



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

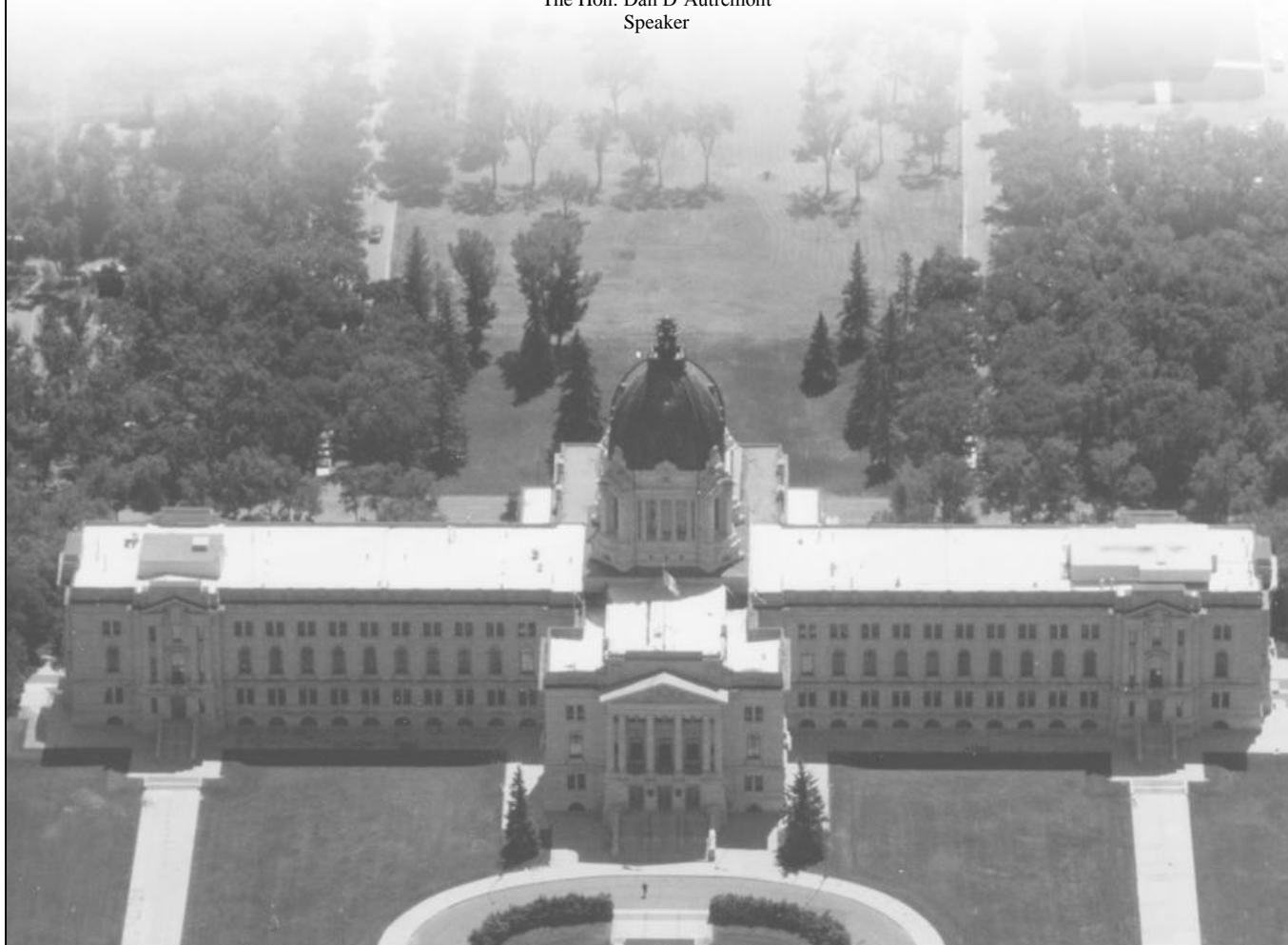
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D'Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Cam Broten

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, 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, Hon. 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, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, 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, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. 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, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition today calling for reasonable funding so all Saskatchewan students can do well. And we know classes in Saskatchewan schools are growing so fast that many classes have well over 30 students in them and many classes are now being taught in hallways and boot rooms. And in a time of economic boom it's only common sense that schools receive appropriate funding so that all students, including First Nation and Métis students, can achieve their full potential. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to immediately increase financial support for all Saskatchewan students, including resources to limit class sizes, to provide for resources for students with special needs, to support English as an additional language, and to provide more support for Aboriginal education.

And [Mr. Speaker] as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. Many northern residents benefited from the rental purchase option program, also known as RPO. These families are very proud homeowners in their communities. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly cause the Sask Party government to restore the RPO rent to own option for responsible renters in northern Saskatchewan, allowing them the dignity of owning their own homes and building community in our beautiful province in northern Saskatchewan.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of replacing the gym at Sacred Heart Community School. I was by there this morning for the opening mass for the sanctuary that has been done over as a gym, and while that certainly beats some of the alternatives, Mr. Speaker, it cries out to the fact that there are 450-plus students at that school that deserve a gymnasium just like any other school in

the city. The prayer in this petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Sask Party provincial government to immediately commit to the replacement of the gymnasium of Sacred Heart Community School.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from Moose Jaw, Weyburn, and Regina. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Saskatchewan Agriculture Student Scholarship

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Minister of Agriculture announced the fourth annual Saskatchewan Agriculture Student Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded to students in grade 12 and recent graduates entering agriculture-related post-secondary studies in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, there are four scholarships to be awarded. One scholarship is valued at \$4,000, and three runner-up scholarships valued at \$2,000 each. To be eligible, applicants must produce a three-minute creative video or write a well-researched, fact-based 1,000-word essay on one of four themes. Those themes are, Mr. Speaker: agriculture solutions for a growing world; farmers and ranchers as environmental stewards; safe food that is responsibly produced; or agriculture as a modern, forward-looking industry. The deadline to apply, Mr. Speaker, is March 1st, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is an important driver of Saskatchewan's economy. Last year we were the top agri-food exporting province in Canada for a second year in a row, with \$11.2 billion in exports. By investing in our young people today, we are supporting the future growth of agriculture in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all Saskatchewan young people to consider a career in agriculture and apply for the Saskatchewan Agriculture Student Scholarship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Autism Awareness Month

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October is Autism Awareness Month in Canada. Approximately 400,000 Canadians live with autism. Paul Collins, author and father to an autistic child, described autism with these words:

Think of it: a disability is usually defined in terms of what is missing . . . But autism . . . is as much about what is

abundant as what is missing, an over-expression of the very traits that make our species unique.

Mr. Speaker, these are moving words about an experience that affects many Canadians. One in 88 children in Canada is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. And for Saskatchewan families, Mr. Collins's words hit very close to home.

We would also like to recognize the role of Saskatchewan Families for Effective Autism Treatment, or SaskFEAT. For over 10 years SaskFEAT has been advocating for services and support for individuals living with autism spectrum disorder, their families, and their communities.

SaskFEAT points to an inequality of services for supports for individuals living with autism in Saskatchewan. Changes are essential so that services and supports are based on need rather than availability, geography, income, or IQ [intelligence quotient].

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in expressing our gratitude to those who are working to ensure this government is responding to the needs of individuals living with autism spectrum disorder. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Helipad Certified for St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last month the helipad at St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan became certified by Transport Canada, marking it as the first certified helipad in the province.

A ceremony was held on the helipad where a STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] air ambulance helicopter touched down, followed by a ribbon cutting to officially open the pad. Marlin LeBlanc, whose life was saved thanks to the expediency of STARS, cut the ribbon as an honorary guest.

This new landing pad will ensure that no matter the weather or time of year, there will be a place for STARS to land that is clear and has direct access to the emergency ward. It will allow patients to be transferred from Estevan to Regina General in only 45 minutes, compared to two hours without STARS. And, Mr. Speaker, this time will only decrease when the construction on the Regina landing pad is completed later this fall.

Estevan Mayor Roy Ludwig made these comments at the event:

With the coal mine and the power plants and all that we have going on in the oilfield, to say nothing of all the farming, we just couldn't be happier that we were able to get this service with the STARS helicopter.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in thanking St. Joseph's Hospital for hosting the ceremony, Sun Country Health Region and all of the contractors who ensured this project was completed. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Comments on Government Economic Track Record

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Here's what the *Leader-Post's* financial editor has to say about this government's economic track record.

From where I sit the government's track record in economic development brings to mind Stephen Leacock's famous phrase, "riding madly in all directions." You could say it's been two steps forward and three steps back.

Mr. Speaker, riding madly off in all directions, two steps forward and three steps back. That's not my assessment, Mr. Speaker, that's the independent assessment of the *Leader-Post's* financial editor. But I agree with that assessment, Mr. Speaker. This government shut down successful government-industry partnerships like Communities of Tomorrow, SpringBoard West Innovations, the Entrepreneurial Foundation, and so on.

It slashed the budget for regional economic development agencies and it drove the film industry out of the province. It has ignored northern Saskatchewan and it has failed to even try and close the Aboriginal education gap despite the fact that prominent economists tell us that Saskatchewan would gain \$90 billion in economic benefits if we did so.

It's no wonder the *Leader-Post's* financial editor says, and I quote, "The Saskatchewan Party government's economic track record is a checkered one." Saskatchewan people deserve better, Mr. Speaker. They want a diversified economy. They want smart growth. And they want our prosperity to be sustainable for the long term. This government is failing to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Saskatoon Ensemble Tours Ukraine

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past summer two Saskatoon groups, the Lastiwka Choir Ensemble and Pavlychenko Folklorique Ensemble together travelled and toured central and western Ukraine.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary, the Lastiwka Ukrainian Choir Ensemble is under the direction of Larry Klopoushak. Pavlychenko is celebrating its 46th anniversary and is a Ukrainian dance ensemble under the artistic creation of Serhij Koroliuk. Their tour this past summer was the second concert performed in Ukraine by this combined ensemble, the first tour being 10 years ago in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, these groups are unique. They were the first in Canada to combine dancers with a live orchestra to perform vocal-choreographic compositions. The concert tour was a two and a half hour free show dedicated to the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada to be celebrated in 2016.

The concerts took place in five cities where every show saw packed theatres of up to 1,300 enthusiastic, energized audience members. The legacy show gathered wide acclaim and much attention in the Ukrainian media.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating these outstanding individuals for their efforts as fine Canadian Ukrainian ambassadors from Saskatchewan. Thank you.

[13:45]

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

Habitat for Humanity Home in Nipawin

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to tell everyone about a Habitat for Humanity dedication ceremony and sod-turning that took place in Nipawin on October 25th. It was a special day for Brenda, Ty, Brandon, and Jett who have worked hard for a new home to call their own.

A home represents security, a sense of belonging, and a place where we can become proud, connected members of our community. Brenda's family put in at least 500 hours to build their home and you can appreciate that makes for very long days, especially with an active family and a day job that requires attention too.

I am proud that our government has helped two more Saskatchewan families achieve this goal by providing Habitat \$100,000 to create two beautiful homes in Nipawin. In fact, since March of 2009, our government has invested 7.1 million to assist Habitat Saskatchewan affiliates in providing a total of 130 homes for low- to moderate-income families in communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this includes the \$2 million that our government committed to Habitat in the 2013-14 budget. This funding is double the amount provided last year and leads the nation in percentage of increases. Mr. Speaker, this is what the Saskatchewan plan for growth is all about — to provide a better quality of life for everyone who calls Saskatchewan home. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Melfort Business Wins Pizza With a Purpose Award

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to look for a December issue of *Canadian Pizza* magazine. It will feature one of the many great businesses in the Melfort constituency. TJ's Pizza of Melfort is the winner of the national Pizza with a Purpose Award. The Muntains, Tara and Lloyd along with their two teenage daughters, have been in business for four years — only four years — and have given endless support to the community. They are also recipients of several awards from the Melfort and District Chamber of Commerce, including Business of the Year — 11 employees and over for three consecutive years.

Mr. Speaker, TJ's Pizza was also a nominee two years ago for an ABEX [Achievement in Business Excellence] New Venture Award and this year was a finalist for the Community Involvement Award.

It's my pleasure to congratulate Tara and Lloyd Muntain and their daughters on receiving this award and wish them many, many years of success in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Special Care Standards and Staffing

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, Sylvia Phillips has advanced dementia, and she's been in Saskatoon hospitals for the last two months as she's waited for a care home placement. Sylvia's son Leon says the family has "been going through hell these past two months." They maxed out their vacation days to be with her, but when they had to go back to work, Mr. Speaker, they felt they had no option but to pay for private care providers to go into the hospital at a cost of about \$1,000 per week to simply help with their mother's basics.

My question, Mr. Speaker, for the Premier: how can he explain why families are being forced to pay for private care providers to go into hospitals to help with their loved ones?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while I certainly won't speak to the specifics of the case, I am not aware of the specifics of this particular case, what I do know though, Mr. Speaker, is that as we work to renew long-term care facilities across the province, what one of our challenges in the 156 facilities, many of them that are aging in the province, is in many cases we are not able to provide the support that we would need for people with Alzheimer's and dementia.

The good news though, Mr. Speaker, in a number of new facilities, particularly in Saskatoon, and I can think of Samaritan Place, Mr. Speaker, that actually has a designated wing for people who have been diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's or other related dementias, Mr. Speaker.

But again I can't speak to this specific case, Mr. Speaker, but I would be pleased to follow up after question period.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Sylvia's son, Leon, isn't frustrated with the hard-working hospital staff. In fact he calls these staff inspiring. What he's frustrated with, Mr. Speaker, is the understaffed system. He says:

There are not enough staff to help with the enormous task of feeding. If we were not there at meal times, mom would not be properly fed. On a number of occasions we were not able to make it to the hospital at supper time. Her meal arrived, no one helped her eat, and her meal was taken away untouched.

So the Phillips family hired a private care provider to go into the hospital to help feed their mother. My question to the Premier: does he think this is an acceptable choice to give families — either pay for a private care provider to go into a hospital to help with their loved one's care, or allow their loved one to go hungry?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly know through work that we did, for example this summer with touring all of our long-term care facilities, with the work that we do on an ongoing basis with our health regions when it comes to acute care facilities, Mr. Speaker, we're always working to address issues around staffing, around the support that we can provide, Mr. Speaker.

The good news, Mr. Speaker, I can report is that in long-term care, Mr. Speaker, 14 per cent more employees are working in long-term care, Mr. Speaker, than when we first took government, Mr. Speaker. I can also indicate to the members that when you look at a staff-to-bed ratio within long-term care, it has increased 9 per cent since this government has taken office, Mr. Speaker. And when you just look at the nursing numbers, Mr. Speaker, it's up eleven and a half per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the same would hold true for acute care facilities, Mr. Speaker. We've come a long ways from when a number of acute care facilities across this province were closed and people were removed from their positions, Mr. Speaker. But we will be the first to admit there is still more work to be done.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Phillips family also says that there weren't staff available to help their mother to the toilet in the hospital. Sylvia's son Leon says, "Without assistance, she would remain in bed, soil herself, and then would refuse to get out of bed, or cry in shame." So the Phillips family, Mr. Speaker, hired a private care provider to go into the hospital to help their mother get to a bathroom.

My question to the Premier: does he think this is an acceptable choice that families are facing — either pay for a private care provider to go into the hospital to help their loved ones get to a bathroom, or to allow their loved ones to be in a hospital bed and soil themselves?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would, in a case such as this, Mr. Speaker, we would look to first of all find placement within long-term care, Mr. Speaker. One of the ways that we are trying to address that, Mr. Speaker, is that we do know that there are too many seniors who have been deemed . . . assessed for placement within long-term care living within acute care facilities, which is not the proper place for them to be living, Mr. Speaker. That's why we are expanding the Home First/Quick Response pilot program from Regina to include Saskatoon and Prince Albert, which is a longer term issue, Mr. Speaker, of trying to help seniors stay in their home longer.

That's why, for example, in this Throne Speech we've announced that we are going to . . . putting in place a program to deliver more house calls for seniors, again helping seniors live in their homes longer, Mr. Speaker. That will help to address the challenge that we do know that we do have in acute care, Mr. Speaker, with far too many seniors in acute care, living in acute care beds when they need to be placed in

long-term care, Mr. Speaker. And we are addressing this challenge.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, Sylvia Phillips needs to be in a care facility that is designed for people with dementia, to properly support people with dementia. Instead, Mr. Speaker, she's been in the hospital for two months.

Here's another quote from Sylvia's son Leon:

Mom was fully ambulatory before being hospitalized, so it was hard to see her strapped in a wheelchair because she was not allowed to walk and wander as she would be able to do in a locked-down dementia unit.

So, Mr. Speaker, she was strapped into a wheelchair because there was not an appropriate facility for her to be living in. Mr. Speaker, she was forced to soil herself in bed because there weren't enough staff to take her to the bathroom. She didn't receive her meals, Mr. Speaker, because there weren't staff available to help her eat. The family, Mr. Speaker, felt compelled to hire a private care provider to go into the hospital at a cost of about \$1,000 per week just to ensure that her mom's basic needs, her basic needs, were being met.

My question to the Premier: does he think that these are fair choices for Saskatchewan families? My question to the Premier: does he think, does he believe that this is dignified, that this is respectful care for seniors in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We take the quality of care of our seniors in this province and those particularly in our care very seriously, Mr. Speaker. That's why we commissioned the first study of long-term care, all 156 long-term care facilities in this province, Mr. Speaker, and we could speak to the results of that work, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we've put in place the \$10 million Urgent Issues Action Fund, Mr. Speaker, to address those urgent issues that came out from that review this spring, Mr. Speaker. And we're also taking steps to help seniors live in their homes longer, which is what they're telling us, Mr. Speaker.

We're also working to renew long-term care facilities and address the quality of care where we can, Mr. Speaker, within long-term care, particularly around the design because we do know that we have aging infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. Not only were 16 facilities closed over the 16 years of NDP [New Democratic Party] government, Mr. Speaker; not enough of them were renewed to begin with, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we're working on 13 long-term care facilities across rural Saskatchewan. We're working towards replacement of three facilities in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. And we opened 100 beds — much to the opposition of the opposition across the way — in Saskatoon with Samaritan Place, which by the way does have two wings dedicated for people with Alzheimer's and other related dementias, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there's more work to do, but we're going to address that challenge.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, it's clear that seniors' care in this province is getting worse under this government. Instead of improving minimum care standards, which it should have done, it simply did away with those minimum care standards. Instead of ensuring appropriate staffing levels, it simply lowered the expectations for the quality of care that seniors should receive.

When families have come to the legislature with their very real concerns, this government has been dismissive, saying there's absolutely no cause for alarm. And even when it was faced with a damning report from health region CEOs [chief executive officer], this government's response was weak.

To the minister: can he tell this Assembly what the CEO of the Saskatoon Health Region had to say about this government's response to the seniors' care crises?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, just to put it into context for the member opposite, in the 1990s when they decided to remove level 1 and level 2 from long-term care, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that they didn't do was change the hours of standards that they now support, Mr. Speaker. So today that has no reflection on the level of care that we are providing within the long-term care because those hours of standards were written in 1966, Mr. Speaker.

We believe that the standards that we should be providing to residents of long-term care should be based on the individual needs of the residents themselves. We have 8,700 residents across long-term care. Each of them have their own situations, their own experiences, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we did, as I mentioned in a previous answer, is we commissioned the first review of long-term care by the senior leaders within our health regions. They toured every single long-term care facility, Mr. Speaker. They reported back.

Mr. Speaker, I indicated that \$10 million would be used in an urgent manner to address the urgent issues that were as a result, knowing that it most likely will not resolve all of those issues, Mr. Speaker. But it is a far cry from what the members opposite did in the 1990s when they removed 1,200 beds without a long-term plan for the seniors of this province.

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

Ms. Chartier: — It was a simple question, Mr. Speaker. Here is what the Saskatoon Health Region CEO identifies as the root cause of the seniors' care crises. She says, "I think it relates primarily to the level of staffing that we have." And this is what Maura Davies has to say about this government's response to the seniors' care crises: "It won't ultimately address the larger issue of adequate staffing or the condition of some of our facilities."

So the main problem is staffing, but the government's proposed solution will not address the problem. Talk about a disconnect, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister: does he agree with the Saskatoon Health Region CEO's assessments?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the CEO of Saskatoon Health Region's assessment of the situation within one health region. We have 12 health regions in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, the report indicated that some issues around staffing are present, but that wasn't the consensus in every single report from 156 facilities, Mr. Speaker. That's why in the Urgent Issues Action Fund, we designated that the fund and the business proposals that we are requiring to access the fund could be in a variety of areas — could be in staffing, could be in equipment. It could be in food quality, Mr. Speaker. There were a number of areas where the CEOs are expected to apply for the dollars, Mr. Speaker.

But we have, as I have said before, we have increased staffing in long-term care in this province, nearly 700 more full-time equivalents across this province in long-term care. Not to say that that has solved all of our issues, Mr. Speaker, but I think we have gone farther than any previous government in trying to address the issues that have been raised in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. In fact we laid bare the issues in long-term care.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Health Region's CEO has also noted that this government's one-time payment fund won't address the over capacity issues that have our hospitals bursting at the seams. Maura Davies says:

... in addition to the patients that are in emerg waiting for long-term care, we have lots of patients in other parts of our hospital, basically in every nook and cranny we could find for them, and that's not the right setting for them either.

When you have patients in every nook and cranny of the hospital and when you don't have enough staff, no wonder seniors like Sylvia Phillips had to have private care providers come into the hospital to deliver their basic care. And no wonder our province's nurses are saying they're very afraid for patient safety.

To the minister: will he admit that there is indeed great cause for alarm in our health care system and our seniors' care system, or is he still stubbornly refusing to admit this?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, this government has never shied away from the challenges that face this government when it formed in 2007 within health care, Mr. Speaker, whether that be long waits for surgeries, Mr. Speaker. We put a plan together

and initiative to reduce surgeries, Mr. Speaker, and we've been very successful in that.

Mr. Speaker, we announced a review of long-term care, the first in our province, this spring, Mr. Speaker. We are working to address that. I released a report, I believe, 27 days ago, Mr. Speaker. I don't think anyone would have any expectation that all of the issues would have been solved in three weeks, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, we are working towards addressing them.

[14:00]

In terms of the capacities within our hospital, we certainly recognize that, Mr. Speaker, we want to get to the goal of no waits in our emergency rooms and our tertiary centres by 2017. Mr. Speaker, some of the actions that we've taken in particular to Saskatoon is 100 new beds in Saskatoon, which the members opposite opposed, through the building of Samaritan Place, Mr. Speaker; the investment of \$2 million in the Home First/Quick Response pilot program, Mr. Speaker; as well as the new hot-spotting approach which we've announced in the Throne Speech.

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

Provision of New Schools

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the headline news in Alberta today reads, "Wildrose urges Tories to pay cash for new schools as P3 plans falter." Here's a quote from the article:

With only one consortium expressing interest in the Alberta government's plan to build 19 elementary and junior highs and repay the cost over the next three decades, the party's infrastructure critic is worried taxpayers will be fleeced.

Mr. Speaker, now that's all of the opposition parties in Alberta that stand in opposition, are calling for the P3 [public-private partnership] plan there to be scrapped. Yet this government keeps pointing to Alberta as some sort of shining success with P3 schools. My question to the minister: is he paying any attention to what's happening in Alberta?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, P3s have been around in Canada for a number of years. They can really be kind of described as a first wave, second wave.

First wave, Mr. Speaker, done through the '90s and early 2000s ran into some issues, Mr. Speaker. They were ad hoc at basis according to the Conference Board of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Often they didn't have a value-for-money audit done on them, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2004 the new wave of P3s have been very successful. Most every province except for Saskatchewan so far has entered into P3 contracts, Mr. Speaker. We've learned from

other jurisdictions, whether it's Partnerships BC, whether it's Alberta, whether it's Infrastructure Ontario — all have entered into P3s. Even in Manitoba, municipally they've entered into P3s under the new format where there is quite a stringent criteria governments or municipal governments follow to make sure that they're successful, Mr. Speaker.

That's what we're doing in Saskatchewan. We are in favour of P3s, Mr. Speaker. We're in favour of getting our infrastructure built on a timely basis, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately the NDP are stuck in their old ways.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't answer the question. It was whether he's keeping track of what's going on in Alberta. The Wildrose infrastructure critic says:

If we have a sole-source contract for schools, I hate to think what we would end up paying. Where's the competitiveness for taxpayers and where's the results for kids who need these facilities?

Mr. Speaker, together the Willowgrove and Holy Family elementary schools cost taxpayers less than \$40 million. These are publicly financed, publicly operated schools and joint-use facilities. That's way less expensive than the \$46 million per P3 school that this government has budgeted. But the minister claims that's because of a construction company bid quite low on that project. Right.

To the minister: where's the competitiveness for taxpayers in his government's P3 school plan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I find it, Mr. Speaker, quite interesting that the member opposite is quoting from the Wildrose party in Alberta. That just doesn't seem like a real mix.

Last night, Mr. Speaker, I thought he was maybe more on point when he was tweeting, Mr. Speaker, the speaking points exactly from QP [question period] — because I think that's where he aligns much better — that schools were going to be private, which is absolutely wrong; that they were going to be of greater cost, which is absolutely wrong; that they were going to be late, Mr. Speaker, in construction, which is wrong, Mr. Speaker. That's more the speaking points he should stick to; probably stay away from the Wildrose party because he may have to quote other things the Wildrose party stand for as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at what's done in Alberta. And certainly on their fourth bundle, they're finding some issues with competitive on the RFP [request for proposal]. But if you look at the first three bundles, they've saved major costs on their facilities. We believe that can happen here in Saskatchewan with our first bundle. We're not looking at a fourth bundle until we complete a first one, Mr. Speaker. We want to see the savings that are realized in that first bundle

because what we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is ensure that our students in Saskatchewan have proper facilities to learn in, Mr. Speaker, not under the decline that we saw under the NDP.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, when it came to portables, this government couldn't run a three-truck portable parade this past fall. And now they say, just trust us with hundreds of millions of dollars of bundled, bulk-bought schools, Mr. Speaker. I don't think so. There's a lot of government bluster and claims on the P3 school file, but there sure aren't many clear answers or facts.

To the minister: are operating costs included in the \$420 million estimate this government has put forward on the new schools that our children need, or will the price tag be even higher? Simply, what are the full costs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when we were estimating costs on the facilities, that's what it was, was an estimate. We looked at what it has cost the Ministry of Education over the last number of years to build a school in the province. We know that it's roughly about 25 million for a school, or in a joint-use school roughly around 50 million. Some come in lower, Mr. Speaker. Some come in higher. That was a rough estimate. We're starting down the process of P3 where a value-for-money evaluation will be done.

Mr. Speaker, all of this was explained to the member opposite in committee. In fact we spent a couple of hours going over . . . In fact, I think there's two pages in *Hansard* that it was explained to the member opposite the procedure that we'd have to go through — value for money, RFQ [request for quotation], RFP — before cabinet made a final decision. And, Mr. Speaker, the member was quite comfortable. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the member said at the end of that “. . . I'm not suggesting that the route needs to be [some] sort of an independent officer.” But I bet you, sometime through question period, he's going to be asking for an independent officer.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

SaskPower Rate Increase

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After this year's hike in customers' power bills, businesses and families are already paying more than ever for their power needs. In the last five years, rates have skyrocketed more than 18 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the rate increases are a direct result of this government's mismanagement of the Crowns. They stripped SaskPower of \$120 million in a special dividend in 2012 and, as a result, SaskPower had no choice but to jack up the rates. And now with their new rate hike application, SaskPower is being forced by this government to jack up rates again, almost 40 per cent since 2009.

Mr. Speaker, why are customers being forced to pay almost 40 per cent more for power as a result of this government's dividend stripping from SaskPower?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the rate application that SaskPower has just submitted to the rate review panel is approved, Mr. Speaker, I'd like that member to know that SaskPower's average rates will continue to be competitive at approximately 18 per cent, Mr. Speaker, below the average rate charged by other thermal utilities within our country.

Mr. Speaker this is an interesting position that that member opposite took, considering only a few days ago she said this, and I quote, “. . . well we know that there is a \$10 billion infrastructure deficit, so they are beginning to catch up on that, so that is a good thing.” That is what the member from Nutana said only a few short days ago. So what is their position? Is there a deficit in the infrastructure or not?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. SaskPower writes in its application to the rate review panel their new rate hikes will bring in about \$103 million in revenues in the first year. This means that next year's rate hike won't even cover that dividend stripping of 120 million. Rather than allowing the Crown to invest in a grid to make it more reliable, renewable, and affordable, the government forced SaskPower to jack up rates to cover their own financial mismanagement. That nearly 40 per cent increase will hit people in the pocketbook hard.

Why would this government think it's appropriate that power customers are going to pay hundreds of dollars more for their power to pay for this government's financial mistakes.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Again, Mr. Speaker, you know it's kind of interesting the position that that member opposite is taking when in 1998, under an NDP government, they took for dividends 114 per cent of the earnings. In 1999 it was 97 per cent of the earnings. In 2001 it was 181 per cent of SaskPower's earnings they took in a dividend. And in 2002, 114 per cent.

What is the record of this government, Mr. Speaker? Well in 2009, what were the dividends? Zero. Mr. Speaker, in 2010, what were the dividends? Zero. In 2011 when there was unprecedented profits, we did take \$120 million. She calls that stripping the Crowns. Quite frankly, we call it flood relief in an unprecedented flood year. But in 2012, what did we take in dividends, Mr. Speaker? Zero. Mr. Speaker, we have not been taking dividends from SaskPower.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Makowsky, seconded by Mr. Merriman, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it gives me great pleasure to speak to the Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, first off, as is often done, I want to have a few thank yous. I want to thank the people of Carrot River Valley for having me represent them for the last six years. It's been an honour and a privilege to be able to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, as everybody here knows, Carrot River Valley is . . . I've long considered it, as most MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] do consider their constituency to be the best, but I always did consider Carrot River Valley a great place to be, great place for fishing, great place for agriculture. And the people there are the finest you can possibly have.

Mr. Speaker, we also, and all of us do this, we want to thank our families for having to live without a lot of us, especially as rural MLAs being away for a long time. And you know, Mr. Speaker, my wife, Terry, has become very adaptive and proficient. Last winter there was a lot of snow, and I wasn't home to shovel off the driveway, Mr. Speaker. And you know, she went out there and just did a fantastic job. I got home and the driveway was nice and clean. In fact, Mr. Speaker, she got to be so good at it that on the weekend, I didn't even bother doing anything on the driveway because, Mr. Speaker, she did a much better job than what I did.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to . . . I'm very proud of my children who now have both finished university and are out working so I actually can start having some financial ability. But both of them are working in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which makes me very happy because it's nice that you can have your children close to be able to come home and visit you.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank our constituency assistants. Shelley, Cindy, and Charlene do a yeoman job back in our constituency looking after the calls that come in when I'm not there. And even when I'm there, they still look after them, Mr. Speaker, and do a great job at that.

Mr. Speaker, Carrot River Valley, as I've said and I have always said, is a good constituency. I'll tell you how it's been really nice that we haven't had that many calls into our constituency office. And I take that as something to do with the way our government is operating. The people are happy with the way that this government is operating. And on the average, people, Mr. Speaker, are not that happy with the way the government operates. They always have complaints of one type or of another, and rightfully so. But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Carrot River Valley have been very good. They know how to operate and they know how to do it properly, Mr. Speaker.

Going on to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. I think it can be summed up, summed up in one word and that's growth. You know the opposition likes to sit back and criticize our Throne Speech or criticize our budget. But here's the catch, Mr. Speaker, they didn't have any plan for growth. You know, Mr. Speaker, before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way when you criticize them, they're a mile away or you're a mile away and still have their shoes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the opposition likes to claim that we're doing everything wrong, that we don't have a plan. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm telling you, we do have a plan and that's in our Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, our Throne Speech lays out, and we have continued to lay out what our plan is for the growth of Saskatchewan.

[14:15]

Now take a look at the difference in leaders. You know, when our leader was first elected as leader he, within six months, came up with an action plan on how things would work. But yet, what do we hear from the NDP, from their leader? He's been there over six months. Have we heard anything about what their plan is? Not a thing. All they can do is criticize.

Mr. Speaker, it's almost embarrassing to listen to them. They criticize everything. They say spend money, don't spend money; build, don't build. I don't know. The member from Athabasca went on for quite a long time there yesterday, continued on and on. But you know, when you don't know what you're talking about, it's hard to know when you're finished.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a plan and will continue to have a plan on how to move things forward. Let's take a look at agriculture, Mr. Speaker, because that's one of the main things up in Carrot River Valley along with the . . . I should mention that the lumber industry, which is operating very well, Mr. Speaker, we have Edgewood operating in Carrot River and Weyerhaeuser operating over in Hudson Bay. These plants were shut down under the NDP's tenure, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh yes, that's right too. They wanted it last minute, before the 2007 election. They wanted to throw \$100 million into the plant in Prince Albert. You know, it was a good political ploy but that didn't work.

Mr. Speaker, here's the other thing too. Edgewood is a BC [British Columbia] company. They moved to Saskatchewan because they saw that we had a Saskatchewan Party government in Saskatchewan that would not hinder business.

But I want to go on to the agriculture part, Mr. Speaker, where, under Roy's revenge, they devastated rural Saskatchewan. You know, agriculture is one of the pillars of the foundation of Saskatchewan. Last year our exports were \$11.2 billion, highest among the provinces. And, Mr. Speaker, this year with the crops that we had, the way things are going, we're going to be even higher. Agriculture is one of the things that moves this province forward and keeps the people employed. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, we also have a lot of agriculture manufacturing businesses here.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at agriculture, you have to look at

what the NDP did to devastate rural Saskatchewan. They cut the funding back to our RMs [rural municipality]. Now in order to move this product — we had a great crop, but in order to move it — the RMs have to build roads. They have to work on these roads. And what did the NDP do? They cut the funding to the RMs back.

Now the funding for the RM of Moose Range has been increased, since this government's been in power, 124 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these are great things. The RMs can actually now go and budget because they know that they're going to get 1 per cent of the PST [provincial sales tax]. They can go and budget for their bridges. They can go and budget for their roads, for their infrastructure, which the NDP completely forgot about.

A good example, Mr. Speaker, of how the NDP could cut things back, our regional parks, which of course we have a lot of regional parks around our small communities, our regional parks were basically left with nothing. Mr. Speaker, this government in the past six years has increased the funding to the regional parks 700 per cent — 700 per cent. The regional parks now are at . . . or have gotten \$5.2 million in the past six years, compared to \$650,000 from the NDP in the six years previous to us being in government.

Mr. Speaker, that is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Athabasca asks, why was that? The member from Athabasca sat there and claimed that they had bundles of money when we came into power. We took over those bundles of money. If that member had that kind of money, Mr. Speaker, why didn't they give some money to the regional parks? Why didn't they give some money to the rural municipalities?

Mr. Speaker, we can go on and on but, Mr. Speaker, it takes us into health and what the previous administration did to health. They sit there every day and ask questions on health, but what did they do? They shut down 52 rural hospitals plus the Plains.

Mr. Speaker, we had a . . . When this government came into power, we were desperately short of nurses. What have we done? We knew that we were growing. We knew that we had a deficit left on the nurse, on the health care, from the previous administration. So, Mr. Speaker, we went out and actively participated and tried to get more nurses. And we did, Mr. Speaker. We're now up to 1,000 more nurses than what there was in 2007, plus 300 more physicians, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, actually our nurse to bed ratio has gone up 11.5 per cent.

And we also have a rural health minister. Now this is really different than what the NDP did. The NDP went and shut down 52 rural hospitals. We have a rural health minister, and I've been there. He's been out to 80 different facilities within the province talking, talking to the providers of care, talking to the nurses, talking to the people, finding out what their concerns are. Where was the NDP? Did they ever send anybody out to the rural hospitals? Well yes, I guess they did when they cut the power off and closed them. That was the way NDP handled rural health.

Mr. Speaker, quite often we hear about this long-term bed shortage. And I know that there is a bad situation out there. We

know that. But of course it wouldn't be quite so bad if the NDP hadn't cut 1,200 beds. You know, we're increasing them by 1,300. Mr. Speaker, is there more to do? You bet you there is. But boy oh boy, you're just not going to do it in a heartbeat. And, Mr. Speaker, we in this government are planning for growth, sustainable growth, by the way, and we want to move forward.

You know, just a good example, there was some problems in the long-term care, so our government created a \$10 million Urgent Issues Action Fund to address the issues identified. I don't think that was ever done under the NDP. The NDP were more, they were more concerned with cutting the beds rather than increasing them.

Mr. Speaker, we could go on here, and we could talk about education a little bit because it seems that the NDP are sitting there now claiming that, you know, on how we should build schools. We had the Opposition Leader who got up and talked about the shortages of schools in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. Well okay, we said we're going to build them there. What do they do? Sits back and complains some more; doesn't like the funding for them.

Mr. Speaker, now you take a look at the difference. First off the NDP had no plan for growth. Fact is I think they had a plan for decline. Actually I think if you went back and if you actually looked somewhere hidden in their little, little deal back in the '90s, I'm willing to bet that they were continuing to look at declining enrolment. It has to be that way, Mr. Speaker, or else why else would they have closed down 176 schools? There must be a reason. So I guess they had an agenda all right, but it was an agenda for a decrease in population.

Mr. Speaker, this government, this government believes in growth. This government believes that we will move forward. You know, we've already built 20 schools. Fact is, I'm quite happy that I'm going to be going to Hudson Bay here probably in another month to do sod-turning for a brand new school in Hudson Bay. Mr. Speaker, that is a far different cry than what the NDP were doing. Like I said, their sod-turning included taking a set of side cutters to the power and cutting it off in those schools.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things that we have done in education is this student-first approach. We're going to build on some of the successes that are happening. Now the Chinook School Division used student reading assessments to help the teachers respond to each individual student's need. And, Mr. Speaker, this approach is working. In 2008, 63 per cent of the students were reading at grade level. By 2012, it had gone to 84 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are things that this government is helping, helping move this province forward for the betterment of our teachers, for the betterment of our students. And, Mr. Speaker, we as a government need these new students coming along because we need people working in this province, and we're happy to see that.

Mr. Speaker, going back over . . . There was one thing I forgot about on the health end here. I had it, if I can just find it. Another thing . . . At least I think this should fit into health. And this spring, the government announced funding to open

Angel's Lighthouse just over in Melfort — my good friend from Melfort there — over in Melfort, and to providing emergency residential services to women and children fleeing domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, these are things that we are doing to help out on that respect. And you know, the last time there was a transition house built in Saskatchewan was in 1989, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we could go on and on about this. We can go into our post-secondary education. And I'll tell you what. I'm a great believer. We have Cumberland Community College up in the Carrot River Valley, and Cumberland Community College does a great service to all of the people. It helps out with not only on the trades end of it but, Mr. Speaker, now they're actually working with the University of Regina and working students through to their university degree on education. This is nice. People don't have to . . . Students don't have to travel from out of their homes or too far away from home, go to the city all the time, to Regina or Saskatoon, to go to university. And I think these are great things. These are steps that our government is working towards and making things happen in a positive way, in a positive light.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, speaking of Cumberland Community College, it was this government that put money forward to build a brand new facility in Nipawin because of the overcrowding. Now you have to realize we're sitting right beside a couple of reserves up there. And so our First Nations people, some of them don't have their grade 12. Now do you know what? They can go there. They can get their grade 12. They can work. They can work hard on their trades. These are people . . . Then they come out of there. These are people who are going out, getting jobs, and moving forward in the world and quitting their reliance on welfare. And, Mr. Speaker, these are just fantastic. I'm just so happy to see stuff like that happening.

Mr. Speaker, this year we're going to spend more than \$500 million on our highways. Now everybody, everybody knows in this province what kind of a deplorable shape our highways were in. Mr. Speaker, our highways were well known, well known throughout Canada to be some of the worst there possibly was. Under the various different Highways ministers we've had, we've seen a large improvement in our highways. And I have to say, being up in Carrot River Valley, our highways . . . Every MLA has a highway that he wants to get worked on. There's not one that doesn't. But boy, you know, our highways are in pretty good shape and they are in far better shape than what they were under the previous administration, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

The twinning is done now, going right through to Prince Albert, as a member from Prince Albert was talking about before, going to the opening of that. These are needed, Mr. Speaker, because when you have a growing province, when you have a growing province you need to be able to move around the province, which is something that that previous administration never thought about. They just thought well, you know, if they could get to the Alberta border, well then they could hit a good highway and they'd be okay from there on, Mr. Speaker. But I'm telling you, our highways now are just absolutely far better

than under the previous administration. Of course it comes with a cost. Everything comes with a cost.

Mr. Speaker, there's been quite a few things that we have talked about and I guess I'm only supposed to use up so much time, but it's been brought up these P3s, the P3s that we have been talking about that the opposition so desperately hates. Well I've got a September-October of 2013 *Fraser Forum* magazine and I just want to do a couple of quotes out of it. And I quote:

International evidence shows that P3s substantially outperformed conventional government-led projects both in terms of cost and completion time. A study from the United Kingdom found that P3 projects typically finished one per cent earlier than scheduled and with virtually no cost overruns, while government-led projects finish 17 per cent late with cost overruns of 47 per cent.

That was done by MacDonald.

Okay then there's one more:

An Australian study found similar results with 3.4 per cent of the P3 projects completed ahead of schedule and 23.5 per cent of the government-led projects completed behind schedule.

And that was done by Duffield and Raisbeck.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we want to, we want to keep up with the infrastructure in this province, we're going to have to come up within innovative ways to be able to do it. You can't just . . . Like P3 actually is the same as me going and buying a house and getting a mortgage with the bank. It's really the same thing. If I'm going to sit there and wait until I have the money to buy that house, my chances of buying it are pretty slim or it's going to be a long time. So, Mr. Speaker, you go to the bank. You get a mortgage. It's really quite simple. Yet that's a P3, in a sense. This is what we're doing. This is what we're doing with the schools. So that way we can build schools. We can move this province forward. And there's places for P3s. And they don't fit in every situation, but there are places for P3s in this province. The opposition wants schools; we want schools. Let's get our schools and let's get them done in a timely fashion, Mr. Speaker, because this province is actually growing. It's not, it's not like under the old NDP where it was in decline all the time. This province is growing and moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I should probably give some other people time to speak so actually what I'm down to right now is saying, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that this Throne Speech is a good Throne Speech. It shows that we actually, we actually have a plan, far better than the opposition. Because all they can do is criticize but they have, they have no plan. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is why I am going to support the Throne Speech and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it also gives me great pleasure to be able to rise today and speak to the 2013 Throne Speech which opened our third session of this twenty-seventh legislature of the province of Saskatchewan.

And of course this is also my third Throne Speech and each year I feel very privileged to be able to sit in this Assembly and participate in the debates on this speech and on many other items that are going to come up for business later in this session.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech that's entitled "Meeting the Challenges of Growth" clearly outlines our government's commitment to not only fully appreciate the tremendous growth we've seen in the last six years but also to acknowledge some of the challenges that come with that growth. As our Premier said, Mr. Speaker, last year we outlined our growth plan and this year our Throne Speech outlines the road map to achieve that growth and to handle the challenges that come with that growth.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer a quote and this quote is from Whitney Stinson from Global Regina, October 23rd of this year. And I quote: "This marks the first time in our history our elected officials will represent more than 1.1 million Saskatchewan residents." And that's where the Throne Speech began today on meeting the province's growth challenges. It's great to see the media appreciating what we are outlining in our Throne Speech today.

But before I get into talking specifically about this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just review some of the activities that have occurred in The Battlefords constituency over the past few months and this past summer, Mr. Speaker.

I think one of the most exciting things that I had the opportunity to attend this year was the official opening of our new Northland Power plant. And I had an opportunity to speak at that occasion on behalf of our Minister of SaskPower. This is a new 260-megawatt power plant which is going to provide power into the Saskatchewan power grid and I think it's going to go a long ways towards providing the power that we need to sustain this growth in this province for many years to come.

Another opportunity that I very much appreciated was to attend opening of two new homes for the disabled with our Minister of Social Services this past month. These are two beautiful homes that are going to provide five new bedrooms in one home, six in another home for those with handicaps in The Battlefords — very welcome additions to the already existing homes there. And this is also part of something that Social Services has been involved with in The Battlefords.

I had occasion to speak on behalf of that same Social Services minister at the opening of two eight-plexes that are being built in The Battlefords to provide affordable housing, first-time housing for people in The Battlefords with low and moderate incomes. And I was very pleased to be able to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And this is just part of our overall plan here in Saskatchewan where we are committed \$344 million to build 12,600 new units in this province. And I think that's a very commendable record, Mr. Speaker.

A couple of other things that I had an opportunity to attend was firstly at our Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs Atoskewin Success Centre official opening in their new building. This is a

centre that's being run by our Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs and it provides first-line education for First Nations, young First Nations people looking for a job. And they provide life skills training. They provide driver licence training to make our First Nations people more . . . to prepare them better to find a job so that they can participate as well with other people in the opportunities that are available in this province today, Mr. Speaker.

Another opportunity I had on behalf of our Minister of the Economy was to attend the Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs job fair and career days that was held a couple of weeks ago here. This is their second annual job fair and career days. And this was an opportunity for, they estimated between 4 and 500 young First Nations people that are seeking employment to have an opportunity to meet with between 30 and 40 employers who were looking for employees in The Battlefords. And I think this was an excellent opportunity to bring people looking for employees together with employees looking for jobs. And I commend them for the work that they're doing in that case.

Also, and something that's very close and dear to my heart of course in The Battlefords is the work that's begun on our new Sask Hospital up there. I had an opportunity to be invited this summer to attend two 3P [production preparation process] planning sessions. These were week-long sessions and they provided the work of their week-long endeavours on the Friday afternoon, and myself and my colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford were able to attend these. I really appreciated having him there and it was great.

What they've done is they've rented a huge warehouse in our industrial park in The Battlefords and the staff, the patients, the doctors, the nurses, the psychologists, everybody from the cooks to the maintenance staff all had a part in designing what our new Saskatchewan Hospital is going to look like, Mr. Speaker. And at the end of that planning session — both of those planning sessions — something that I took away from that was that here's an opportunity for the people to have some input into what their new premises are going to look like. And I think what came out of it was they certainly claimed ownership to that new building. They're going to be able to sit down at their desk in the years to come and say, I had some input in how this was built. I can now sit at my desk; I've got a clear sightline to the patient rooms, to other stations. And it's being designed properly and I think this is an excellent exercise.

Of course this past year, Mr. Speaker, was the 100th anniversary of the city of North Battleford, and I've had an opportunity to attend many 100th anniversary celebrations. And I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the committee, the staff from the city, and the volunteers that have worked so hard to make all of these celebrations such a great success. And I know the residents of North Battleford and area have certainly enjoyed all of these celebrations.

One other opportunity that I had that I was very happy to have was I was asked by the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport to attend on his behalf and present a cheque for \$83,000 jointly to the city of North Battleford and the town of Battleford, in support of our urban park. It's The Battlefords valley park. And something that I commented on that night and I think it's very important, we hear a lot about our regional parks and indeed

about our provincial parks but not a lot about our urban parks. And I think this urban park is very important to the residents of The Battlefords and to visitors that come to The Battlefords. It's allowed the city and the town to be able to build hiking trails, to build cross-country ski trails, to build portable barbecues, warm-up shacks down on Finlayson Island, those kinds of things. And that all adds to the quality of life for The Battlefords and for this province together.

And while I'm talking about giving thank yous, Mr. Speaker, I think I would like to at this time thank two people that are very, very, very important to the operation of my constituency office in The Battlefords. And those two people are Lillian Robinson and Gail Heintz.

[Applause]

Mr. Cox: — Lillian and Gail — thank you — keep my office running, running smoothly. They are tasked with keeping my schedule up to date, keeping me at the functions, some of the few that I've just mentioned today, but I think more importantly in handling the questions, the concerns, the problems that constituents bring to them on a daily basis. They handle these very efficiently, very professionally, but I think more importantly, they handle it with a lot of compassion. They are very prompt in getting the message to the ministries here in Regina. And I would also like to offer my thanks to those ministries. I think the staff in the ministries here in Regina do an excellent job, and in every case they get back to either my office or to the constituent. And that's excellent service that I think are being provided, and we should definitely acknowledge our ministries for doing that.

Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I think that most of my colleagues will agree, that in order for Saskatchewan to continue to be the leader that we have become in recent years, we will need a good education for our young people. That is why that I have chosen to address some of our education priorities at the beginning of my address here today.

Just to highlight some very astounding figures that reflect our growth, I would mention elementary enrolment figures in and around two of our major cities. And I know some of my colleagues have mentioned some of these before, but I think they bear mentioning again, Mr. Speaker. Here in Regina, elementary enrolment has grown since 2007-2008 by 3,369 students. That's a whopping 18 per cent increase in enrolment. In Saskatoon, for example, that increase has been even greater at 20 per cent or 4,256 students.

Now let's look at one of our newest cities, the city of Warman — a whopping 90 per cent increase of 428 students in that city. A similar story in Martensville with 52 per cent increase in elementary enrolment.

Mr. Speaker, that is why in this Throne Speech we have outlined plans to build nine new joint-use facilities in these centres. And, Mr. Speaker, that is in addition to the \$600 million that we have spent since 2007 on 20 new schools, 23 major renovations, and 900 other minor renovations to our schools. Along with this increase in enrolment that I've just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we also know that there were 15,000 births in Saskatchewan last year. So those numbers are going to

continue to increase and we must plan to handle that increase in the future.

This past fall, my colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford and myself were invited to attend the monthly meeting of the Living Sky School Division. It's something that we do on occasion just to keep abreast of issues that are happening in our school division and any questions or concerns they might have. Two issues that they brought up that evening to myself and my colleague, the first one was bandwidth in rural schools and the second was the need for more consultation between the Ministry of Education and stakeholders.

[14:45]

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say our government is listening. Both of those items have been addressed in this Throne Speech. SaskTel is undertaking a commitment to provide greater bandwidth in our rural schools. One of the school board members that night, Mr. Speaker, talked about when the high school in his town is using their computers, then the children in the elementary school can't use their computer lab because there's no bandwidth. Well we are going to correct that problem, Mr. Speaker.

The second issue that I was also very pleased to see a commitment in our Throne Speech was that we are going to continue with more consultation from the Department of Education with students, with teachers, with parents, and with administrators. This government does listen, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to offer a second quote if I may, Mr. Speaker. And this quote is from Dale Hunter, CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Regina, October 23rd of this year, and I quote, "The government is promising new money and new ideas. There can be little doubt health care is once again back at the top of the agenda."

Mr. Speaker, we are addressing health care issues. There are now 300 more doctors practising in this province than there were six years ago. In 2007 we committed to hire 800 more nurses for Saskatchewan residents. We have far exceeded that goal. There's now 1,000 more nurses working in our province.

In the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to see the announcement that the collaborative emergency centre in Maidstone is now open and the announcement that we are committed to open four more collaborative emergency centres, one close to The Battlefords and that is in Spiritwood. Although, Mr. Speaker, neither of those are in my constituency of The Battlefords, I think they're going to be a benefit to The Battlefords because now people who are in need of emergency care from communities that are, say, close, partway between The Battlefords and Spiritwood, partway between The Battlefords and Maidstone, will now be able to receive their emergency care in either Maidstone or Spiritwood. And I think that's going to go a long way to relieve the pressure on the Battlefords Union Hospital, so I applaud those efforts.

A few moments ago I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that I had the opportunity, along with my colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford, to attend the 3P for the Saskatchewan Hospital planning. So I was certainly delighted to see a further

announcement in this Throne Speech of the ongoing work at Sask Hospital. And I would just like to say to the residents of The Battlefords, to the constituents there, that every day we are one step closer to the reality of a new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, in order to plan for continued growth and to plan for the challenges of that growth, we know that we have to update our infrastructure. And that is why since 2008 this government has spent \$13.2 billion, more than double in the previous six years, to upgrade our infrastructure. We've built new hospitals. We've built new schools. We've upgraded water and sewer systems and laid new water and sewer systems. We've upgraded our electrical system.

And at a function I was at recently, Mr. Speaker, and had a conversation with some SaskTel management people from The Battlefords, they told me that their plan for SaskPower over the next 10 years is going to involve expenditures of approximately \$1 billion a year. That's their long-term commitment to upgrade the infrastructure that we inherited when we came to government, Mr. Speaker, the deficit in that infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that I was very delighted to see in our Throne Speech because we know that to continue growth for this province, we're going to need more workers, we've announced 1,000 new training seats. We've announced a commitment for 700 new adult basic education spots. And closely related to this, and I think very important to The Battlefords area, is the driver ed program for high schools on First Nations. We feel that in the first year, Mr. Speaker, 2,600 young First Nations will take advantage of that program.

And as I mentioned earlier in my address here today, I've attended numerous training sessions with Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs, Battlefords Tribal Council. I've been to the Indian Métis Friendship Centre, their training program, SSIT, and as well our Ironclad training centre. All of these training centres outline that one of the first things they do for their First Nations clients is they have to get them a driver's licence. In order to get a job away from their home reserve, they need a driver's licence to get to, back and forth from work. So I think this is going to go a long way, Mr. Speaker, to assisting our First Nations to get on a level playing field with our students from the urban areas. They're now going to have a greater opportunity to get employment and to be part of the opportunities that are available in this province.

Mr. Speaker, even though The Battlefords is an urban constituency for the most part, we certainly recognize the importance of agriculture in our community and all across this province.

And I'm very happy to see such a great crop come off this fall. And I think some of my colleagues have mentioned it earlier on. If this isn't a record crop for Saskatchewan, it's awful close to a record crop. Our prices are good. Our cattle prices are good as well. I think the whole agriculture field is in good shape this fall.

In 2012, Mr. Speaker, we exported \$11.2 billion worth of agriculture exports from this province. That's the highest of all of Canadian provinces and territories for the second year in a

row. And it happens to be one-third of all of Saskatchewan's exports. That drives home the importance of agriculture to this province.

And last fall in our plan for growth, 2020 and beyond, we have an ambitious goal set of \$15 billion in agriculture exports in 2020. In order to achieve that goal, we realize that we're going to need funding committed to agriculture research. And that's why in this Throne Speech we've committed \$27.7 million to go towards agriculture research to help our ag producers attain that goal of \$15 billion worth of exports.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very proud of our record in assisting those citizens with long-term and enduring disabilities. Today more than 11,000 citizens in Saskatchewan are on the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program. And we now announce in this Throne Speech that we have made our third increase in four years to the benefits paid out under that program.

Our seniors, Mr. Speaker, our seniors enrolled in the seniors' income plan, and more than 16,000 of them today, will see their benefits triple from what they were in 2007 by 2015.

Mr. Speaker, this past summer, I was very pleased to have been asked to sit on our all-party committee for highway traffic safety. And our Chair from that committee was our MLA from P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton, and the members from Saskatoon Meewasin, Regina Walsh Acres, Sask Rivers, and myself from this side, and our two members from across the aisle from Cumberland and Saskatoon Riversdale. And I'd like to take this opportunity to say how much I enjoyed that committee, how much I enjoyed getting to know our two members opposite. We had some good, excellent discussions.

We went into that committee with, I think, a single aim, and that was to try to solve some of the problems with traffic in this province and to prevent some unnecessary deaths. And I thank the two members opposite for their contribution, to what they brought to the table as well. Our committee travelled from Regina here. We started our deliberations here. We travelled to Estevan, then we moved on the next week to Saskatoon, to P.A. We had a session in La Ronge as well as in Pelican Narrows. And as well as the personal presentations that we had to us, Mr. Speaker, we had many, many written submissions that we went through in coming to our conclusions.

Basically what our committee looked at, Mr. Speaker, was five different items of traffic safety. Firstly we looked at impaired drivers. We looked at distracted drivers. We looked at excessive speed. We looked at dangerous intersections. And we looked at collisions with wildlife.

And some of the things that we come up with, some of the suggestions, some of the problems that we identified and some of the ways to solve some of these problems, one of the first things we identified is that we need to increase the awareness of Saskatchewan drivers to these problems. And we need to do that by training, by advertising, by commercials — whatever we need to do to convince our drivers of those things. Impaired driving is dangerous. Distracted driving is dangerous. Excessive speed is dangerous. And we also need to be aware of dangerous intersections. And those are the things that we looked at.

And awareness was the first one. The second one is enforcement of course. We know we need enforcement, in some cases more enforcement than we have right now. And thirdly we need stiffer penalties. Well, Mr. Speaker, it was very gratifying to see in this Throne Speech that our government is responding to our suggestions. And it's very great to see that our efforts have been worthwhile.

We noticed in our Throne Speech we're talking about more twinning of highways, which will help make them safer. We're talking about a pilot project for passing lanes. We're talking about tougher penalties. All of these things have been outlined in our Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to just wrap up here in a few more minutes, but I'd like to just summarize some of the things in this Throne Speech that I think are important to The Battlefords. You know, I was at actually two functions this past weekend, had an opportunity to talk with some of the constituents from The Battlefords, and had some very positive comments. And unlike my colleagues from Regina Rosemont and from Athabasca — it seems they had negative comments — I had very positive comments.

And I don't know whether those across the floor are negative because they're in opposition or they're in opposition because they're negative. It's kind of like the chicken and egg thing, I guess. And I don't know where that's going to go.

But I'd like to just talk about some of these things that are important for The Battlefords. And you know, I had a couple of fellows who hadn't read the Throne Speech yet, so they asked me, what is it that's in this Throne Speech that helps The Battlefords? My response to that, Mr. Speaker, was basically what's in the Throne Speech that's good for one citizen in Saskatchewan is good for us all. What's good in Estevan is good in Yorkton, is good in P.A. and Swift Current and North Battleford. And that's what this Throne Speech was all about.

But specific to us, Mr. Speaker, if I can just summarize. First and foremost, mention again of the planning that's ongoing for our Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. Secondly, our initiative to continue building affordable housing in Saskatchewan and certainly in The Battlefords. We've seen in the last five or six years 161 affordable housing units built in The Battlefords. That's going to be continuing. I think it's important, as I mentioned, that our collaborative emergency centres in Spiritwood and Maidstone again will help relieve some of the pressures on our Battlefords Union Hospital.

Our Traffic Safety Committee, the recommendations coming out of that and that we're going to see legislated here later this fall I think are also important to help save lives in The Battlefords, very important.

I think our First Nations education . . . our drivers ed program on our First Nations, very important. We have several First Nations within a very close proximity of my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very pleased to see that we're going to offer that driver training to the First Nations people to help put them on a level playing field with the students coming out of urban schools.

I'm happy to see the bandwidth being increased in and around The Battlefords to help school children be able to access computer training. Our adult basic education seats, Mr. Speaker, very important in The Battlefords as it is in other parts. And of course our student support for our post-secondary students, some \$338 million in the past year for direct support for students, very important.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, just one more quote. And this quote is from Wayne Mantyka, CTV Regina, October 23rd of this year, and I quote, "This Throne Speech maintains the government's focus on a growth plan as the province pushes forward with expanding the economy and dealing with the issue that growth brings." Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with Mr. Mantyka 100 per cent, and for that reason I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne and will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced of Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to rise in reply to the Speech from the Throne and to speak in support of this speech. We know how important this speech is for people right across the province. And as I begin, I'd like to, I'd like to turn my attention just briefly to Saskatoon Greystone and the constituents that I have the honour of representing on a daily basis.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased to talk about the support that I receive in the office, and Ms. Katie Konkin is there. She's helping to make sure I stay on time and on track and anyone that knows me knows that that's no main feat. And so as she's returned from Queen's, a degree in hand, she's returned to Saskatchewan like so many others from this province that are coming back, looking at the opportunities as they present themselves, looking at the employment prospects for today and into the future, and also for the high quality of life that there is here for families, with the knowledge that obviously it's a remarkable opportunity where young people can roll up their sleeves and help to shape the future of Saskatchewan in unique ways.

I'd also like to pay tribute to the members of my family, who provide me support and allow me to undertake the work at hand, as well as those right across Saskatoon Greystone that speak in kindness and also in candour about some of the challenges and opportunities that they see right across the community.

I think I speak for all of us, regardless of partisan stripe, when I say that it's our constituents that keep us grounded, keep us focused on the tasks at hand, and make sure that we remain in contact and in touch on a daily basis with opportunities for learning, for listening, for empathizing, and ultimately do our best to act upon for those constituents that we all serve.

Mr. Speaker, there was an important book published by our former Lieutenant-Governor Dr. Gordon Barnhart. It's a biography of our first premier, Premier Walter Scott. And in that biography, Dr. Barnhart recounts a reflection on the first

meeting between the first university president, the University of Saskatchewan president, Walter Murray, and our first premier, Walter Scott. And as Walter Murray was able to get off that train and was greeted by the premier, he looked around. He had come from the east coast, well-established communities, and well-established post-secondary institution. As he got off that train, he asked a simple question, and the question that he asked is, why should I stay? Because as you might imagine, there was no university that was built. It was something that he had accepted a challenge to come and undertake. And Walter Scott responded, and I'll paraphrase simply to say in a way that still inspires all of us to think about and reflect upon the value of the people of this province. And he said, because this is a big land for big people with big ideas. And, Mr. Speaker, when we think about the significance and the importance of this Throne Speech, we can think about the significance and the legacy of those big ideas.

And, Mr. Speaker, a big idea then, more than 100 years ago, and a big idea today focuses on ways that government can help ensure that growth continues — although government is not responsible for this growth; that comes from a variety of sources, from the private sector, from communities, from families, but government has a facilitating role — but not just that growth but ways to overcome some of the challenges, inevitable challenges, in fact universal challenges that are associated with growth.

And, Mr. Speaker, growth is the cornerstone of the new Saskatchewan, a defining and a definitive character of the new Saskatchewan. So what does that look like today? For the first time in history, Saskatchewan has a population of more than 1.1 million people. And, Mr. Speaker, when we think about a very simple measure, a very simple matrix that Tony Blair offers in his recent biography, that matrix is, are more people moving into a jurisdiction or moving out? And, Mr. Speaker, importantly, more people are moving into Saskatchewan. More people are staying in Saskatchewan. More people are envisioning Saskatchewan as the land of promise for themselves and their families, and that's vitally important.

We also know that there have been more than 14,700 new jobs created year over year right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This is a really, really important statistic because we know that there are jurisdictions, in fact there are countries around the world that haven't seen that kind of employment growth. And, Mr. Speaker, when we think about communities right across the province and how they are thriving and how they're growing, they're helping to define the new Saskatchewan. For example in Saskatoon and in Regina we see nation-leading growth records in GDP [gross domestic product], and again we can go to the Conference Board to see how that can be situated against the context of other communities and other cities right across the country.

Mr. Speaker, we know that our government is reflecting and reinforcing the momentum that's under way across the province. And we know how important it is that others are helping to lead this growth and, at the same time, we're playing a facilitating role.

The agenda, as it's spelled out in the Throne Speech, is about making sure that we continue to help move Saskatchewan

forward. An example that is evident of that commitment certainly was on display last week with the announcement at Dundonald School where our Premier announced nine new joint-use schools. Four of those schools will be located in Saskatoon, and others will be located across the province. These schools will be constructed through a public-private partnership. And, Mr. Speaker, these are just simply some additional investments, vital investments in helping to make sure that our growing population and our growing enrolment continue to have their needs met.

We know that there's more work to do. There's been plenty of work done in school infrastructure already, but this new announcement and these new schools are going to help, just as the infrastructure investment at St. Matthew School right in the heart of Saskatoon Greystone continues to move forward, where recently I had an opportunity to sit down with Principal Rivard and have a look out over the construction that's under way, understand the challenges that he and his team face on a daily basis as they're balancing the needs of the school as it's operating today, in fact in two locations, and at the same time working with an eye on the future when the renovations are going to be complete and the school is going to be unified once again. And I'm delighted to see the kind of progress that's being met, and I'm thankful for his effort and the effort of his team as we continue to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect of education — and education is one of those big ideas — but another aspect of education that is really worthy of our attention, worthy of our empathy, and worthy of our action relates to helping to make sure that students feel secure in our schools. Soon our government is going to respond to the anti-bullying recommendations that were put forward by the member from Saskatoon Fairview, based on the extensive consultation she held throughout the province with students, with parents, and with teachers.

I was able to attend one of these sessions in Saskatoon, and I was able to see her level of engagement with community stakeholders, with people that came and told their stories and shared their concerns. She sat with some students that were there that evening as they began to talk about some of the challenges and the hurdles that they face. And I just want to make sure that we acknowledge in a very public way the work of the MLA for Saskatoon Fairview for her important work on this vital initiative. Importantly she's going to help be part of hosting a forum during national Anti-Bullying Week in November to discuss directly with students key aspects and characteristics, troubling characteristics of bullying, and identifying pathways to help prevent bullying right here in Saskatchewan. And we know there's more to do, but we really appreciate her effort.

Another big idea — and has been from the early days of Saskatchewan where really we were seen as innovators in health care at the community-based level — continues to be our focus on making sure that as we invest in health care with the knowledge that there's always more to do, that we're helping to improve the quality of life for people right across the province. I think recently what we've seen is some needed attention on long-term care, and what we've seen recently is the creation of a \$10 million Urgent Issues Action Fund to help address issues that have previously been identified, like purchasing required

equipment, insuring that more baths are available, that there's improved nutrition, improving responsiveness, and a range of other initiatives. We know that there is more to do, but this investment, this additional investment is meant to help make sure that we continue to see some improvements in this area because that means improvements in the quality of life for people right here in the province.

I'd also like to touch upon some of the important work undertaken through our Ministry of Social Services. And really when we talk about the Ministry of Social Services, we talk about efforts that are undertaken to help provide greater support and services for those among the most vulnerable in our community. I think we've been able to make some important gains in this area, again with the knowledge that there's always more to do.

A couple of areas that have come to mind, first and foremost on housing. Our government has committed more than \$344 million to expand the housing supply across the province by more than 12,600 units and to repair or upgrade about 24,000 additional units by 2016. In fact last year, Saskatchewan led the nation in housing starts on a per capita basis with the total number of rental starts in 2011 and 2012 exceeding the number of rental starts in the previous 16 years combined. Again we know there's more to do, but when we begin to look at statistics that offer that there were more rental starts in 2011 and 2012 than all of those in the previous 16 years, I think it demonstrates a heartfelt commitment for us to move forward in this area.

Indeed and additionally, we'll be broadening the HeadStart on a Home program to encourage the construction of additional rental properties. And since its creation in 2011, HeadStart on a Home has provided more than \$193 million to finance the construction of more than 1,150 entry-level homes across the province. That's a big idea, Mr. Speaker. We know housing is vitally important. This is an initiative that's making a real difference for Saskatchewan families.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that there's more work to do with those that work to overcome and work through and demonstrate their resilience as they work with others in areas of disabilities. And I'm very pleased to see that more than 11,000 Saskatchewan citizens with long-term and enduring disabilities have now enrolled in our SAID program, an income support program that recognizes unique needs and experiences. And I can think of a number of conversations, and I know I'm not alone, as colleagues again on both sides of the aisle meet on a regular basis with those among our most vulnerable in the province. This initiative is making a difference in people's lives, and it's based on stories that we've heard about ways to help out perhaps in just simple, straightforward ways. This year our government was pleased to bolster the benefits paid out under the SAID program for the third regular increase that's taken place over the course of the last four years.

I'd also just like to touch on the work that's under way to help support our seniors, again with the knowledge that there's always more to do. A few months ago we were pleased to increase the benefits paid out under the seniors' income plan, and indeed at this point more than 16,000 Saskatchewan seniors receive SIP [seniors' income plan] benefits every month. And this I think is vitally important when we think in the context of

our population and some of the demographic characteristics that we see here in Saskatchewan, a growing population to be sure, 1.1 million people strong, but we know that seniors have played a vital role in helping to lay the foundations of Saskatchewan. And we think that this is a very, very important support initiative that we hope is, certainly the feedback is helping to make a difference in people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last 14 months or so, I've had an opportunity to spend a fair amount of time in a number of our rural and remote communities and reserve communities. And during that time, especially in our North, I received some considerable feedback about people in communities that wanted to have greater access to high-speed Internet, among other services. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased to see, within the Speech from the Throne, the northern fibre expansion project which is a partnership between SaskTel, SaskPower, and Cameco to bring high-speed bandwidth to our North through 566 kilometres of new fibre replacement.

[15:15]

This is going to make a real difference. It's going to make a real difference for young people, especially in those communities that are increasingly connected. In fact when the member from Fairview and I undertook some consultations with First Nations and Métis youth across the province, we saw how connected these young people are and want to be in ever-increasing ways. And I think this is going to make a real difference in the lives of those young people, among others.

Mr. Speaker, I also just want to highlight on a key issue of the environment and regarding water. What we saw in the Speech from the Throne is that it is highlighted that our government has implemented, under the good work of our Minister of the Environment, a 25-year Saskatchewan water security plan to ensure our water resources are used in a sustainable manner. And we know how important water is for today, but also for the future. And so we know how important the work of our Minister of the Environment, and a good friend and colleague from Saskatoon, how important his work has been in this endeavour. And I wanted to make sure that we highlighted this.

Mr. Speaker, I also have the privilege of serving as the Minister of Advanced Education, and I wanted to touch on a number of initiatives that have been identified in the Throne Speech as well as those that are consistent with and aligned with the speech. Mr. Speaker, since first taking office we know that advanced education has been identified as a consistent priority for our government. In fact during the 2007 election we highlighted the graduate retention program which, shortly after being elected, we were then able to act upon. The program provides up to \$20,000 back over seven years for graduates that stay and work and thrive here in Saskatchewan. And I'm delighted to highlight that since its inception, since this program began in 2008, we now see more than 40,000 graduates from across Saskatchewan benefiting in the graduate retention program.

This is a vitally important number because when we think about that 1.1 million, when we think about the population having increased by more than 100,000 people, we know that graduate retention, that is, making sure that young people as they

successfully complete and finish school, whether that's an apprenticeship program, whether that's a SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] diploma or a SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] certificate, whether it's out of the regional colleges or through our universities, that they're staying in Saskatchewan and they continue to draw on this program. It's one of the reasons that we've made sure that it's in place, and we're delighted to see that they're helping to build and helping to ensure that the momentum remains under way in the new Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we've also put in place, based on a platform commitment from 2011, the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship which provides \$500 a year, up to a maximum of \$2,000, to high school graduates that then move on to post-secondary education and skills training right here in Saskatchewan. And the good news is more than 4,500 students are benefiting from this initiative already, Mr. Speaker. These are just a couple of programs that we think are making a real difference in the lives of young people because we know young people have always helped to define and give shape to Saskatchewan.

In fact in student supports this past budget, the budget year that we're currently in, sees more than \$117 million in student supports for programs such as scholarship, loans, and bursaries. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that this draws on a number of initiatives that, as a government, we've focused on and helped to put in place, for example, reducing interest rates on the Saskatchewan portion to student loans, eliminating vehicles from the calculation of student loans, allowing full-time students to earn as much as they choose to during their time of study, and a number of other initiatives that we heard directly from students that in small but significant ways helped to improve the quality of their life, helped to ensure that they have a few more dollars in their pocket while they're studying, and helped to ensure that as they're successful in their studies, that they can then look to the thousands of job opportunities that are available in the new Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, on student supports, since that first budget in '07-08 we've provided more than \$388 million in student supports, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that again that message is very, very clear, that our post-secondary sector and our students especially have opportunities to continue to thrive in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the post-secondary sector, our institutions and students combined, we've made sure that those investments again have been a real priority. That's why the overall investments since coming to office in 2007, the overall investments for post-secondary education, including student supports, is \$4.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. It includes operating costs, capital projects, and student supports. For example, since 2007, operating funding to the University of Regina has increased by 36 per cent to over \$105 million. Operating funding to the University of Saskatchewan is up 59 per cent to now about \$333 million. Operating funding to SIAST is up 23 per cent to \$147 million. And operating funding to our regional colleges is up about 61 per cent to over \$27 million.

We've also invested significantly in key capital projects. In fact since 2007 and '08 we've invested over \$400 million into

capital projects in the post-secondary sector. A good portion of this funding has been dedicated to the Health Science Building at the University of Saskatchewan. I had an opportunity to be there two or three times in recent weeks, and we know how important that building is for the future of the University of Saskatchewan as well as for the future of this province. It's home to students and faculty and researchers. In fact we were able to have a look at one of the labs, and work is under way. And it's just wonderful to see the kind of endeavours that that investment is now allowing.

Mr. Speaker, we've also participated with the federal government in previous years with the knowledge infrastructure program. And it's worth highlighting a few of these initiatives, Mr. Speaker, because that knowledge infrastructure program as it pertained to the post-secondary sector offered more than \$117 million in infrastructure improvements and enhancements, for example, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. We were able to complete the renovations. Essentially when we came into office, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine was tarped. Construction had come to a standstill. That was affecting not simply the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, but it was affecting communities right across the province. We were able to move forward. That construction is now complete at the University of Saskatchewan, and we know that the Western College of Veterinary Medicine has students studying from British Columbia, from Alberta, from Saskatchewan, from Manitoba, and from other places across Canada and beyond. And, Mr. Speaker, that was a vital priority for us to move forward to help ensure that we continued to demonstrate our leadership, a leadership that continues to be acknowledged.

We were able to move forward with Lab Building upgrades at the University of Regina. And we continue to see a number of other initiatives right across the province, whether we're talking about improvements at Great Plains, whether we're talking about improvements in the Southeast at an energy centre that's now down in Estevan, whether we're talking about the improvements that, and really the enhancement of an entire facility in Nipawin. I recently had an opportunity to go and tour right across the province. We see that those dollars, both federal and provincial dollars, have helped to make a real difference.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to see real progress on, relates to student housing. In fact, since 2007 and '08, we've provided more than \$34.8 million towards more than 1,000 new units since we've become government. That's more than a 4,000 per cent funding increase in our first six years compared to the opposition's last six years — a 4,000 per cent increase in funding for student housing. Mr. Speaker, that means more students in communities like La Ronge, in Saskatoon, in Meadow Lake, in Prince Albert are now able to focus more time on their studies because they and their families have more places to live. And in fact, in this most recent budget, the University of Regina received an additional \$10 million to begin construction on a new 605-bed student residence and child care facility. Mr. Speaker, we know there's more to do here, but this is a very real and lasting contribution to the quality of life for our students.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to highlight some of the work that we've done in co-operation with First Nations and Métis

students and educators and institutions right across the province. In the last six years, we've seen an investment of more than \$245 million in First Nations and Métis education and skills development, which includes providing \$5.7 million for SIIT, a 51 per cent increase from 2007. It includes more than \$10 million for the Gabriel Dumont Institute, a 39 per cent increase from 2007.

And importantly across Saskatchewan's post-secondary sector, we see that First Nations and Métis students, the enrolment of these students has increased from around 13,000 students to now more than 15,000 students over the course of the last five years. This year alone there's been a significant increase in First Nations and Métis enrolments in our universities. For example, at the University of Regina there's been a 15 per cent increase year over year. At First Nations University of Canada, we're very happy to see a more than 21 per cent jump in enrolment at that institution. At the University of Saskatchewan, we see — and the numbers are still preliminary — we anticipate what has been a 30 per cent increase in Aboriginal enrolment at the University of Saskatchewan. Those are some of the indicators.

There are other institutions that are seeing similar trends. For example, we recently did a tour of Cumberland College in Nipawin, and we've seen significant enrolment increases from our First Nations and Métis students in that institution. We know that at Northlands College enrolments are strong, and in fact they're looking for ways to enhance some of their mining initiatives. And right across the province we're seeing very, very promising trend lines.

Mr. Speaker, we know there's a lot to do in this area and we know that our First Nations and Métis people already play a vital role in Saskatchewan's economy. Just last night I had the opportunity to help share in the celebration of Cameco's 25th anniversary. And, Mr. Speaker, we know how important Cameco is when it comes to employment, especially in our northern communities, Mr. Speaker. So there's always more to do, but it's through that kind of investment through advanced education and skills training, and then to see our private sector partners, especially with their employment opportunities, like those of Cameco, among many, many others, we see that we are making some significant progress. We know there's a lot more to do here.

Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne we've seen an announcement of more than 1,000 new training seats. This is going to include 300 additional apprenticeship seats, which is going to bring the total number of apprenticeship seats to more than 6,700, an increase of 76 per cent since 2007. We know there's more to do, but a 76 per cent increase in apprenticeship seats.

We also see that we're moving forward with 700 new spots added to adult basic education, and this is vitally important, Mr. Speaker. We heard that again, the member from Saskatoon Fairview and I heard about the significance of adult basic education seats right across the province. This is going to bring that seat count to more than 8,500, an increase of 46 per cent, again since having the opportunity to come to office in 2007.

The Speech from the Throne also highlighted the significance of being able to move forward the new centre of excellence

regarding manufacturing. And that centre of excellence is also going to play an important role, especially when it comes to connecting the learning and earning opportunities for our First Nations and Métis students.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending, with the member from Yorkton and the Premier, the announcement at Parkland Regional College where our Premier announced \$10 million for a new trades and technology centre in Yorkton. And I want to applaud the member from Yorkton because over the course of the last several years he's been tenacious in making sure that that remained on our radar screen. He was a key liaison and link between the ministry and his local community, as well as the college, making sure that as questions came up they were being addressed quickly on both sides.

And so I want to applaud our colleague from Yorkton for his diligent and hard work on this. I also want to say how much we appreciated the assistance of the Minister of Finance for his efforts as well. The facility is going to help to address trades and technical training needs in the region by graduating hundreds of students per year and providing upgrading for more than 2,000 students annually.

[15:30]

What's also impressive about this project is the level of community support. Parkland Regional College has raised more than \$8 million within the region through its capital campaign — more than \$8 million. And in fact, I think next week there's likely to be another community-based announcement that's going to be recognized probably right across the province and maybe well beyond for another significant investment.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate CEO Fay Myers, the board, and the staff at Parkland Regional College, as well as the students because the students played a key role. And certainly when we were there we were able to engage them, learned a lot from the students, whether they're local students, whether they're from nearby reserves and coming in and interacting. As well, Parkland has about 60 international students, and so we're seeing that that college is increasingly diverse and dynamic and cosmopolitan in its character. We're delighted to be able to together move forward on this new initiative.

Mr. Speaker, in 2012 I had the opportunity to introduce in this Assembly and ultimately to help pass the degree-granting Act. This Act provides the ability to extend degree-granting authority or authorization to post-secondary educational institutions outside the University of Saskatchewan, outside the University of Regina. The goal of the Act is to make sure that we're being both responsive to local communities and regional communities, and at the same time responsible to our students and other stakeholders on quality assurance. And I think we've got a mechanism in place that allows for that careful balance. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to highlight that we've been able to move forward with both Briercrest College and SIAST as the authorization for those two institutions to grant degrees has gone forward.

In the case of Briercrest, they now have authorization, and we were able to present this at the recent installation of the new

president of Briercrest. We were able to present this in a form and format that we hope has enduring qualities; they will be able to really, and quite literally, hang this on the wall. And also to provide similar documentation to SIAST, which can now offer a Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing. This is another effort to make sure that more students have greater access to post-secondary opportunities right across the province.

And I think, importantly, Mr. Speaker, within the Speech from the Throne we were able to highlight that SIAST is going to continue to evolve. We know how important this institution is, and we were delighted to see both Dr. Larry Rosia and Board Chair Ralph Boychuk here as we support the evolution of SIAST into a proper polytechnic institution. And certainly we know how important that's going to be for the SIAST campuses right across Saskatchewan, whether it's in Prince Albert, whether it's in Moose Jaw, whether it's in Saskatoon and Regina. And we know how important it is.

SIAST actually became a member of Polytechnics Canada in December of 2012 as it began to position itself for this. And we know that three defining features of polytechnic education in Canada are first and foremost, that there is a degree-granting option. We've been able to make sure that that's in place. Secondly, that research that's undertaken is applied, and the innovation that it's focused on has real grassroots application. In fact SIAST now has the capacity to receive funding from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation as well as NSERC [Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada].

We're delighted to see that this strategic positioning is going to allow SIAST to play an increasingly important role, again in applied research. As well it's going to continue on, as other polytechnics do across the country, with trades training and the apprenticeship opportunities that we continue to expand. And so we're proud to support SIAST, and we'll continue to assist this organization, this very important post-secondary institution, as it continues to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech helps to guide our government as we continue to move forward with many partners right across the province, including importantly our post-secondary partners. Mr. Speaker, education is one of those big ideas that has been a defining feature since the founding of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, what's important is now, with more than 40,000 graduates benefiting from the graduate retention program, that means they're staying in Saskatchewan. They're working in Saskatchewan. They're raising their families in Saskatchewan. They're helping to increase the quality of life in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we know how important post-secondary education is. We know how important these young people are. It has been forever thus in this province. In this big land for a big people with big ideas, we're delighted to see that these big people, our young people, are staying in Saskatchewan and making a real difference in helping to set the course for the new Saskatchewan and the next Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's in this theme and in this spirit that I'm delighted to support the Speech from the Throne. And I appreciate the honour and opportunity of having the chance to speak directly to the Speech from the Throne.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure and an honour to enter into the debate on the Speech from the Throne 2013. Listening to the member from Greystone, I almost thought the theme of the speech was, we know there's more work to do. And I think that's an acute observation on his part because they do have a lot more work to do. And he certainly acknowledged it throughout his remarks.

There is a lot of work to do. We have an awesome responsibility. We are very glad, very happy that people are choosing Saskatchewan as a place to call home. It's a great place to be. And we think that's a wonderful thing, but it comes with an awesome, awesome responsibility to make sure our province is sustainable and that people, when they come here and they bring their families, that they can expect that it's affordable, it's safe and that their whole families, including their parents and the children, are safe and well looked after.

So I'll get into more on those details as we go forward. But, Mr. Speaker, I think this speech in many ways falls short for the families and the people here in this province who have a right to expect more from their government. This government's been in power now some six years. And this government, I mean, we often hear this, they tend to skip a beat and want to talk about the '90s as the reason things . . . why they are hobbled and can't do the things they should be doing. But that's not quite true. It's their responsibility. The Sask Party asked for the job. They got the job, and they should deliver. And that's what people . . . that's their expectation.

Now before I get started on my comments and the body of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to acknowledge several people. And of course, as we should do and we ought to do is acknowledge our family and our support. It's not easy being in the role we have because if we do our job well, we're out and about and we hear things that we should hear. And sometimes it's pleasant and sometimes it's not so pleasant. And when we have those people come up to us, I always say, you know, this is why I'm here, to be accessible to people so they can tell me what's on their mind. And whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, it's our job. We asked for the job and it all comes with it. And we have to act with a certain class and a certain graciousness in that role.

So I do want to extend a thank you to my own family who have experienced this now for several years. They've been very supportive and they continue to do so. I want to thank my own executive back in Saskatoon Centre for being supportive as well, to make sure I continue to do my own work, and my constituents. I tell you, you know, I know, I know the member from Nutana said last night she has the best riding, the best constituency. I think it's the second best. I think Saskatoon Centre is really the heart of Saskatchewan. I think it's the best. I tell you we have, along Spadina Crescent, the most beautiful part of the province. When you're taking a walk along there, along the Bessborough and the churches, it's a beautiful place. And people often think of that image when they think of Saskatchewan. And I'm proud to represent downtown Saskatoon.

I have a very diverse, very diverse constituency because I also represent a lot of 20th Street. I share that with the MLA for Riversdale, 21st and 22nd. Real working class areas where these are the folks that really drive the economy, drive the service industries. And when I talk about issues, when we talk about labour issues, these are the folks that really put things together for Saskatchewan. They are the ones working in the mines. They're the ones who are working in the stores. Many of them have ties to agriculture. Many of them go up north. And many of them are in unions, many of them are not, but they make a lot of difference.

But I also represent some very wealthy people downtown, in the condos downtown. And sometimes they don't call me as often as they might, but that's what I understand. I think and I know that Bill Doyle, the president of Potash Corp of Saskatchewan, he lives downtown in one of the condos. A big deal when he moved up here as part of the commitment Potash Corp made. But he hasn't called me many times. I don't expect that, but that's okay. But I represent a wide range of people, I truly do, and it's a real honour. And I take it very seriously that we all want the best for Saskatchewan. And I think on both sides of this House, that's what we really truly do.

And as a teacher, I would often have that conversation with parents when they would come in, very unhappy about what's happening in the school. We have a common ground. We all want what's best for the students. And in this House, we want what's all best, what's best for Saskatchewan citizens and residents. That's our goal. That's our goal, and we take that further into Canada, and as a global responsibility.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to underline that when we see the exciting things that are happening downtown — whether it's in the arts, or whether it's in business, whether it's in social justice movements — when we have member statements, I'll highlight some of those. For example, Equal Justice For All, an advocacy group for those less fortunate, they're back in business. They've worked hard to re-establish their funding and that's exciting. I see high schools . . . I see Mount Royal that's done so well in terms of trades training and child care, providing training in that area. It's a real rebirth of that school. But I also think about E.D. Feehan, the exciting things that are happening at E.D. Feehan and Bedford and the community schools in our schools.

So it's an exciting time. And it's an exciting time to be in our province because we are seeing some amazing things happen. And it's a good time to be here, but there are challenges because we know families are facing challenges daily that they think can be addressed by government and should be addressed by government and need to be addressed by government, but this government fails on those counts. And I will, I will get into it as we go forward.

So in many ways it's a disappointing speech. As I said, families are looking for more. They're working harder than ever, but they're not seeing this government step up to the plate and take responsibility. They're seeing a lack of vision for what it means to be a family in Saskatchewan and what it means to be a senior in Saskatchewan and what it means to be a kid in Saskatchewan. These are real challenges that this government needs to take on and needs to take on as quickly as possible.

And I think and I would argue that they should change their moniker, their motto, that there's more work to do. We know there's more work to do. I don't know how many times I've heard it today, that there's more work to do. We know that. Well we do know that. Let's get on with it. And that's what we're talking about with this Throne Speech.

So we see *The StarPhoenix* editorial from last week on October 24th, the day after the Throne Speech, and it says, the headline is, "Detailed speech offers no vision." And clearly that's the problem. It's more than just setting an agenda. This is where people get excited about seeing, hey I can get behind what this government's doing. I can support what this government's doing.

But it was more like a job jar of things that they pulled out of both things they're going to do — and I think of the Highway Traffic Safety report and that's a good thing, but that needs to go further, that needs to go further — but they're also pulling out things from the past. And people are getting this mixed message. Is that new money? Is that old money? What are they talking about here? It's like you need some sort of road map to understand what this government is doing sometimes.

But the other one that was interesting is this, and the member from Athabasca raised this today in a member's statement, and that's Bruce Johnstone's column from October 12th, 2013. And the headline is "Sask. Party growth plan adrift." And I thought it was a very thoughtful reflection on the past six years of this government and where they've come and where they're going and what's really happening. And I will quote from that column, and I quote:

From where I sit, the government's track record in economic development brings to mind Stephen Leacock's famous phrase "riding madly off in all directions." You could say it's been two steps forward and three steps back. A harsh assessment perhaps, but let's look at the record.

[15:45]

And really that's what we need to do. Now whenever this government gets challenged, it says, let's talk about the '90s. Let's talk about the '90s. Let's talk about the record. Let's really talk about what this government has done, you know, whether it's Enterprise Saskatchewan, the cornerstone of the Premier's 2004 economic plan, the promise of Saskatchewan, all of these things. Where are they now? Where are they now? The film employment tax credit — where is that? What about the hostile takeover of Tourism Saskatchewan, the sacking of the CEO? All of these things indicate what this government's track record is.

And as Bruce Johnstone talks about, and I quote again: "What it suggests is a government that [as he says] 'doesn't play well with others.'" Doesn't play well with others. "In other words, the Sask. Party doesn't like sharing power or tax dollars with any organization they don't have complete control over."

And so this is a problem, Mr. Speaker. And we have a real concern, a real concern about what is happening as we go forward in Saskatchewan, as we see record population happening in this province, but we see a government that's

economic plans are adrift, adrift. And that's not us just saying that. This is a well-respected journalist in this province who's been watching both when we were in government and now that this party is in government.

So I think there is something to be learned from that column. Like really, what is the track record and what is this government all about? And I think the point about them not playing well together is something that we should all take to heart. So we have concerns, Mr. Speaker, and I'll go through this. And as a critic of a few areas, I have some observations to make about many of these areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been talking about education because it is so important. It really, truly is important. It's an opportunity really, as I said, to make sure our province is sustainable. It's more than just meeting a need. This is a part of where we really speak to the vision of what we see this province being. Do we see a province of just people who are doing the basic industries or do we see an economy that leads this province, leads this country, leads North America? What do we really see for the people of Saskatchewan? And it's much more than just work. It's the arts. It's health care. It's all of this. So education is critically, critically important.

But we see a government that is chronically underfunded. The education system here in Saskatchewan has created a situation where we know there are students who are in hallways. We know that they're taking classes in boot rooms, that this is . . . The lack of funding has impacted the kids' learning. We know that there are cutbacks in educational assistants. We know that there are real challenges in terms of educational assistants making a real difference for those students who have special needs. We know this is a reality of far too many classrooms in this province. And we know particularly that there are specific barriers and challenges for students of First Nations and Métis descent. And what do we see with this government? We see a lack of willingness to really tackle this problem.

And in fact last year, on April 15th, we saw the release of this report, the joint task force on improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people. Do you remember that? That was April 15th, last year. Not a mention of this report. And this report was done by three well-respected citizens of this province, cost a lot of money. They were really committed to making sure that they would have an impact on the education of Aboriginal kids in Saskatchewan. But where is it? Where is it? It's not even mentioned, not even mentioned in the Throne Speech. Now I can understand why it wasn't mentioned so much in the Throne Speech a year ago because we were still waiting for it, but this is the time when it should have been incorporated into this year's Throne Speech. And it's not there. It's not there. Why? Has the government lost that report? What happened to that report? What's the game plan going forward with that report?

Aboriginal kids, First Nations kids deserve so much better. And they see this report being shelved, sitting on a shelf and, as they say, gathering dust. Where is it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I think this is appalling. And here we have an opportunity in a province that's doing as well as we're doing, and we have let that fall through the cracks. We've let that fall through the cracks.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to just take a moment and talk a little bit about the P3s. And do you know this government is working very hard and we're hearing every member so far, almost every member so far, get up and speak in favour of this. So clearly they want to create the idea on their side that this is the answer, and don't think about it. Don't be critical thinking on this one, especially in education around schools. Don't do any critical thinking about whether this is a good idea or a bad idea. Just follow the lines, ideological lines around P3s when it comes to schools and bundling schools.

And we see a lot of people asking questions about, really, is this the best way we should be doing this? We know we need new schools. There's no argument there. We know we need to get on with the job. We all agree with that. There's no argument there. But are P3s the way to go? Just what we're hearing in *The Calgary Herald* where they're having some real problems.

And the minister talks about contractor fatigue, or there's just too much work out there and people may not be interested. And we're making a big investment. We're going down this road for 18 schools. We're committing a lot of money, so we better make sure we get our value for that. And we see what happened in Nova Scotia when they bundled 50 schools together and they decided the last 20 or so, they'd better — or 12 — they should do on their own because it was cheaper, because the P3 model was not working.

We saw what was happening in New Brunswick. And we saw what happened in Edmonton where we had these cookie-cutter style of schools. And we know in Saskatchewan, particularly in Saskatchewan where you see communities that have specific needs for schools that are different from each other, and a cookie-cutter model just won't work.

And so there's a lot of questions about this, you know. And I think that it's interesting that the Finance minister . . . And I'm going to quote from a column that actually came out today from Murray Mandryk. And this is . . . But we've known this, this has been the thinking of the Finance minister. But this is how Murray Mandryk quotes, and I quote, "Finance Minister Ken Krawetz — when education minister — rejected the P3 model for the Willowgrove school in 2008 because the cost was too high." He said, and I quote:

"It's easy to say a P3 is a great idea in the first year when, in fact, over 25 years, it may not be such a great idea," Krawetz said on Nov. 13, 2008. "So we're not moving forward with P3s at this time."

So that's what one of the former ministers of Education said. Now we've had a few ministers of Education, I have to say, so we're going to go back a bit here. But he was the first one and he took a look at that, and I think you need to look at what he's saying about that now. He took some time. He travelled down East, I understood, to take a look, to see how things were going with P3s. And he came back and said, that's not a good idea. And I think it was down East where they came up with that phrase, debt is debt is debt. There's no way of hiding it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And sometimes people . . . And I know the member from Nutana really actually said this quite eloquently last night about debt and P3s, that sometimes people are attracted to them because it's a way of hiding debt or putting it

off to the side and it's not counted. But truly we know the debt will come home because somebody has to pay, and it will be the taxpayers who pay. And so debt is debt is debt.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, we've been talking about our review of P3 school plans. We think it's important to have an independent technical review of the government's plans to make sure that we are getting value for money, that this is the best way to go, that we're not making a commitment to a situation that will cause us a lot of problems further down the road. And we've got to make sure that we do that work, and I think a lot of people are asking the question about that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to have a lot of discussion about P3s, and I've got to tell you, this government's track record when it comes to portables this fall . . . Now I haven't heard many of the speakers from their side talk about or try to defend what happened with the portables this fall. But if that's a sign of things to come, this is going to be the kind of message of what people can expect, we've got a lot to worry about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as there is a lot of problems ahead if this is what P3s mean. When this government bundled those portables together thinking they were going to get a better deal, and that's just not what happened at all. People had high hopes and people said, we'll play along. The school board said, we'll play along, you guys. We'll give it a try . . .

An Hon. Member: — More of a bungle.

Mr. Forbes: — More of a bungle than a bundle, that's for sure. So I think there's a little credibility issue here when it comes to this government. Now, Mr. Speaker, I do want to take a minute and talk about bullying. And I think that's an important issue that we've all come to appreciate, that the time is now and that we need to act on it right away. And we were very encouraged this morning to see the headlines in *The StarPhoenix* that the minister, "Minister wants bully plan released." And it was great to see that he says he wants it to be released as soon as possible, and that's important that we have that.

And we know that since we've been calling for this — and I want to talk a little bit about what our record is and how we've been talking about this — but it's been over a year now, about a year that we've been talking about how important bullying is. So it's important that this government get on track and get this happening because our province unfortunately has had a couple of suicides in the recent past that we just need to say, we've got to resolve this issue. We've got to get to work on this and get it resolved as soon as possible. We cannot be saying, there's more work to be done, and we're going to do it in the months ahead, or we're going to wait for an appropriate timeline. That's just not on.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I know, and I just want to take a minute and say, you know, it was interesting that yesterday in question period I did raise this, and the minister had a couple of interesting answers that I just want to take a minute and reflect on, because I was a little surprised at his answers. And I appreciate the fact that he quoted our leader. And this is what he quotes our leader as saying, and I quote:

The Leader of the Opposition had this to say on Twitter over the weekend: "Absolutely heartbreaking. I am

committed to working with the government to ensure Saskatchewan does a better job of combatting bullying." That was the member for Saskatoon Massey Place, the Leader of the Opposition.

So true. We are committed to working with the Government of Saskatchewan to combat bullying. We've taken that position. That's been our position, and that will be our position as we go forward to combat bullying so we don't see the tragic results in teen suicides or teen violence or what happens in schools. We have to stop that.

So I just want to underline that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I was a little bit taken back when the minister then said, we have until October 31st to file our submission. And I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and you've been here longer than I have — I was a little bit taken back because I think what's important to all of us here is the debate that happens on this floor. And I look at *Hansard*, and I honour *Hansard*, because it's a record of what all of us say. And that's where we come to share our ideas — on the floor of this legislature. We do text people; we do phone people; but this is where the public expects us to do the work, on this floor. We ask questions to make sure people get answers because they want those answers. And when we do our Throne Speech responses, that's our contribution to the work of the government. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have made a lot of contributions to the work of bullying to the Government of Saskatchewan.

[16:00]

Now the Government of Saskatchewan may have a Legislative Secretary, and we wish her well in her deliberations, and we hope that her work is fruitful and productive. But as an opposition, as members of the legislature, the people of Saskatchewan have paid us to do our submissions, to do our work on the floor of this legislature. And that's really important.

We do it in a public place, in this beautiful place, and we have galleries for people to come and see us have this dialogue, this debate. We don't do it by submissions. This is really critical, Mr. Speaker. And this is why we have *Hansard*. This is why this is televised. This is why we attend here, and we make it possible for people to attend to the legislature so we can have this debate. It's not just something as an afterthought.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was surprised when the minister . . . I don't know what he was saying, but I know the government has many, many researchers who read *Hansard*, and that's our . . . and this will be . . . And we have contributed to this dialogue, this debate on bullying for many, many months. And I want to talk about a couple of them today. And the one that I wanted . . . I mean there's three of them that I want to highlight. But the first one is when the Minister of Justice, on April 25th, wanted to go to the provincial-federal meetings about cyberbullying. And we had a special debate in the House that day. I hope this debate is not forgotten. It's in *Hansard*, and I'm looking at it right now. And this is what the minister at the time said, and I quote:

By pressing for an early report, the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers are sending a signal to Canadians that

we take the issue of cyberbullying very seriously.

And we agree with that. We agree with that and we supported it in that debate that day because we wanted him to go to his meetings fully supported by this legislature, by this floor, by this floor.

Now this is what the Premier had to say, and this is what the Premier said:

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful for the leave to discuss it, and [we are] grateful for the co-operation of the opposition when we asked if we could have this discussion just before we get into some other business on private members' day.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we will send a strong and clear message to the federal governments that they need to look at all Criminal Code improvements that could put an end to this sort of thing . . .

So the Premier even acknowledges that this is how this House works. We co-operate. When there's good ideas that are common sense, we work together. And that's the spirit in which we want to do this bullying initiative. So that's why I have that question for the minister is, why he's waiting for a submission. Our submission happened on April 25th. If they want a submission it's April 25th and this is what we had to talk about. This is what our leader had in that speech of the day. He said, and he talked about the work in Nova Scotia, and I quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Nova Scotia's also, Mr. Speaker, being proactive in combatting cyberbullying . . .

This year's *Speak Up: An Action Plan To Address Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviour* lays out a solid timeline for new and expanded actions to combat cyberbullying. It's a multi-year action plan that combines more than 40 actions involving police, schools, teachers, communities, health care providers, families, and government. So it's comprehensive, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to places where children are and where change needs to happen.

So we had quite a long, a good fruitful discussion on April 25th. So I'm hoping that contribution has not been lost, because it was meaningful and I think the Minister of Justice appreciated the fact that we took this, we co-operated with the government on that.

I also want to talk about the contribution that our Education critic made and this actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you might find interesting, goes back to November 29th, 11 months ago. In fact exactly 11 months ago when the member from Rosemont raised the question in the House about what's going to happen about bullying and interjurisdictional work around bullying, and asks, and I will quote:

Mr. Speaker, the consequences of bullying are devastating including depression, self-harm, addictions, and suicide. I've witnessed these first-hand as a teacher, as I know I'm sure the minister has as well. We support the work that the

province has done to raise awareness about bullying, but unfortunately it still occurs.

The Minister of Education said in mid-October the province could benefit from further coordinated national work. I certainly agree, and we also believe that there's important work to be done here in the province. This is an issue that matters to all of us, that causes damage that's simply unacceptable.

What actions has the minister and his ministry taken since mid-October to protect students against bullying?

So it's been over a year that we've been asking these questions. Now we do this because we believe all of us are committed to protecting our youth. And this is our contribution on the floor of this House. And this is really important to understand.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's what two of my colleagues had to say. And I just want to highlight that in fact we had an interesting visitor back on April 16th. And this is Halla Scott. I don't know if you remember the day that we had a visitor from one of the high schools in Regina here. And she had come because she really wanted to make sure that this government, through the Ministry of Education, promoted, acknowledged, supported gay-straight alliances in our schools.

And our leader here had been raising this issue for two or three weeks in April about this very, very important issue. And so what was happening was, the government was saying, we'll get to it. We'll get to it. But this grade 11 student who I think is a real hero for stepping up to the plate and saying, this is what the kids want. This is what the kids want. Now this is Halla Scott from Regina, and I certainly hope this government hasn't forgot what she was saying that day.

Again I don't know if she's made an email contribution, but she came to this House, to this legislature, and we often say to their legislature. This is her place to come and make a statement, and so her government should listen to her. And to have the minister say, well the submissions are open until October 31st; you can email it, I hope he remembers to listen to Halla Scott. I truly hope that he does.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's been many different ways to make a contribution to the fight against bullying. And you've got to know and all the members on this House have got to know that we are committed to working with the Government of Saskatchewan if it makes common sense and it's a good, solid approach. It's our job as opposition to hold the government accountable, make sure they're transparent. But we are there to make sure our kids in our schools, in our communities, are protected. And this is the place where I want to say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it's a time for the response to the Throne Speech, and that's the way it's been in this province for over 100 years. I feel very strongly about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I want to talk, I want to shift to a couple of other points I want to say before we move on.

But I want to talk about labour. And I was again disappointed, actually more than just disappointed, about what was in this

speech. Last year we had a record number of deaths in this province. We had 60 deaths in our workplaces — 60 workplace-related deaths — and this government fails to mention any response in the Throne Speech about that situation. That is shameful, Mr. Speaker. That is our number one concern in our workplace. Sixty deaths. Sixty deaths. We usually have between 30 and maybe up to 40, 44. Sixty deaths, but not a mention in the Throne Speech about fighting that.

Clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to make that a priority. In this side of the House, we will make that a priority for the weeks ahead. We have to do better than that. We just can't say . . . We just can't, on April 28th, have a day of mourning, acknowledge 60 names of people who've died, and then say nothing for the rest of the year. Is that responsible government? I don't think so. I don't think so at all. Sixty deaths in a booming economy like ours, we've got to do better. And you cannot say there's more work to be done. The work has to be done today in that area. Truly it's an important issue.

I also want to talk about minimum wage because, as the government would know and the minister would know, many of the people who live in my riding live on minimum wage. And they've already got ahead of the bandwagon by saying it's indexed. It's not indexed. It hasn't been indexed. The last increase of minimum wage in this province was last year. And the government made a big deal of rushing through the employment Act so they could get to indexing it. That's why, on May 10th, when we had this discussion in committee about what was the rush, the minister said, well we have to get it done so we can index minimum wage. They were hoping they could do it for summer. Now we're coming up to Christmas, and there is no sign of any indexation of minimum wage. So it rings a little hollow when this government gets out the PR [public relations] and says, we're indexing minimum wage when, I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have some real, real concerns about that.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also wanted to read into the record a very interesting letter that was caused by *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. The Archbishop of Regina, the Most Reverend Daniel J. Bohan, wrote a pastoral letter on work and worship to the Catholic people of the Archdiocese of Regina. This was distributed in the Catholic churches in Regina, I believe either on Labour Day Sunday or the Sunday following. And it's the first one where we've seen this kind of public commentary about a government action. And I would really encourage the members opposite to reflect on what the Archbishop has to say.

Now I have to tell you that I'm not Catholic but I did write all the churches about their concerns about the fact that this government was taking out the reflection or the connection with Sunday out of *The Labour Standards Act*, and what did that really mean for a province like Saskatchewan.

Now the minister would say at the time that in fact actually most provinces have taken out Sunday. And that's not accurate either. We know it's about half and half — half taken out the Sunday, half still have it. And it's how it's framed. We understand the human rights implications of that and I'm totally understanding and support of that. But I do also understand that our province has been built around the five-day workweek.

Schools operate on a five-day week, generally speaking. You can't take classes on Saturday. But Sunday usually is considered a day that runs right across the spectrum.

But I just want to, I just want to read parts of this letter which was so interesting that he circulated this or actually circulated through the churches this September.

Dear friends and co-workers with our Lord Jesus; [I'm quoting here, with our Lord Jesus Christ]

This past spring, the Saskatchewan Legislature passed Bill 85. This Bill made wide-ranging changes to labour laws in Saskatchewan. As Archbishop of Regina, I wish to remind all Catholics, but especially employers and managers, that it is important to consider the greater flexibility granted by the revised law in view of the moral question of how we are to live out our Christian commitment to justice in the workplace.

It goes on.

The place of ethics is supremely important as we seek the authentic well-being of people in the work place. Our legislators [that's us] need truly to be at the service of the common good of their people. Ethics enable us to create a balanced social order that is more centered on the human person and his or her good and thus promotes the dignity and rights of those who work. Every change in our labour laws needs to help our society move forwards in seeking just working conditions for all.

[16:15]

It goes on to say:

The growing disparity of income in our Canadian society is a pointed reminder of the presence of this threat as the income of a small few is grows with noticeable rapidity while the income of the great majority stagnates. As we struggle to make our economy grow there is a noticeable tendency to reduce the human person to one of their needs: consumption. So people now are not only described but identified as "consumers."

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to acknowledge and thank the Archbishop for . . . I mean it's quite a thoughtful letter, and I would close with this. And he goes on to say:

In this way employers and managers can promote the values of human work, recognizing that a person is "more precious for what he is than for what he has." And they can promote a "greater justice, wider brotherhood, and a more humane ordering of social relationships . . . all of which supply the material for human progress."

So that was Most Reverend Daniel J. Bohan, Archbishop for Regina. And I thought that was very thoughtful and something that we should all think about as we as legislators do our work here, and we do it with a strong sense of ethics about how we advance the social condition in Saskatchewan. It is about dignity.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm taking . . . I've just got two more

points on social services. I wanted to say that this report that came out this fall, *Out of Sight: How One Aboriginal Child's Best Interests Were Lost Between Two Provinces*, not a message, not a mention in the Throne Speech about that. How did that happen? We need to do better. This is a big issue. I just want to say, last week was Foster Parent Week, and we acknowledge the good work that foster parents do. But I tell you, this is one of the biggest challenges that we have, and we've just got to step to the plate with that.

I also wanted to say, it was interesting that the member from Greystone . . . And I hear this so often, and we'll hear this more from this other side, how they've worked so hard for seniors on the senior income plan. And I think that it's a wonderful program, and it's great that it's been raised up, but I have this big question. Four years ago they talked about 18,000 seniors being on that plan. They were doubling the number from 9,000 to 18. Now it's 16,000. So what happened to the other 2,000 people? What happened to the other 2,000 people? It was four years ago, 18,000 numbers, 18,000. That's what the rallying cry was on this side — doubling nine to 18,000. Now it's 16,000. What happened to the 2,000 seniors that were cut off the program? We'll have lots of questions about that in the weeks ahead.

I want to talk about housing. And sadly this Throne Speech bundled the old messages that they've had, that they've brought forward but clearly that we need to do better. We need to do so much better. Here's a story in *The StarPhoenix* just Tuesday, September 24th, 2013, when it talks about:

More than 20 per cent of Saskatchewan households are living in "unaffordable housing," [20 per cent] which is higher than the national average and Manitoba, but lower than Alberta, according to the August edition of *Sask Trends Monitor*.

And Doug Elliott, the editor, this is what he had to say, and I quote, "This is during a period when incomes rose quite dramatically, so this wasn't because we had less money. It's because housing costs have increased more than incomes."

So here we have, Mr. Speaker, a situation that's facing 20 per cent of the people in this province. It's probably more because of renters. It's even more than 20 per cent. But you have a situation coupled with the SaskPower rates that we're seeing, the rate increases. People are finding this a real challenge in Saskatchewan when it comes to affordability — a real, real challenge.

The other issue I'm going to look a lot for: life lease, what that really means versus housing co-ops. And Housing First, we didn't hear any mentions about that. Seniors, that's a huge, huge issue. And I'm looking at the people from Prince Albert here. Last year there were four people who died over the winter months in Prince Albert of exposure. Now this is a situation where the vacancy rate in Prince Albert is 6.5 per cent, so it's not because there's no place to live, but it's because of other challenges. But four people dying in a Saskatchewan winter in Prince Albert over the winter months, what's happening with our housing strategy when that kind of thing can happen?

So, Mr. Speaker, I have some real concerns about housing, and

affordability is a real issue. And the government can talk about their focus on the 3 per cent vacancy rate. We can look at what's happening in Estevan where you have a zero vacancy rate. You can look at Prince Albert where it's 6.5 per cent, but you have people dying on the streets because the housing just isn't appropriate. So, Mr. Speaker, we expect more, and I think the families and the people of this province expect more for the province of Saskatchewan, the Government of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I just want to say that we have an awesome responsibility. And I mean that in the old, classic sense, that this is a real huge responsibility to make sure this province and the people in the province are well looked after in a sustainable way. And there are challenges. And we see that there's huge inequities, whether it's income, whether it's education, whether it's care in our houses, care for our seniors in long-term care such as raised today with Sylvia Phillips and the situation that she finds herself. And we know that there are more seniors in that situation.

So there are some real, real challenges that we expect, and the people of Saskatchewan expect better from the government that we have now. We know this government can do better. It has the resources to do better, and it should do better. And it can't keep delaying the job. It needs to get on with it.

We know that we'll be hearing about the traffic report that was . . . the traffic safety report. We expect that there will be lots of discussion around that, and we support a lot of it. But I have to tell you that the member from Riversdale, who makes a very strong point about how we need to impound those cars of people who's been drinking, that that can have a real impact. And we can't understand why the government won't step up to the plate and acknowledge that this has got to happen if we truly want to make sure our highways are safe.

Mr. Speaker, it is something to be able to be in this House, to be on this floor, to contribute to the discussions, the debates, the dialogue around the issues of the day. We expect that this government will step up to the plate, take its work seriously and responsibly, and act immediately, as quickly as it can on the issues that are facing our families. And whether it be the kids in the school and making sure that they're learning, that they feel safe, they have adequate facilities, and that bullying is not part of their reality, we can work on that as quickly as possible. We need to look after our seniors in a much better way. And we have to make sure our workplaces are safe.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I'll be voting for the amendment — I think it's the one that makes the most sense — and voting against the main motion. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Tochor: — The glass is half empty. A dollar short, a day late. Now for something totally different, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech I'm going to speak to in a couple of different segments. First off, a couple of thank yous. And I'm so appreciative of my wife, Danielle. And there's some news for this year in our family is that we had our first child in June. So June 19th he arrived a couple of weeks early,

but that was all right. He was a healthy weight: 7 pounds, 6 ounces. And mom did a fantastic job, and we are so happy to have Jacob in our life.

And the part that is probably changing — and every father and mother has gone through this — is that after you have that first child, it's kind of a different lens that you look at life. And that's kind of the lens that I'm going to look at this Throne Speech is, what does it mean to Jacob? And what does it mean to Jacob when we're done our growth plan of 2020? And he's going to be roughly six years of age, and then also going further than that. What is life going to be like for Jacob because of the vision of this province and this government and what we can be as a province?

And this Throne Speech falls on the back of our Saskatchewan growth plan that, Mr. Speaker, we introduced a year ago. And that is our vision for the province. And really this Throne Speech talks about specifics on how we are going to get to our objectives based in the growth plan. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go back — and I know a lot of people have read this document — and I'm just going to go back to the six points that kind of are the backbone of our growth plan, and then we're going to get into how this Throne Speech speaks to those goals.

Now we have the six areas, which is investing in the infrastructure required for growth, which is the first plank. Next one is education, training, and development of a skilled workforce. Third one, sharing the ongoing competitiveness of the Saskatchewan economy. Supporting increased trade, investment, and export through international engagement. Advancing Saskatchewan's natural growth strengths, particularly through innovation, to build our next economy. And ensuring this is all done within a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

So it's been a year, and how have we done? Well, Mr. Speaker, progress is being made. There is more work to be done for sure but for sure that we're moving towards what those goals have laid out.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those are the six areas. And how that relates to what we set as goals is important because, Mr. Speaker, we know the difference between this side of the House to that side. We set goals, Mr. Speaker. The other side wouldn't set a goal because they were fearful that they may actually miss it, Mr. Speaker. How do you advance as a government, as a society, or even a party if you don't set goals or benchmarks and work towards it. It's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important goal and indicator of how we are doing as a province, are — it's a simple one — are people coming or are people leaving? Mr. Speaker, we know that an important milestone was reached recently, and one that we stated that is a goal of this province to grow to 1.1 million people. And, Mr. Speaker, Jacob is one of those 1.1 million people. Mr. Speaker, he is one of the people that made up that 100,000 increase in population. Mr. Speaker, that took six years to grow. This party has stated that the goal was to do it within 10 years, and we have been noticing that right now that that growth is actually picking up.

And there is challenges that come from that growth, Mr. Speaker. We'll rise to the occasion. These challenges are much better to face than the decline that the NDP put us in. If you go

back to just the population number, just briefly to give a context, it took 77 years to grow the last 100,000 increase in population. Mr. Speaker, you know who was in charge for the vast majority of those 77 years? The NDP. And why is it, why was it so tough for this province with so much resources, so much opportunity that was squandered? And, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's firmly placed on governments past that were planning for decline, not planning for growth. Mr. Speaker, that's an unfortunate reality in this province of what held us back was that government, when it was in power, the NDP and the decisions it made to hold back this province, that we talked about people moving in, moving out. Well, Mr. Speaker, that was their plan is move people out.

When we talked about this goal and just briefly on this 1.1 million, we all notice the national average is roughly 1 per cent, and it was well stated that the NDP believed that we could not grow at the average. We could not be average in the minds of the NDP. Not everyone in Saskatchewan believed that, not everybody. I know on this side we didn't, and more importantly the people at home because the real thank you and the real people that made it possible are the people outside watching in right now. Or you know what? Probably they're not watching. They're at work. They're creating jobs. They're creating the economy. They're creating the opportunity for more people, the next generation to live in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the people that believed in what could possibly be in the province.

Just briefly, what did the NDP think about when we came to the stated goal? Well this is a quote from them:

... they [the Sask Party] propose to increase the population of Saskatchewan by 100,000 over ... I forget what number of years, Mr. Speaker.

Well it is so over the top, it is so farcical, Mr. Speaker, that it flies in the face of reality.

That's the NDP. We could not grow it at the average. We couldn't be average in the Dominion of Canada. In the eyes of the NDP, is that it didn't work. Why would we want to grow? You know, and that's their view. And that's what shaped this province for far, far too long, Mr. Speaker. That's why it took 77 years for this province to grow 100,000 people. It took now, under new management, it took 6 years. And, Mr. Speaker, and we're just getting started.

[16:30]

And we've talked about growth and why it's important because it's a good indicator is, are people happy with what you're doing? And, Mr. Speaker, it is important to set these goals, and we will be measured by it. The reason why we want growth, Mr. Speaker, isn't for the sake of growth; it's what we can do with it. And we've heard the other speakers speaking about this Throne Speech. And they talk about, well we could have done this or what we would have done is that or we would have spent more money here or we would have ... You know what? They didn't do anything for 16 years.

But they didn't have the ability because the ability to make

change in this province is coming from the growth. It's the economy that is creating the opportunity for further investment in education. It is affording us the opportunity to look at housing and improve the housing in this province. It is affording us the opportunity to put record investments in post-secondary education, record investments in K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12], Mr. Speaker. It is affording us the opportunity to address the deficit in schools. We've had countless schools that have been closed by the NDP when they were planning for decline and being in government.

What did we just announce? Well nine buildings, which is 18 new schools, that are getting built in Saskatchewan. That's a far cry from what the NDP did when they were in government. And, Mr. Speaker, that is why we want to pursue growth. It lets us take the dividends of such growth and fix some of the problems that we have out there. And we've seen that in education. We've seen that in health care.

Right now we're talking about long-term care. And back to what I'm going to tell my son in six years when it's 2020. He'll be roughly 6 years, and a little bit older obviously from there. You know his grandparents are going to need some of the long-term facilities that are now finally getting built in the province, Mr. Speaker. Now this is a far cry. We've got 13 new long-term care facilities being built in this province, and that will help. But why we're in such a tough situation, Mr. Speaker, is because of that party closing 1,200 long-term beds, Mr. Speaker. They also closed 16 facilities. So how would we be faring today if we had those beds, Mr. Speaker? How about those facilities we had on top of what we're building, that we could have the capacity to actually provide the service that we all want for our grandparents and seniors?

Mr. Speaker, we know that there's challenges in long-term care. There's more work to be done. But you know, a telling, telling number is how many people are actually working in long-term care facilities. We've got 14 per cent more staff now working in long-term care facilities versus on the first day that we took over. That's an increase. We know that we need more, but could you imagine if we'd continued down the path the NDP had us on, closing beds. Their view at the time, that we're just always going to keep declining, that people will just keep fleeing the province. And you know what? That's what they were doing, Mr. Speaker.

And we'll get into the Throne Speech here briefly, but I found a quote, and I think it sums up nicely on what the planning from the NDP was during that time period. It's their government's view on the economy should be summed up in a few short phrases, Mr. Speaker: if it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it. That summarizes what the NDP did for those 16 years. That, Mr. Speaker, was from a fellow from California, Ronald Reagan.

Mr. Speaker, what we laid forward is a plan for growth. And that plan is what's our guiding star. We're going to do what we say we're going to do, and we're going to achieve those goals that are outlined in this book. And we're going to be held accountable. What this Throne Speech does is it starts the next page, the next goals that we need to accomplish to fulfill the promise of Saskatchewan and the vision that is 2020.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne had some important highlights and important goals that we're going to achieve in this session. In 2009 we announced the most aggressive strategy to significantly reduce surgical wait times. Mr. Speaker, this is probably one of the most important goals for Saskatoon Eastview. And it is a goal that we will reach, is that no surgery will wait more than three months. Now this is a far cry on what it was like a few short years ago under the NDP. We have commissioned, as you know, Mr. Speaker, created a \$10-million Urgent Issues Action Fund to address the issues that our minister asked our CEOs to go out to their facilities and find out how we are doing. And we've drawn on that action fund that's there to start immediately helping the situation.

There's also in this term where we got building our government's \$2-million investment in a Home First/Quick Response program launched in Regina this year. Another one that's important is the personal care homes. We have them inspected but the people, the residents, and the public aren't able to view those inspections. We're going to change that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the overall health of the province is well and it's growing. Improvements in health care, there's an important indicator, I think, is how many doctors you have in the province. It's a simple one but are we increasing? Are we going down? And what's the goal? And we stated a goal of 200 new doctors. How did we do, Mr. Speaker? We're at 300. More to do. We need more.

We talk about some of the innovation that's happening in health care. And we have the collaborative emergency centre being opened in Maidstone. In the coming months, we're going to see Shaunavon's, Spiritwood, Wakaw, Canora. We're going to look around Canada, and if there's a smart idea that is being implemented, we're going to, you know, borrow that idea. And that's where we got the hot-spotting program that we're going to welcome to Saskatoon and Regina. This is high-risk, high-use patients who repeatedly show up in the emergency room.

Mr. Speaker, this is what successful governments do. They set goals and they work to achieve them. Mr. Speaker, what we're trying to do there is eliminate the wait time for emergency rooms, which makes sense. If you have an emergency, you need to see someone quickly. That's the definition of emergency. And unfortunately, because of the lack of resources placed into our health care system from successive NDP governments, we were in a place that was very scary. And fortunately this is one of the initiatives we're going to take forward in this year. It's going to drive that wait time. If we can take out those high-use, high-risk individuals that are taking up resources and get them better health care in the proper setting, that's just the smart idea to do. And that's what we're going to do as a government.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to look at mental health and addiction issues in the province. We know that there is some gaps in how we treat addictions and mental health. And you're going to see that roll out this year.

Probably the most important thing now that I have a son, and in a few years he's going to be starting school, is education. And we all want the best for our child or children, and I know that's

what I want for Jacob. And I'm pretty proud of some of the initiatives that we're doing in education, the student-first approach to building successes that are already being achieved in school divisions through the province. This assessment is helping school divisions such as Chinook increase the results of their children learning. And it's working, Mr. Speaker. In 2008, 63 per cent of the students were reading at grade level. By 2012, so we're looking at four years later, this number has increased to 84 per cent. So, Mr. Speaker, 63 per cent or 84 per cent. You know what? If I had a choice, I'd want my son to be at 84 per cent. This is a no-brainer. This is what we're going to roll out.

Another important program is pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students and Tell Them From Me surveys. This is getting front-line exposure to what students and parents are dealing with. Mr. Speaker, we have some pressures in education. We've seen that with capacity. We see that in Saskatoon. These are problems that, you know what, we'll gladly take over the alternative. The alternative — and this is what the NDP brings forward — is a decline. Decline in enrolment, which results in decline in the ability to fix some of the problems out there, especially in education, which would be schools falling apart. We know that we've put record money into repairing schools, replacing schools.

And that work will continue, and this announcement with these new elementary schools is much needed throughout the province. And you know what? I've yet to run into a parent that said, you know what, I don't know. I don't really want a new school. The only people I've ever seen or heard from are the NDP that don't like these schools, Mr. Speaker. They'd rather not have this growth. They'd rather not have a new school. That was the old Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Something different is happening here, something that is going to . . . You know what? We're on a different path in the new Saskatchewan. Our classrooms are, we are getting new classrooms built. If you start to look at, just since 2007, Mr. Speaker, these 18 schools in 9 buildings are important, but you look at what else we have done. Our government has invested more than \$600 million to build 20 new schools and undertake 23 major renovations in addition to completing approximately 900 small capital projects.

Mr. Speaker, our educational system was falling apart under the NDP. Physically, we had schools that were being condemned. We had situations where it just wasn't safe environment, that if we neglect the maintenance of these facilities, unfortunately no one would want to send their children to these schools. Mr. Speaker, we are addressing those. There is much to be done and more work to have for sure.

Just on the pre-kindergarten programs and the development of 500 new child care spaces bringing the total number of licensed child care spaces to more than 13,700 — a 48 per cent increase since 2007. Only ones that don't like that are the NDP. Only people that I've ever heard of that are disappointed in a 48 per cent increase in child care spaces have been the old NDP, Mr. Speaker.

Important part of education now in the new Saskatchewan, and as technology increases, is we need better access to the Internet.

We've heard this from front-line teachers is that the bandwidth just isn't enough to deliver what they would like over the Internet. So, Mr. Speaker, in this budget or in this Throne Speech, what we'll see in the budget is a \$5 million increase over four years to CommunityNet which is going to help with the bandwidth issues in Saskatchewan.

Now that's on the education side, and Jacob's a few years away. And I can't wait for that first day of school. I'm sure it'll be an emotional day. My colleague from Walsh Acres is also a proud father, and it's a wonderful time in our respective families. But sometime, you know, they're going to have to go to school now too. So post-secondary, and this is an important part because when I went through university, it was the dark days in this province, the declines, the lack of investment in our post-secondary institutes. Mr. Speaker, I once wrote a university exam at the University of Saskatchewan in the gym. What the gyms were back then was two World War II aircraft hangers stacked on top of each other, Mr. Speaker. So you have one gym on the bottom, one on the top. Somehow they got that approved, and that was the NDP and the old Saskatchewan way of doing things, you know. Well we'll just put the barns together and we'll put that on top of this and it'll make it all work.

[16:45]

Well it worked for a few years but, Mr. Speaker, the one day I went to write my final exam and the building was, I don't know, not that it felt differently but there was, there was rumours around campus that it wasn't the safest building. But you know what? I went in there in the morning and wrote my exam. Returned home at lunch and then I found out that afternoon the building was condemned. I was one of the last students ever to write in the old phys ed building at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. That was what the state of the universities was back in the '90s.

So what did this government do? What, since forming government in 2007, what was our track record in post-secondary? Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to state that we were able to put \$4.6 billion into post-secondary education since 2008. More than 4,500 students have seen the tuition costs reduced through the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that would never happen under an NDP government. That money that came for that advantage scholarship was provided through by the dividends of growth, Mr. Speaker. Growth never happened under the NDP. So that scholarship, that would never happen and they'd probably still be in that airplane hangar.

Since 2007 our government has provided \$388 million in direct student support — 120 per cent increase over the previous six years.

Mr. Speaker, we've also had some pretty ambitious programs we rolled out. The student graduation retention program, that wouldn't have cost, probably, the NDP that much money because grads never stayed here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We've had close to 40,000 students that have taken advantage of that program and that's a powerful success story, Mr. Speaker, because they're making the decision. We talked about

before, people making a decision. Is the area you represent or your province, how's it doing? Are people moving out or in?

Mr. Speaker, we used to have outmigration numbers the worst in the domain of Canada. Mr. Speaker, things have changed. Fortunately now Saskatchewan is growing. There's opportunities for our grads. And that's important because we have post-secondary investments that we're making, but if there isn't any opportunity for them afterwards, what's the point? And, you know, I'm so thankful that that page of Saskatchewan has turned and we're not going back.

Mr. Speaker, what else we got in this Throne Speech? Well another area . . . And as many of you guys know, I grew up in rural Saskatchewan and I experienced first-hand what the NDP used to do with highways — nothing, Mr. Speaker. The investment that the NDP had in roads is embarrassing. The lives unfortunately that were risked were a tragic part of life in rural Saskatchewan. And you know what? There's no one more grateful if they have loved ones or . . . Myself, I got my parents that travel on roads in rural Saskatchewan.

And so how are we doing on our highways? Well this year we spent more than \$500 million on highways, bringing total investment over the past six years, Mr. Speaker, to \$3.7 billion. Mr. Speaker, that's 76 per cent more than the previous six years of that government. The NDP would never have put that record investment in roads. And if they did, it would have been in debt because, Mr. Speaker, they didn't have the money to because the province wasn't growing. The province wasn't growing because the people in charge, the NDP, had a plan for decline, Mr. Speaker.

What they did to scare away people is embarrassing, and scare away businesses. We're talking about taxation that was some of the highest in Canada. Well who would invest or who would move to a jurisdiction that had some of the highest property taxes in Canada? Who would invest if at the time their leaders of the day back then described our province as this wee little province that can or one that was always going to be in and out of equalization, always have not and maybe some day if we get lucky we'll be a have province? But we'll bumble along and, you know, maybe we'll grow, maybe we won't, but that will be fine. Well who in their right mind would move to that province?

That's not what I think attracts investment in this country, in this world. Mr. Speaker, we don't take credit for the economy that is Saskatchewan. We've had a lot of good fortune. Mr. Speaker, the commodity prices have been strong and it's really the people of Saskatchewan that is building this economy, that's growing and it's changing.

Governments can do a lot of things. Growing the economy, they can get in the way, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we've seen in past years in past governments. But I'm pretty proud of the fact that this government believes in getting out of the way of private enterprise, getting out of the way of job creators out there that will go out there and can raise the capital, invest in their different plants. Look at potash being a prime example.

You know what? I've been ragging on the NDP a little bit, but I'll give them a little bit of credit. Yes, you know, they did

some decent things. Royalties on potash, you know, they did re-examine what the royalties regime, and you know what? In opposition, the Sask Party, we supported it and thankfully so. And it's important to stick to that plan. We're seeing that.

So a little bit of a thank you for thinking that those royalties might be knowledge that was there. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Just as they learned that lesson that, you know what, if you tax people less, more investment will come, you think that that would be, you know, wait a minute, we found something here. The NDP has turned a new page. But then the last election came, and you know what? They talked about jacking up the rates and royalties, doubling the royalties, nickel to a dime. That was their famous leader at the time and it . . .

An Hon. Member: — Who was that again?

Mr. Tochor: — I believe that was Dwain Lingenfelter. But the idea, the idea for that came from the famous tree book, Mr. Speaker. You know who wrote that tree book?

An Hon. Member: — Who wrote the tree book?

Mr. Tochor: — The new Leader of the Opposition, which is shocking but, you know, that's the NDP for you, Mr. Speaker. So you'd think they would learn. And I'm being very thankful for some of the decisions they made in the past, but they haven't learned from them, that this growth that we're experiencing . . .

And I'm just going to talk just briefly on the potash side, and that would've never have happened if we jacked up the rates. We've heard of a couple billion dollar investments from BHP that is so welcome in this province. And you know what? I fear for the day that if a party got in — and I'm not saying which party, but if a different party got in and jacked those rates that they were proposing — that investment, poof. Gone.

Mr. Speaker, that's an industry that really have had a hard time and this province had a hard time. We talk about the 100,000 people that . . . it took the last time to grow 100,000 was 77 years. I believe that one of the main reasons why that happened was the NDP's government of the day decision to nationalize potash in this province. It killed, it killed investments dead, that why would anyone ever invest in a jurisdiction such as Saskatchewan if they were fearful that their hard . . . their capital investment that they made, such as all those potash mines, were just going to get stolen? And that's what it was. It was the government of the day, the NDP government, said you know what? That's mine and we nationalized your industry. That killed investment. That killed investment in not only potash but any other project in this province.

We've turned the corner. Some of those people that have had their investments stolen by the NDP such as K+S just announced that, within the last couple of years, that they're going ahead with their project. And we welcome them back to the province. And I don't have their direct quote in front of me but pretty much at their major announcement that they're back they said, you know what? We've forgiven Saskatchewan. We've forgiven. Bygones being bygones.

So how long did that take? So when did the nationalization

start? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, no, yes. It was back then. So we're at 50-some years for one company to say, you know what? After being burnt by the NDP, I'm ready to come back. I wonder how long the voters of this province is going to stay away from the NDP. Fifty years, Mr. Speaker? We can only hope.

Mr. Speaker, we know that all this growth is because of the hard work of the people of Saskatchewan. They are the ones out there laying it on the line. We can make the right climates and we can help with some of the training and the labour side and we've done that as a government. We're going to keep taxes competitive, Mr. Speaker. This is something that, you know, past governments would jack up the personal tax rate or the PST and they would decide to take that money from one person and give it to a potato farmer or a hog farmer or bingo hall. It's the examples of, ludicrous, of taking money from one side of the economy to put it on the other to hopefully have something grow.

That is the economic development that the NDP were known for. There are some unfortunately in this province that think that governments, if they're not putting direct taxpayers' dollars into investments or into the private enterprise, that they don't have an economic plan. Mr. Speaker, that's ridiculous. Governments should not be risking taxpayers' dollars in these initiatives.

What governments should be doing is making the right climate so that all the industries, all companies can grow. Not just the select few, Mr. Speaker. And that's one area that I think this province and this government can be very proud of is that by making that climate better, making that climate ripe for investment to happen, for job creation to happen, we're all going to benefit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as our economy grows and as we reach for the goals that were stated in the growth plan 2020, we're going to achieve what we've laid out in the Throne Speech that it's going to meet the challenges. We know we have challenges on education. I've talked about that. We have also apprenticeships — very important. We have announced 1,000 new seats. That's going to go a long way.

Another important part is our manufacturing centre of excellence, Mr. Speaker. This is an idea that, you know, it's . . . A lot of governments that fail think that they have the right ideas. Governments don't have the right ideas. It's listening to the people, Mr. Speaker. Listening to people out there every day working. What can government, what ideas can come up with. And that's where the solutions that we're going to find are out there. And that's where this manufacturing centre of excellence came from, Mr. Speaker, is that they said, why don't we have something similar to this?

We have a fantastic opportunity for manufacturing in this province. Only ones that don't believe in manufacturing in Saskatchewan are the NDP or their federal leader, Thomas Mulcair. They think that our economy is a disease and that it affects manufacturing. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've seen record money poured into manufacturing. We've seen record results with employment and exports that are driving the new Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to move forward

with that, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of challenges that come with growth. But thankfully we are given the opportunity to address those versus the decline that would happen if the NDP ever got into power again.

So with that I am pleased to have a glass of water here quickly. Mr. Speaker, just briefly, we're going really quick here, but you look at the record investments in housing and competitiveness that this province . . . You look at adult-based education. There used to be a wait-list, and there still is unfortunately, which is embarrassing. That if you want an education — just basic education — you shouldn't have to wait. We're making record investments. That's going to change in this province, Mr. Speaker, and with international engagement. And I can't think of another government . . . And I'm very thankful for our leader and our Premier to the important work that he's done telling the Saskatchewan story.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to support the motion. And I will not be supporting the amendment to the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It now being near the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed to 7 p.m. this evening.

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

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