



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

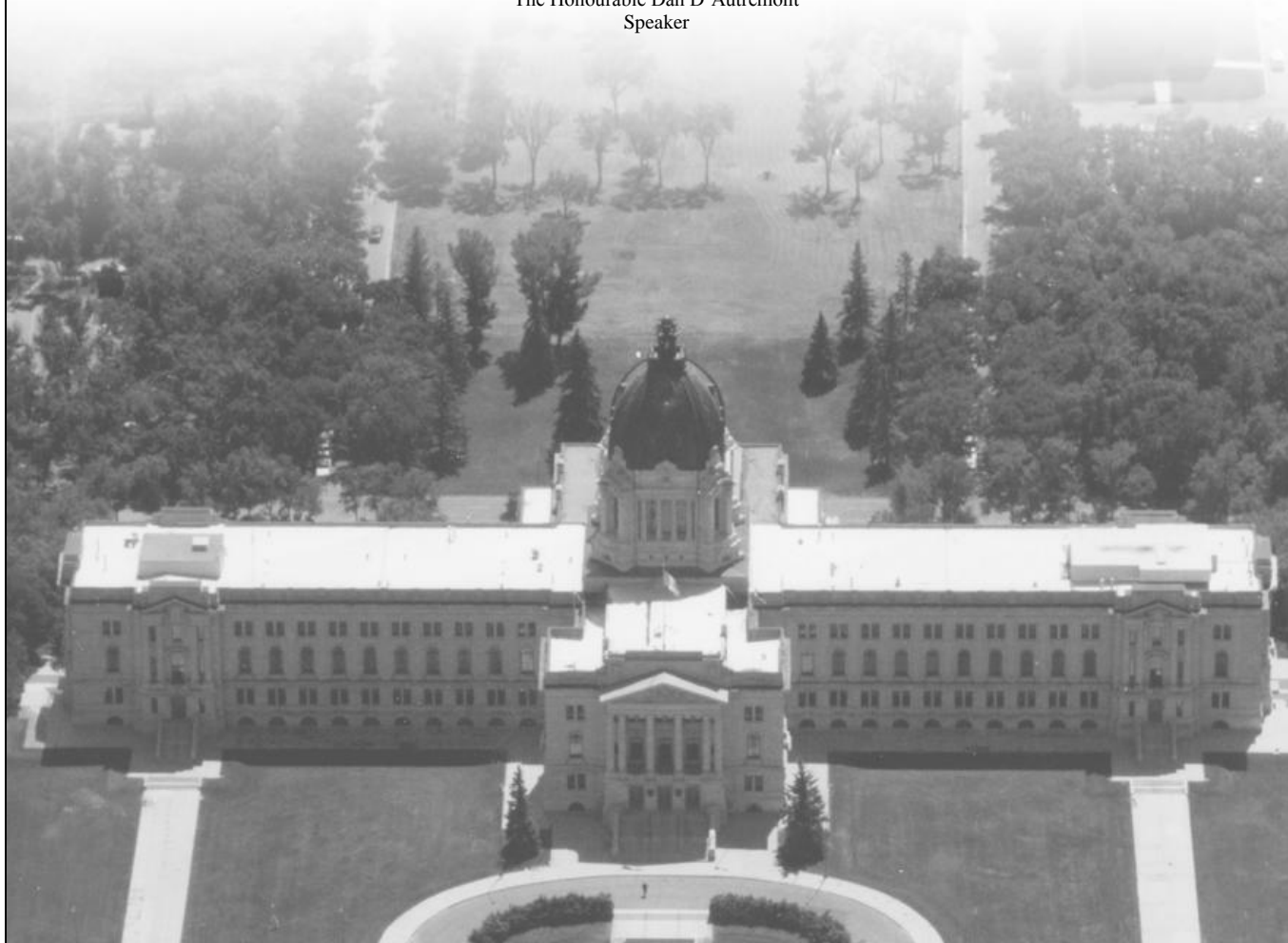
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
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The Honourable Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — John Nilson

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
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
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Cox, Herb	SP	The Battlefords
D’Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Jurgens, Victoria	SP	Prince Albert Northcote
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lawrence, Greg	SP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Hon. Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

Clerk: — Members of the Assembly, I wish to inform you that Mr. Speaker will not be present to open today's sitting.

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Marchuk: — I request leave for extended introduction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, I would like to welcome to this Assembly a very distinguished individual who is helping to bring rural Saskatchewan to the international stage.

Amber Fletcher, up in the west gallery, a constituent of Regina Douglas Park via Kelvington-Wadena, is a doctoral candidate at the University of Regina who has just returned to Saskatchewan this past weekend from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Ms. Fletcher attended the session as just one of four women from non-governmental organizations appointed to the Canadian delegation. This was a huge honour for Amber and also for the people of Saskatchewan.

The theme of this year's session was The Empowerment of Rural Women, an area of expertise for Amber who was recognized just this past October by the Governor General of Canada with the youth award for her commitment, advocacy, and passion for improving the daily lives of Canadian rural women. The title of her thesis, *The View from Here: Agricultural Policy, Climate Change, and the Future of Farm Women in Saskatchewan*, is particularly relevant. To date her research has taken her from the homesteads of farm women in rural Saskatchewan to international academic conferences on climate change and gender in Italy.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to please join me in acknowledging the outstanding contributions that Ms. Fletcher is making to the lives of people in Saskatchewan, Canada, and worldwide and welcome her, accompanied by Husain Aboghodieh, government relations consultant with the University of Regina, to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through

you to all members, I would like to introduce a group of individuals seated in your gallery in the front row. Seated there, Mr. Speaker, are a number of employees from the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

I would like to thank these individuals for the important work they do for Saskatchewan people, families who are battling and fighting cancer. These individuals, some of them also belong to the bargaining committee for the employees at the Cancer Agency. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure, the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly, I would like to introduce, in the west gallery, a group of students from the Dinsmore School in my constituency. Mr. Deputy Speaker, accompanying them are their teachers, Ashley Brown and Sue Lytle; and also chaperones Tammy Blackwell, Marnie Thorpe, Michelle Dawe, Wanda McPhail, Glen Menke, and Murray Dueck.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a special day for me. Because of the distance my constituency is from here, I don't often get school groups here. And especially today, I also have a great-nephew, KeAndre Evans, in the group, and also my niece, Kailyn Jensen. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to mention that when I had a chance to talk to the group earlier this morning, the member from Regina Dewdney came by and had a chat with the students as well. And, Mr. Speaker, because of his former profession, he was a much bigger hit than I was.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask everybody in the Assembly to please give the students a warm welcome.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena, the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce two very important people who are guests in your gallery today. Joining with us from the FoxValley Counseling Services Inc. is the founder and executive director, Mark Fox, and chairperson, Keith Pratt. Can you give us a wave?

FoxValley provides intensive after-hours, in-home supports to families in crisis. Later on this morning, I'm going to have the opportunity to take part in the grand opening of their new offices in downtown Regina, and I'm really looking forward to it.

I also want to thank you, Mark and Keith, for your dedication in helping children and families in need. It's the work that your organization does that makes a big difference in our province. So to everyone in, all my colleagues, please help me to welcome these gentlemen to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Mr. Mark Fox and Mr. Keith Pratt to their Legislative Assembly. I can't help but wonder if Mr. Fox is also going to be giving some instruction on fastball in terms of the work they'll be doing, but it's good to see Keith and Mark here at their Legislative Assembly. And the official opposition looks forward to the announcement, the important announcement coming later today.

But I'd like to introduce to the Legislative Assembly as well, three individuals seated on the floor of the Assembly. Those are three grandmothers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are Sharon Lupanko — if you could give us a wave, Sharon; all right, there we go — Geraldine “Gerry” Henderson, and Margaret Samuelson. They're three very fierce grandmothers that do a lot for their community and for their families, and it's good to see them here today at their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, bear with me. I have three different introductions today, and I don't want to have to sit down between each one of them, so if you don't mind I'll just stand while I go through all three. First of all, seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have with us Andrea Stangeland who is in your gallery, if you'd just give a wave. Andrea's daughter works for me — Kaitlyn — in the minister's office and does an absolutely amazing job. Thank you for all the work, Kaitlyn. And I have to say after saying that, all the staff members in my office do an absolutely excellent job.

Andrea is a Saskatchewan expat. She had spent 15 years in Swift Current before moving to Indiana with her and her husband as they moved their business there. She's back visiting her daughter for the next couple of weeks. Mr. Speaker, this is the first time she has been in the House. So before I ask all members to welcome her, I also would say that she is soon to be a first-time grandmother as well, as Kaitlyn is expecting in the next month or two — I should know exactly, but . . . month or two. But I would like all members to welcome Andrea to their Legislative Assembly.

Also while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce, in your gallery, two members joining us today, Mr. Collin Schaan, the CEO [chief executive officer], and Mr. Mike Lawton, comptroller, from the Schaan Healthcare Products in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this company was founded in 1980. The Schaan Healthcare Products has been serving Saskatchewan very well. It's a leading distributor of medical supplies to health care facilities including hospitals, nursing homes, and personal care homes.

Mr. Speaker, this company obviously has been in the province for the last couple of decades doing great work supplying, as I said, products. Not only do they service the health care facilities very, very well, but they also are a company that gives back. It's my understanding that this company donated about a quarter million dollars to the Children's Hospital Foundation

just recently, Mr. Speaker. You know, philanthropy is alive and well in this province, and this is just another great example of that. So thank you very much for the work that you do in the province, and I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

And finally, as my colleague would say, I would also like to introduce or welcome, I should say — they've already been introduced — the members from the Cancer Agency, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. The agency does absolutely amazing work in this province and especially when you look over the last number of years when we've seen the reduction, significant reduction of some of the wait times that we've seen in the province that we inherited, quite frankly, and we've been able to reduce. So I want to thank all those at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency for the great work that they do.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce a delegation of Chinese nationals from the People's Republic of China, seated in the Speaker's gallery. The delegation is led by Madam Han of the Shanghai Aohon Industry Company Ltd., which is a leading company in China.

I had the opportunity to first meet Madam Han as mayor of Melfort by hosting a luncheon last June. Madam Han made a return trip to the constituency last October and this is her third trip to our beautiful province.

The delegation is researching an investment in the Melfort constituency and would like to become part of the new Saskatchewan. Hosting the delegation is Mr. Jeff Mahon of STR Trade and Investment, a former Melfortite. Please join me in welcoming Madam Han and her delegation to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today to present a petition calling for greater protection for late-night retail workers by passing Jimmy's law. And we know that in the early morning hours of June 20th, 2011, Jimmy Ray Wiebe was shot twice and died from his injuries. He was working alone at a gas station in Yorkton and was unprotected from intruders. And we know similar incidents have happened with armed robberies such as the one that took place in Regina on January 23rd, 2012. And just this past Tuesday night in Saskatoon, on March 13th, a similar incident involving a shotgun shows that Jimmy's law is needed to give workers added protection in the workplace.

And we know provinces such as British Columbia have brought in several safety precautions through law, including a requirement that workers cannot be alone during late-night, early morning hours. And if they are required to work, there must be protective barriers such as locked doors and protective glass. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately enact Bill 601, Jimmy's law, to ensure greater safety for retail workers who work late-night hours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people signing this petition are from Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to education in our province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the Sask Party government to make education a top priority by establishing a long-term vision and plan, with resources, that is responsive to the opportunities and challenges in providing the best quality education and that reflects Saskatchewan's demographic and population changes, that is based on proven educational best practices, that is developed through consultation with the education sector, and that recognizes the importance of educational excellence to the social and economic well-being of our province and students for today and for our future.

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

The petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Regina and Moose Jaw. I so submit.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

[10:15]

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

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of trappers of Saskatchewan. The current regulations being enforced are creating challenges that are a concern to our traditional trappers.

The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that the experience gained through practical experience be valued; and in so doing to cause the government to review the current legislation and regulations with respect to trapping regulations and firearm use in consultation with the traditional resource users.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by many good trappers and northern people of Saskatchewan. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

CTV Saskatoon Citizens of the Year

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, early this year, CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] announced that Saskatoon Nutana constituents Bill and Eleanor Edwards are the 2012 CTV Citizens of the Year. And that award is being given in Saskatoon tomorrow.

While operating Saskatoon's only locally owned full-service funeral home, the couple is also renowned for their philanthropy and generous service to their community. Bill and Eleanor believe in dedicating themselves to their family, their business and their community. In the words of CTV Saskatchewan's vice-president and general manager Wade Moffatt, "Bill and Eleanor exemplify how a dedicated team effort can make a positive difference in the community and shape a better life for the city."

The Saskatoon Funeral Home began in 1910 under Bill's grandfather, William, who followed in the trade of his own father, thus establishing a 130-year tradition through four generations of the Edwards family. Bill and Eleanor tend their funeral business with vision, developing and expanding bereavement support for their patrons through groups such as Children and Grief, Walk of Memories, and Motherless Daughters. Their empathy for others also inspired them to build the W.A. Edwards Centre as a place for resource-challenged community groups to gather. Bill and Eleanor also volunteer with such community organizations as Kinsmen Telemiracle, the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, and a number of Saskatoon hospital boards and foundations.

This nomination by fellow citizens for the CTV 2012 Saskatoon Citizens of the Year Award highlights the good fortune felt by Saskatonians to have this outstanding couple in their midst.

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

Moose Jaw Warriors

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How about those Moose Jaw Warriors? I am pleased today to speak to you about the Warriors, highlighting what may become their best season ever. With first place clinched in the east division, 12 points ahead of the second place Regina Pats, the Warriors have two games left before heading into the first round of the WHL [Western Hockey League] playoffs. The team has clinched home ice advantage for at least the first two rounds of the playoff. If the Warriors win both games this weekend, they could set a franchise record for wins and points, surpassing the previous mark of 44 wins and 96 points set by the eastern conference championship team from 2005-2006.

What makes the Warriors team so special this year is the total team-first attitude instilled by coach Mike Stothers, former assistant coach with the Atlanta Thrashers. This year's edition of the Warriors is very well-rounded. Each member gives 100 per cent every night. The team has only three players with 30 or more goals, meaning that each player is contributing to point production and the success of the team. Cam Braes, Kenton Miller, and Quinton Howden are the three players with 30 or more goals, and goaltender Luke Siemens is on fire with division-leading statistics.

I would like to ask all members, even the ones from Regina, to join me in applauding the great efforts of this year's first place Moose Jaw Warriors team. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout March, which is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, the Canadian Cancer Society is encouraging people 50 years of age and over to fight back against colorectal cancer by getting checked before symptoms appear. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in Canada, but is also highly treatable if detected early through screening. Getting regular checkups can help detect cancer early. Some screening tests even help prevent cancer by finding changes in your body that would become cancerous if they're left untreated. Mr. Speaker, it is important for people to take the time this month to find out how they can reduce your risk of colorectal cancer and live a healthier lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, we must learn about the relationship between diet and colorectal cancer. March is also Nutrition Month, and the Canadian Cancer Society is encouraging you all to fight back against cancer by making healthy food choices. The agency's goal is to raise awareness of the relationship between diet and cancer and the benefits of eating well. Mr. Speaker, good

nutrition is an important component of a healthy lifestyle which can help reduce your risk for cancer. I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in recognizing colorectal awareness month for the month of March 2012. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saw Mill Operation

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Carrot River saw mill formerly owned by Weyerhaeuser and purchased by Edgewood Forest Products is back in operation. This is good news for the residents of Carrot River Valley.

This plant was closed back when the NDP [New Democratic Party] were administrating this province, but now many companies such as Edgewood Forest Products see a new Saskatchewan — a Saskatchewan that embraces economic growth; a Saskatchewan that wants to export products, not people.

Mr. Speaker, the forest industry has always been a vibrant part of northern Saskatchewan and a major player in the history of Carrot River Valley. It is absolutely great news that companies such as Weyerhaeuser in Hudson Bay and now Edgewood Forest Products in Carrot River are ongoing enterprises. Mr. Speaker, the employee base for the mill takes in the entire northeast area of the province and includes not just the workers in the plant but also contractors, truckers, and of course the many spinoffs that come with industry right down to the grocery store. This provides a huge boost to the local economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Edgewood Forest Products, thank them for choosing Saskatchewan as the place to be, and wish them the best of luck in their endeavours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly and the Minister of Finance.

National Recognition for Agri-Retail Accomplishment

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with pride that I rise in this House to speak about a Saskatchewan business that is garnering nationwide recognition.

At the annual convention of the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers, Hudye Soil Services Inc. of Norquay, Saskatchewan was awarded the 2011 Retailer of the Year. This award is presented annually to a Canadian agri-retailer that demonstrates exceptional customer service and satisfaction, effective employee relations, business innovation, and environmental stewardship and community and industry leadership. What is impressive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that the board of directors was unanimous in selecting Hudye Soil Services Inc. for this year's award. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers represents the majority of farm inputs sold in Canada. Their retail members provide farmers with the products and services required for Canada's agricultural production.

Established in 1983, Hudye Soil Services Inc. is headquartered in Norquay, Saskatchewan, and it is a full service farm supply retailer with satellite locations in Kamsack and Sturgis, Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like this Assembly to join me in recognizing Hudye Soil Services Inc. for their accomplishment in being named the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers 2011 Retailer of the Year. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Youth Science Festival Month

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year over 500,000 young Canadians participate in project-based creativity and experimentation. During the month of March, Youth Science Festival Month is celebrated. Thousands of students will be showing their work and competing to earn a spot at the Canada-Wide Science Fair. This year the science fair will be held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in May.

Mr. Speaker, since 1962, Youth Science Canada has been instrumental in encouraging students to push their limits, developing scientific and technological knowledge and skills. Youth Science cultivates the essential skills needed to tackle mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. Mr. Deputy Speaker, science asks students to learn to peer through the lens of a microscope and ask challenging questions that sometimes neither their parents nor teachers can answer easily. Scientific impulse is essential for the good of our future for the economic health of our country.

Youth Science Festival Month is carried out due to the tireless efforts of volunteers nationwide. Scientists, educators, and parents encourage the scientific efforts of over half a million young Canadians. Mr. Speaker, foundations like Youth Science Canada inspire youth to explore the world of science, encourage them to build their professional careers, and make our world a better place. Mr. Speaker, I'd like all MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to recognize them and thank them for their efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

St. Patrick's Day

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Saturday, March 17th is St. Patrick's Day, the annual celebration of Ireland's patron saint. St. Patrick was a Christian missionary in the fifth century who worked hard bringing Christianity to Ireland. He was beaten by thugs, harassed by the Irish royalty, and reprimanded by his British supporters.

After his death, poor St. Patrick was largely forgotten. But over his time, mythology grew. It is said he introduced the Irish to the concept of the Holy Trinity by using a three-leaf clover to represent the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Another legend tells of how St. Patrick banished all snakes from the Emerald Isle. It is true that no snakes exist on the island today, but they never did. Driving the snakes from Ireland is thought to be symbolic of driving the old, evil, pagan ways out and

ushering in a new age.

When this great province was founded, one in ten of our residents were of Irish origin. They have been a crucial part of Saskatchewan history, and it is fitting to celebrate with them.

In an interesting and far from sobering side note, Guinness consumption worldwide more than doubles to 13 million pints each St. Paddy's Day. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm hoping that everyone will raise a glass of their favourite beverage at some point on Saturday and join in a toast to the patron St. Patrick. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unlike the Irish slogan of *Tiocfaidh ár lá* — our day will come — in Saskatchewan, our day has come. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Caregivers

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Social Services: can she please provide for us her definition of financial hardship?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the action that we provided on financial hardship is something that we've been discussing for a number of years. In fact, the members opposite had a . . . We knew that they didn't understand the definition of financial hardship for years when they didn't do anything with seniors that didn't have their income looked at for 16 years, when we know that the number of children that were at food banks were increasing under their care.

Mr. Speaker, what we have to do with financial hardship is making sure that we can support families with housing and put more money in their pockets. That's why we have done things like taking people off the tax roll. That's why we know we've got a family of four in this province right now who's going to pay over \$10,000 less in income tax in the next four years.

Mr. Speaker, the definition isn't something that's easily defined, but the outcomes of it are something that we're looking at.

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

Ms. Chartier: — I think, Mr. Speaker, that answer is going to ring hollow with the grandmothers who are here in the Legislative Chamber here today.

The federal government has changed the way it pays out children's special allowances. They now pay the Minister of Social Services instead of individuals caring for extended family members. The minister sent out a letter in December about this issue to all caregivers, the Premier, and all MLAs. She stated: "The Ministry of Social Services wants to ensure that families do not experience financial hardship as a result of

these changes.”

Mr. Speaker, we know that Gerry Henderson is raising her five-year-old grandson and has had to go to the food bank for the first time because of cuts to her funding. We know that Margaret Samuelson will be 74 years old in July and is raising her two great-nephews. She is applying for jobs because of cuts to her support.

To the minister: would she agree that these families are experiencing financial hardship? And what is she going to do to live up to her commitment she made to those caregivers in that letter?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the issue that the member opposite is talking about is something that was brought to our attention as a result of changes to the federal government’s program last fall. And I was very concerned at that time, and we continue to press the federal government to see what they actually were defining in that legislation and the monies that were going to be changed.

So we sent letters out to people that could be involved, warning them that this could be happening. And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, I wrote a letter to the federal minister. I’ve written a letter to the provincial ministers as well to make sure that we are speaking from the same voice. To date there hasn’t been one situation that can’t be managed with funding for special needs. And our ministry officials have met with 17 caregivers across the province who’ve identified concerns, and they are being addressed. And right now we’ve got about between 20 and 25 other meetings scheduled with caregivers to make sure that if they have an issue, we can help address it. So I encourage the member opposite to bring her constituents over and we will talk.

[10:30]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, we understand that money is being shuffled between the federal government and the provincial government. We know that very well. But the bottom line is the minister assured families that they would not experience financial hardship as a result. Mr. Speaker, Gerry Henderson has an income of \$20,485 and now is getting \$189 a month less than before. Margaret Samuelson is getting \$220 a month less than before.

The minister and other government MLAs, as the minister has said, has been made aware of this problem by many of our offices, but the response has been wanting. Geraldine and Margaret are representative of the many extended family members looking after their children, looking after children because they don’t want to see them in foster care. And like many others, they are suffering financial hardship because of these changes to the special allowances Act. What is the minister going to do for Gerry and Margaret and all the caregivers experiencing the same hardship?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, when we sent the original letter out to give an update to the families and heads-up to the families to make sure that they were aware there were changes coming, we also advised them that they should be contacting our office and to bring forward their concerns. Mr. Speaker, we have met with 17 caregivers and we have another 20 to 25 that will be met with. We also know that the federal government is not aware specifically of what they have done with their changes, and that’s why I’ve written to the federal minister and I also contacted the minister from Saskatchewan, Mr. Ritz, and asked him to bring, through his office, the concerns forward.

We’re not sure of all the implications, but we are sure that everyone in this province should have the benefits they had before. And I can tell this House that there are some families are seeing that they are going to be getting more money. Mr. Speaker, this issue is very important to us. When someone is looking after our children is the most important issue in government. And I assure you, I’ll be pleased to meet with these individuals.

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

Collective Bargaining at Cancer Agency

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in question period, we discussed how the shortage of injectable drugs is causing uncertainty for cancer patients. There are other reasons, Mr. Speaker, why patients in Saskatchewan are concerned. Since December of 2009, Cancer Agency workers have been without a contract. That’s 27 months, Mr. Speaker, of patients having uncertainty and of employees having uncertainty, and the last thing that cancer patients deserve, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister: does he view this extended length of time without a contract as a concern, and what is he doing to ensure that a settlement is reached in a timely manner?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in the introductions, I want to acknowledge and recognize the great work that all of our health care professionals do day in and day out, 24-7, Mr. Speaker, including especially the members working through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency that supply great service to patients throughout our province in some very, very difficult situations. And I want to acknowledge that and thank them on behalf of government and the people of the province.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I’ve had the opportunity over the last four and a half years to stand in this position and talk about negotiations — or not really talk about negotiations because negotiations are conducted through the Cancer Agency and their employee representative group, Mr. Speaker. That’s where negotiations take place, and I’ve stayed away from that, Mr. Speaker. We have settled with nearly 40,000 health care workers in this province through a collective bargaining process, Mr. Speaker, that served all, I think, quite well. We look forward to that process seeing a conclusion to this

contract, we would hope real soon.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After 27 months of negotiating, the two sides are not anywhere close to an agreement, Mr. Speaker, and this is causing uncertainty and having a negative effect on the morale of employees of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

These health care professionals are the people that care for our loved ones when our loved ones are battling cancer — people like nurses, pharmacists, radiation therapists, Mr. Speaker. These individuals do their job because they truly do care about patients, and I know the minister can appreciate that point.

I'm told however, though, because of the uncertainty without having a contract for such an extended period of time, some employees have been forced to look for opportunities elsewhere. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that is a problem. Clearly we need the most qualified and the most experienced health care professionals working in the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

My question to the minister: will he admit that the extended period of not having a contract is having a negative effect on the recruitment and retention efforts of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, we would love to see negotiations come to a conclusion between the representative group and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. But I will say to that member's question as to the issue around recruitment, I would say that in the last six months to a year, it's the first time that we've had a full complement of oncologists in this province, Mr. Speaker — something that was never accomplished under the former government, Mr. Speaker. We've been working on it, and we have a full complement of oncologists.

There has been a huge reduction in wait times at the Cancer Agency through the great work of the oncologists and all the others working at the Cancer Agency. Mr. Speaker, an average patient wait between appointments has improved by 92 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that's in the last six months. Huge improvements, Mr. Speaker. More work to do, absolutely. There's always more work to do and especially once a new contract hopefully is agreed on in the very near future.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, over the course of the 27 months with the absence of a contract, the employees have been quite reasonable in negotiating with SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations]. They actually, Mr. Speaker have gone so far to say that they're willing to give up their right to strike. From a news release issued a month ago by the employees, here's a direct quote. It says, "Because cancer agency workers don't want to put patient care at risk, workers

have offered not to strike now or in the future in exchange for binding arbitration."

Mr. Speaker, these individuals want a fair deal. My question to the minister: is he prepared to create stability for cancer patients in this province by allowing this contract to be settled through binding arbitration?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, this government, over the last four years, four and a half years, has come to an agreement with close to 40,000 health care employees throughout the province through the collective bargaining process. That collective bargaining process has served not only employee, but the employer, I think, quite well. We would like that process to see this contract to fruition, Mr. Speaker.

But I will say that in the last year, in the last budget year, Mr. Speaker, the budget for the Cancer Agency was \$122 million. That's \$12.6 million more than the year before, or 11.5 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, has gone to the Cancer Agency to provide programs such as the bone marrow transplant program, the colorectal screening program, operating costs, Mr. Speaker. This government has funded the Cancer Agency, Mr. Speaker, at record levels.

More work to be done. You can see it by the full complement of oncologists, Mr. Speaker. You can see it by the reduction in wait times. We're on the right track. We hope an agreement is reached real soon between the Cancer Agency and their employees to further serve the citizens of this province.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cancer patients in the province deserve the very best treatment that our medical system can provide. Everyone in the province would agree to that. But it's clear that the absence of a long-term and . . . It's clear the absence of a new contract for the employees working at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is causing uncertainty for the employees, it is hurting recruitment and retention, Mr. Speaker, and it is having a negative effect potentially on patient care. My question . . . Well it's clear the employees don't want to be involved, I think, in a public tug-of-war for the hearts and minds of Saskatchewan patients. What they do want, Mr. Speaker, is a positive solution. What they do want is a fair deal. There is a solution to the impasse between SAHO and the employees, Mr. Speaker, and that is binding arbitration.

My question to the minister: will he demonstrate that he's serious about patient care, serious about ensuring the very best possible cancer care here in the province, and will he allow this contract to be settled through binding arbitration?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, similar to yesterday, he's asked the same question two or three times. Mr. Speaker, I've answered that question. I've said that the collective bargaining process has worked very well for over, up to 40,000

people, Mr. Speaker, in this province. We're going to continue to let that process work because it has worked very, very well.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite proud of what this government has done in the last four and a half years. I can tell you, when I was on the opposition benches, Mr. Speaker, we saw at least a three-month wait between first referral from a GP [general practitioner] to an oncologist because we simply didn't have the oncologists, Mr. Speaker, in this province. For the first time in many, many years, Mr. Speaker, probably out of the 16 years of opposition, when opposition was in power, we have the proper complement of oncologists. Wait times are less, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we want a contract to see this bargaining finished, Mr. Speaker. It has gone on probably far too long. I think we would all agree to that. But a collective bargaining process has to go through its steps, Mr. Speaker. I think we're getting close to the end.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, after three long years, the Sask Party finally put together a funding formula for the school divisions of this province. Unfortunately just a few days before budget, the education sector as a whole is bracing for cuts. The ministry's own documents forecast, based on the previous year's funding level, that 12 school divisions will take a significant hit, many of them in the millions of dollars. For many others, it's constraint. This, Mr. Speaker, is at a time where Saskatchewan communities are growing and significant opportunities and challenges exist in education. Can the Minister of Education tell this Assembly how this is in the best interest of Saskatchewan people?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, what has been evident over the last few years is that there has been a significant change from years of stagnant, if not declining, enrolments in this province, Mr. Speaker.

The province of Saskatchewan used to lose 3,500 students per year, year after year after year, Mr. Speaker. And there's been a tremendous change here, Mr. Speaker. We not only see a levelling off, Mr. Speaker, but we are also seeing a growth.

Mr. Speaker, there was a recognition that the formula — the formula that was in place since the early 1970s — was not working. The boards of education in the province of Saskatchewan had indicated that the formula was no longer meeting its needs, Mr. Speaker.

We have worked on that formula for the last three years. We wanted to implement it a year ago. That was not possible, Mr. Speaker. And we are now going to move forward with implementing a formula that, Mr. Speaker, everyone has worked on. The representatives from the boards of education and the trustees as well as the Teachers' Federation have worked on this formula and, Mr. Speaker, we'll see it in a short few days.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Some of the lack of reflection of some of those demographic changes mentioned by the minister, that's the very problem with the funding numbers that are coming out, and the funding formula. Based on ministry numbers, the Living Sky School Division in North Battleford would be cut by \$6 million based off the previous year's funding level. This is a school division with a young, growing population and in fact with a significant community schools movement and innovative programs and in fact, a First Nations and Métis population that exceeds 50 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A \$6 million cut to Living Sky's funding would be drastic. Can the minister describe where she thinks this \$6 million of cuts would come from?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has raised some very good points about the diversity in school divisions. There are school divisions that have unique situations. They have unique problems, and the funding formula has to develop, has to be developed, with those things in mind. And that's exactly what has been occurring over the last two and a half years, Mr. Speaker.

We are moving forward with a formula that will better reflect the needs of school divisions. We are going to move forward with that. We are going to be able to say that, you know, Mr. Speaker, as we've developed this funding formula, and that we've taken over as a government ensuring the full funding of school boards. Under that previous system, Mr. Speaker, we used to have tax revolts. We used to have tax revolts where they knew that the status quo was simply unacceptable. And you know, Mr. Speaker, they didn't do a thing about it. They didn't do a thing about it. We're going to move forward, Mr. Speaker. There are challenges in growth. Growth brings about unique challenges, Mr. Speaker, but we are excited about that growth, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has tied the hands of the school divisions. They entirely control the purse strings but it seems they're deferring the tough decisions, the cuts, to be made at the school board level. They're off-loading those difficult decisions.

I mentioned Living Sky at \$6 million, but there's also cuts in many other school divisions: Prairie Spirit at almost 5 million; Prairie Valley, more than 9 million; Northern Lights in northern Saskatchewan, \$1.7 million; Creighton School Division, more than 15 per cent. The list goes on, Mr. Speaker. Why is the minister making cuts to education at a time of prosperity in the province?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

it's interesting to listen to the member opposite reveal numbers that are supposedly going to be in the budget. I can tell him that he's a little bit out in his numbers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that member has no idea what's going to be in the budget, and I'm not going to release anything today, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member opposite that the school divisions that we are going to work with, that the Minister of Education is going to continue to work with, are excited about growth. Growth, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we have moved forward on 38 capital projects in the last four years, Mr. Speaker — 38 capital projects. Mr. Speaker, that member and his seatmate have raised concerns about space and growth and, Mr. Speaker, they used to plan for decline. We're planning for growth.

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

Water Supply

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, water is one of our most precious resources. Our government needs to manage it carefully just as it must manage other natural resources. Brazilian mining giant Vale is proposing to build a solution potash mine near Kronau. Vale needs 40 million litres of water per day. That's 14 and a half trillion litres of water per year to create the solution needed to make the mine profitable. There's no large water source near Kronau.

According to Vale's project proposal, SaskWater has agreed to build a 70-kilometre water pipeline from Kronau to Katepwa Lake in the Qu'Appelle Valley if the environmental assessment gives the green light. To the minister: has a contract for the pipeline between SaskWater and Vale been signed?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that question is no, not at this time, it hasn't been signed. There is some discussions going on between SaskWater, who would be hired to provide the water. But first what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is to assess whether or not we actually have the capacity to be able to provide that amount of water, and that work is being done by the Watershed Authority at this time.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, we all know the importance of potash, both for our economy and for food production in the world. However, the pace of development should be based on due diligence, ensuring that the rush to develop does not negatively impact our precious water resources. Water experts are saying that the province needs to look at the cumulative impact of all the several mines planning to use the water from the Qu'Appelle River watershed. Once that determination is made, only then the question as to whether the Vale water draw is okay should be answered.

Instead of putting the cart before the horse, will the minister

first heed the expert advice and demand scientific evidence confirming how much water can we take out in total to supply all these mines, and then answer the Vale demand?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly not just with this proposed mine development, Mr. Speaker, but with the significant number of mines that may be coming on stream into the future, the Watershed Authority and the Government of Saskatchewan is doing our due diligence when it comes to being able to provide answers of water stability for the province. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we are engaged, through the Watershed Authority, through a multi-year water availability study to be able to determine whether we have enough water to supply not only the growing demands for industry, but also for the growing demands of municipalities. We have a growing province, Mr. Speaker. More people come to this province each and every year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are engaged, through the Watershed Authority, to determine what would need to take place as a short-term solution to provide enough water into the Qu'Appelle system to be able to draw that much water from Katepwa, Mr. Speaker. And that work is, as I said, is currently being done.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Several Treaty 4 First Nations have reserves that border the Qu'Appelle River where they are exercising their treaty rights. If the actions of the Crown create an adverse impact on those rights, there is a legal duty to consult with those First Nations. At least one of these nations have publicly stated that they have not been adequately consulted.

It seems like the mine is already a foregone conclusion. Vale plans to be in production by 2015. To the minister: what has the government done to discharge their duty? And if nothing has been done, why not?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I think, just like on a number of areas, this opposition feels that they know when deals are going to be signed before anybody else, Mr. Speaker. In terms of Vale, they're still in the pre-feasibility stage, Mr. Speaker.

On this case, Mr. Speaker, SaskWater will have to fulfill their obligations to publicly advertise in relation to the pipeline. Should we ever get to that point where a deal is signed between Vale and SaskWater, Mr. Speaker, Vale will then, and all the partners, will have an obligation under the duty to consult, Mr. Speaker. But it's interesting that, you know, in one hand, some people think that this is going to take too much water out of Katepwa; on the other hand, some people think that's it going to flood the area around Katepwa, Mr. Speaker. So we will work through this process and do our due diligence as we would with any proposal, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Local citizens in the Katepwa Lake area are concerned about the effects that the withdrawal of trillions of litres of water would have annually, not just on their water supply but on the province's lakes. They have many concerns, including possible reductions in property values, water quality issues, and the accumulative environmental impacts.

They met with officials of the minister on February 11th, and gave the minister's staff 40 questions about the development, to which they have not yet received all the answers. Further, at the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention in February, the minister indicated that the water analysis was coming soon. To the minister: when are these answers forthcoming? How long do the concerned people of the Qu'Appelle Valley have to wait?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at a minimum, the member would have to wait until at least budget day, Mr. Speaker, because if a proposal would go forward for the Watershed Authority to do the maintenance work that they would need to do to provide additional water, they would have to have the budget to do so, Mr. Speaker. So that's one of the steps that has to take place just to ensure the Watershed Authority has the capacity to do it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there have been some concerns that have been brought forward from people that live in that area. We're trying our best to answer those concerns, Mr. Speaker. The Watershed Authority is looking at what would need to take place in order to be able to provide, in dry years, additional water into the valley so as not to take away from the current existing users of that water and their ability to use that water, Mr. Speaker. And we're working through that process.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

FoxValley Counseling Services Inc.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House today to talk about the grand opening of FoxValley services incorporated in downtown Regina.

The Ministry of Social Services is partnering with FoxValley on an important initiative by providing over \$439,000 in operational funding. I'm excited about the good work that's going to be done out of these offices. And when I say out of these offices, that's exactly what I mean.

We know that family emergencies don't always happen during traditional office hours. Crisis situations can arise at almost any time and it's during those times that the families need the most help. These new headquarters will allow FoxValley to provide the assistance through intensive after-hours, in-the-home

support.

FoxValley workers will be able to meet with families where they are, right in their homes, with the ultimate goal of preventing children from coming into care of the ministry. Apprehending children is the ministry's very last resort. If possible, we want children in the home with their parents, with their families, where they can attend school and continue to participate in the community. Our sincere hope is that this outcome can be achieved by the supervision and the support of the FoxValley workers.

I'm also very proud of this announcement today because of its relationship to both the child welfare transformation strategy and the Saskatchewan child and youth agenda. The child welfare transformation strategy was developed as a response to the child welfare review panel and the 12 recommendations. The children and youth agenda is an innovative, cross-government approach to deal with the complex issues dealing with Saskatchewan's children, youth, and family.

Two of the main areas of focus for the child welfare transformation strategy include working differently with First Nations and Métis partners and prevention supports for families. The goals of the children and youth agenda are that children get a good start in life, youth are prepared for the future, families are strong, and communities are supportive. The prevention-focused nature of this partnership with FoxValley is proof that these changes are taking place. And thanks to FoxValley support services, more children will get a good start in life, more youth will be prepared for the future, more families will be strong, and another community will be supportive.

In closing, I want to sincerely thank the staff and board of FoxValley Counseling Services for their hard work and their dedication. They really are making a difference in the lives of Saskatchewan's children and families. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just want to commend FoxValley Counseling Services on being part of this initiative. I think it's incredibly important to ensure that families have the services they need outside of the Monday to Friday workday, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The reality is, crises hit at all times of day and night, and ensuring that families have the supports that they need to get through those crises is very important. So I commend FoxValley Counseling and the folks there. And this is a good step on behalf of the government as well.

I would like to add, though, it's ironic. Today one of the minister's comments was around ensuring that apprehending children is the minister's last resort. And we heard today earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about grandparents or caregivers who have the care for grandchildren or nieces or nephews. The reality is, it's very important to ensure . . . And we heard today that the Ministry of Social Services has been lacklustre in ensuring that these families have what they need.

So I find it ironic on a day, today, that we're talking about

ensuring that children stay out of care that we are also hearing that children who have stayed out of care because families have been willing to step up to the plate and take responsibility for those children, that those families are being financially penalized and not being supported in the way that they do need to be supported. So I'm glad to hear that the government has implemented this program and . . . to the good folks at FoxValley for the work that they will be doing. But the government certainly does need to do more in this regard. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Constituency Boundary Changes

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with a certain sense of bewilderment that I rise in this debate today in terms of the actions of this government as it relates to Bill 36, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to read the motion out for the clarity of this session, for the assembled, wherein it states:

That this Assembly support the inclusion of all young people under the age of 18 in any consideration of constituency boundary changes and reject expanding the number of constituencies in the province by three.

I guess the bewilderment comes from the fact that not too long ago in this province, Mr. Speaker, we had an election which, you know, we well know the results of that. We also know the premium that was placed on the planks in that platform by the members opposite and how important it was, what a sacred trust and a covenant with the people and all these kind of different things, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what they were bringing to the people's attention for their consideration. And I guess if you're going to have . . . you know, that's fair enough, and that was interesting language that they'd used at that time.

So again the Throne Speech touched in large part upon what had been included in the election platform, straight ahead enough. And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the surprise came when in December the Bill No. 36, the last Bill in the legislative agenda of the fall, came to this Assembly. It was quite interesting to see it come, Mr. Speaker, because of course the first thing that garnered a fair amount of attention was the fact that they were proposing three additional members of the Legislative Assembly.

[11:00]

And of course the no-politicians plank in their platform was non-existent. It was made of thin air because they didn't come to the people and say ready for growth means — guess what? — we need more politicians. They didn't come and say that, Mr. Speaker. They didn't come and say that in 2007. They didn't come and say that in 2011. And so when it came forward, that was obviously the first mark of attention that . . . you know, three additional MLAs being proposed, isn't that

strange?

I guess the other thing that was a bit of a slow burn on Bill No. 36 was of course the change that was in it being proposed to the calculations or the way that population is calculated for the purposes of redistributing seats. And the kicker there, Mr. Speaker, of course was the fact that, as it currently exists under the constituency boundaries redistribution and as has been the case in this province since 1993 when *The Constituency Boundaries Redistribution Act* was passed . . . And I might add, Mr. Speaker, after discussion about constituency boundaries and electoral reform in the 1991 election, absent from the 2011 situation, the change that is provided in Bill No. 36 around population excludes those under the age of 18 for the purposes of calculating boundaries.

And as other colleagues on this side of the House have said, it rings, it rings ironic. It rings hollow. It rings hypocritical that for the many times that people rise on their feet in this Assembly and say welcome to school groups and welcome to your Legislative Assembly, that those very students have been incorporated into the counts since 1993 for the building of the very basic block of our electoral democracy in Saskatchewan, which are the constituencies.

So at the very tail end of the legislative agenda, as it was introduced back in the fall — it wasn't raised in the election; it wasn't in their platform; it wasn't anticipated in the earlier platforms, wasn't raised in the Throne Speech — that that gets tacked into the mix at the very end of the agenda leaves us with a lot of questions on this side of the House.

Now we know that other jurisdictions have different ways of doing this, but a strong majority of Canadian provincial jurisdictions use the total population when it comes to counting for constituency boundary construction. And the fact that the federal government right now uses total population for construction and all of the different questions that are going on about how democracy is practiced in the federal House of Commons, the fact that even in the federal government, they use total population for the purposes of building constituencies, that should give us pause for thought. So how is it that in the province of Saskatchewan we want to go back and not forward?

It was interesting. They introduced the Premier and his comments yesterday in question period, talked about a measure from 1979. And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because the '71 election when Allan Blakeney was elected premier of the province of course, electoral reform was an issue in that election as well. And the question at that time was on the variance in population between the individual constituencies. And you had a situation where Regina Centre, which is my home constituency and which was represented in that election by Allan Blakeney, had over 19,000 electors. And that was compared to under 5,000 electors in Regina South, the boutique riding that had been carved out in the backrooms of the Thatcher Liberal government to ensure that it was a safe Liberal seat in the face of the '71 election.

So one of the things that we had in the '71 election was a discussion about an independent boundaries commission. And some of that discussion evolved, and they improved upon the situation where boundaries were no longer being drawn up

under the desk of Ross Thatcher or whoever the government of the day was, but it put power and authority in the hands of the citizens to draw up those boundaries.

Things have changed around the question of electors and the number of constituencies, but there was a discussion that went on through the '70s in terms of what is that adequate representation. How does it work in terms of ensuring that you balance off the tremendous geography? Well it's interesting. I hear the Minister for the Environment, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, weighing in and of course, he was born in 1979 which was interesting. For all the railing they like to do against the NDP and history and this, that, and the other thing, that they had to reach so far back into history yesterday, Mr. Speaker, for their defence was mightily interesting.

So I'm glad that they've suddenly got an interest in history, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's good to see that they're interested in what's happened in this province because I'll tell you what. The fact that they want to take a measure that takes us backwards is very interesting, take us backwards in time, backwards in history. It's like these things don't evolve. It's like standards don't ever get refined, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's very interesting that they want to go back to the '70s. And I thought for all the guff we hear from that side about being forward-looking and forward, not back, you'd think that the '70s wasn't a place they didn't want to get into the time machine and travel back to.

But this is a measure that we have that does just that, Mr. Speaker. It takes us back through time when total population didn't count. So for members on that side, especially younger members . . . They like to talk about the youthful nature of the Sask Party and this, that, and the other. The fact that they now want to discount young people in this province is cause for alarm. The fact that they want to implement a constituency boundary change that takes square aim at urban Saskatchewan and takes square aim at younger Saskatchewan is offensive, Mr. Speaker. The fact that they want to put Saskatchewan in a select group with a distinct minority of other provincial jurisdictions says a lot. The fact that the federal government sees fit to count total population says a lot as well.

So what's really afoot here, Mr. Speaker? We know that in the United States of America there's a great amount of attention that gets paid to the questions of redistribution, and we know that that has been part of the history in the past of Saskatchewan as well. So why are they trying to sneak something like this in that they didn't have the guts to come clean with for the people of Saskatchewan in the election? Why would they want to be doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Is it because they're so scared and jealous of their political advantage that they can't be straight with the people of Saskatchewan? I think that's the case.

I think there are members on the side of the House over there that don't really understand what this was about. I think there's an in-group over there that understood very clearly what this was about, and there is an outgroup that said, well, if the bosses in the caucus want this to go forward, that would be a good thing.

But they've got to wake up to the fact that this takes square aim at urban Saskatchewan and undercutting the representation

there. It takes square aim at young people in Saskatchewan. When they talk about growth, they should be counting those young people, counting on them now more than ever. But what they're doing, Mr. Speaker, is discounting them. They're counting them out. They're saying you don't matter. Sure, all the constituency offices should be providing service for the total population in these constituencies. But when it comes to the young people, in the very founding of the electoral . . . the basic building blocks of our electoral process in this province with constituencies, they're looking to count them out.

So how the heck does that work, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why are they taking such square aim against young people in this province who — I might add as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker — are in very large part young First Nations people, young Métis people which, you know, you'd think they'd be interested in counting them in instead of counting them out. But they're not, Mr. Speaker. They're counting out young people, and it undercuts the electoral fairness that should exist in this province between regions and for people.

And I guess with the First Nations and the Métis, the way that this legislation goes at them in a sort of a circumnavigated sort of way, the way it goes at them in a sneaky way, Mr. Speaker, it reminds us of what happened in the advance of the election with photo ID [identification] and the way that photo ID was played out and played out and played out to the point where attestations were going to be finally allowed for people in soup kitchens, people in long-term care homes, but people on-reserve, on First Nations, were counted out. And it took the acting electoral officer, the Acting Chief Electoral Officer to step in and put a stop to that attempt by that government to single out on-reserve First Nations in that way.

And the fact that again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, attestations had worked in the federal election, that it was part of the federal election process, the fact that they tried to sneak it into the back door on the eve of the election goes to the kind of paranoia that I think exists on those benches, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the way that they're so desperate to not just get power but to keep power and to do it in a way that counts people out, that do it in a way that sets up barriers for people that should be going to the ballot box, and instead this government tells them, no we don't want you there. We don't want you participating. They want to make it harder for them than it is in the federal jurisdiction.

So we'd seen that movie in the federal situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we'd seen what had happened there, and we saw that it was the Chief Electoral Officer that had to step in and put a stop to the efforts of that government. And we saw that that government had nothing to say about this measure in the election, but now we see it coming forward as part of what they're doing. And again, Mr. Speaker, I think it speaks to a paranoia. I think it speaks to a bitterness on the side of members on those benches opposite when it comes to dealing with urban Saskatchewan and when it comes to dealing with young people in Saskatchewan.

And why the heck would you approach people like that, Mr. Speaker? Why wouldn't you want people to count? Well it's because it's about their attempt to sharpen their own electoral advantage as they see fit. And I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, the more that people wake up to this, they'll see them for what

they're doing. And the more that people wake up to this, the kind of advantages that they campaigned on in the election and the way that they said, oh we're just, you know, just humble folks and straight up and this, that, and the other. We'll see how that lasts, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We'll see how it lasts when they take such a cavalier approach to the young people of this province. We'll see how First Nations and Métis people react when they realize that. We're a young population. Why don't we count in the building of our constituencies? Why are we being counted out by this government? What is that about?

People are going to wake up to that question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and when they wake up to that, what is being attempted by this government, what is being snuck in by this government, they're not going to think too highly of it. And the members opposite can talk about the mandate they got in the election, and that's fine. That's the rules of our democracy. But part of our democracy is also they should be straight with the people of Saskatchewan with what you're going to do when you get the power. And this measure was glaringly absent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it's with a certain . . . I said bewilderment at the start, but I think it's with a fair amount of . . . This makes me angry, Mr. Speaker, to see people playing games like this with our democracy. So I move that:

This Assembly support the inclusion of all young people under the age of 18 in any consideration of constituency boundary changes and reject expanding the number of constituencies in the province by three.

I so move, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved that:

This Assembly support the inclusion of all young people under the age of 18 in any consideration of constituency boundary changes and reject expanding the number of constituencies in the province by three.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituencies boundary amendment Act contains three major provisions which, in summary, will serve to increase the number of constituencies from 58 to 61 by adding three seats south of the dividing line. The Act will define total population under the Act to mean those individuals in the province over 18 years of age as determined in the last census rather than using the entire population of the province.

The Act will direct that a commission that is already established, once this Act comes into force, shall proceed to report based on the new provisions and not on the provisions in force at the time the commission was established.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's population is now at an all-time high of 1,063,535 at last count. It has grown by 15,241 people in the last year alone, making Saskatchewan the second fastest growing province in Canada. The province's population has

now increased for 22 consecutive quarters, and in the past five years, Saskatchewan has grown by over 70,000 people. This is the fastest and most sustained period of population growth in many decades, in fact since the early days of the development of the province, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

Under the constituencies boundary Act of 1993, boundaries are drawn every 10 years. It is the view of this government that this boundaries process should reflect the over five per cent increase in population that has occurred since the boundaries were last drawn, and the increase in population that we feel will continue to occur until the next commission is struck based on the '20-21 census, Mr. Speaker. A move from 58 to 61 seats is also a five per cent increase in seats.

Saskatchewan has a vibrant economy with a growing population. It's important that the new voters in our province be recognized and that their votes be counted equally to any other voters and that they receive adequate representation in this Assembly by their MLA. These amendments will ensure that this is the case.

Under an Act passed by the previous NDP government, Mr. Speaker, the constituencies boundary Act, 1993, boundaries are to be redrawn every ten years based on the decennial census. This requirement is not changed and nor are the criteria on which the constituencies are to be determined such as geographical conditions. The commission continues to be independent and continues to have the same mandate. It will simply be creating three more constituencies and basing the permissible variance between the constituencies on the number of people eligible to vote, rather than on the entire population in each constituency, which strikes normal people out there in the real world, Mr. Speaker, as a more sensible and fair way to do it than base the count on every person regardless of age.

We are not interfering in the process in any way, Mr. Speaker. We are providing no direction in the Bill or the legislation itself as to where these three new seats may be situated. This will be for the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission to determine under its standing terms of reference in the Act. The provinces of Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, the Yukon Territory, have counted electors rather than total population for many, many years, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan will be the first province, however, to use the census rather than a voters list to determine who was of voting age in a particular constituency.

The change from using total population of the province versus the total population based on the number of individuals who are 18 years of age and over according to the recent census is based on this government's conviction that constituencies should be based as closely as possible on the number of voters in a constituency rather than the overall number of people.

Mr. Speaker, it is voters who elect their members of the Assembly. It is voters whose votes should be made as equal as possible and to the degree possible, and accordingly, it is voters who should be counted for this purpose. People understand that this exercise is all about eligible voters, Mr. Speaker, and that no one will be disenfranchised under this Act — quite the

contrary. The fundamental Canadian principle for elections, Mr. Speaker, is that each vote should have reasonably similar value between areas of jurisdiction, in this case, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan.

In the 1970s, Mr. Speaker, under the late Premier Allan Blakeney, some age . . . the same age criteria was used to realign seats in this province. I heard the member go back into the 1960s to criticize the government of Liberal Premier Ross Thatcher, but I didn't hear him fess up to the fact that the Allan Blakeney government, the NDP Allan Blakeney government of the 1970s, used the same criteria that we are planning to use now, Mr. Speaker.

In Saskatchewan we have one of the lowest permitted variances of plus or minus five per cent between constituencies. British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and the nation of Canada are at 25 per cent for some of their ridings. These changes will ensure that votes are of equal value in Saskatchewan rather than that constituencies are roughly the same size in terms of population. Using the census to determine who is 18 years of age enables the commission to use the best information available.

The commission is struck every 10 years based on the most recent census, Mr. Speaker. This will use the most recent census to establish who is eligible voting age. Using the voters list is a much less accurate method in that an enumeration is not mandatory to start with like a census is, and further, that in future years at a time of commission, the provincial voters list may be out of date by as much as three years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government has reduced spending on government communications by about \$5 million a year compared to the last year of the previous NDP government, Mr. Speaker, and reduced spending on government travel by about \$3.5 million a year from the last year of the previous NDP government. Insofar as we are saving millions in these areas alone, an additional \$675,000 investment on improving and enhancing democracy in the province of Saskatchewan is more than appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let's examine for a moment the real motives of the NDP for opposing this Act, and particularly, particularly that member that brought this debate to the floor of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, that member for Regina Elphinstone, Mr. Speaker.

Seats like Saskatoon Silver Springs, Saskatoon Southeast — I have those numbers in front of me — my constituency is very similar. Other large rural constituencies have voting, voter numbers similar to those seats, and Saskatoon Silver Springs weighs out at 16,180 voters. Saskatoon Southeast weighs in at 16,343. My constituency is a little less, but not much. Let's compare that to Regina Elphinstone, Mr. Speaker, at 6,313. Saskatoon Centre, Mr. Speaker, had only 7,409. Saskatoon Riversdale, Mr. Speaker, 8,388. Saskatoon Massey Place, eleven thousand five. Regina Rosemont, 9,713.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear. That member, that member from Elphinstone with a 60 per cent turnout, which would be high I suggest for Elphinstone, could win with 1,893 votes. Allow for a little vote splitting, Mr. Speaker, under 1,500 votes would be more than enough to get that member elected. I am on a

first-name basis with more than 1,500 voters in the massive constituency of Thunder Creek, more than 200 kilometres end-to-end.

Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder they defend the old way, and it's no wonder they're trying to discredit this great legislation that we're bringing forward to make the system more fair. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today I'm very pleased as always to weigh into the 75-minute debate. And the motion before us is around Bill No. 36, which is before the Legislative Assembly for discussion right now.

So what is this Bill about? It's a Bill that's been introduced by the government that will add three more politicians — this, as the government likes to say, at the time of austerity — as well as ensuring that close to half a million citizens will be left out of the equation used to calculate our new constituency boundaries, close to . . . constituents who will be left out of the count when it comes to determining constituency boundaries, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is an interesting proposal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that didn't get raised during the election. It's a good question to ask: why wasn't this on the radar? Why wasn't this on the people of Saskatchewan's radar? What were they afraid of, talking about this during the election, Mr. Speaker?

These are pretty significant changes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think the first one that I'd like to focus on is the fact that this government wants to add three more politicians — three more politicians, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that we've heard from this Premier . . . We get incredibly mixed signals from this Premier. On one side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear the Premier say we need three more MLAs to serve the public. But he's publicly given the blessing to one of his new backbenchers to work part-time. That issue's now resolved itself, but basically he was saying we need three more MLAs. We need three more MLAs. But in the meantime he's saying, well you know what, one of my MLAs can work part-time and not serve his constituents in a full-time capacity. So again, this would be out of both sides of our Premier's mouth, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So which is this? Which is this, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Is this a job that MLAs can do part-time? Or do we need more of us to do the work? I think we're hearing mixed messages from this Premier.

So another question is, what is this addition of three more MLAs going to cost the citizens of Saskatchewan? Well it's going to cost close to \$1 million, Mr. Speaker. Close to \$1 million, again, at a time when the Premier . . . That is close to \$1 million every year, every year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again this is at a time when the Premier has warned us of budget cuts and austerity measures. So I don't think the average citizen would be really keen on spending another close to \$1 million every year for three more politicians when we're being told that there are budget cuts coming.

At the same time, this government has been cutting the civil service. They've got their 16 per cent plan over four years. So I

would actually suggest that perhaps the Premier and his ministers think about applying their own lean processes that they're so proud of to this notion of more MLAs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we cut the civil service, the people who are doing the non-partisan work of delivering the services, the non-partisan work of delivering the everyday services to citizens, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government is okay with cutting those individuals, but keen to ramp up the number of public servants — MLAs, politicians — engaged in the more partisan activity. So the Premier can't have it both ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So is it about cuts? Or is it about increasing the budget for the people who are not necessarily required, especially when you look at the numbers comparatively to what other provinces have in terms of representation?

I think one of the other things that I've heard — I believe it was the member for Kindersley talking about — he expressed the concern about large geographic rural constituencies. And obviously there are plusses and minuses to both being a rural MLA and being an urban MLA. There are challenges and there are really good opportunities on both sides of the equation. We have to work and figure out how to do our jobs well, whether we're in rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan.

And we have as MLAs, we have as MLAs sufficient resources to be able to serve our constituencies, I would argue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would suggest that, perhaps, I think that there's some really creative things we could do on some of those large, urban ridings. And we have those large ridings in the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker, two very large ridings in the North. But you have to, as an MLA, figure out how you serve your constituents. So part of it, one suggestion would be part-time office hours in different parts of the constituency. I know even in my constituency, which I can get across very quickly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have to look at different ways of outreach and connecting with the citizens in my constituency.

It's not just about geographic space, but it's about figuring out those ways to ensure that we are connecting with our constituents. One of the awesome things about living in 2012 is technology, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We now have telephone, Internet — thank you here in Saskatchewan to our Crown corporation, SaskTel — we have great means of being able to communicate at a distance with people not only in our own constituency but around the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I think that that's the large . . . The large size of a riding I think can be dealt with. And there are members on this side of this House who are also dealing with large ridings. It's about being creative but acknowledging that there are plusses and minuses, or positives and challenges, no matter where we serve constituents here.

I think for me, the second part of Bill No. 36 is even more problematic. So the new members, I would actually argue that perhaps there's a new member on the government side of the House — that would be mister gerrymander who is representing the subversion of democracy. That is exactly what we on the opposition believe are happening, and people in the public. And actually there's a quote from, there's a quote from *The*

StarPhoenix who suggest that as well: there's a whiff of gerrymandering going on here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And what this Bill is proposing is the change in the way we determine constituency boundaries. The Premier wants to move from counting the total population, like the census does, to basing boundaries on those who happen to be 18 or of voting age at a particular snapshot in time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Not at the time of the election, but a small snapshot of time. Again, no word about this in the election platform, so I don't know why the Premier wouldn't want to talk about that. Well I actually do. I think many, many people who are concerned about democracy and gerrymandering would have not been very happy with that.

[11:30]

I know in my own household, I have an almost 14-year-old daughter. Hennessey will be 14 at the end of this month. She'll have spent the next two elections not being counted, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She will be 18 at the time of the next election, but she will not have been considered in the drawing of the constituency boundaries. There are a number . . . All our young people will not be considered in the drawing of the constituency boundaries, so I don't know why we wouldn't want to count her and her contemporaries in voting in the next election.

I think one of the other things, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Well actually, you know what, I would like to quote the Premier. He had said here, "Elections are about people who are of the age of majority, 18 years and older, who can cast the vote, but the services, the representation of government is for all."

And actually the member from Thunder Creek said the very same thing. I'd like to draw the Premier's mind and the member from Thunder Creek's mind back to a time not really so long ago, to yesterday. March 14th was the 96th anniversary of the Royal Assent of the Bill of women's right to vote on equal terms to men here in Saskatchewan. So less than a hundred years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, women got the right to vote here in Saskatchewan . . . Or actually to be more clear, white women got the right to vote. First Nations people didn't get the right to vote until 1960, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So the elections are about those who can't cast the vote, if elections are about the people who . . . Sorry, pardon me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If elections are about those who can cast the vote, is the Premier suggesting and saying that elections weren't about women until 1916 or not about First Nations people in 1960? So who were those elections about, Mr. Deputy Speaker? So elections, in fact, are about all citizens. That is who elections are about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are newcomers here to Canada. Are elections not about them?

So I would argue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think the Premier is completely off base here. Elections are about citizens, not about voters. And who do we represent? We represent all people here in Saskatchewan, not just those who vote. But perhaps that's a bit telling about what the government side of the House is about. Elections are just simply about voters apparently, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So elections, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are about all of us. This is a dangerous precedent. We're taking a step back here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are taking a step back.

So with that, I've had an opportunity to say my piece here, and with that, I would like to support the motion. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Considering I only have 10 minutes, I would like to take the opportunity to respond to all of the talking points from the other side, but there's so many to respond to, I'm not quite sure where to start. So I'm going to begin by talking about the actual commission. And I'm quite disturbed actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that heckling from her chair, the new member for Saskatoon Nutana was accusing this commission, before it's even begun, of gerrymandering the constituencies, the boundary changes that are coming to this province.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, people who appeared on or were members of this commission included people like Judge Malone, Judge Barclay, Justice Ellen Gunn. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's an outstanding group of individuals who take the time to participate in this commission. And it is independent. It is independent, set up by legislation.

And I would also point out to the members opposite, who are apparently quite disturbed about having their words used against them, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition members have full input into who the members are on this commission. So if they have any concern about the goings on of this independent commission set up by legislation, that they have full input on who those people are. And we welcome their input, Mr. Speaker, because this province doesn't belong to one party or the other. It belongs to the people of this province. The NDP do represent a certain constituency, and their voice is valid at those discussions about who is going to be part of this commission.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I said, the commission will be established. It's nothing new. It's the way it's always been. Two members will be appointed following, as I said, consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. And it is mandated through legislation, the boundaries Act in 1993, that we have a change in boundaries based on the current census.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen in this census an unprecedented growth in our province. And I have to say, coming from my constituency, the brand new city of Martensville is the fastest growing community of its size . . . second fastest growing community of its size in all of Canada. It grew by 55 per cent since 2006. Warman has grown by 46 per cent since 2006. Mr. Speaker, the growth is unprecedented. I know that not all ridings are growing as fast as others, but when I look at mine, it really is unprecedented, the growth that we've been experiencing.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've been an MLA now for five years. And I have to say that when it comes to representation, for some reason the NDP think that because we are changing the boundaries to reflect voting age and over, that somehow children are completely disregarded, there's entire groups of people that are completely disregarded. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. I think, quite honestly, it's a bit

of a ridiculous argument.

I was voted in as an MLA in March of 2007. And when people phone my office, I don't care who they are. I don't care how old they are, how young they are. I don't care if they voted for me, if they didn't vote for me, if they didn't vote at all. I have people who phone me up and say, by the way, I didn't vote for you, but will you still help me? And of course I will; that's my job. I'm an MLA for everybody in my constituency regardless of who voted for me, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to touch on the member for Elphinstone who was completely outraged, apparently, that we were using the NDP record from 1979 to show that this is — the approach of using voters — is nothing new. And then he went back to 1971 to somehow make his point. So we can't go to '79, but they can go back as far as Tommy Douglas. Apparently there's a certain amount of time range in our province, but we're not allowed to talk about it. I'm not sure why. But going back to 1979, Mr. Speaker . . . And the member from Elphinstone had pointed to 1971 and said that electoral reform was an issue that year. The NDP's answer to that in 1979 was to use a voters list to set the boundaries. And I think it is an absolute valid argument on our point, Mr. Speaker. That was their answer to electoral reform issues, was to use the voters list.

Mr. Speaker, we're not doing that. Those voters lists are outdated very quickly. They're not necessarily accurate to begin with. We're going to be using census data, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is incredibly accurate. So once again, Mr. Speaker, what was good enough for the NDP is not good enough on this side of the House, and I'm not sure why. But we've seen so many flip-flops, Mr. Speaker, from the NDP that I'm not surprised that the arguments that they present don't always make a great deal of sense to them.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Centre had said earlier, when we had referenced the member for Athabasca's comments on Bill 36, that we should take those in context. So I went back. I've read the speech from the member for Athabasca several times. And taking it completely in context, when it comes to our proposal — this motion is in part about the three additional MLAs, so I'd like to speak to that — the member from Athabasca said, and I quote:

There is no question that as our population growth continues that the question has to be asked when we're getting more seats. Because right now in the Assembly, we have a certain amount of seats, and as the minister alluded to, as the population grows, do we . . . need . . . more seats . . . more MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]? And the obvious answer is yes, as the population grows. And you should have more MLAs as the population should reflect that in the number of seats that we have in the Assembly.

So, Mr. Speaker, their motion today says that we're supposed to disregard the requests for three additional seats to reflect the increase in population in our province, yet the member for Athabasca was completely in support of this. Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just once. As I said, I went through the speech several times. He went on to say, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "So we on this side of the Assembly generally agree. If you have a

growing population, have more MLAs.”

And, Mr. Speaker, there’s several other points in his speech where he says that the call for additional MLAs is completely valid, that he supports that position because of a growing population. Our population has grown by 5 per cent. The three additional seats that are being requested reflect that 5 per cent increase in population.

But, Mr. Speaker, again they can’t keep themselves on their own same page. The new member for Nutana in her speech on March 13th said, “It’s not really clear why the need is now” for this increase. Well the need according to the member for Athabasca is the increase in population. And she went on to say, “Certainly this province has had more MLAs in the past, and the government saw fit . . . [at that] time to reduce them.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, their reduction in MLAs, there was a massive decline in our population under the NDP. People were leaving this province in droves, so her argument actually supports us. If you have less population, fewer MLAs. That’s what happened under the NDP. Population left our province. Mr. Speaker, our population is growing. It will continue to grow, and I think the request for three additional MLAs is completely justified.

But perhaps the member’s comments are based on the fact that . . . I don’t know that she’s quite — I know she’s new — but I don’t know that she’s quite aware of what her job is. She seems to think, Mr. Speaker, that our job is part-time. She said in her speech that we get Fridays off. I don’t know what she does on her weekends, Mr. Speaker, but I’m working. We have Fridays off from the legislature. I go home to my office. I meet with constituents. I have meetings on Saturdays. I have functions on Sundays in summer. I don’t have weekends free. I have parades. I have fairs I have to go to. And apparently the member for Nutana thinks that she gets Fridays off.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a complete disconnect with what happens in rural Saskatchewan. We don’t have just . . . Oh we have so many towns that we represent and so many functions that we have to go to. And, Mr. Speaker, her complete disconnect with rural Saskatchewan when she said people don’t want to meet with us in person . . . Well I can’t speak to her constituents, but I know that when I go home the one thing I hear is we don’t see you enough. You’re in Regina a lot. We don’t see you enough. We’d like to see you more. They never come up to me and say oh I wish we could email you more. I wish we could send you text messages more. I wish we could phone you more. No, they want to see us, Mr. Speaker.

And when it comes to rural constituencies, that is difficult with the size that they are currently. And to expand those constituencies to be even larger is really going to limit the ability of rural MLAs to meet with their constituents because, unlike apparently the member from Nutana who works part-time, we want to meet our constituents when we’re home on the weekends, including Fridays. We work Fridays. And, Mr. Speaker, I just don’t think there’s a great understanding on the other side of the House about what happens in rural constituencies.

I’m very fortunate. I have a densely populated constituency. It’s

a rural constituency. It only takes me about half an hour to get from one end to the other. And I count myself incredibly fortunate, but that is not the same for all of our colleagues. So, Mr. Speaker, while the member for Nutana takes the weekend off — I wish her a happy Friday tomorrow — I will be in my office working.

So I will not be supporting the motion put forward by the NDP. I think our population has determined that the need for MLAs has increased, and we look forward to the continued population growth in our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I’m pleased to enter in on the debate that’s on the floor here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I’m disappointed that we’re having this discussion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it’s a direct consequence of changes brought forward by this government that simply don’t make sense and aren’t in the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

I know when we’re looking at . . . This is all in relation to this Bill 36 that’s been put forward that’s been widely criticized across the province and rightfully so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it has . . . You know sometimes when we look at a piece of legislation, we talk about that there’s intended consequences but that we need to watch out for the unintended consequences. What’s sad about this piece of legislation is it’s in fact the intended consequences that are the very problem with it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And when we look at the changes that we see to the democratic process and desire to control that process in the best interests of that political party as opposed to serving the best interests of Saskatchewan people, it’s most disappointing to see that being a priority and focus of government. I know that the changes that have been put forward certainly are offside with the research that exists in this area, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly it’s offside with the evidence that exists, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And certainly it’s offside with the public, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And it’s very much representative of misplaced priorities of this government. And it has Saskatchewan people both frustrated and angry when a government, as this government is, is in fact increasing the number of politicians at a significant expense to the Saskatchewan public — almost \$1 million to increase the number of politicians — something that wasn’t promised in the last election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but then is something . . . They’re moving forward at the same very time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you can imagine, at the same very time as this government’s moving forward with cutting and reducing core programs and services in communities across Saskatchewan — reductions and cuts in the classroom, reductions and cuts in health services, reductions and cuts as it relates to retirement security. And yet this government forges ahead with pushing the expenditure to increase the number of MLAs. This is offside with the public, and it’s a case of misplaced priorities. And it serves one purpose: to advance the political agenda and fortune of this government and as a party as opposed to focusing on the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

[11:45]

There's significant consequences when we're looking at the changes that are proposed and what we oppose here today. Certainly we oppose adding the new MLAs and the expense that comes with it, particularly at a time where we have a growing population in the province that requires programs and services. And instead of meeting the needs with programs and services to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people, this government's moving forward with making cuts on that front and wants to create more MLAs and to then control that process . . . That somehow those MLAs and that electoral process will somehow serve this party's best interests. And it's shameful that we're having this discussion here today, but I weigh into the discussion with great importance.

I also am incredibly disappointed with the changes that eliminate the voice and the role of youth in the process, that discount youth in the electoral process, with removing individuals under the age of 18 from the constituency count. And it is a real disconnect from what we should be embracing in this province. What we should be doing is embracing this young population and young communities and making sure we're setting out to address the needs of these young communities, these young families, by way of programs and services and solutions and making sure that their economic fortunes are improved as they move forward, that they're a full part of our economy as we move forward. Instead we're discounting that role.

I have a quote here from the Premier, a very sad quote from the Premier of Saskatchewan. I quote, "Elections aren't about everyone you represent. Elections are about people who can cast a ballot." Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's entirely, entirely offside with the reality of what we should be doing. The Premier of Saskatchewan, I quote, "Elections aren't about everyone you represent. Elections are about people who can cast a ballot." Mr. Speaker, that's wrong.

What we need to do is embrace the voice, the needs of young families, of young constituencies . What we need to recognize is that this is occurring all across Saskatchewan, but in many ways this sets out to disenfranchise and disadvantage First Nations and Métis communities in a significant way as well, and young communities across this province.

But if you look at the numbers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a burgeoning young First Nations-Métis population with significant needs and opportunities that we need to be identifying and speaking to by way of policy. And instead we see a government that's more interested in marginalizing those voices, discounting them from the process, and what we need to understand is the ramifications this has for us as a province from an economic perspective, from a social perspective, but also from a perspective of how we need to be able to empower and improve the lives of individual youth across this province.

So certainly we're disappointed with the changes that are put forward. I know that there's been wide critique in the public at large. Question here from political columnist in the *Leader-Post*, Murray Mandryk, "Do we really need three more MLAs?" is the title. And I know the closing line in this article, I quote, "You might want ask your nearest government MLA . . .

if he or she's not too busy."

Mr. Speaker, I think that's a good question for so many that are sitting over there right now, Mr. Speaker, and so many, Mr. Speaker, that I would suspect have a little bit of extra time to do a better job of serving their constituents and the province as a whole.

Certainly there's the articles in *The StarPhoenix*, an editorial that lays out that there's a poor rationale for more seats, taking to task a government that's pushing ahead this agenda. And I know I'd also like to quote Dr. Dennis Pilon, certainly a leading academic as it relates to political science in Canada, political studies, and from York University, and couple of comments that I'll take from some of the information he's provided. I quote, "While these people are not voters, they nonetheless draw on services of MPs or MLAs." And I quote on further, "The Bill will advantage the Sask Party."

Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing that at a time in our province where we need to be addressing the needs of our growing population, where we need to be bringing forth solutions that are in our economic and social best interests as it relates to our demographics, that we have a government instead focused on making changes that only serve the best interests of that political party as opposed to Saskatchewan people. We stand opposed to these sorts of changes.

When we look at where this government has meddled with the democratic process in the past, we can only look at examples where they interfered with the hiring of the independent Chief Electoral Officer of this province, Mr. Speaker. We can look at specific actions and provisions in legislation that was brought forward to suppress the involvement of young people and First Nations and Métis and seniors in this province from the democratic process from voting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's a shameful record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it relates to what a government should be doing.

And then it gets to a whole other notion about simply being straight with Saskatchewan people. And this is a government that just came through an election. They earned a mandate. But this was not a single part of that platform and was a complete surprise to Saskatchewan people. So you know, we've got circumstances that are sad, where we hear voices across the province talking about gerrymandering and controlling the political process, about suppressing vote, about serving their best interests ahead of that of Saskatchewan people. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker, and something that we oppose.

We believe fundamentally that when we have students that come in to this Assembly from our constituencies and they sit in the galleries, and when we introduce them and say welcome to your Assembly, we mean it, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the Assembly. We stand to represent all citizens of this province. We will never discount the voice of young people in building a better future in this province. And we'll never discount the importance of government serving the greater good of making sure that they're representing those needs, putting forward policies that improve the economic and social fortunes of that next generation, and we're incredibly disappointed to see the changes that are put forward here today.

You know, this government's more focused on spending money to inflate their number of seats or to serve their interest. We believe we should be bringing resources to bear, to improve the lives for Saskatchewan people. It's a line of distinction between that side of the Assembly and this side of the Assembly.

Certainly as such, I'll be supporting the motion put forward today by the member from Elphinstone who knows all too well the realities and the needs and pressures within his own constituency that need to be served, that are under-served by this government. And that's where we will be bringing our attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's been my pleasure to weigh in, in debate here today.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a great pleasure that I am able to take part in this debate because I believe, among the many things that have been said, I think the NDP have to be called on their comments about what the Saskatchewan Party government, our Premier, and our commitment is to youth and young people in this province. And we really need to set the record straight about those comments were totally unfair and inaccurate.

This government under our Premier, the member from Swift Current, our cabinet and our caucus . . . I think every decision our government has made since we became government in 2007 is about children, is about families. We have certainly a different way of trying to improve their lives but every, every decision we make is about improving the lives of the constituents in Saskatchewan, the families and the children of Saskatchewan. Our approach to that is by growing the economy, by creating more jobs, by creating higher paying jobs. And guess what? What does that do for families? It improves their lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is something the NDP never, they never seem to figure it out. And after 16 years of government, they never did come to the conclusion that you have a growing economy, which would mean a growing population, higher income, more jobs . . . is good for families. Well this is what we have been doing, and we will continue to do in this province.

And I want to point out some of the areas where specifically . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — I am having some difficulty hearing the member. I'd ask the co-operation of all members so that the member can make his comments. I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — [Inaudible] . . . that the members from the opposition don't want to hear about the good record of the Saskatchewan Party and all the good things that we've done for the citizens and the families and the children of this province, Mr. Speaker.

But I will point out a few of the wonderful things we've done for the families and children in this province since we formed government November 2007. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we increased the funding to the Child and Family Services by 124 per cent — 124 per cent increase to Child and Family Services.

After 16 years of NDP rule, they did nothing, but we increased it by 124 per cent.

Our government set up a child welfare review with a seven cabinet-member committee to look into issues around children and families, Mr. Speaker; invested \$34 million in the first ever child and youth agenda budget. It's all about children. It's all about families, something the NDP never figured out.

We signed an historic letter of understanding with First Nations and Métis people; hired 85 new child protection workers — 85 new child protection workers, Mr. Deputy Speaker; increased funding to extended family caregivers and family finders, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And what are we doing going forward? Fifteen million dollars invested in a new case management system that we rolled out this spring, going to bring down our second government child and youth budget which is essential to what I've been saying and about what our government has been doing.

The result of all these initiatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the number of children in care down for the first time in over a decade — down, Mr. Speaker. A 48 per cent reduction in children living in overcrowded foster homes. And I can't wait for the part where I'm able to talk about what the NDP did and their record.

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — I'd ask members to allow the member to make his comments. And so that he can make his comments with regards to the motion before the floor, I'd ask members to allow that, and I ask for their co-operation. The member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Increase the number of children placed permanently with extended family by 44 per cent since 2007.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to talk about the NDP record over 16 years of their government. And what happened under 16 years of the NDP? They're so concerned about families and children. Well the caseloads grew by 53 per cent between 2000 and 2007. They had a serious problem of overcrowding. It was identified as early as 1986. What did they do? Nothing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The NDP actually had a foster home with 21 children in it. It was totally unacceptable.

In 2000, the Children's Advocate identified a serious gap and major disconnect in child welfare services. That's under the NDP. At that time, the Provincial Auditor and Children's Advocate continually called on the NDP to develop a new tracking system. The NDP put a press release out in January 2004 stating it was moving ahead, but did nothing. When asked why the NDP didn't have the political will to confront problems in child welfare, the member from Saskatoon Centre said, "Many initiatives were started, but unfortunately they weren't sustained." Clearly more needed to be done. Well, Mr. Speaker, under 16 years of NDP rule, they admitted total failure helping families.

Now this is something very . . . has been a very good initiative of our government, is the active families benefit. It was . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I'd ask the members to come to order and allow the member to make his comments. Member from Biggar.

[12:00]

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The active families benefit was legislated by the Saskatchewan Party government and has been in effect since January 1st, 2009. Now the members might want to listen to this. The active families benefit provides a tax benefit of up to \$150 per child to help Saskatchewan families with the cost of their children's sport, culture, and recreational activities. Originally the benefit was just for children aged 6 to 14, but listen up — now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has promised to expand the program to include all children under the age of 18.

To date, the active families benefit has provided tax rebates to nearly 26,000 Saskatchewan families, with the majority having a household income of less than 80,000 people. The active families benefit makes sport, culture, and recreational activities more accessible and improves the quality of life for Saskatchewan families. Again, more examples of great things we've done for families and children in this province.

Other initiatives that we've done is the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship — \$2,000 for Saskatchewan high school graduates attending post-secondary education in the province. They're used directly for tuition and up to a maximum of \$500 per year. The Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Industry Scholarship, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$1,000 to be awarded to 80 eligible high school students who have completed the Saskatchewan youth apprenticeship program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has done amazing things for families and the opposition just do not recognize or want to recognize all the good things we've done for families and for children in this province.

I want to speak . . . I was elected in 1999 in a constituency called Redberry Lake. We went through redistribution. Redberry Lake as a constituency disappeared. I ran in what is now Biggar constituency three times. I know something about, you know, when the census is done every 10 years and there's population shifts. I, as one member, have been through that. And I certainly understand that every 10 years there's a census done and we have to — by law, that is — a commission is set up by legislation, that this commission looks at boundary changes and all those issues. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government, since we've been government in 2007, has grown this economy and grown the population by 5 per cent. And what we're doing now is increasing the number of constituencies by 5 per cent.

In just the few seconds I have left, I want to address the member from Saskatoon Nutana who said, well I guess she doesn't work on Fridays. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know I work on Fridays. This Friday I've got meetings booked in my constituency in the morning, and I'm driving to Borden, Saskatchewan — which is about an hour and a quarter, hour and a half away — to a grand opening of a private care home.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to put on many miles and make many phone calls and meet many people in my office on Friday. So I tell you what. Maybe they don't work full-time over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but members on this side work full-time. And many times we're on the phone at night and have events and functions on Saturdays and in the evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So the member from Nutana maybe should learn how to do her job rather than complain and make accusations about . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for debate has expired. Oral questions. I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Jurgens: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, today's motion for debate asks for the government, and I quote, "reject expanding the number of constituencies in the province by three."

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on March 5th, the member from Athabasca said in this House, and I quote, "There is no question that as our population growth continues that the question has to be asked when we're getting more seats."

To the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: does this conflicting comment reflect division within your own caucus over this issue, or are you people making it up as you go along? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The bottom line is the Sask Party should have been straight with voters during the election. They didn't make any mention of this during their campaign, and the bottom line is the government should withdraw this Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from Thunder Creek. Oftentimes in these debates he likes to talk about the virtues of smaller government and cuts to government and, you know, the perils of big government. When was that member on the road to Damascus? When did he undergo his conversion, and when did he become a fan of bigger government, moving forward for three extra MLAs, especially when he didn't campaign on it, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm more than happy to answer that question. We do believe in smaller government and that's why we cut \$5.5 million out of their budget and 3.5 additional million out of their travel costs, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Doherty: — Mr. Speaker, I'm a little confused on this issue from my colleagues on the other side of the House,

because depending on which day of the week that they speak on, their position on Bill 36 seems to change.

On March 5th, Mr. Speaker, the member for Athabasca said, and I quote:

The obvious answer is yes, as the population grows. And you should have more MLAs as the population should reflect that in the number of seats that we have in the Assembly.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the NDP, and I quote, “reject expanding the number of constituencies in the province by three.” So to the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: do you agree with your friend and colleague, the member from Athabasca, that we should increase the number of MLAs by three, or do you just disagree with the number?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well it’s pretty clear that we’re a united caucus here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we do not support the addition of three more MLAs. A united caucus does not support the addition of three more MLAs. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I guess, to the inconsistent members opposite, my question to the member from Thunder Creek would relate to how does he square the circle, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we have a government that’s increasing the cost to increase the number of MLAs that only serves their party’s best interests as opposed to meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people, and at the same very time as they’re cutting services for policing, cutting programs in the classroom, and cutting health services. How does the member from Thunder Creek square that circle, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — I heard part of that question and, I’m sure, enough to get the gist of it. That member, Mr. Speaker, speculates on what may be in the budget. He doesn’t know what he’s talking about as usual, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is cut five and a half million dollars out of Executive Council, compared to their last year, and \$3.5 million out of their travel budget.

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

Mr. Steinley: — During the last four years of the NDP government, there was a marginal population increase at best. Since our government was elected in 2007, Saskatchewan’s population has grown by 58,452 people.

To the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: given your record-breaking population growth and the fact that the member from Athabasca said just last week, and we quote, “we need

more seats,” why does some of your caucus insist that our government do nothing for electoral representation?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There’s no doubt Saskatchewan’s a great place to live. We love our citizens. This is a fabulous place to be. But we certainly don’t need more politicians, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you count the nine of us around here, we are a united caucus, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We do not support the need for three more MLAs. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had a hard time getting a straight answer from the member from Thunder Creek, so I’ll try this again. Sometimes they say you should beware of the small print in advertising, so I guess maybe they could point out for us, where was the small print that said ready for growth in the number of MLAs? If the member for Thunder Creek could point that out for us.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the last 16 years this government has ... or the previous government, the NDP government was focused on decline. We’re focused on growth, Mr. Speaker. And we expect that the people that are coming to this province in droves will be represented fairly by MLAs, and that’s part of the growth.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Moe: — On March 5th the opposition member from Athabasca said, and I quote:

... there’s a growing population and we need more seats. We agree with that, that there is a growing population and more seats are necessary. We would applaud that ...

To the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: what has happened between then and now for your caucus to contradict the statement made by that member?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this was such a bright idea, where the heck was it in this government’s election platform? Why did this government not have the guts to bring this forward during the election, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Thank you.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason Saskatchewan people don’t trust members opposite when it

comes to our electoral system is that we've seen them politically meddle in the past. In the previous term, Mr. Speaker, there was a bipartisan agreement for a new Chief Electoral Officer. That decision was vetoed by the Sask Party caucus. My question to the member from Thunder Creek: around the caucus table, did he support vetoing the decision that had been made about the Chief Electoral Officer?

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

Mr. Stewart: — I thank the member for that question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course that decision was made by both parties through the Board of Internal Economy.

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

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've been listening to the debate quite intently. And through the 75 minutes, we heard over and over again about this cloak-and-dagger, this secretive, secretive idea by the Sask Party government. It's so secret it's put forward in legislation, in proposed legislation. In 2003, I think it was, the election when the then Finance minister Harry Van Mulligen said — and I think that would be more cloak-and-dagger type initiative, Mr. Deputy Speaker — where he said, well we don't talk about tax increases during election; it's not popular.

Well this is something that's totally out in the open. I don't want to, you know, pick on the member from Riversdale. However there was something that she brought up about being a united caucus. And, granted, that could be the case. But I find it interesting that . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I'd ask the opposition members to allow the member to put his question.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I find it interesting that the member from Athabasca talks openly about the need for adding three more seats, but yet the member from Riversdale says that they're united in saying they don't need three more seats. So I'd ask the member from Riversdale: which is it?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just for the record, I need that member to know that I don't feel picked on. Just for the record, I think I can hold my own. Again, this was not in the Sask Party platform, wasn't even in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government had the opportunity to bring this forward in their Throne Speech. This is a pretty big piece . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Time for the 75-minute debate has expired.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 — Support for the Keystone XL Pipeline

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Stewart.]

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

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to enter this debate again. I think it's two or three months since we began this particular conversation on the Keystone XL pipeline, and it's my privilege to speak on the merits of this project once again.

I'm quite familiar with the project, as I indicated in my opening comments, because a leg of the pipeline actually goes through the constituency of Cypress Hills, entering the province of Saskatchewan from the Alberta side right in the vicinity of the community of Burstall and working its way in a southeasterly direction until it comes to the community of Monchy, which is right on the Montana-Saskatchewan border immediately south of Val Marie.

And we've watched the contractors move pipe into our area where it's being stockpiled. We've seen a lot of activity in preparation for actual construction. There's been a huge influx of both trucks and workers into the Shaunavon area and other small communities along that area as preparation for the construction, the actual construction of this pipeline gets under way.

[12:15]

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the Keystone XL pipeline as it impacts Saskatchewan, as it impacts the province of Saskatchewan and our neighbour to the west, the province of Alberta, and how it will benefit both the Canadian economy and be of ultimate benefit, both in terms of economic and energy security, to the Americans.

You know there's a lot of controversy around this pipeline project that is actually driven by . . . I would characterize it as misinformation in a more generous way and outright ideology in a more specific and direct way. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've heard things said about this pipeline project and the deleterious effect it will have on the environment and on sensitive areas in both Canada and the US [United States] that are based on pure ideology. It's almost of myth proportions.

And I want to, in the few minutes I've got today, to try and establish for the record and for our viewers how significant the impact of this pipeline was evaluated by the proponent, TransCanada Corporation. They understood the significance of this pipeline economically, but just as importantly, they understood the importance of this pipeline from an environmental perspective. And so they have undertaken very extensive review of environmental requirements and risks to try and mitigate them to the best level possible.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as anybody who is familiar with advances in new technology, you may or may not have 100 per cent accuracy in your predictions and in your projects. But without the assurance of a full fail-safe project, should we not proceed? And if that's the benchmark by which we make our decision on whether or not projects should go ahead, then we would indeed be in big trouble.

Somebody said one time, if a fail-safe or zero prospect of damage was the standard by which we evaluated progress in our society, we would be living without fire today. And we all know that fire does have some damaging aspects to it, but it's essential to the way we live our lives in terms of heating our homes and moving products forward in all kinds of different applications. Fire is an important part of our life.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what the reality is in terms of this pipeline project versus what the mythology and the ideology opposing this pipeline continues to be.

Pipelines have been around for a long time. Canada has utilized pipelines very effectively in terms of providing energy to communities and areas of our nation and also to the Americans for several generations already. And if you look at a map of North America, there are pipelines criss-crossing the continent in all sorts of directions to provide that energy security and that comfort quality that natural gas and oil bring to consumers in North America.

And I don't think anybody, you know, looking at this situation realistically, would say that that's a bad thing. We have, as our number one export market today in terms of Saskatchewan, our number one export market is the state of Illinois. We sell far more natural gas and oil into Illinois than any other market. So the state of Illinois is actually the number one trading partner of the province of Saskatchewan, and that's a little-known fact. But it's such an important part of our economy that has gone under the radar, under observed and realized by the citizens of this great province, that here is a pipeline project that has allowed the state of Illinois to become our province's number one trading partner.

And so because there are pipelines all around North America and we have benefitted economically from the use of pipelines, I think it's only safe to assume — and we can be really quite assured of this — that more and more study goes into improvements in the quality of the product, the steel that's used to build pipelines, the welding that is required and utilized to seal the junction points of two pieces of pipe. More and more study has gone into how we can best lay these pipelines, how we protect the environment when we're doing that, how we operate them, how we monitor them. All of these elements, all of these different elements of pipeline production and installation have improved dramatically over the last 50 or 60 years of pipeline experience.

And I know that there have been recent instances of failure in pipeline. We've heard about some dramatic cases where one of our pipeline companies experienced failure in the United States recently. But having said that, the technology and the improvements to pipeline construction over the years have mitigated a lot of the environmental concerns that have existed

previously and will give us a better and safer pipeline product for future use.

I want to just confirm a few things as part of this debate today. Saskatchewan knows and recognizes that pipelines have been operating safely and in accordance with high standards for decades. I've just elaborated on some of that in my opening comments. And constant improvement is part of the, is part of the industry because they know they are under greater and greater scrutiny by public officials and by society at large and by the environmental community who is insisting on constantly higher standards.

So those improvements are being made. They're being made and, as I indicated, the strength of the metals that are utilized in pipeline construction and in the very welding . . . If you're a pipeline welder, you're a highly trained and skilled artisan. You know, you can't have just anybody who knows how to hold a welder in their hand get out on a pipeline project and do the job because perfection is required when you're welding a pipeline.

The lack of pipeline capacity in North America has resulted in challenges for some of our own oil producers in the province of Saskatchewan. We know that oil production in some areas of the province is moving ahead so quickly that available pipeline capacity has limited the amount of oil that they can move. And even though there's a market there, even though there is a demand there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without the pipeline capacity to move that oil production, there's only a couple of other options available for the movement of that product.

One of them of course is trucks. And if you look around the province today, if you go to areas that are the home to a lot of oil production, you'll find that there's trucks on the road constantly. In my own community — and we've got a pretty good handle on what kind of a truck count there is on the highways moving oil — but our area isn't nearly as heavily concentrated with this type of activity as, say, the heavy oil area around the Lloydminster region or in the Southeast where the Bakken play is one of the biggest oil activity areas of not just Saskatchewan but even in North America.

So the alternative to pipelines in many, many areas are trucks. And so locals identify trucks as pipelines on wheels, and we know the impact that heavy traffic has on our roads and our highways. We know that the more trucks you have on the road, not only is there a negative impact on the condition of the highway but there's always the additional environmental risk of mishap and rollover and accident.

And so in bad weather, in bad road conditions, in all kinds of erratic circumstances, you have trucks on the road. Those oil tankers have to move. They have to keep moving the oil from where's it's pumped out of the ground to a battery or a deposit point where the oil can actually ultimately enter the pipeline system. So that's the other alternative to pipelines.

And I guess a second alternative would be railcars. And we're hearing more and more about how oil is being moved by rail. I am familiar with one class 1 railway, one of our major railways in Canada, that thinks that there is a big opportunity for moving oil by rail from Canada to US markets. And we don't want to deny them that opportunity. If they think there's a business case

for it, and they can help the industry out and provide a benefit to both the oil industry and the end consumers by moving the product by rail, that's probably an acceptable alternative. But it isn't, it isn't for one moment seen as safer from an environmental perspective than a well-constructed pipeline.

And so while there might be alternatives to a pipeline, they all bear their own level of risk. And that's part of the reality that we face as a society that is very much dependent on energy and expansion of the oil industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the growing economy of Saskatchewan and the growing demand from the American consumer market for this product makes the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline not a certainty just yet but an absolute necessity. And there is a conflict between the need and the political will to see this done that is impacting the construction of this project.

The construction of the Keystone XL pipeline will result in literally hundreds of jobs for Saskatchewan people and considerable economic benefits for communities and businesses in the area around the construction and in supply industries that will provide materials and goods for the construction project. And I think there's an estimate out of the US that says if the entire project were built, it would require about 20,000 labourers to complete. And at a time when both the Canadian economy and the American economy are looking for opportunities for real job growth, then a project of this magnitude and this necessity is a great avenue to achieve that job creation objective.

And expansion of pipeline capacity, going both north and south and east and west, is critical for the continued expansion of Saskatchewan's own oil and gas industry. I mentioned earlier that there are pipeline networks running in all directions across North America, virtually trouble-free. And in some instances where there has been trouble, response has been quick and sufficient to address the negative impact of a spill. So we have a conscientious and active industry that will operate these pipelines in their best interest, in society's best interest. And I'm sure in terms of environmental impact, they will have that interest as part of their priority as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all the positive elements of a project of this magnitude, the benefits it would bring both to the economies and to the trading relationship of our country and our province with our neighbours, in view of the ongoing need for energy self-sufficiency and reliability, a project of this magnitude can hardly be doubted. I would, if I had more time today, I would like to go through step by step all of the environmental and regulatory activities that have taken place in preparation for this project to be constructed. And I may get an opportunity at another time, at a future date, but suffice to say that right now the most lonesome voices against this project come from the federal NDP.

And we would call on all members of this legislature and all members of the federal House of Commons to get behind this project because of the value to the Canadian people. Thank you.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to

move to adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That's carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I moved that this House be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved to adjourn the House. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:30.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier of Saskatchewan
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for SaskTel
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

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

Hon. June Draude
Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Education

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Enterprise
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Municipal Affairs

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

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

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Tim McMillan
Minister Responsible for Crown
Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for Information
Technology Office
Minister Responsible for Information
Services Corporation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Rob Norris
Minister of Advanced Education,
Employment and Immigration
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for Uranium
Development Partnership

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

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Government Services