of Health, are looking at the processes that have been in place for many years, and planning, long-term planning and building in their communities. They don't get the same kind of special deals that seem to be coming out of the Premier's office.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's a big reason for this transparency and accountability Act that the opposition has put forward, Mr. Speaker, and it doesn't end there. You know, if it was one item or two items, there might be a little bit of understanding. Well it could be unusual, could be difficult. But, Mr. Speaker, when you start getting to the amount of examples that we have seen over this first three and a half, almost four years of the Saskatchewan Party government, it raises numerous concerns and questions.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the areas for sure that have raised concerns, and it kind of gets into Amicus some way . . . I'd better finish off the one first. But there is a number of areas. Amicus raised concerns, but also when we start to see another similar deal that come out of the 1980s, it was Parkridge in Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, after all these years, we finally found out that the Government of Saskatchewan has been paying to Parkridge, a private long-term care facility, 1.2 to \$1.4 million in lease costs per year. And that's been almost for 24 years, Mr. Speaker, and then at the end of that 24 years, Government Services paid \$8.1 million to buy out the facility.

So \$1.2 million for 24 years, then a lump sum of 8.1 million for the facility. And then after it was bought by Government Services for the 8.1 million, then the regional health authority bought the building from Government Services for \$5 million. And, Mr. Speaker, we find out that this facility needs over \$19 million in renovations. So here we are. Over \$50 million has been paid by the taxpayers of the province for what? For what, Mr. Speaker?

And when we have lived through these long-term, 20-year agreements or longer, and we have seen how difficult they can be to deal with, we have seen how they are a drain on the public



finances, Mr. Speaker, we have to question why we are entering into more of these agreements on . . . behind closed doors, Mr. Speaker, is a better term. Behind closed doors, we are entering into more of these long-term agreements. Amicus was probably one of the most noticeable right off the get-go, but it's definitely not going to be the last, Mr. Speaker, from what we're seeing.

Mr. Speaker, another issue for accountability and transparency has to be the privatization of health care. And we have seen time after time, this government believes that private is better. They have cancelled a number of projects that had been planned for and were in the works and the money was set aside, Mr. Speaker, to pay for them. But they believe that public . . . or private is better when it comes to health care. And I guess one of the basic arguments is that privatization will lower the cost.

Mr. Speaker, quite clearly when we looked at the announcements that the Minister of Health made about the government paying Omni Surgery Centre to perform certain types of day surgery, clearly they stated that it was cheaper than in-hospital costs. And when we look at specific instances, the government said it is paying Omni Surgery Centre about \$1,500 for knee surgery performed at the clinic, stating that it was cheaper than the in-hospital cost which the government estimates at \$1,700.

Well, Mr. Speaker, instead of just going ahead and doing this, why would you not have the discussion with the public of the province? Because according to interprovincial billing rates, Saskatchewan pays less than \$1,000 for outpatient when they have the same surgical procedure done in a public facility in another province. So if the Government of Saskatchewan recognizes that \$1,000 is what would be paid on interprovincial transfers, now they're saying that it costs the Government of Saskatchewan \$1,700, and gee, we're only paying Omni Centre \$1,500.

Mr. Speaker, it's these half-truths and these selective facts that are released that really have caused the concern amongst the population here in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, when we have, we have questioned any of these arrangements, when we have talked about any of these arrangements with the government, they say, well that's . . . it's confidential, or they don't do that in other provinces.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we also, in other provinces, don't do drastic changes to the Human Rights Tribunal. We also, we don't seem to embrace this whole change in human rights to move away from an open and accessible tribunal, and move towards Queen's Bench. That's unusual. That's extremely unusual. But yet the argument used in other cases is, we don't want to do what other provinces aren't doing. We don't want to be different than the other provinces. But, Mr. Speaker, what it turns out to be is that they don't want to be different from other provinces when the change isn't what they have mind. If it's their idea, they seem to think it's great and they will gladly walk away from what other provinces are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I can't impress enough the need for transparency and accountability. And when we got into the discussion this week and last week, I guess also, on the Hill family tower that

is being built in downtown Regina, the answer first was policy. Well that's policy of the Government of Saskatchewan and that, I — meaning the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow — followed the same policy. And, Mr. Speaker, I did.

And when I went home over the weekend and I thought about some of the things we do as government members, we fall into the same processes that have been used without questioning them. We fall into the same answers. And I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have listened to many of the answers in question period, and I know we often think, my goodness, they're using our same briefing books that we had before. Sounds like the same answers in many cases.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon us, it's incumbent upon us as elected officials and elected representatives from our constituencies to question the processes and to make sure they are appropriate for the time that we are in, make sure they are updated and appropriate for what needs to be done and for what the taxpayers of this province and our constituents expect.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's not good to just stand in this House and say, well that's the way it's always been done, or that's what other provinces do. Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe it's time we didn't do what other provinces did. Maybe we had . . . This government needs to sit down and look at what the taxpayers of this province want, and move ahead.

And, Mr. Speaker, there have been too many questionable deals and long-term arrangements that this government is not being transparent or accountable on, that the taxpayers are asking questions on. And that is a dangerous path to be walking on, Mr. Speaker, because if questions are out there and there's no information or discussion, and we as MLAs are not able to explain to our constituents what the process is, how the decisions have been made or what information was used to make the decisions, people start to discount the political process. They start to discount the democracy that our society depends on.

Mr. Speaker, anyone in this House — anyone — should be able to stand and explain a decision they have made. Is it always easy? No, it isn't. Mr. Speaker, I've had various uncomfortable meetings over the years that have been difficult, where it is the responsibility as an elected official for me to explain to my constituents why our government or why our opposition have made decisions and put forward legislative changes, regulation changes, or policy changes.

Mr. Speaker, not everyone in your constituency . . . They may not all agree with you. But people in the province of Saskatchewan are intelligent, they are concerned, and they demand information. They expect information from us and, no less, accountability.

Mr. Speaker, if we make a decision in this legislature that impacts the province of Saskatchewan, we owe it to our constituents to be able to explain the decision, why it was made. People may not agree with you but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they understand why you made the decision that, if isn't on a piece of paper blacked out with a black felt marker, that you aren't hiding behind the whole issue of confidentiality when it's your money they're spending. And you explain it to them and make

them realize why the decision was made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's why this Bill is here because that's sadly missing in this Legislative Assembly. It is sadly missing, Mr. Speaker, from this government. We have seen too many deals that have been clumped in that confidentiality agreement and tucked away. They are committing Saskatchewan taxpayers to long-term financial commitments that will have impact for years to come. And this government owes it to this Assembly and to all of us as elected officials and to taxpayers of this province to explain why the decisions were made and to justify why the decisions were made.

[12:30]

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that's what our job is. That's what our job is as legislators. And, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a government that is sadly, sadly lacking in any transparency and accountability. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to reread the quote into the record:

Government accountability means that public officials — elected and un-elected — have an obligation to explain their decisions and actions to the citizens. Government accountability is achieved through the use of a variety of mechanisms — political, legal and administrative — designed to prevent corruption and ensure that public officials remain answerable and accessible to the people they serve. In the absence of such mechanisms, corruption may thrive.

[Mr. Speaker] Citizens [need] to know what their government is doing. A transparent and accessible government is essential to a successful free society, and fosters trust and confidence in government.

Mr. Speaker, it could not be any clearer than that. And when we see that other governments around the world — and especially in North America — talk quite at length about the issue of transparency and the issue of accountability, we know that it is growing in citizens right across North America and that we need to make sure that we are addressing it here in Saskatchewan because there are concerns and they are growing.

Mr. Speaker, another area that caused concern was the issue of the Northland Power agreement just outside of North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, while there was an all-party committee that was travelling the province talking about the future needs of the province of Saskatchewan, I'm told that Northland Power was in North Battleford preparing for the bid from the RFP [request for proposal] . . . their bid for the RFP that was released by SaskPower.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this raises a number of questions because here we have a Crown corporation owned, bought, and paid for, Mr. Speaker, by the people of this province, the people of this province who have a great deal of pride in Crown corporations and the service they have provided over the years. It's over 100 years that SaskTel has been in service in the province. But here we have SaskPower who has the expertise and the ability to build a natural-gas-fired electrical generation. I had to stop and think about this, Mr. Speaker. But so the question is, why are we contracting it out? Why are we contracting out the

generation of electricity in the province of Saskatchewan to an Ontario private power company when here in Saskatchewan we have a Crown corporation bought and paid for by the people of this province that provides excellent service to the people of this province. Has been innovative and responsive to the needs of the people in this province, and they're set on the shelf?

Well, Mr. Speaker, lots of questions, but we know that here again the Saskatchewan Party government feels that private is better. It's an ideological thing. And I know the minister has made comments previously. I have to say the member from Silver Springs, in this Assembly in 2008, he said, and I quote, "Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear for the member opposite that yes, we will impose our views on the Crown corporations."

So, Mr. Speaker, this has nothing to do with good business. This has absolutely nothing to do with good business. This has absolutely nothing to do with service to the people of this province. This is ideological. That's all it is, Mr. Speaker. It's ideological. And do you know what? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well that's good. You know, the minister just says he admits it. Can we quit now? Well do you know what I said? You know what? No, you can't give up because you know what? If you're getting nervous sitting in your seat listening to two examples, I'll tell you I've got lots more where that's coming from. So I hope you sit and listen.

So Mr. Speaker, here we have an RFP put out. We have an Ontario company that has put in a bid on this project which could have been done in-house. Well you know, sometime when the minister wants to get on his feet, maybe he could explain how does this fit in with the Sask First policy; that Saskatchewan Crown corporations were going to focus on the province of Saskatchewan and you bring in someone from Ontario to do all of this? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you know, the minister says, sit down and I'll tell you. Well do you know what? He won't. And that's why this Bill has been tabled because the transparency and accountability from this government is seriously, seriously lacking, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is look at what's happened. So okay, Northland Power gets the agreement. An Ontario company comes in, takes over an area where our own Crown corporation should be providing the service, has the capability of providing the service. And preference is given to an Ontario company, so we have to ask why, Mr. Speaker.

Well guess what? Any questions are stonewalled. We don't get any information. We don't get any documents when there is any attempt to go through freedom of information as to what exactly this deal is and why preference for an Ontario company instead of the government's own Sask First policy and focusing on Saskatchewan companies. Well Saskatchewan companies that provide good jobs, buy services, goods and services in communities right across this province, Mr. Speaker, this isn't just a deal that we're upset about. There is going to be small businesses and communities that are going to feel this impact too.

So we ask questions. Well what do we get? That black felt marker's back at it again, Mr. Deputy Speaker — Mr. Speaker, sorry — and it's blacked out. No information. So, Mr. Speaker, what I have to do then is just tell you what I've heard. Now I've

heard that Northland Power, this private power company based out of Ontario, will come into Saskatchewan. All the profits will go back to their home base of Ontario. And what we do know about the agreement is that it's scheduled to open, the plant is scheduled to open in 2013. And once this private Ontario power company is up and running, it will produce 347 megawatts of baseload power — baseload power.

So, Mr. Speaker, the next part that we heard . . . Well this is, I guess you can do the calculations. It's about 10 per cent of the total power requirements in the province of Saskatchewan. So according to the Northland Power news release — now this was no information from the government that is so transparent and accountable; I think they forgot that, Mr. Speaker — this agreement — and I quote, “. . . provides protection against changes in the market price of natural gas, as fuel costs are passed through SaskPower.”

Well don't we love the private sector, Mr. Speaker, as long as they're backstopped by the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. The government won't say it. Northland Power lets out a bit of it. They're free and clear, Mr. Speaker, on any of the increased costs because it'll be covered by SaskPower. It will be covered by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, as we will see our utility rates continue to increase. Where is the transparency and accountability from this government, Mr. Speaker? It's not there.

No information is available for Northland Power. No information on Amicus. Distorted and sketchy information on the privatization of health care in this province and the costs that are associated. Mr. Speaker, we are being sold down the river by a government that is not living up to its own commitments in its election platform. Nice words, Mr. Speaker, but there's been no attempt to live up to them, in the three and a half, almost four years that this government's been in power.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we'll carry on now. Here's Northland Power, guaranteed price of gas for 20 years. And I'm told, Mr. Speaker, that they are also given priority access to the grid, preferential treatment to the grid so that when power requirements may reduce at off-peak periods, it won't be Northland's power that scales back. It will be SaskPower. So Northland's power, their full 347 megawatts of baseload power will be continuous for the people of Saskatchewan to use, which means continuous subsidization of the gas rates is a possibility to generate that electricity, and an increase to the people of Saskatchewan whose tax dollars and the profits from this operation will go back to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of activity this government has been carrying on, and it's ideologically driven. It has nothing to do with business. It has nothing to do with benefit to the taxpayers of this province. It has to do with purely ideological views of this government that are creeping in to the public service, to the Crown corporations, and government organizations across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at more information, there was some discussion also in the piece that I've seen about utility rate hikes are a fact of life in Saskatchewan. I think this is a comment from one of the ministers in *Hansard*. And when we look at the rate of inflation during this time was at 1 per cent,

but the rate of increase of power, increase of cost of power was over 15 per cent over this very same period. So is this the type of increases we're to be expecting when we see a continual movement away from our Crown corporations and also a movement to private power generation?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the SaskPower annual report was just released the other day. And when we look at page 98, there's a number of commitments and contingencies that are listed that talk about generating capacity, three power purchase agreements: Red Lily wind power; Spy Hill power, it's also natural gas; the North Battleford power limited natural gas generating facility.

But, Mr. Speaker, the interesting part is this: SaskPower has committed to electricity sales of 16 million — in 2009 that figure was zero — and electricity and transmission purchases of 51 million, which in 2009 was \$3 million. Now, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say that these contracts are considered derivative financial instruments and changes in their fair value has been included in the net income.

But, Mr. Speaker, what caused these changes? A purchase of 51 million? I guess when I sit and think of, where is SaskPower purchasing \$51 million, they talk about sales then they talk about purchases — 51 million. I guess I wonder if it's the P.A. pulp mill and if some type of arrangement has been made, and at what level has that arrangement been made, Mr. Speaker. I know from past experiences, business is business. But often when these companies are generating electricity and want SaskPower to buy it, they want retail rates. They always look for bulk rates when it's coming in their door and they're using it, but when it's going out they want retail rates.

That's fine, Mr. Speaker. It's business. You need to negotiate, and you need to provide the best deal. But the government has to remember, they are looking for, or they are supposed to be looking for the best deal for Saskatchewan taxpayers. They're not supposed to be standing in the House defending PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.] and Bill Doyle. They're here to represent their constituents, and as government they represent the people of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, questions, lots of questions and very little information. And there was another piece in here, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't highlight it and I should have. But it shows . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We're getting to that. Mr. Speaker, I was just trying to figure out how much time I have left because I've just got a pile of other topics to touch on.

[12:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, there is also another area here in the SaskPower annual report, and I apologize that I didn't highlight it and mark it off, which I should have because there is a number of areas that are questionable. And one of those dealt with the purchase . . . Oh, here it is, Mr. Speaker. It deals again with the purchase power agreements for the Red Lily Wind Power, Spy Hill, and the North Battleford power.

And when we look at these operations are expected to become operational in 2011 with generating capacities of 27 megawatts, 86 megawatts respectively. And 261-megawatt North Battleford

facility will become operational in 2013. Now the total cost of all power purchase agreements is expected to be 11.692 billion. And in 2009 that figure, the expectations, the power purchase agreements, was 7.502 billion. So, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about a 4, over a \$4 billion increase since the estimates and since the actual 2009 annual report came out.

So why the change? Is it increases? Is it changes to the rates, Mr. Speaker? These are questions that the people of Saskatchewan are asking us, and we have no way to answer. We can give them the bits and pieces, kind of the unsubstantiated information that we received. But, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers deserve more than that.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are questions when it comes to SaskPower and the Northland Power that are unanswered. There are questions that come out of I guess our concern over the whole circumstance around Parkland in Saskatoon and now the reincarnation of Parkland. We seem to have Amicus, which has many close connections to this government and to a variety of family members attached to this government. Mr. Speaker, untendered contracts, contracts that went out the door before there was any scrutiny or any discussion. And, Mr. Speaker, that's where the concerns rise.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, the member across the way, the member from Wood River, he's yakking about different things. Well you know . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You know, Mr. Speaker, he wants to talk about SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the minister, he needs to pay a little closer attention to business as to the issues that are ongoing in the Government of Saskatchewan today.

He can live in the past all he likes, but there are so many things that are passing over his head and being put in place. Either he is turning a blind eye or he is part of it. And, Mr. Speaker, he needs to be part of the solution and look at being more transparent and accountable, Mr. Speaker — a commitment that his government made in the last election campaign and couldn't be falling farther and farther away from.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just to remind the members across. The lack of government accountability and transparency undermines democracy and gives rise to cynicism and mistrust. So, Mr. Speaker, that's a problem. That's a problem.

And, you know, the minister takes this rather lighthearted view of it all and is too busy looking at the past. And, Mr. Speaker, he needs to . . .

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

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

**The Speaker:** — The member from Regina Dewdney has asked for leave to introduce a guest. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a guest we have in the east . . . or west gallery — pardon me, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Jason Small who is a recent addition to our caucus office, Mr. Speaker, joined us just at the start of this session. He hasn't had the opportunity to be introduced in the Assembly.

Mr. Small is from Moose Jaw, has spent considerable time over his life working in the newspaper industry, Mr. Speaker. And he's a vital, vital contributor and addition to our caucus office. And I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce him to you and to the other members of the Assembly.

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

## SECOND READINGS

### **Bill No. 624 — *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act* (continued)**

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to carry on with my comments about Bill No. 624, *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act*, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's another area that is a little maybe closer to home for us here in this legislature, and it really speaks to this government's lack of accountability and lack of commitment to their previous election campaign where they did talk about becoming the most transparent and accountable government in Saskatchewan ever. Mr. Speaker, we know it's not happening. We know with frustration in opposition that it's about as far as it can get from being accurate or even close.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things we're dealing with now on a weekly basis is the whole issue of estimates. Mr. Speaker, estimates is a time for opposition to be able to sit with the minister and officials to scrutinize the ministries' budgets and to ask questions, questions that we have an interest in, questions that our constituents have an interest in, and questions that are in the bigger interest of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we get back to this same issue. People demand accountability. They are demanding transparency, but yet even amongst the Legislative Assembly when we are trying to arrange time we would like to be able to ask questions, we are stonewalled, Mr. Speaker. The government, for the last number of years, has gone with . . . There is a minimum number of hours that are allowable of scrutiny on the budget. This government has never allowed anything above the minimum. So, Mr. Speaker, where is the Premier's commitment to transparency and accountability?

**An. Hon. Member:** — Where is the leadership?

**Ms. Higgins:** — Where is the leadership? Exactly.

Mr. Speaker, we ask for time to ask questions or if you hit on a

certain area where there is more information that's needed, well your time's up. That's it. And we're not allowed to be able to fully ask the questions that are needed to be asked. What is this government hiding? What is this government hiding, Mr. Speaker? This Assembly has always been transparent. Could it be better? It could, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I'm on my feet today because we need to address the times that are changing, when people across the country and in Saskatchewan have access to so much information at their fingertips, and they expect the same from the Government of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, even as legislators, it's very hard to get information on the basic numbers in the budget and basic information. I can't tell you the amount of times we have gone to estimates when the departments and the ministries are to be there with information of the activities in the ministry over the year, and you will ask a question, and they'll say, well we don't have that information with us. We'll see if we can get it for you. Mr. Speaker, estimates are to discuss the estimates of that department and the ministries and department people should be here ready to answer those questions.

Mr. Speaker, this government restricts the time that we as opposition have to even ask questions. That's a problem. And how does that speak, as my colleague said, to the leadership or this commitment to transparency and accountability? Well it doesn't speak well, Mr. Speaker, and it is frustrating and it is not helpful to be able to try and answer questions that our constituents put forward and do the job that we are here to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I still have to tell you, I was at a meeting in Saskatoon on the weekend and we talked about a number of issues. And then at the end of the meeting, someone made the comment about how much money was coming into this province of Saskatchewan and the province's coffers. And, Mr. Speaker, it was interesting because I said to this group, this provincial government is seeing the highest revenues in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. It will reach \$11 billion this year.

And, Mr. Speaker, \$11 billion, and the Premier stands on his feet and he talks about the new Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan advantage, but I said to this group, well what have you felt? We have seen housing prices climbing out of the reach of most young families. Rent increasing, I mean hugely, for people to be able to remain in adequate accommodation, if they can find accommodation. The price of groceries is going up. The price of gas is going through the roof, which just leads into higher costs for transportation all the way around. We're seeing municipalities downloaded on by this government. And many communities across the province had an increase in property tax last year, and we'll see another increase in property tax this year.

Meanwhile this government sits on the highest revenues they have ever seen, and the Premier talks about the new Saskatchewan. And I said to these folks, higher housing, higher transportation, higher groceries, increased utility rates, privatized health care, privatizing the Crown corporations and selling off bits and pieces of them — how are you liking the boom so far?

**An Hon. Member:** — Excellent.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well that's good, because I can tell you many people who aren't.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the Saskatchewan advantage, the Saskatchewan advantage has always been a affordable quality life where our children could afford to live in this province and have a good life and raise our grandchildren. And, Mr. Speaker, when we see the costs, the basic costs of living skyrocketing and this government not making any attempt to actually address them, never mind talk about them in a transparent and accountable way, Mr. Speaker, they're living the high life, but I'll tell you many of our constituents aren't.

And that's a problem because it gets back to the issue that democracy is what our society believes in. It's what we have used and we need to make sure that we are transparent and accountable to maintain the trust and the support of the citizens of this province. It's a responsibility we have. And, Mr. Speaker, this government really needs to sit down and reread a number of the information that they put out during the last election campaign because I believe they forgot a lot of it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have multiple topics to be able to talk on on this issue. Mr. Speaker, I haven't even talked on or spoken to the issue of the downtown office tower, which this government has signed on to . . . Here we go. Another 20 years. I don't know why they like this 20 years, Mr. Speaker — 20 years on the power agreement, 20 years on leases.

Mr. Speaker, there needs to be some accountability. And there needs to be some action by this government to actually live up to the commitments that they have made. You know, and the minister can sit there, and he can chuckle along all he likes, but he has to be one of the worst offenders, Mr. Speaker. And this old, attack-dog stance that he takes, please, please, Mr. Minister, just stand up and give us some straight answers and some honest-to-goodness responses to questions.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move second reading of Bill No. 624, *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act*.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved second reading of Bill 624, *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act*.

It now being past the hour of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. Enjoy your weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]



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