



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

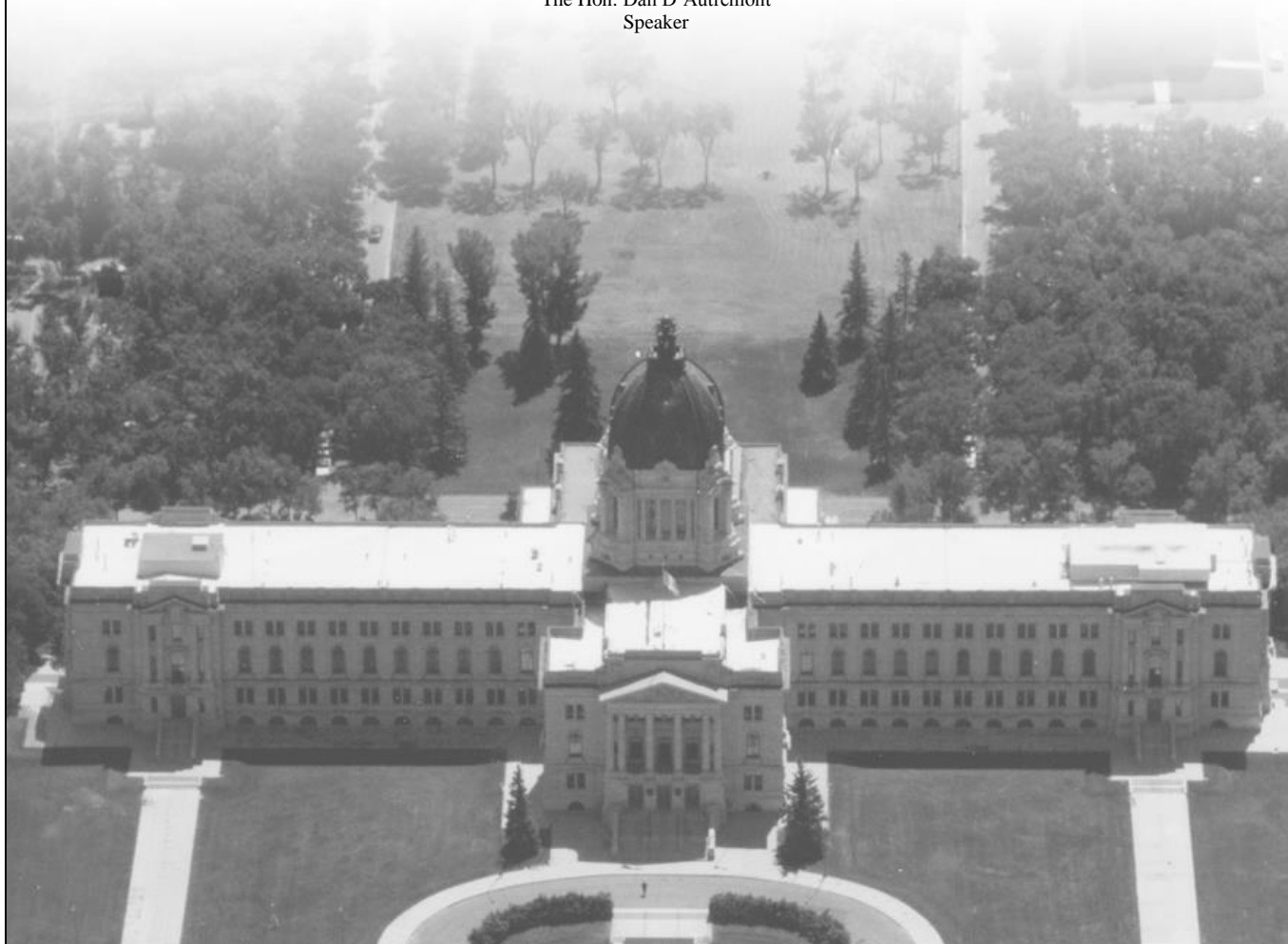
of the

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 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would seek leave for an extended introduction, please.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to colleagues. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, it's my pleasure this morning to introduce Caitlin Taylor. Caitlin is seated in the front row of your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Caitlin is our 2014 Saskatchewaner, and I'm sure you also recognize her as our 2013 Saskatchewaner. She reapplied for the expanded year-long position last December, Mr. Speaker, and won the competition. Her skills and talent, passion and work ethic are exceptional. She was selected from a field of more than 40 talented applicants.

Caitlin has been travelling the province in her new role since the end of January. In addition to showcasing why Saskatchewan is a wonderful place to visit and a great place to stay, she is demonstrating what makes it one of the best provinces in Canada to live, work, start a business, and raise a family. Caitlin, Mr. Speaker, is an outstanding ambassador for our province. She continues to engage a huge social media following; she boasts nearly 6,500 followers between her Saskatchewaner Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts.

As the 2013 and 2014 Saskatchewaner, Caitlin has attended and participated in sport, recreation, and cultural events throughout the province, including the Mosaic cultural festival, the Wanuskewin Days powwow, and most recently a citizenship swearing-in ceremony here at the Legislative Building. She has spoken at numerous events throughout the province, including the Association of Saskatchewan Realtors annual general meeting, the Saskatchewan Trails annual general meeting, and regional heritage fairs.

Mr. Speaker, I wish her the best of luck as she gears up to experience summer now in Saskatchewan for the second year in a row. She will continue touring and promoting our province until the end of this year. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to welcome Caitlin to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the official opposition, through you and to you we are also very pleased to welcome Caitlin to this Legislative Assembly, a very important part of Saskatchewan and part of your wanderings.

Certainly I think you have the absolute dream job, and we're really thrilled to have you doing that job and representing Saskatchewan and getting out there and seeing all the wonderful opportunities that are available for people to do in Saskatchewan. And I know, I expect I'll be maybe running into you at some of the festivals and events this summer, so hopefully we'll run into you there. But certainly on behalf of the official opposition, we really are very pleased to welcome you to your Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, to and through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to introduce two people in your gallery today. With us today are Anne Chase, a board member with Ovarian Cancer Canada, and Stephanie Gosselin, regional manager for Saskatchewan and Manitoba with Ovarian Cancer Canada.

I was able to participate in a flag raising with them earlier today in front of the legislature to recognize World Ovarian Cancer Day. Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues will have more to say in a member's statement. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Anne and Stephanie to the legislature.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the legislature, I'm pleased to join with the minister in welcoming Anne and Stephanie to their legislature on World Ovarian Cancer Day. It's an important day to recognize an illness that doesn't impact a huge number of people but the diagnosis often can be very . . . It's not a good diagnosis, Mr. Speaker.

For bringing awareness and making sure that the women who are going through this can connect with one another, I think the work that you do is very important. And on behalf of the official opposition, thank you so very much for that and welcome to your legislature.

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

Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with my colleagues in welcoming to all members of this Legislative Assembly, to you and through you, I might add, Ms. Anne Chase from the Ovarian Cancer Canada society.

And I'd like to make special mention of Ms. Stephanie Gosselin, who grew up in a community where both my wife and I grew up, and had since moved to Edmonton and Perth, Australia, Mr. Speaker, back to Airdrie, and now back to Shellbrook where her and her husband have moved with their

three children to enter into a farming career. And I'd like to congratulate Stephanie on her recent position with Ovarian Cancer Canada as a regional director for Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, Stephanie Gosselin — her maiden name was Hughes — has been a friend of my wife and our family for many, many years, and generations now. So I would like everyone to join me in welcoming Stephanie and Anne to their Legislative Assembly.

And while on my feet, Mr. Speaker, and speaking of my wife, I would introduce her as well to her Legislative Assembly. My wife, Krista Moe, came down with Stephanie. As I mentioned, we're friends.

But as we know and as the member opposite had indicated, ovarian cancer and cancer in general is a disease that reaches out and touches virtually every family in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And our family is no exception, with ovarian cancer touching our family six years ago. And my wife coming down to raise the flag at the Legislative Assembly with Stephanie and Anne today is special for us. And I would like all members to join me in welcoming my wife to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this House, I'd like to ask all members to welcome several guests in the east gallery. These folks are from SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union]. They're here to watch the proceedings. They're very interested in the discussions that we may be having. So on behalf of all members here, we'd like to ask all members to join us in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the House, it gives me great pleasure to introduce 10 grade 5 and 6 students from the Englefeld School, the home of the Eagles. And with them today, they're accompanied by their teacher, Jolene Gullacher; also parent chaperones, Andrea Burseth, Pam Crone, Vasyl Vorona, Rina and Cory Murray.

They must have been on the road early today, because it's a good two-hour drive anyway from Englefeld. And nice to see you all here. And I would ask all members of the House to welcome these students to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce 23 grade 5 and 6 students from Avonlea, Saskatchewan. They made about a 45-minute trip into Regina, obviously. They are accompanied by their teachers, Denise Dombowsky and Joanne Kirkpatrick; as well as parent chaperone, Jeff Robertson and Christina Daniel.

And I have to say that once I put my glasses on there's a lot of familiar faces up there from my days teaching back in Avonlea many, many years ago. So I would like everybody to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition against Saskatchewan health care laundry privatization. And we know that in May 2013 the Government of Saskatchewan announced its plan to privatize health care laundry in Saskatchewan, handing it over to a for-profit, Alberta-based corporation, K-Bro Linen. And we know that as a result of the decision to privatize health care laundry, six non-profit public health care laundry facilities will be closed within two years in the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Weyburn, Regina, and Saskatoon. And we know that the privatization of health care laundry will mean the loss of over 300 good-paying jobs, devastating local economies and families. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly be pleased to cause the government to reverse the misguided decision to privatize Saskatchewan's health care laundry, which will result in the devastating loss of over 300 jobs in the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Weyburn, Regina, and Saskatoon.

And moreover, the privatization of health care laundry will misuse vital taxpayers' dollars by taking money out of Saskatchewan's health care system to boost the profits of an Alberta-based corporation. And furthermore, the privatization of health care laundry will put patient care at risk as Saskatchewan's health regions lose direct control over laundry and thereby will have a significantly reduced ability to quickly and effectively respond to infectious outbreaks in health care facilities.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, people signing this petition come from all over the province. Thank you so much. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition. Many northern residents benefited from the rental purchase option program, also known as the RPO. These families were very proud homeowners in their community. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this government stubbornly ignored the call to maintain this program. Instead it cancelled the RPO, and that means the dream of home ownership is destroyed for many families in the North. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

To cause the provincial government to restore the rent-to-own option for responsible renters of the social housing programs and to reinstate the remote housing program.

And the people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Ile-a-la-Crosse. And we've had petitions signed from all throughout Saskatchewan. And I so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition for a residents-in-care bill of rights. Those who have signed the petition recognize that residents in care have the right to dignity, respect, and safety; that residents in care deserve basic guarantees of the quality of care they ought to receive; that it's the responsibility of the provincial government to ensure consistent standards of care in facilities throughout Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan adopt Bill 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act*, which would provide Saskatchewan seniors with the right to quality, high-level standards of care in seniors' care homes.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by folks in Saskatoon. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan calling for improved safety on the Highway No. 1 corridor between Regina and Balgonie, which has become unacceptably dangerous as attested to by the number of traffic collisions, many involving personal injury and death, Mr. Speaker:

In the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan, until the overpasses are built along this corridor: (1) immediately install traffic lights at appropriate locations along Highway No. 1 between Regina and Balgonie, (2) immediately reduce speed limits to appropriate levels within this corridor, and (3) take steps to ensure that the speed limits are properly enforced.

Mr. Speaker, this particular batch of petitions represents citizens from Regina, Cupar, Pilot Butte, Emerald Park, Francis, Lumsden, Lemberg, Balgonie, Regina Beach, Raymore, Stoughton, Silton, and White City, including I think everyone on Fairway avenue. Mr. Speaker, this is again a significant batch of petitions coming forward in what are hundreds, if not thousands, of people calling for this action. I so present.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition that's opposed to correctional service job privatization. The government has been going ahead with a proposal to deal with privatization of food service in the correctional system without properly listening to the front-line workers. And in this petition it's:

Respectfully requested that the Legislative Assembly of

Saskatchewan may be pleased to cause the government to cancel its privatization in the corrections and young offenders facilities in Saskatchewan.

And these petitions are signed by people from Regina, Riceton, Lumsden, and Grand Coulee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, and I'm pleased to rise to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. There's over 1,500 signatures here, Mr. Speaker. And this is in relation to the announcement of this government to close a number of public liquor stores in rural communities.

And the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention the following: the Government of Saskatchewan is planning to close Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority stores in Langenburg, Ituna, Ponteix, and Kerrobert. These closures will result as a loss of good jobs and quality public services. SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] staff live and work in their communities. They have children who attend local schools, helping keep enrolments up and schools open. These workers support local businesses and pay local taxes. Public liquor stores return profits to the people of Saskatchewan, 232 million in 2012-2013.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan stop the closure of public liquor stores in rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the individuals that have signed these petitions come from Annaheim, Balcarres, Battleford, Biggar, Birch Hills, Candle Lake, Cactus Lake, Coleville, Creighton, Denzil, and Delisle, Doddsland, Eaton, Englefeld, Eston, Evesham, Fiske, Flaxcombe, Goodsoil, Grand Coulee, Gronlid, Gull Lake, Hague, Handel, Hanley, Hoosier, Hubbard, Humboldt, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Ituna, Kelliher, Kelvington, Kerrobert, Kindersley, Lake Lenore, Lang, Langenburg, Lanigan, La Ronge, Leross, LeRoy, Lestock, Lloydminster, Loon Lake, Luseland, Lumsden, Macklin, MacNutt, Major, Marengo, Martensville, Melfort, Melville, Moose Jaw, Muenster, Naicam, Nipawin, Outlook, Quill Lake, Pilot Butte, Plenty, Plunkett, Ponteix, Prince Albert, Raymore, Regina, Rosthern, Rose Valley, Rouleau, Saskatoon, Simmie, Spalding, Springwater, St. Gregor, Stranraer, Tisdale, Tramping Lake, Unity, Vanguard, Viscount, Watson, Weyburn, Wishart, and Yorkton. Mr. Speaker, I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Mental Health Week

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 5th to 11th

marks the Canadian Mental Health Association's 63rd annual Mental Health Week. This is an important week to raise awareness about mental health issues in the community and work together to eliminate the stigma and discrimination facing individuals living with mental health problems.

As the Canadian Mental Health Association points out, "Mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness." Mental health is an important part of overall health and allows us to cope with stress, to work and to study productively, to contribute to our communities, and to realize our own abilities. At least one in three Canadians experience problems with their mental health each year, says the Canadian Mental Health Association. To that end, this year the association is launching the first ever Be Mind Full initiative.

Peter Coleridge, the national CEO [chief executive officer] of the Canadian Mental Health Association says, "Too often people claim to be feeling fine when they do not feel fine." The reality is approximately 7 million Canadians, 20 per cent of the population, live with mental illness but many do not seek treatment because of the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems.

Mr. Speaker, creating a supportive community for those with mental health challenges takes a commitment from individuals and governments. I encourage each of my colleagues in this House to take advantage of this awareness week, to learn more about how we can support and improve mental health services in our communities, and to realize the important role we can play in reducing the very painful stigma and discrimination facing those living with mental health challenges. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Women of Distinction Awards Gala

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night I had the pleasure of attending the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] Regina Women of Distinction Awards Gala.

This great event is an extension of the YWCA's commitment to supporting women in the realization of their full potential. The YWCA Women of Distinction nominee is a woman who displays a sustained and significant contribution in her field of endeavour whether it's locally, nationally, or internationally.

In addition to honouring talented women who make a difference, the gala awards dinner raises funds to support the YWCA's program and services. There was a fantastic selection of silent auction items as well as great raffle prizes to be won. Many thanks to all the generous donations and sponsors.

Awards were given in several categories including circle of friends; community leadership and enhancement; contribution to a rural community; cultural heritage; education and mentorship; entrepreneurship and innovation; leadership and management; science, technology, and the environment; the arts; wellness, recreation, and healthy living; and Young Woman of Promise.

In addition, the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Jacqui Shumiatcher. Jacqui has been described as an unassuming, generous, courageous, young-at-heart woman. Jacqui has had a lifetime of achievement and accomplishment and long-time dedication to improving the lives of others.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating each one of the 2014 Women of Distinction nominees and award winners. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Special Olympics Event in La Ronge

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, last weekend I had the pleasure to attend the first annual showcase sporting event and coaching clinic for Special Olympics Saskatchewan. Athletes and coaches from all across northern Saskatchewan came to La Ronge to showcase and build equality in sports for everyone.

Special Olympics aren't just a few days of sports competition once or twice a year. In reality the training for competition is as important as the competition itself. Special Olympics involves individuals of all ages and ability levels, including athletes with low motor abilities as well as highly skilled athletes who can compete at a higher level of sports both in and out of Special Olympics competition. It is a year-round program. Athletes who participate in Special Olympics receive a lifetime of learning through sports. They sharpen their motor skills, gain self-confidence, develop social skills that help them live a better life.

The Special Olympics committee organized a dinner and a movie which was a community fundraiser. The local Elks Lodge had a pancake breakfast fundraiser that benefited local athletes. There was an exhibition of showcased sports including soccer, basketball, rollerblading, visual arts. These events were followed by appreciation supper and PowerPoint presentation of the entire showcase.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the committee including Mike Clark, Pam Sanderson, Krissa McKay, for their vision and great work in bringing equality and dignity to these special athletes. To all the coaches, chaperones, many volunteers, and the JRMCC [Jonas Roberts Memorial Community Centre] staff, we appreciate your great work.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

National Day of Honour

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today in 1945 Canadians celebrated the moment when Allied forces triumphed over Nazi Germany to claim victory in Europe. Tomorrow, May 9th, is also a day of remembrance and recognition of our Armed Forces as it is the National Day of Honour.

The National Day of Honour commemorates the strength and sacrifices made by members of the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan and recognizes the friends and family of the fallen.

From May 4th to 9th, Canadians who have been injured in

Afghanistan will participate in a six-day, six-city relay where they will pass the last Canadian flag flown in Afghanistan from Canadian Forces Base Trenton to the Afghanistan Commemoration Parade in Ottawa where the flag will be presented to the Prime Minister. In Ottawa, the National Day of Honour will be commemorated by a parade that will begin at the Canadian War Museum and travel along the memorial route to Parliament Hill.

Mr. Speaker, more than 2,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces were wounded in this conflict and 158 women and men lost their lives. Because of the work that they did, more children have access to education, more Afghans are being trained as teachers, and through an ongoing vaccination campaign, more than 8 million children have been protected against polio.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members join me in recognizing the National Day of Honour and to take a moment tomorrow to reflect on the sacrifices made by the women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces and by their families and friends. Thank you.

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

Youth Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, May 3rd, I was honoured to attend the 13th annual Youth Business Excellence Awards in Nipawin. The YBEX [Youth Business Excellence Awards] Awards are hosted by Newsask Community Futures in order recognize the accomplishments of young people throughout northeast Saskatchewan and encourage entrepreneurship as a career option.

Mr. Speaker, this year there were 37 submissions which involved 79 youth, which is up considerably since last year. Since the YBEX Awards began, over 580 young people age 30 and under within the northeast region have been involved in this worthwhile program.

The categories were as follows: business plan, operating plan venture, Special Achievement Awards, Agriculture Business Awards, and the Newsask Memorial Award.

While there are just too many award recipients to mention, I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think that Carrot River Valley holds some of the most innovative and talented youth from around Saskatchewan. It was a great evening and I was marvelled by the accomplishments of the youth that we have coming from this corner of the province.

I'd ask all members to please join me in congratulating the 2014 YBEX Award recipients. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

World Ovarian Cancer Day

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 8th of last year marked the first World Ovarian Cancer Day. Once again May 8th is the day we draw attention to this disease which kills

1,750 Canadian women each year. Earlier today the Government of Saskatchewan raised the Ovarian Cancer Canada flag at the legislature in recognition of this very important day.

Approximately 2,600 Canadian women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer this year. The survival rate of ovarian cancer is 90 per cent when the disease is detected in its early stages. Mr. Speaker, there are, unfortunately, no simple tests for early detection. The warning signs are easy to dismiss, and too few people know what symptoms to watch for so that they can seek treatment early. We can do our part by becoming aware of the risk factors for contracting ovarian cancer, and the warning signs. There are resources available from advocacy groups like the Canadian Cancer Society and Ovarian Cancer Canada.

In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan ovarian cancer support group has been meeting monthly since 2006 to share experiences, learn about research, and offer support. The group is open to women going through treatment, survivors, and family members of women touched by the disease.

Mr. Speaker, we want to thank the people that raise awareness of ovarian cancer so more women can seek medical attention and help sooner if they display a warning sign that will lead to diagnosis. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

A Mother's Day Tribute

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand in the House today to recognize a very special day which we will celebrate this Sunday. It is of course Mother's Day. This weekend we should all take the time to pay tribute to the women who brought us into this world and who helped raise us to be the people we are today.

Our mothers are there to support us, love us, and maybe discipline us from time to time. They are anchors to our families, dedicating themselves to being important role models. As children, they feed us, run after us, clothe us, teach us, nurture us, and make sure we don't get into too much trouble. Mine had a lot of work.

Even when we become adults, their love and support never stops. As our province continues to grow, it is important for people to remember where they came from. Days like Mother's Day helps to remind us and give pause and thanks to the people who are responsible for where we are today. Personally I am very thankful for my wife and the mother of my daughters, Leone; my own mother, Pat; and of course my wife's mom, Elizabeth.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing the hard work, love, and support that our mothers continue to provide for all of us. We love you and appreciate all you have done for us. Happy Mother's Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Utilization of Saskatoon City Hospital

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most people in Saskatoon and throughout the province cannot understand why Saskatoon City Hospital is not used for the purpose for which it was built. I think it's probably safe to say that it's never been properly utilized, but this government, Mr. Speaker, has made the situation much worse, much worse by actually closing City Hospital for acute care since 2008.

This government turned City Hospital into a health facility that performs day procedures, provides outpatient services, and houses people waiting for long-term care. Anyone that shows up at City Hospital or ER [emergency room] during its reduced hours and needs to be admitted for acute care is transferred by ambulance to St. Paul's or RUH [Royal University Hospital]. This defies common sense, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: how can this government, how can they defend the increasing underutilization of Saskatoon City Hospital under its watch?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are aware that the emergency department at RUH in Saskatoon is experiencing some capacity issues. What we've done with the three hospitals, the health region has looked at all three hospitals and made some efficiencies. Saskatoon City Hospital emergency will stay open into the future, as the Minister of Health has mentioned on a number of occasions. And there'll be efficiencies around all three facilities in Saskatoon.

[10:30]

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the associate minister give a reply, but I believe he pulled the wrong note there when he was trying to answer the question. The questions was, how can this government justify not using Saskatoon City Hospital for the purpose that it was built for?

Dr. Nawal Sharma has spoken out publicly about this and expressed his frustration. He says:

Most physicians and nurses think the standard of acute care in Saskatoon hospitals has steadily declined in recent years. This isn't for the lack of effort by doctors, nurses and other care providers, but because of the lack of space and resources.

He goes on: "It's an unfortunate state of affairs that City, the best built state-of-the-art acute care facility, is closed for the purpose it was built."

Since writing that letter to the paper, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Sharma has met with senior health region administrators, and he's identified at least 64 beds and rooms that were designed for acute care but are being used for administration offices or other purposes. My question to the Premier: how can he justify health care administration being so bloated that we have whole wings

intended for acute patient care being used for offices and other purposes?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Health has said in the past, Saskatoon City Hospital is not closing their acute care. In 2012 and '13, Saskatoon City Hospital provided care to 5,483 in-patients; day surgery is operating in its main rooms, over 7,000 patients; emergency room service, over 5,000 patients; ambulatory procedures are taking place, which helped over 14,000 patients.

As in most major cities in Canada with multiple hospital sites, there are defined roles and service expectations for each hospital. And with the continued growth it was experiencing in its day surgery, out-patient clinics, and diagnostic services, Saskatoon Health Region focused City Hospital as a hospital for ambulatory, acute care services, and the site for in-patient rehabilitation and complex generic care.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said before and as the Minister of Health has said repeatedly before, the acute care service will continue in Saskatoon City Hospital, as the member opposite knows full well.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, if an individual, a patient, shows up at the ER during the reduced hours at Saskatoon City Hospital and they need to be admitted for acute care, Mr. Speaker, they don't stay at City Hospital. They're taken to RUH and St. Paul's, which are very, very full.

Dr. Nawal Sharma's speaking out again precisely because the health region and the government are being stubbornly dismissive. And we see it again this morning. The government should listen to what he's saying: "Most physicians and nurses think the standards of acute care in Saskatoon hospitals has . . . declined in recent years." And he talks about congested ERs, undue delays in admitting patients, overcapacity alerts, hallway beds, and extreme pressure to discharge patients as soon as possible.

Dr. Sharma wants to see a plan to see Saskatoon City Hospital used properly for acute care. He's identified 64 beds in rooms that were intended to provide acute care to patients that are now used for purposes other than that. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people, Saskatoon residents, health care providers in the province want Saskatoon City Hospital to be used properly. Why isn't this government listening?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Premier, I will gladly take this question. The region views Saskatoon City Hospital as representing the hospital of the future, in which care is increasingly provided on an outpatient and ambulatory care basis. With advances in surgical technique, anesthesia, and other technological improvements,

more surgical procedures are being done as day surgery.

And for the information for the House, on April 23rd, 2008, Saskatoon Health Region met with the Saskatoon City Hospital staff to discuss the future role of the three hospitals in Saskatoon. The major changes affecting City Hospital were decisions to combine critical care and in-patient medicine services at Royal University and St. Paul's Hospital and focus City Hospital on day surgery and ambulatory services.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, will this government admit there are many beds in Saskatoon City Hospital, that was built to provide acute care for patients that are now not being used for acute care, are being used for offices, being used for administration, and being used for other purposes, and not providing acute care to Saskatoon patients when in fact RUH and St. Paul's are bursting at the seams?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to take this question again. Again I can repeat what we are doing in Saskatoon. The one thing that the member should know, we in our government and our health system, that we are looking for efficiencies. We're looking for ways to improve health care. It's patient first. And we'll continue to look for innovation and use all means necessary to improve the patient care to the people in Saskatoon. As I said before, the region views Saskatoon City Hospital as a hospital of the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, in our government, we open long-term care homes, we open new hospitals. And the opposition when they were government, they closed hospitals across the province. They closed the Plains hospital, and they closed long-term care beds as well. And, Mr. Speaker, I like our record much better than the opposition when they were in government.

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

Ministerial Relationship With Board Members

Mr. Broten: — Yesterday I asked the Premier "Would it be appropriate for the minister to talk to her friend about issues related to the Social Services Appeal Board?" The Premier said, "The answer to the question is no . . ."

But then we learn, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers actually paid for a one and a half hour discussion between the Minister of Social Services and her very close friend that she appointed to the board, and the topic of the discussion was about issues related to the appeal board.

The Premier said yesterday that such discussions would not be appropriate. My question to the Premier: what action was taken after learning about the inappropriate conversation between the minister and her good friend who is the Co-Chair of the board?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I know that

the members opposite were questioning the conversation we had, and I think the members should know there was never any individual cases discussed. What we have to talk about is the processes. We have to make sure that what we're doing is making the system easier for the clients that we have.

I had the opportunity last fall to talk with a number of members from the Social Services Appeal Board. And we discussed things like making sure that the system was available to them either through phones or video links, making sure that there is better communications between the caseworkers and the clients so they wouldn't have to go to the appeal process, and making sure that we make it the very easiest we can for our clients. Mr. Speaker, that's the type of conversation that I needed to have, not just with Rita, but with other members from the appeal board to make sure that we can update and ensure that we have right processes for our individuals.

That's always been my concern, Mr. Speaker, is that people that are vulnerable have an opportunity to get the very best not only information but support they can from our government.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Social Services went to Ghana and London, and there are many inappropriate expenses that were billed part of that trip. And we know that the minister took her very close friend along on that trip. They had a \$200 personal lunch, paid for by taxpayers, which was only repaid once it was exposed. They were chauffeured around in a Mercedes at a cost of \$3,600, which again was only repaid once we exposed it. And we know that the Minister of Social Services appointed the same friend as the Co-Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board, which is supposed to be, supposed to be an independent tribunal. But the minister and her friend have been chatting it up inappropriately, and that's something that the Premier said yesterday would not be appropriate. Again my question to the Premier: why isn't this being taken seriously?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as members of cabinet, we're all responsible for the administration of certain pieces of legislation. I myself am responsible for the automobile accident insurance appeal board and, Mr. Speaker, I meet with the Chair of that board on a regular basis to talk about administrative matters, Mr. Speaker. It would be a shock to me to find out that members opposite when they were in government didn't have the same conversations so that we can effectively work for the proper administration of the legislation that we're responsible for, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if that person is the minister's close personal friend of many years. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Now they're getting these other ministers to pop up and try to provide a bit of backup.

But they should listen to the own words that the Minister of

Social Services has said. The Minister of Social Services said herself that she would think it would be inappropriate if an NDP [New Democratic Party] Social Services minister appointed their very close friend and travel partner to the Social Services Appeal Board. She said, "It's probably better if they're not a real close friend of the minister." And she said, "I would imagine maybe this is the type of thing we should be reviewing again to see if, to make sure we're not closely tied to somebody that's on a board."

But the government, instead of admitting they made a mistake, they chose to double down on this and claimed there's no issue whatsoever with the independence of the Social Services Appeal Board tribunal, where the next step is to go court.

But now we know the minister and her very close friend have had at least one inappropriate conversation. And it's not just me that's saying that; the Premier yesterday said it would be inappropriate to have those discussions. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why won't he act on this?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my first response, a number of us, most members of cabinet are responsible for the administration of the legislation that we're responsible for, and many of those pieces of legislation are adjudicative in nature, Mr. Speaker.

I'm personally responsible for the administration of justice in this province. I meet with the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal and the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench on a regular basis to discuss administrative matters, Mr. Speaker. If that weren't the case, then I can't imagine how the administration of justice would be affected in this province, Mr. Speaker. There's no difficulty with members of cabinet meeting with Chairs of boards who are responsible in an administrative or an adjudicative manner, Mr. Speaker. That just makes sense.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, taxpayers paid \$117.50 for the Minister of Social Services to have a one and a half hour phone call with her close friend on February 1st, who she appointed to the Social Services Appeal Board. The discussion was about issues related to the board. Well yesterday I asked the Premier, I said, "Would it be appropriate for the minister to talk to her friend about issues related to the Social Services Appeal Board?" And what did he say back, Mr. Speaker? The Premier said, "The answer to the question is no . . ."

We've talked to others who are well acquainted with the Social Services Appeal Board who all agree that this interaction is completely unacceptable. At best, Mr. Speaker, at best, it contributes to the appearance of interference with an independent tribunal.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: how on earth can he justify this after learning about the details of the contact between the minister and her very close friend?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite have a copy of the claim that says the phone call was a consultation re board processes. That's exactly what we need to do, is to determine what the boards do and can they do it any better.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition talked about the FOI [freedom of information] process and how that could be improved. I am always concerned about whether we can do a better job for our vulnerable citizens when it comes to an appeal process. Can they do it faster? Can they get their information sooner? Can they get their payments out quicker, Mr. Speaker? And really, part of the issue is making sure that the information between the caseworker and the client is shared easily so maybe we don't need the process. It's all about making it better for the individuals.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is well aware this is not about individual cases. This is about process. That's what it said on the statement. That's what I talked about. And that's the importance of doing the job that I do and my colleagues do. We have to make sure we can improve processes if we're going to improve the lives of the people in this province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Economy.

Living Skills Program

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member for Saskatoon Centre asked several questions regarding the current status of the living skills program offered at Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw. I have looked into this matter and found that this is one of some 300, approximately, programs, third party delivered programs by the Ministry of the Economy delivered through SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. And I can confirm for the House this morning that this program has not been cancelled.

We from time to time look at programs to provide the very best education, and programs are reviewed frequently. This includes a delivery of programs in other institutions such as community colleges or community-based organizations to ensure best practices are being followed.

[10:45]

Just for the benefit of all members of this House, this program comprises of an eight-week life skills training component followed by a 10-week work placement program. And I understand that there are people that have applied and have been accepted in both the spring and fall applications.

Mr. Speaker, this is a program that's very important to the people in Moose Jaw. There's been some 500 people over the years have gone through the program. It is extremely important. It adds to the component of about \$84.3 million in this year's budget for people with disabilities, for a total of \$466.2 million, more than doubling the funding.

This is a very important program, Mr. Speaker. You don't have to take our word for it. Just look at what Amy McNeil, the

executive director of the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, has said. And she said, and I quote, “We are leading the country in . . .”

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

Closure of Liquor Stores

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the government announced on April 3rd that it would close public liquor stores in Ituna, Langenburg, Ponteix, and Kerrobert. Many are concerned about the loss of jobs and the impact that loss will have on these rural communities. The Ituna Business Association wrote to the minister and said, “As the local business association, it was very disheartening to hear that a business in our town would be closing, and we hope that you will reconsider this decision.”

Mr. Speaker, today we’re joined by many in our province who support these thriving public liquor stores. The application for franchises closes today. It’s not too late. Will the minister listen to the business association? Will she reverse her decision to close these liquor stores?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it’s very important for the people of the province to know that the majority of retail sale outlets within our province is delivered through the private outlets. We have 190 private franchises throughout our province as well as 440 private off-sale outlets, and we only have 79 SLGA stores.

The conversion has been done from an SLGA store to a franchise by all governments throughout the years in our province. It does not reduce the services in those communities; it only changes who is the service provider. This is a cost-saving business decision, Mr. Speaker. The closure of these four stores will mean an additional savings for SLGA of three-quarters of a million dollars. That’s money, Mr. Speaker, that our government’s priorities is to be spent on health care, education, and infrastructure.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, we’re joined today by SLGA employees from Ituna and Kerrobert. They share the concerns of the Ituna economic development committee who wrote to the Premier recently saying, “The impact for our current businesses is not what a small community needs. To keep a community viable, it’s essential to keep all businesses operating.” They went on to write, “Why would you do this when each year this location has made a profit and will continue to do so if allowed to stay open? These profits help secure funding for other government initiatives.”

Will the Premier listen to the advice of the Ituna economic development committee and to the employees affected by this proposed closure and reverse his government’s decision?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown

Investments.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous answer, the profit margins on these stores is less than the 15.3 per cent discount which is offered to franchisees. Mr. Speaker, it is a cost savings business decision that our government has made and it will save us approximately three-quarters of a million dollars, Mr. Speaker. Those are valuable dollars that can be spent on our priorities of education, health care, and infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, in my entire constituency, I have one SLGA store. I have a number of very thriving communities that have franchisees.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I’ve been told the minister met with the mayor of Kerrobert just this week, and I’ve also been told there was a meeting of 100 concerned citizens in Kerrobert last week. They asked for and got a two-month extension to the franchise application deadline. People in that area are concerned about the loss of their local liquor store, and people in many other communities are worried that their store might be next. If the minister stubbornly insists on closing these profitable stores, what does she have planned for other rural stores? How many others are on the chopping block?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, this was a budget decision. The member opposite knows that there is only four stores.

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

Social Housing

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the volunteer board of directors of Earl Grey Housing Authority sent concerns to the minister, and one of those concerns had to do with the maintenance budget. But when we asked the minister why the maintenance funding for Earl Grey Housing Authority was cut by 63 per cent, she said the numbers were dreamt up the night before.

The minister had received those very numbers a week prior from Earl Grey Housing Authority, Mr. Speaker, and we have those budget documents. And we know the facts are that government has cut the maintenance funding for Earl Grey Housing Authority from \$1,475 to \$550, a 63 per cent cut. I hope the minister can set the record straight today. Does the minister want to clarify her comments?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m delighted to make sure that the member opposite knows, first of all, that I had an opportunity to speak to members of the Earl Grey Housing Authority yesterday. And we talked about the money that was given to them, and they understand that it’s a two-step

process. They know that they were given a portion of their funds earlier this year, about \$500 of it. And then they're going to be reviewing the needs when it comes to the other housing authorities — the capital asset planning work that's going on right now — to determine the work that should be . . . go on as we move on. They know there's more funds available.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's an important part of what we're doing as government to ensure that the 18,000 units that we have are kept in good shape. And my conversation with the board yesterday, with a member of the board yesterday . . . They were delighted to hear that I was going to come out and meet with them, that we're going to talk about this issue, and to see what other input they can have as we make decisions on the funding as we go forward.

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

Mr. Forbes: — We appreciate the minister's willing to sit down with the board, but the official from Sask Housing wrote to Earl Grey, instructing that the housing is intended for seniors of 60 years of age or older or those with a permanent physical or cognitive disability near that age. And the letter says and I quote, "If the housing authority rents a unit for other purposes, it must charge community market rent."

But that doesn't line up with what the minister was saying earlier this week. She claimed that rent for all tenants is based on income. So the minister's saying one thing, but her officials in the housing authority are under a very different impression.

So, Mr. Speaker, does she know what the actual policy is and how it's impacting low-income people in our province?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm well aware what the housing policies are. I'm well aware the changes that were made in the last while, and I'm well aware why they were made in the last while. We have to make sure that people that are vulnerable, people that are most in need are getting the houses that we have.

And, Mr. Speaker, we looked at the numbers of people that are renting these houses and know that there are some people that are making below \$39,500 a year that can be in our homes. We know what the maximum rent is. We also know that some of the board will have the opportunity, if there's chronic vacancy, to look at if somebody else can actually be in that home.

Our goal is not to have empty homes. Our goal is to make sure that the homes are there for people who are most in need. That's the discussion that we're having. Not only am I . . . within our ministry, but with authorities that are right, the housing authorities across the province. That's why I had a discussion with them. That's why I've gone out to other authorities in the province, and that's why I'll be meeting with the Earl Grey Housing Authority. And I'm sure the members opposite won't be there.

The Speaker: — You can tell it's getting close to the weekend again.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

National Day of Honour

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark a solemn event taking place tomorrow around the country. The federal government has declared May 9th, 2014 the National Day of Honour for those who have served in Afghanistan and the 158 who died during the mission.

Mr. Speaker, you will remember that on March 12th, in front of the Legislative Building there was a ceremony marking the end of the Afghanistan mission and the departure of the last Canadian troops from that country. That day the Premier opened his remarks with these words, and I quote:

Today we honour the heroes who served our country and our province so courageously during the mission to Afghanistan. We come here, I would hope, humbled by the knowledge that others have sacrificed so much on our behalf.

Mr. Speaker, we are humbled by the sacrifices of those who served. And even though we can only ever feel a portion of their loss, we join with families — mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, spouses and children — to honour those souls so close to them who gave their lives so that we can live free.

So many times over the more than 12 years of the Afghanistan mission, we wiped away tears and watched as a cavernous military transport on the ground at CFB [Canadian Forces Base] Trenton gave up its precious cargo in an all-too-familiar ceremony. Our nation's heroes, borne on the shoulders of fellow soldiers, returned to Canada and to their loved ones, there to accompany them the rest of their journey home.

Tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, we honour the more than 40,000 who served in Afghanistan, remembering those lost in combat in the overall mission and those who have tragically perished since. Along with their families and loved ones, they will all be honoured with two minutes of silence marked coast-to-coast-to-coast.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the last act of remembrance coming up this year. On June 6th, we remember the 70th anniversary of D-Day. And later this summer, August 4th marks the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. On that day, just to the northwest of this building at the Saskatchewan War Memorial, we will hold a commemoration ceremony to honour those who answered the call and paid the supreme sacrifice in the First World War. It is not lost on us that 100 years after the Great War we are once again honouring those who have served and those who have laid down their lives on battlefields thousands of miles away to keep us safe and free.

In response to those unprovoked attacks that took the lives of 24 Canadians on that clear September morning, Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform took the fight to the perpetrators. They fought valiantly and without equal — sons and daughters of Saskatchewan, proud Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the 17 names honoured on the Afghanistan plaque at the Saskatchewan War Memorial into the record:

Corporal Jordan James Anderson
 Corporal James Hayward Arnal
 Corporal Cole Daniel Bartsch
 Lieutenant Justin G. Boyes
 Corporal David Robert William Braun
 Captain Nichola Kathleen Sarah Goddard
 Master Corporal Byron Garth Greff
 Corporal Shane Patrick Keating
 Corporal Bryce Jeffrey Keller
 Sergeant Darby Todd Morin
 Lieutenant Andrew Richard Nuttall
 Master Corporal Joshua Brian Roberts
 Sergeant Prescott Shipway
 Master Corporal Allan Maurice James Stewart
 Master Corporal Jeffrey Scott Walsh
 Journalist M.J. Lang

The Speaker: — Statement has ended. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — The individuals who also passed away, Mr. Speaker:

Corporal D.R.R.J. Wasden.

Mr. Speaker, may he rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker, we do recall the day back in March when we, as an Assembly, gathered and recognized the service on the front of this legislature and had many veterans here in the Assembly. And at that time, Mr. Speaker, we, as an Assembly, recognized that the soldiers who have returned did their duty, that they have served their country for a purpose and a calling that is about promoting peace and a better global future for all of us here living on Earth.

But we know, Mr. Speaker, that many individuals did not return. We know that war involves a great amount of death, a great amount of pain, and a great amount of suffering. So it's absolutely appropriate that tomorrow we would recognize a national day of mourning to recognize those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, Mr. Speaker. And may we use it as a reminder that we do our duty as Canadians who are here to ensure that our veterans are treated properly and treated fairly.

Since we won't be gathering tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate if we took a . . . by leave of the Assembly, stood for a moment of silence which you could conclude at the end of the appropriate length of time, Mr. Speaker, if members are in agreement with that.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition has requested leave for a moment of silence. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

[11:00]

The Speaker: — Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Anti-Poverty Strategy

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to stand today and enter into the debate on an anti-poverty strategy. And we've seen a lot more attention to this over the last few months, but it's been a call that's been going for many years, and it's one that I think that we should heed. So it is an important debate that we have before we take our leave of the House for the summer. And we know that it's one that has serious consequences right across this province.

And we find ourselves in an unfortunate situation where we have . . . we are only one of two provinces that are left in the country without an anti-poverty strategy. And just as recently as earlier this week, we saw a situation where once again the Children's Advocate . . . And it's not a new call. The Children's Advocate has been calling for an overarching anti-poverty strategy in Saskatchewan because, as he's pointed out with the stats . . . And we'll probably get into a lot of stats and I hope we don't get into a situation of duelling stats, but I think it's important that we take the time to really reflect on what the Children's Advocate has said.

Earlier in March we had the Poverty Costs coalition talking about it. A few years ago we had the Poverty Free folks talking about it. We've been calling for it. But many others have called for it and it's just one that makes a lot of common sense. And I think with this government . . . And even the Minister of Social Services has talked about strategy. She's talked about the mental health, addictions strategy and the disability strategy. Both are very good and wise initiatives, but it would be good to have us connect the dots. It would be very wise for us to connect the dots.

I think that it's important that every government realizes that we're only as strong as our weakest link and how, if there is poverty in our communities, then it's something that we should focus on. And it's not one that we should be stepping back and congratulating ourselves if the rate goes down. Until there is no poverty, I think we keep focusing on it. And that doesn't matter, whether when we were in government or the Sask Party's in government, it's something that we should rise above the petty politics of it and really strive to do the good job that I think that we can do. And this is where an overarching strategy can make a lot of sense.

And as the Children's Advocate had pointed out, 16 per cent of non-Aboriginal children live in poverty. Thirty per cent of Métis and non-status First Nations children in our province are living in poverty. Sixty-four per cent of status First Nations children in Saskatchewan are living in poverty. And we know that there are estimates that poverty costs us some \$420 million in higher health care costs, and of course the whole issue of what this means for social assistance costs, some \$720 million there. And as well, we know that Saskatchewan tops the list in

terms of highest rates of women residing in a shelter.

And we can go through this, and just last week I raised questions in the House about what was happening at our food banks where we see in Regina the food bank usage has gone up some 24 per cent in terms of senior citizens using its services. And for the first time, we're starting to see seniors who are having to utilize shelters, emergency shelters, and this is something that nobody can take any kind of happiness. This is a call to action. This should be a call to action and one that we would happily embrace here in this House. And it would be a great thing if we were to say, listen, let's really work on this, you know.

And I recognize the government, as I said earlier, two strategies that they're really striving to put forward, and I hope to attend some of their sessions. Good work. Good work. We have a lot of hope. There is a lot of optimism that those will do the jobs that they are required to do. But the question we have overarched is the same one the advocate has, the same one the poverty folks have, is the overarching strategy that to eliminate, to tackle the issue of poverty in our communities.

And so I just want to reflect on a couple of articles, and then I do want to take a minute to talk about our own situation here in Saskatchewan. And of course, this was an editorial that was actually in response to the cost of poverty campaign. And it notes that it was a coalition of Saskatchewan community groups that put this together, and they really focused on the cost, the financial cost, and hoping that that would have caught the attention of this government.

But the government while . . . And I understand some met with the Poverty Costs folks, and I'm happy to hear that. It's always good to be meeting with community groups, and we would always hope the government does that. But there were no reassurances that anything more would come out of it, and we have some concerns about that.

But a *StarPhoenix* editorial on March 15th, 2014, talks about, and the headline is "Ideology beats sound policy." And it talked about two articles, or two news items, that were in play that week. One was of course the poverty campaign, and the other one of course was the whole issue on tanning beds. But it seems that . . . And this is the quote from *The StarPhoenix*:

In both cases, the attitude of the government seems to be that other provinces can heed good advice and get positive results, but Saskatchewan will do its own thing despite evidence that says the government would avoid costly problems down the road by taking action now.

It goes on to say:

Saskatchewan and British Columbia are now the only provinces without a poverty reduction strategy after Alberta, long the standard bearer for personal responsibility, recently adopting a comprehensive policy. Yet Social Services Minister June Draude insists that Saskatchewan's growth in average weekly earnings and its low unemployment rate somehow point to a superior anti-poverty strategy in this province where a tenth of the population is impoverished.

And it goes on to talk about:

Given the . . . high cost of social programs such as health care and welfare, not to mention the human cost of unrealized potential that has its roots in poverty, it's difficult to understand the provincial government's reluctance to consider sound public policies in place elsewhere in Canada.

And it goes on. But I have to say it's something that we really, we should take the time to think through and rise above. Rise above, as I said, that petty politics that sometimes in this House stops us from doing the right thing, stops us from doing the right thing. So I would really ask today, as we debate this situation that we have in our province, that we really take a look at what can we do and really engage our communities to develop this overarching anti-poverty strategy. We have a moment in time. And I think that often this government likes to say we are either the first province to do something but, you know, it's not really about being the first or last; it's about doing the right thing. And it's never too late to step up and say, you know what, let's get at this problem; let's get at this issue, you know.

I was struck by this cartoon that was in *The StarPhoenix* back in the fall. And it's a cartoon of Stephen Harper and it says, the one caption says, good news, the poverty rate is on the decline in Canada. And then the next box it says, bad news, the evidence-based data comes from a box of fortune cookies. And the fortune cookie is, the label on the box is, 2011 results of voluntary household survey.

And this is the thing that I really worry about, that we're missing. We're missing out on . . . Sometimes we survey, sometimes we use data that isn't that solid and we get caught up in that and it's really unfortunate, particularly in the light of the changes at the federal level. We can't really trust those numbers. But I do want to say, and I have raised these numbers in the House, you know, when we look at our own social assistance rates here in the province, while . . .

And I do think and I have to acknowledge, and I will say this and I've said it many times, we are encouraged by the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program, and that has really worked well in terms of the call from the community. DISC [Disability Income Support Coalition] has really set the agenda on what we should be doing there. And full recognition to DISC and the good work they're doing, and I'd also like to recognize the government for listening. Now we always have some questions about how it's being implemented, but generally it is the right way to go.

Now I have to say that this still leaves other situations that we have in terms of social assistance. And one that we see right across when we started keeping track . . . And this is through written questions, so if my numbers are wrong, they're only wrong because of the written questions that we got, the answers that we got. So if there are better numbers, we would sure like to see them and have them because it's important that we have accurate information.

But we see right from 2008 when there was an average of 6,000 families on social assistance. In 2012 that number actually . . .

Actually it increased 2010 and '11. We are still seeing about 6,000: 6,100 in 2012, 5,700 in 2013. We haven't got a full set of numbers yet for 2014. But that is really significant, Mr. Speaker. So while we know the minister will say and talk about poverty rates going down, that they've cut this and that, we see the numbers.

When you couple them with what's happening with the Children's Advocate's numbers and we see our own answers to written questions, we have concerns. And we see some problems with the children's numbers here. These are the number of children that we see: in 2012, there were about 13,000; last year, 12,400 children who were living in families who were receiving social assistance. That's a shocking number, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that while we can talk about percentages or cuts in the poverty rates, these are real people. This isn't a percentage. These are real kids who are in our schools across the province. Way too many of them are, you know, as the Children's Advocate pointed out, are First Nations or Métis, but this is a real number. These are kids that are in our schools, in our neighbourhoods, and these are our families that are in our communities and our towns and villages right across the province. And we really should be doing something about it.

[11:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, as well, the caseloads that we have for Social Services . . . And again these are numbers from written questions. And we see that in February of 2014, the latest numbers we have, there is a caseload for Social Services, when you combine social assistance, TEA [transitional employment allowance], and SAID, the number was 28,101. Now, Mr. Speaker, when we left government, the caseload was 25,998 — about 26,000. That's 2,000 more than when we left government. Mr. Speaker, in the lowest, and then we have the lowest actually was in 2008, 23,678.

So well we see the numbers are there, that there is work to do. And I always appreciate that the minister says there's more work to do, but the first thing you do, you have to have a plan. You have to have a plan and one that fits all these pieces together.

And I would really call on the government to take some time, really think about the value of their position of saying, no, we're not going to do this. And while they say that we're involved in action, but the actions aren't having the effect that they think they're having, that in fact it seems that they're stuck, that they're stuck. There may be things that they're doing well, and as I said, and we'll talk about SAID, but there's many more pieces to the puzzle than just that.

The Children's Advocate has advocated for changes and a real focus on that because he sees the result when things go off the rails. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that we really think about this motion before the summer break. And I would move:

That this Assembly call on the government to develop and implement a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy.

And I do so with my folks on this side of the House. And I

think it's a very important motion, so I would enter this motion into the House. I do so move. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Centre:

That this Assembly call on the government to develop and implement a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pleased to have the opportunity to enter into the debate. This is actually a debate that I have both personal and some experience in. I've got an interest in this for sure.

So since this is the motion from the member from Saskatoon Centre, I take it that he's trying to assert that this government doesn't care about the province's most vulnerable. And I find that to be a fascinating premise but not surprising since we're used to the opposition standing up in this Chamber and making farcical and unsubstantiated claims. They like to frame this with, we've been told and this is what we are hearing. Well we already come to this Chamber and leave the hearsay and the gossip behind and stand behind what we say because we have a growth plan. We set targets and goals, and we have a lot. There is a lot more work to do. And I have nothing but examples here, and I'd be happy to read them into the record.

So let's start with poverty in Saskatchewan. In 2006 and 2011, that's a 50 per cent reduction in the percentage of persons in low income. That's a Stats Canada. So that's from 10.7 per cent in 2006, 5.3 per cent in 2011. Saskatchewan is tied with Newfoundland for the second-lowest percentage of people living in poverty at 5.3 per cent, again another StatsCan number. Sask outperforms almost all other provinces and their strategies. And between 2006 and 2011, the incidence of child poverty dropped from 14.8 per cent to 6.2 per cent.

The NDP record at this though, so the NDP introduced a strategy in 1998 called Building Independence: Investing In Families. That was in 1998. So the incidence of child poverty in Saskatchewan, in 1998 the incidence of child poverty was 11.2 per cent, again a Stats Canada. That was the number. By 2006 that number had gone from 11.2 per cent to 14.8 per cent, so the incidence of child poverty actually increased in those . . . while the opposition was in place.

So the headline at the time, in 2005, here's a headline on *The StarPhoenix*: "NDP fails to reduce child poverty: Saskatchewan numbers higher than the national average."

In 2003, the incidence of child poverty in Canada was 17.6 per cent, while in Saskatchewan that number was 18.3 per cent or 40,000 children, says the 2005 *Report Card on Child Poverty in Saskatchewan*. And so Garson Hunter, who's a professor of social work, University of Regina, social policy research unit, said, those numbers are disappointing; we don't see any government social policies being brought in that meaningfully address the issue of child poverty. There's Garson Hunter. I know him well, a really good prof, knows his stuff.

In 2006 Saskatchewan's child poverty rate was the second highest in the country. That's the *Child and Family Poverty Saskatchewan Profile 2008*. And in the NDP's 1991 platform, they promised to work to eliminate the need for food banks in Saskatchewan, wanted to work to end child poverty by providing increased income supplements. Well, Mr. Speaker, that didn't quite occur.

So I was kind of puzzled by the member from Saskatoon Centre when, and I'm not sure, but I mean he talked about it again today in his motion and he talked about the 24 per cent increase in the numbers of seniors using food banks. And that was from an April 30th, 2014 CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] News article. So I'm not sure whether the member from Saskatoon Centre is either misinformed or misinterpreted the stats. I mean we saw today in regards to SIAST and the living skills program some difficulty understanding exactly what the facts were. So anyways in this article, it states that there was a 24 per cent increase in the number of seniors using the food banks last month compared to last year at this time.

So the *HungerCount 2013* report however shows a 9 per cent decrease in Saskatchewan from 2012 in seniors using food banks, from 689 to 629 individuals. The overall percentage of people using food banks who are over the age of 65 is 2.8 per cent. So the overall number of people using food banks in Saskatchewan has decreased by 8.8 per cent from 2012. So I'm fascinated, you know, where these numbers come, but I guess *HungerCount 2013*, a reputable agency. Well okay. Not for now.

So I'm going to go on because I've got nothing but examples of investments that this government has made for the most vulnerable. And I'm going to start with supports for seniors since we're on that topic.

So from our budget, so Social Services 2014-15 budget for seniors include \$10 per month increase in benefits under the seniors' income plan — that's in July of 2014 — to a maximum of \$260. That's single seniors. And \$225 per month for each member of a married couple. All right. An increase in the monthly income threshold and the personal care home benefit from \$1,875 to \$1,950, that's again in July of this year.

Let's move on, since I'm proud to be the Legislative Secretary for disability issues, proud to be a part of that. Well let's talk about the investment we've made for people, citizens with disabilities. So in particular, \$9.9 million in funding for the Ministry of the Economy's employability assistance for people with disabilities program to assist adults with disabilities to prepare for, secure, and maintain employment. Again, an amazing program.

I, for one, like to trumpet any time I can the issue of . . . and our program, our SAID program, Saskatchewan assured income for disability program. And I've got nothing but positive comments from people in the disability community about how grateful and happy that they are, amazingly.

Anyway so this Ministry of Social Services investment of \$5.1 million in 2014-15 will increase benefits under the SAID program for the third year in a row — \$20 a month for those in residential care, \$50 a month for individuals, \$55 a month for

couples. This increase will take effect in June of this year. It will benefit more than 12,000 households. Absolutely, absolutely amazing, sir, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy again to talk about this and go on in terms of the SAID program, this four-year commitment to increase income, living income benefits by \$100 a month for those living in residential care; \$350 a month for those in independent living arrangements; and \$400 a month for couples who are living independently.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to talk about some of the pieces that we've been involved in in relation to tax reduction. So for instance the low-income tax cut-off, the low-income cut-off . . . Since 2007 Saskatchewan has seen larger reductions in the incidence of low-income, both adults and children, than any other province in Canada. Saskatchewan has the lowest rates of low income for all persons and children in Western Canada. Saskatchewan has the second-lowest incidence of low income for all persons in the country. So between 2007 and 2011 the number of Sask residents in low income declined by 23,000 people, including 8,000 fewer children.

Mr. Speaker, the actions that we've taken to assist low-income people, we increased the minimum wage by over 25 per cent since 2007 from \$7.95 to \$10 an hour; implemented historic personal income tax cuts since 2008 which have removed more than 114,000 lower income Saskatchewan people from the provincial tax rolls; doubled the low-income tax credit; and significantly increased the income threshold.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go on. Just a couple more pieces. But in relation to adult basic education and in relation to First Nations and Métis, \$5.9 million targeted specifically for First Nations and Métis learning to continue efforts to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people — 25 per cent of the adult basic education budget is allocated for on-reserve programming.

In 2012-13 the demographic participant information showed 68 per cent of adult basic education learners are First Nation and Métis and lastly, Mr. Speaker, adult basic education training continues to focus efforts on First Nations-Métis education and the employment strategy. Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed. I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand today and participate in the debate and of course on the motion:

That this Assembly call on the government to develop and implement a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that now is the most crucial time for the people of Saskatchewan to begin some of this particular work, Mr. Speaker. We heard the member from Saskatoon Centre speak very eloquently about the challenges that many people face within his constituency, within his city, and of course within his province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important, that we also stress on this side of the Assembly, is that on page 10 of the

child's advocate report, there is a couple of headlines that really caught my attention. And the first headline on page 10 is, "Two-thirds of status First Nations children live in poverty." That was one headline, Mr. Speaker. The second headline, and I quote again from the document, "Children living on reserve do not . . . [enjoy] the same level of services as those off reserve."

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I mentioned earlier that I thanked my colleague from Saskatoon Centre for calling on this government to develop a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, Mr. Speaker, that he comes from an area that has a myriad of people from different worlds and of course different lifestyles. And he speaks very eloquently and passionately about the challenge that all people face, and I recognize that. There are many people in many of our communities that struggle, and the ones that pay the greatest price are perhaps the children.

Now I think what's really important, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the document itself, I want to take a reference to the document and speak about the First Nations and Métis people and of course the northern community people as well. I do this, not out of disrespect nor to diminish the needs of others, but to simply highlight the cause and the concern that many northern leaders and many northern people have expressed over the years as we talk about developing an anti-poverty strategy as a government.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the revenues that the government currently enjoys, great revenues from oil and gas. The agricultural sector is certainly booming, Mr. Speaker. You look at the industry of potash. You look at the cattle industry. You look at the tourism opportunity, Mr. Speaker. You see the great amount of revenues that Saskatchewan is enjoying at this juncture of our history.

[11:30]

And this is the purpose and the reason and the logic I think behind my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Centre, is doing the call and has continued doing the call for the government to get serious, to get serious about implementing a very comprehensive anti-poverty strategy. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Saskatoon Centre recognizes the great amount of income that the current government enjoys. The economy is booming. The population is growing. But there's still a segment of our population that is not feeling the benefit and is not feeling part of our province because of poverty.

Now in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have many challenges that we often want to speak about. And I look at some of the families and some of the hurtful things that have been done to some of the families in northern Saskatchewan. And many of the cuts are related to the Social Services department, in particular the Sask Housing component.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know many people's rents have gone sky-high. We know many seniors in our cities are paying much more rent than they anticipated. We know they're paying more for their medicine. But in northern Saskatchewan, that problem is also dramatically increased because of the distance from some of our more central markets. And we're talking paying a significant amount more for power, because you consume more power in the North because some of the houses are not properly

insulated, in particular the Athabasca Basin where it's not uncommon to see 900 to \$1,000 a month for power bills. Mr. Speaker, we see the high cost of transporting basic foods that help address poverty and, Mr. Speaker, nothing from this particular area has been addressed whatsoever.

We see families that are finally starting to see a little light when they have the opportunity for employment, where they have struggled when they were younger with very young children. And they go to school. They get a trade. And, Mr. Speaker, they then turn around and get a decent job. And this family wants one thing that 77 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan enjoy, and that is the opportunity for home ownership. And you look at what has not been done in support of these communities, is that they have not been afforded the opportunity to buy their house off Sask Housing because the minister callously cancelled that program. And it affects that family, that working family, Mr. Speaker, and the children living in those homes.

Day in, day out we stand here in this Assembly and we present petitions on the remote housing program, on the rental purchase option, for many families in northern Saskatchewan so that they're able to exercise those options and buy out Sask Housing, so they can see the value and achieve the dream of owning their own home and having a mortgage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the fundamental difference, the fundamental difference that I'd point out to people that might be listening, and the reason why I think the member from Saskatoon Centre made this very compelling argument, is now's the time. The economy of Saskatchewan is pumping on all cylinders. The Government of Saskatchewan is enjoying record revenues, enjoying record revenues, and as much as they want to pat themselves on the back, they simply inherited the booming economy and the growing population. But we're not going to go there, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to go there primarily because it takes lot of hard work and a lot of hard years to rebuild the economy and the hopes of the people of Saskatchewan.

But while we have this largesse of revenues coming into our province, while we're enjoying the boom of the agricultural sector and of the tourism sector, of the oil and gas sector, of the mineral sector, and the list goes on of how every sector in Saskatchewan seems to be pumping on all cylinders, making our province stronger financially and, Mr. Speaker, that is something that we within the NDP circles applaud and recognize it's something that we need to continue building on.

However, the fundamental argument that we have is while we have this opportunity, we should be doing a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy to help those that have less than us. It is a very simple message: to help those that have less than us. And there's nothing more compelling and compassionate than that basic statement that the member from Saskatoon Centre has made on a continual basis.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see the actions, as I mentioned, of cutting programs that are very essential to northern Saskatchewan communities and to First Nations and Métis people. When we see the advocate's report say that two-thirds, almost two-thirds, and I'll quote again, "Two-thirds of status First Nations children live in poverty," these are Saskatchewan

people, Mr. Speaker. Yes, they enjoy the distinction of being our First Nations people, but they live in Saskatchewan. These are Saskatchewan families. These are Saskatchewan children. And we can't understand, on this side of the Assembly, with the largesse we have in terms of a government getting a great amount of wealth, why can't they do something to help those that are less fortunate than many of us in our province.

But a fundamental difference I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, in the last minute that I have, is that if you look at the callous attempt by the government to divert the attention of people to what the NDP did or didn't do versus what they're trying to do today, the fundamental difference that I'll tell the people of Saskatchewan and why we're calling for an anti-poverty strategy, Mr. Speaker, is today, 2014, the Saskatchewan government enjoys a \$14.2 billion budget. They enjoy a \$14.2 billion budget. That was their budget this year, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you that that is a phenomenal amount of money to have at your disposal.

When the NDP assumed government in 1991, Mr. Speaker, we had a deficit of \$15.5 billion. So it's almost a \$30 billion difference. So our point is and my point is, you can stop playing the games of saying, why didn't you guys do this? And our response is, because the province was flat broke. Now we're saying, you guys do this because you've got \$14.2 billion to work with and, Mr. Speaker, they're failing.

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

Ms. Jurgens: — “We believe that the fundamental objective of public office is to serve our fellow citizens with integrity in order to improve the economic and social conditions of all Saskatchewan people.” Mr. Deputy Speaker, this direct quote is taken from the Legislative Assembly's code of ethical conduct for members of the Legislative Assembly as found on our website at legassembly.sk.ca. These are not just words on a website. They're an inspiration for action, action that helps maintain a strong economy, action that puts money back into the pockets of those that need it; action that provides traditional assistance for those who need it, and action that focuses on programs that help people make the transition from poverty.

Mr. Speaker, it truly is an honour to participate in this debate. I thank the member opposite for bringing up the issue of reduction of poverty in Saskatchewan. It really provides me the opportunity to highlight the many actions that we have taken to improve the economic and social conditions of all Saskatchewan people. Together my colleagues and I have taken a multi-pronged approach and made a commitment to holistic cross-government solutions.

The message from Kelvington-Wadena member, who is our Minister of Social Services, says it so eloquently, and I quote from the document *From Dependence to Independence* that says: “We are also measured by our efforts to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society are met.”

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can talk about taking action now. Well we're two steps ahead of them all of the time. The caseload, our member opposite said the caseload is horrendous. Well let's compare the results of undisciplined rhetoric to our disciplined action. The child welfare caseloads when the NDP

were in government rose by 53 per cent. And we'll just compare those seven years, from 2000 to 2007.

What we are doing is we are working on four pillars: sustaining a strong economy, ensuring our citizens have more disposable income, removing barriers to independence, providing financial support to our most vulnerable citizens.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our actions are fulfilling a commitment of our growth plan. We have purchased an additional 300 training seats. Now in the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, we now have 6,700 training seats. We have increased training allowances and income support to support 1,000 new apprenticeship and ABE [adult basic education] opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the member from, my colleague that just finished talking in the House here, indicated . . .

An Hon. Member: — Coronation Park.

Ms. Jurgens: — Coronation Park, thank you . . . indicated that we have been increasing all of these helps for our most vulnerable. Well now we have 6,700 opportunities for apprenticeship training funding.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca can talk about whether we pay attention to First Nations or not. Here are some statistics that'll help him understand just where the First Nations and Métis are participating in Saskatchewan's bright future. We have 68 per cent of adult basic education learners that are First Nations and Métis. Well we have put 25 per cent of our ABE budget for on-reserve programming. We have Aboriginal participation increasing in apprentices to . . . We now have 13.8 per cent of total apprentices are First Nations. Our First Nations are part of our Saskatchewan economy. Note that that is almost the same as the ratio of First Nations in our province. So our disciplined action speaks far louder than any undisciplined rhetoric the NDP will throw around.

Mr. Speaker, we have what I like to call the Hub and COR [centre of responsibility] in Prince Albert. It is a model that is being recognized around our province and across the world. Because of the leadership that is shown by our city, we have 10 active Hubs in the province in Prince Albert, Yorkton, La Ronge, North Battleford, Moose Jaw, Estevan, Weyburn, Nipawin, Lloydminster, Swift Current, and Saskatoon.

I would like to point out that since the implementation of the Hub in Prince Albert we have seen an overall crime rate decrease by 18 per cent and violent crime rate decrease by 38 per cent. Not only that, we are being recognized around the world. Just yesterday *The StarPhoenix* highlighted — on the May 6th *StarPhoenix* — highlighted that P.A. [Prince Albert] serves as a role model. And this is a quote: “Its ability to get results comes primarily from a willingness to look at evidence, weigh and adopt those measures that are deemed successful, and adjust those measures that fall flat.”

Mr. Speaker, we are full of action, not undisciplined rhetoric like the opposite members like to . . . Mr. Speaker, we also have taken actions to increase the minimum wage over 25 per cent. What that means is that we are now going to have a minimum

wage that is over \$10 per hour compared to \$7.95 in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, in 2008 and again in 2011 our government increased the basic spousal exemption amounts and the dependent child tax credit amount. What that means is that a Saskatchewan family of four or more with an income of 75,000 is expected to pay less in total provincial taxes and utilities than their counterparts in any other Canadian province.

Mr. Speaker, in the North those people that need a little helping hand up, are income assistance recipients, receive an additional \$50 per person per month in recognition of higher food costs. Again actions speak louder than undisciplined rhetoric.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, our citizens are pulling together. We are working shoulder to shoulder to reach Saskatchewan's full potential. We are looking at a bright future that includes the most vulnerable. It helps people make the transition from poverty.

Mr. Speaker, in the senior income plan, we see that we have increased benefits under the senior income plan. We have constructed long-term care facilities in Biggar, Kelvington, Kipling, Maple Creek, Prince Albert. We have increased funding for urgent issues and we call it the Urgent Issues Action Fund. And this will continue to improve services and long-term care facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I can keep going on and on and on about how our record clearly indicates our government's propensity to act. Our actions speak louder than words. We are creating a reduction in poverty. We are helping the people of our province — all people of our province.

When I talked about the seniors' income plan, let's compare the failure of the NDP with their undisciplined rhetoric and the success of disciplined action. The NDP failed to increase the senior income plan between 1992 and 2007, and they have the audacity to say that they are taking care of the most vulnerable. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the third-lowest percentage of seniors living in low income in Canada. Disciplined action versus undisciplined rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Coronation Park indicated that we have reduced the percentage of persons on low income. The headline in *The StarPhoenix* on December 5th indicated Saskatchewan NDP fails to reduce child poverty. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to rise on this debate in regards to the motion that my colleague has made. And I think it's a bit disappointing that some of the speakers haven't taken time to actually address the motion itself and instead just provide a little list of things that they wanted to highlight. But they obviously missed the point of the motion, so I'm going to try and address that a little bit in the short time that I have.

The motion reads:

That this Assembly call on the government to develop and implement a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy.

And I think that's something that's been highlighted and is certainly not something that . . . raging rhetoric from the opposition. It actually comes from the recently released annual report for the Children's Advocate. So I don't know if this untrammelled tendency towards ridiculous rhetoric is something we could apply to the Children's Advocate. And that's a very important role in our province that highlights some of the issues that many of our most vulnerable people are facing, and particularly children, which is always a huge tragedy as everyone knows.

Now in his report — and this is on page 10 just so everybody knows what we're talking about here — he made a comment about where this strategy is or whether it's in place at all. And what he says on page 10, in the paragraph, he says,

The provincial government has started developing such an overarching strategy, with investments in [things like] the *Child and Family Agenda*, and . . . the *Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People* and the *Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan*.

But what he goes on to say is that "A poverty reduction plan could provide an overarching framework in which to address poverty in a more focused, measurable way." And this is the concerns that, I think, we're trying to highlight and hopefully members opposite will take time to actually think about what the role and overarching plan would achieve in terms of bringing all these actions they talk about into a proper focus.

The Children's Advocate goes on to say in the next page . . . He's talking about how children living on-reserve are not receiving the same level of services as those off-reserve. And he does commend the province and the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] and the Métis Nation for publishing their report in 2013 on the joint task force. But he goes on to say, and I quote, "This work needs to begin in earnest now." So there is work that needs to be done on all these activities that the province has indicated it's working on.

What I'd like to focus on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a report that came out, and it was a review of the plan that this government introduced in 2012. It's called *From Dependence to Independence*, and this was a report released by the Ministry of Social Services in 2012. And in the introduction . . . The report itself is called *Saskatchewan's Anti-Poverty Plan, From Dependence to Independence: Does it measure up?* And it's written by Brian Banks and Paul Gingrich. And these two individuals took some time to look at the plan that the government released in 2012, and they point out a number of deficiencies that exist. And obviously the Children's Advocate is also concerned about the way they're approaching anti-poverty in this particular government.

So in the introduction to the report, the authors write:

In 2012 the Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services published *From Dependence to Independence*, a lengthy report describing the policies and programs it has designed

to attack poverty in Saskatchewan. The preface makes strong claims regarding its intentions, "Previous governments in this province should be acknowledged for their work on different aspects of poverty, but no previous administration approached the challenge with a comparable commitment to holistic, cross-government solutions.

And it goes on to say, further down the page:

From Dependence to Independence sets out four pillars of poverty reduction: sustaining a strong economy, ensuring citizens have disposable income, removing barriers to independence, and providing financial support to the most vulnerable; as such it appears to be Saskatchewan's version of an anti-poverty plan.

And the paper . . . That's the end of the quote. And they go on in the paper to analyze these four pillars that are identified in this plan. And they point out some of the flaws I think that this government would do well to pay attention to. So the first pillar that they talk about is sustaining a strong economy.

And before that, on page 6 of their report, they talk about the resource boom and how it has provided some economic results. But what they also talk about is the other side of the growth equation. And here's what they have to say:

On the other side of the growth equation housing prices have risen to unprecedented highs, the availability of low cost housing has reached historic lows and . . . [housing] is a growing public issue. And despite relative prosperity income inequality has not been reduced. In Saskatchewan inequality sharply increased from 2000 to 2006, then declined slightly, remaining above the level of the 1990s . . . Rapid growth of international immigration to the province, approximately 31,000 between 2007-2011, has added to Saskatchewan's low income population.

So the concern here that they express further on in the page, and I quote, is, "*From Dependence to Independence* is almost exclusively focused on an income approach to poverty reduction." So this is a very ideological approach that I think is very classically reflected in many conservative governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this government of course is no exception to the rule.

But the authors point out further:

Poverty, however, is not just about income levels; it is also about lack of opportunity, provision of meaningful employment, and developing a sense of belonging and community.

And we know there's other groups that have highlighted these issues over the years, most recently a group called Poverty Costs. That was a campaign to raise awareness about the cost of poverty in Saskatchewan. And they continually point out that there are many, many factors involved in poverty that go way beyond the income level of the individual, and they talk a lot about the cost of poverty. That's the main focus of the paper. But Poverty Costs indicated that in spite of a growing economy, poverty has not gone away; 11.9 per cent of Saskatchewan's

children are still living in poverty. So what doesn't add up here, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And I think that's the question that this anti-poverty plan would answer if it was taken, and if the social science research that was applied to an overarching plan like the Children's Advocate is calling for, we would clearly, clearly see that it's not just about income. There are all kinds of factors that factor in.

The pillar one, which describes the economy, the authors point out it's not usually a theme in an anti-poverty plan because those plans usually focus on anti-poverty measures. But he says by focusing on the economy, this plan . . . And I'll quote them. They say, "By describing all low income persons as dependent, the plan establishes a negative frame of reference and creates stigmatization and a sense of ostracism from the rest of society."

And the second pillar is, to ensure citizens have disposable income, describes how this government is taking steps to provide more income. And the concern there is, "While these changes, particularly reduced taxes on the lowest income quintiles, have a positive effect on those with lowest incomes, many of these programs also provide superior benefits to middle and upper-class income earners, not the poor." So I think that's one of the flaws I think that this government needs to address.

And then finally pillar 3 is about nine areas of government intervention. And pillar 4 describes financial support to some vulnerable populations, but the focus there is on seniors and those requiring extra shelter allowance and transportation allowance. And the comment here is, "Programming directed at improving opportunities for unattached individuals, single parents, First Nations, rural poor, and immigrants is difficult to identify. It is apparent from a later discussion the plan that First Nations education and employment are seen as a success indicator, but there are very few specific initiatives in the plan to address this long-standing issue."

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there just isn't enough time to go through the entire report.

I'd spoke about, last week in the 75-minute debate about a project that my constituency assistant was doing last week. It's a challenge called living below the line, and it's a challenge for everyone to live on what welfare recipients would live on when it comes to their food. And this is from her blog, and I'm going to quote from her blog last week. It reads:

A conversation with the husband this morning resulted in us adding up what \$1.75 turns into when you look at a month. So \$1.75 for 30 days is \$52.50. A single person on the Saskatchewan assistance program gets \$714 per month for every expense you can imagine. \$459 of this is for shelter.

And it goes on to say, you try and find a place in Saskatoon for that.

And I'm going to run out of time. I won't be able to read the whole blog, but I strongly recommend, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you look at it. Her name is Erica Spracklin and this is her blog on her experience in poverty. It's worthwhile looking at. I

urge the Assembly to support this motion.

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

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to yet again rise in this House to take part in a debate of this magnitude. This is a worthwhile discussion to have as we have a government who has in the last, first term . . . in these last two years of this current term has worked tirelessly, but not as just ministers in government, but working with the deputy minister level and the individuals that give every day of their lives to government and public service to try to make people's lives in this province a better place.

And it's that note where I want to start in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the inter-ministerial work that's being done and by the Minister of Social Services today, who along with other ministers are working with their deputy ministers and staff to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our population aren't forgotten and left out.

We've always said from day one that we believe that our government . . . Had we been lucky enough to form government in 2007, we'd talked leading up to the election that we believe in a hand up versus directly handouts. Now there are people who need our help, who will always need help of government because they are unable to crawl out of a situation due to limitations beyond their control, whether it be inherently just a cycle of perpetual violence they live in or it could be that their personal lives are just such that through mental health or addictions or through physical ailments they will never be able to get out of a situation without some hand up or maybe in some cases even a handout still. But that's important to recognize that that's the group that we're talking about today, I believe.

There's a lot of individuals in this province who are seeing and . . . The economy in this province is actually thriving. It has and we've always said it's . . . We don't take credit for that. We've gotten out of the way of that economic boom, we'll call it, or economic expansion in the province. The government has always, under our Premier, has always said we need to form policies and formulate action plans to encourage that growth. And from that growth, we see the direct benefits to the population of this province. We see that we have more people employed in the province than any other time before. We have more opportunities for people who are in fact in lower income families to do better. They can in fact address their education needs at a different level. They have more opportunities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to experience a better way of life because the economy of the province is doing better than it was in the past.

[12:00]

You know, we've directed, ministers have directed to their officials that we are no longer going to work in silos within the concept of working together in collaboration. I believe for too long that previous governments, notwithstanding even ours when we first formed government, that everyone was focused on their end goal within their own ministry to ensure that their portfolio was managed and that their direction that was given within the mandate was followed.

But there's also been an enlightenment whereby we see people working together now, crossing over from ministry to ministry to ensure that we in fact have opportunities to use synergies, use ideas across ministries and across the bureaucracy to look at innovative ways.

My colleague from Northcote talked about the Hub model and the COR model that's being used within the Ministry of Justice. You know, that's one fundamental working group that in principle, they work with ministerial colleagues from Education, Social Services, Health, Justice, Policing to assure that they address the most vulnerable people within, not just the demographic group, but have issues that are, as I've stated before, sometimes systemic within their own families that they need help to get out of those situations, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, that's where the government of the day, our government has looked at other issues involving particular groups. We talk about seniors who in fact, when the minister of Social Services, the first minister, took over, she started looking at ways to increase their economic situation, their outlook. And the current Minister of Social Services has also done the same.

We are always looking at opportunities to engage with groups, and the Human Services Committee has talked to the Seniors Mechanism group in this province. We heard from them loud and clear that there's still more to do, yes. And we will definitely take on those challenges and work towards ensuring that that group, the group that built this province, the group whose shoulders we stand on every day, as the Premier has always said, and other colleagues have, are supported by this government.

And on that note, the seniors' income plan has been and will be looked at every year, budget to budget, to ensure that there is an economic advantage to those seniors who still require the hand up, not the handout because they are making their way in this province, and they are respected by us because of what they've given to our province. They've built this province for us. They've built it so we can stand here today and have the opportunity to in fact have this debate in the House, which is really important.

And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We had a moving statement today by a minister about those who've given their lives so we could have what we have today in this province. And that's why we don't ever, ever want to forget the sacrifice of those before us. And in that context, I mention seniors because they have built this province for us. We will always have them in our minds moving forward.

Also in the whole issue today in the debate, we talk about, you know, getting people opportunities. And we look to this government's . . . again an issue working with partnerships in the community, and we talk to and about Habitat for Humanity. We have groups in our major centres who see an opportunity and synergies with the government to pool resources, work together to provide families the security of a home, which gives them the hand up so they can actually have a secure environment so families can, mothers and children can in fact have the security of a home whereby they can then engage in other processes in the government and in the province to ensure that they have security and well-being.

So in this purpose, you know, we have a sense of need still. We understand that and we're going to work towards that. And the government and Minister of Social Services has provided money for Habitat and will continue to provide money for Habitat homes in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, we talk about the record of what the NDP has done in the past, what we're doing now as a government under the Sask Party. And you know, there's an interesting statistic — I hate to dwell on this sometimes — but we see that children living in low-income families declined by 12 per cent in NDP's last seven years. That's a good record. That by itself, that's nothing wrong with that.

But because of the fact we're able to have an economy in this province that's doing better now, we're seeing that we have less children living in low-income families because it's declined by nearly 36 per cent in our first four years as government. So it shows that there's still things that are working. We're addressing the needs because the economy's doing well. And we see that comparison back and forth across caseloads from the past to caseloads of today.

We see that there are opportunities because we're reinvesting dollars that are coming from our resource revenue sector back in social programs. We're not forgetting about those needs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a social conscience, as any other government should, and will have in the future, to show that we are addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in this province.

Now having said that, we have a dedicated corps of men and women who work in public service who are always trying their best and working their best to give everybody the opportunity to thrive in this province. And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We have more work to do and, you know, we'll never stand on our laurels. We'll always strive to do better because we want everyone in this province to have a great quality of life. And we are doing everything possible by looking at other jurisdictions, looking at new, innovative ways to engage with other partners in the province.

We're looking at innovative ideas to ensure that we can see . . . we can maximize our dollars to give everybody in this province the benefits that are inherent to living in a democracy where they can come forward, they can ask, they can give advice to our Human Services Committee, to ministers, to other committee members as well as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], to see what in fact we could do better in this province. We are always going to engage those groups, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We see that happening in more and more times here. And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? This government will always strive to do what we can to make their lives better. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for debate has expired. Questions. I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's one thing to talk the talk, Mr. Speaker. It's another to actually walk that talk. You know, it's an unfortunate reality, Mr. Speaker, that those living with disabilities or are suffering from mental health and addictions are more likely to live in poverty. But our government is taking actions to change that. \$446.2 million in

funding has been allocated for people with disabilities; \$238 million is allocated to mental health services. There's been a 34 per cent increase for funding for mental health services in the last seven years. To the member from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, where are the . . .

An Hon. Member: — Saskatoon what?

Mr. Marchuk: — Saskatoon Centre, sorry. Where are the NDP plans to improve the lives of those living with disabilities? Where are the plans to improve the lives of those suffering from mental health and addictions? What are your plans to walk the talk?

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it is a good question. We've been very clear that we have been very supportive of DISC's initiative and it's resulted in SAID. And while there may be some things we would have done differently, generally we are happy with that program. We are supportive of the mental health initiative that's happening right now. Unfortunately, we think it's a little too slow, that it should have been announced sooner. And we're going to get the results a little too . . . Well it should have been quicker because we know there are issues that should have been done right now.

So, Mr. Speaker, what our position is though is that what we need to do is connect the dots. We need to connect the dots. And this is what we're seeing the problem with this government, is that they're not connecting the dots. We see *The StarPhoenix*. We see the Children's Advocate, Poverty Costs — all calling for us to connect the dots. That's our stuff.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering if the government has read some of the comments on their *From Dependence to Independence* paper. And I want to ask whether or not they're concerned about the gaps that are in that report. Particularly their whole approach lacks a foundational base and a well-thought-out definition of poverty that sees poverty in terms of power, asymmetries, or human rights. And secondly, the gap in the plan is that it avoids the discussion of how social exclusion and stigmatization act as a barrier to reducing poverty. And so my question is for the member from Prince Albert Carlton: is he concerned about those gaps in their 2012 report?

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

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course we are. Any government that gets a report from an independent body or from anyone that says that we could do better, we will look at those comments. We want to see if we can address those deficits to make sure that we could do better in the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's important. You know what? And the member from Athabasca yawns. He mocks my answering, mocks the process today. Shameful. Shameful for that member to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when in fact the member . . .

His colleague asked a very good question. And the answer is like, it's too bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This government could always do more. Our ministers have said that. We will always take advice from those in the community, and we will always work to make this province the best place ever to live, raise a family, and thrive. Thank you.

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

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is in action when it comes to helping those living with little or with no income. In 2008 this government increased the basic and spousal personal tax credit by \$4,000 and the Saskatchewan dependent child amount by \$2,000. In 2011 we further increased the basic and spousal personal tax credit amounts by \$1,000 and Saskatchewan dependent child amount by \$500. In total this government . . . Increases to these personal credit amounts are providing over \$300 million in annual tax savings and have eliminated provincial income taxes for almost 112,000 Saskatchewan residents.

To the member from Saskatoon Centre: do you agree this is a good step to reducing poverty, and if not, what exactly would you do?

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

Mr. Forbes: — Again, Mr. Speaker, it's about connecting the dots, connecting the dots. And this is what *The StarPhoenix*, Poverty Costs, poverty-free Saskatoon, many, many community-based organizations are calling for things that make sense. But one of the programs that he didn't talk about is our basic living allowance for people on social assistance. Do you know when the last time that was increased, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The last time it was increased was 2007. That's a shameful record on their side.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the independent officers of this legislature, we look to them for a great deal of guidance on many different issues. So when the Children's Advocate comes forward and says that this government should be providing a comprehensive anti-poverty plan, you'd think the government would listen to the Children's Advocate.

My question to the member from P.A. Northcote: why are they disagreeing with the Children's Advocate in his call for a comprehensive anti-poverty plan?

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

Ms. Jurgens: — I thank the member opposite for that question. Our actions speak louder than any rhetoric that the NDP throw. Our actions have, from Stats Canada information, indicated that between 2006 and 2011, there is now a 50 per cent reduction in the percentage of persons in low income. Our actions are

creating a reduction in poverty in our province. We walk the talk. For example, we have a provincial training allowance which provides income support for adult students with low income in basic education and related studies. Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the NDP, our government isn't afraid of setting targets and implementing actions to achieve them. Our province's population has grown and continues to grow and prosper. But despite this growth in numbers, there are over 23,000 fewer people living on low incomes and 8,000 fewer children living in low-income families. We've reduced the number of low-income people more than any other province in Canada. In fact since 2006, the number of low-income people has been reduced by half. On top of that, food bank usage rose by 94 per cent during the . . . [inaudible] . . . period under the NDP. Their record makes it hard to take lessons from any of those members.

To the member from Saskatoon Nutana: what was the NDP's comprehensive plan to reduce poverty during their 16 years of government?

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

Ms. Sproule: — I thank the member for his question, although it was difficult to get to it, I guess, when he had his speech prepared. But what the problem here, and what we're hearing from these government members is the complete failure to recognize the ideology that's driving their whole approach and the fact that the Children's Advocate has called them on that. And they don't even want to address that issue.

My colleague from Saskatoon Centre continually raises the issue. We see the Minister of Social Services' failure to even comprehend what the problem is, and that's what's scary. We see that in their plans they talk about income levels, and they focus on income levels as the only solution to poverty amelioration. But clearly there's no focus on prevention strategies. That's the failure of this government and that's what the Children's Advocate is trying to point out.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Prince Albert Northcote. And one of the things I think is important is we talked about home ownership. And we're going to ask her to do a little bit of work here, in the sense of asking her if she'd lift a finger to walk over to the Minister of Social Services, use her finger to tap the Minister of Social Services' shoulder and say, can you kindly restore the rental purchase option program for home ownership for northern Saskatchewan families that have been renting for years and years, and ask the same minister, can you restore the programs for many working men and women in northern Saskatchewan and their families can finally achieve home ownership? Will she do that, Mr. Speaker?

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

Ms. Jurgens: — I thank the member opposite for the question. Our record clearly indicates our government's propensity to act. Disciplined action produces positive results. Here's one of them: Saskatchewan offers supports to working families through the Saskatchewan employment supplement, the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement, and the child care subsidy. These supplementary income programs lower the welfare wall by assisting low-income families to make the transition out of poverty while remaining in the paid workforce. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our government's housing strategy of Saskatchewan sets out direction to provide better access to safe, quality, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income earners through the creation of new housing and improvement to existing housing in the 2014-2015 budget, included 9.2 million for first year of a five-year plan for the federal-provincial investment in affordable housing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This means that people within Saskatchewan will have an opportunity to live within safe, affordable housing conditions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a plan. That opposition does not have a plan. They stand and they talk, but they have never ever put forward a plan. This government has put forward a plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from Saskatchewan Centre: what is your party's policy to provide adequate housing to Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I found that very interesting. First thing we'd do is have a minister who actually knew her file on housing. We have a situation where we have a minister who's disseminating . . .

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 3 — Western Livestock Price Insurance Program

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the end of my speech today, I will be introducing this motion:

That this Assembly commends this government's actions to support Saskatchewan's growing agriculture industry and livestock producers through the implementation of the western livestock price insurance program.

Mr. Speaker, the road to livestock insurance has been long. So

first, being a history guy, I feel I have to go back to the history of where Saskatchewan began. It has once been said, if you do not know your past, how can you know your future? By 1905 when Saskatchewan became a province, we were booming. We had the third-highest population in all of Canada. We had a higher population than our sister province, Alberta. The people who came to Saskatchewan were mainly of European descent, but the vast majority weren't farmers. They were such things like tailors, carpenters, jewellers. And they came and they had to learn a new way of life. They had to learn a new existence, and they became farmers.

The farms of those days were strictly mixed farms. They were self-sufficient. The only items you bought were salt, sugar, and flour. Flour was usually bought on a grist account where you hauled grain in and took out bag by bag whenever you wanted flour. They also had all the livestock, the poultry, hogs. Everything was right there, and only the staples were what they needed too. And that was usually bartered for.

Things were going great, but our weakness was we only had one industry, one lone industry, and that was agriculture. Everything that happened in the province was part of or attached to agriculture.

Then came the dirty thirties. The land blew. Soil drifted like banks of black snow. The rain didn't fall. The method of farming in those days was the plow, followed by harrows, which left the soil dry and powdered. The people of Saskatchewan suffered. Mr. Speaker, no people in Canada at that time, the dirty thirties, suffered more than the people of Saskatchewan. And it's because we were strictly agriculture and only agriculture. The stories are endless, but the one I will relate to you . . . Many a livestock producer shipped his livestock and, instead of getting a cheque, they received a bill owing to the railways for transportation. To really finish off the prairie farmer, last of all, were the banks. And all was lost.

Then in the mid '30s comes Tommy with his save-you-all plan. By 1944 he became premier. Farming started to improve. The '30s were over. Tommy took the credit. And the point I am making, the real point I want to make is the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation], now the NDP, were born of rural Saskatchewan. They were born of agriculture.

The roots of the NDP, now rotted and blowing away like the prairie soil of the '30s, are no longer in rural Saskatchewan. They turned from rural Saskatchewan and became a labour party of urban Saskatchewan. Then they moved even further and became a union-controlled party. In order to hold power, they began to sacrifice rural Saskatchewan.

Their record by the '07 election is as follows. They closed 31 rural agricultural offices. They cut extension services. They eliminated GRIP [gross revenue insurance program], tore up the contracts, increased crop insurance premiums without increasing coverage. They refused, refused to address the education portion of property tax. They cut spot loss hail twice. They ignored agricultural disasters such as the drought in the Southwest. They blamed and blamed the federal government for everything that went wrong. They closed 52 rural hospitals. They closed rural schools, ignored rural roads and highways, offloaded costs on their RM [rural municipality] and the farm

families.

The only interest they had in agriculture was the growing of potatoes; 35 million lost there. Well maybe not the only. Here are a few more ag-related fiascos of the NDP: 8.9 million lost on agdealer, a farm equipment Internet site; Big Sky hogs, a hog production, 26 million lost there; Thomson Meats, 7.9 million writeoff; World Wide Pork, 1.5 million writeoff; Canadian livestock services, 750,000 writeoff; Northern Genetics, 500,000 writeoff; Melville Seed Processors, 384,000 written off; Canadian Select Grains, 57,000 written off. Mr. Speaker, what couldn't have agriculture done with that money?

Then, Mr. Speaker, came one of the cruelest blows of all — the education portion of property tax. The then-government of Lorne Calvert kept downloading property tax onto rural Saskatchewan until the RMs of Saskatchewan started a tax revolt. They couldn't take anymore. They said, we can't afford it. And then at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, the then-premier, Lorne Calvert said, "The status quo is not on." But it was. It stayed the same. The taxes weren't fixed. So finally in '07, the Saskatchewan Party came to power and cut property tax by 60 per cent.

Now in opposition, they haven't changed. Here's a quote from the member of Regina Lakeview when he was asked if there was more money needed for Saskatchewan filmmakers, where would that money come from out of the budget? The member for Regina Lakeview said, and I quote:

Well practically, there are a number of areas where they could have left money for films. And one of the things they could have done is looked at some of the initiatives around agriculture and look at some of the things they've done for municipalities. And I think they forgot how much money is generated in something like the film industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's atrocious. I would like to quote John Webster, the author of Webster's dictionary. And he once said, society is based on agriculture. When agriculture flourishes, all the arts follow. All the arts follow. And this is so very true in this province of Saskatchewan, which is still so very much agriculture based.

Mr. Speaker, the old adage, kill the goose that laid the golden egg, applies for the NDP. They were killing agriculture. They were bleeding it dry.

Mr. Speaker, just as the livestock industry was finally getting back on its feet in 2003, the biggest livestock disaster of the last quarter century hit. That was of course BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy]. It destroyed our markets to the USA [United States of America]. It destroyed our markets to Europe, and it destroyed our markets to Asia. BSE sent livestock producers, many of them into bankruptcy. Many a livestock operation was auctioned off reluctantly by a disheartened producer. Many livestock producers quit, never to rebuild again.

Mr. Speaker, what help did the livestock producers of Saskatchewan get in such a crisis, the biggest crisis in 25 years? Zero. Nothing. Ignored. No help was given. And Mr. Speaker, now they have the audacity to say they have the answers to agriculture. They know what should be done. Mr. Speaker, my

response is a quote by my late father, who was often using this one. And he was quite a cattleman. So his quote was, "The NDP know as much about livestock as the cow knows about Sunday."

Mr. Speaker, I've spent enough time on the negative and now dwell on the positive. I will start with the Saskatchewan Party's ag initiatives. I will not list them all, just the ones that are livestock or livestock related.

The Saskatchewan Party's initiatives include the largest education tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history; western livestock price insurance program available this spring here in Saskatchewan; programs to increase market access for products; farm and ranch water infrastructure programs; compensation for livestock killed and injured by predators; increased agricultural research funding by 104 per cent over the NDP; gopher control rebates, not available under the NDP; beaver control programs, also not available under the NDP; 10 new extension service offices — remember, the NDP closed 31. Introduced the five largest ag budgets in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker, in our entire history; the 2009, 2010, 2011, '12, and '13 largest ag budgets in Saskatchewan history. 71 million to 18,000 cattle and hog producers in 2009. Increased funding for rat control; Crown land sales programs.

[12:30]

This year is the sixth-highest agricultural budget ever announced. Our budget supports a growth in the agricultural industry. We've even done things for the small sections of agriculture. Like we have now the new bee mortality insurance pilot program.

Agriculture research budget is 26.7 million, includes 2 million for Global Institute for Food Security.

We're growing forward: 78.8 million investment for strategic initiatives, increase of 7.5 million; rural water infrastructure, 23.6 million; agriculture innovation and research, 26.7 million; pest control and disease surveillance, 3.4 million; farm business management; trade and market development; agricultural awareness; value-added business development; continuing support through industry grants, 4.2 million. And of course our government still supports one of the cornerstones, 4-H Ag in the Classroom.

And then we go to Agribition. Mr. Speaker, our government supports Agribition. And the word Agribition is like music to my ears. I've shown cattle at Agribition for a lot of years. I've shown cattle at the first Agribition 43 years ago and many times since. Agribition is a world-class show, one of the top shows in the world. To the Canadian livestock producers, it is the most important show in our entire country, with over 4,000 head of livestock, 450 trade show exhibitors, visitors from over 40 countries.

Mr. Speaker, last fall Agribition hosted over 120,000 visitors. The dollars left behind in our province is over 37 million. This year our government is proud to support such a great show and very proud of the volunteers and exhibitors from our province.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the dedication our livestock

producers have created, and have developed a great reputation. Our livestock producers are some of the most innovative in the world.

Trade is very, very important to Saskatchewan, particularly in agriculture because we produce way more than we can consume. We are a producing province and we depend on exports. Exports are our cornerstone. Over 40 per cent of the arable land of Canada is in our province. We grow what the world needs. We have a reputation as a reliable producer of safe, high-quality agricultural products.

The American country of origin labelling program, or COOL, has caused significant damage to our livestock industry. We have to search out new markets. One of the new markets that we are looking at is the European Union. It is the world's largest importer of agriculture and ag food products, importing more than \$130 billion worth in 2012.

The federal government has penned a deal with the European Union. The trade agreement is the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, CETA [Canadian-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement]. The benefits for Saskatchewan are more than we could have hoped for. There are so many that I will once again only list those that will benefit the livestock industry.

CETA established tariff rates quotas for each product, giving Canadian farmers yearly duty-free access for up to 80 000 tonnes of pork, 50 000 tonnes of beef, 3000 tonnes of bison. In addition, CETA will give farmers duty-free access for high-quality beef under the existing quota of nearly 15 000 tonnes. Hilton beef quota, currently duty at 20 per cent, and for processed beef, pork, and bison products.

Mr. Speaker, what is our present supply at? We know that since 2007, ag imports have increased by 83 per cent, Mr. Speaker — since 2007, 83 per cent increase. That's phenomenal. But what are our livestock numbers at today? Total Saskatchewan hog inventory numbers as of January 2014 are 1.055 million head. Saskatchewan sow and bred gilt numbers as of January are 91,900, up 3.1 per cent. The size of the Saskatchewan cow herd has been relatively steady in 2013. With strong feeder cattle prices in the fall of '13 and current record Saskatchewan feeder prices, we could start to see more positive growth movement, momentum in the industry.

Saskatchewan cattle farmers had 2.4 million cattle on their farms as of January 1st, 2014. That's down 3 per cent from 2013. The Saskatchewan inventory of beef cows was 1.2 million head, up point two per cent from 2013. The number of beef replacement heifers was down point nine per cent from last year.

On the American side of the coin, which is our biggest consumer, competitor, and on and on, United States cattle supplies continue to decline. Cattle on fed numbers in the United States for February 1st, 2014 were 3 per cent lower, year over year. Cattle on feed numbers have continued to decline year over year since late 2012. United States beef production is estimated to decline 5.3 per cent in 2014 from 2013.

Mr. Speaker, now to the real meat of my speech, and that is the

livestock insurance program. I've given you our history of how we got here. Now where are we going and how will we get there?

An innovative new livestock price insurance program will be available this spring to help cattle and hog producers in Western provinces manage price risk faced by the industry. Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, Saskatchewan Agriculture minister, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan have all got into the program. The pilot will help livestock producers protect themselves against unexpected price decline by allowing them to purchase insurance on an insured price selected by the producer from the available coverage levels, premiums fully funded, fully funded by the producer.

As to date the livestock price insurance highlights are: on January, announced livestock price insurance for Western Canada cattle and hogs. It was a Throne Speech promise collaborated with the federal government, the Alberta government, the BC [British Columbia] government, and Manitoba government. It is based on Alberta's current livestock price insurance program that is already in operation. Industry asked for this and we have worked with our western counterparts and feds to make it happen. It offers protection against unexpected drop in price over a defined period of time.

Four insurance products are available: for calf, for feeders, for finished cattle, and for hogs. It will be administered in Saskatchewan by our crop insurance offices. Premiums will be 100 per cent producer funded. The federal government and the provincial governments will share administrative costs. Policies will be able to be purchased early this spring.

To explain the program more, there are four areas of available insurance. The calf product is offered in the spring and covers the price risk as a cow-calf producer faces selling calves in the fall market. The settlement index is based on the average price of a 600-pound steer. The feeder program product covers the price risk a cattle feeder faces when marketing. The settlement index is based on the average price of an 850-pound steer. Finished cattle, the fed product is offered year-round for cattle being finished in Western Canada. The settlement index is based on the weekly Alberta fed cattle price using Canfax data. The hog product offers hog producers protection against the decline in price over a defined period of time. Hog producers choose from a range of policy lengths and price coverage.

So how does it really work? If a producer plans to sell 75 calves in November weighing about 600 pounds, he's going to insure 4,500 pounds. And when you work that out, his premium cost would be \$949.50. So if the producer now has a floor price of \$1.58 and the market price is \$1.47, the producer is going to receive a cheque for \$4,950.

So this is the heart of the program and it is truly a wonderful program. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan was born of agriculture and still is agriculture. Today in the Saskatchewan economy, agriculture is still second only to oil. I have related to you the lows and the highs of agriculture in Saskatchewan. We are now assisting the livestock producers of our province to help navigate the lows. With the higher prices of today, it is the right time to start an insurance program that is producer-driven. Not when the industry is at an all-time low is the time to start a

program, but when it's high. I believe that this could be one of the building blocks that would help rebuild the livestock industry and keep it profitable well into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will now present my motion:

That this Assembly commends this government's actions to support Saskatchewan's growing agriculture industry and livestock producers through the implementation of the Western livestock price insurance program.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Batoche:

That this Assembly commends this government's actions to support Saskatchewan's growing agriculture industry and livestock producers through the implementation of the Western livestock price insurance program.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — There is a motion before the ... The Government House Leader has moved that the House do now ... [inaudible interjection] ... Oh, you adjourned the debate of the ... Okay, sorry. Okay. The member has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House to accept the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Now I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:44.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Doherty	5355
Sproule	5355
Weekes	5355
Chartier	5355
Moe	5355
Forbes	5356
Phillips	5356
McMorris	5356

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Forbes	5356
Belanger	5356
Chartier	5357
McCall	5357
Nilson	5357
Sproule	5357

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mental Health Week	
Chartier	5357
Women of Distinction Awards Gala	
Ross	5358
Special Olympics Event in La Ronge	
Vermette	5358
National Day of Honour	
Huyghebaert	5358
Youth Business Excellence Awards	
Bradshaw	5359
World Ovarian Cancer Day	
Wilson	5359
A Mother's Day Tribute	
Ottenbreit	5359

QUESTION PERIOD

Utilization of Saskatoon City Hospital	
Brotten	5360
Weekes	5360
Ministerial Relationship With Board Members	
Brotten	5361
Draude	5361
Wyant	5361
Living Skills Program	
Boyd	5362
Closure of Liquor Stores	
Sproule	5363
Harpauer	5363
Social Housing	
Forbes	5363
Draude	5363

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Day of Honour	
Doherty	5364
Brotten	5365

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Anti-Poverty Strategy	
Forbes	5365, 5374
Docherty	5367
Belanger	5368, 5375
Jurgens	5370, 5375
Sproule	5371, 5374
Hickie	5373, 5374
Marchuk	5374
Moe	5375

McCall	5375
Michelson.....	5375
Ross	5376
PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS	
Motion No. 3 — Western Livestock Price Insurance Program	
Kirsch.....	5376

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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

Hon. Bill Boyd

Minister of the Economy
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Kevin Doherty

Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

Hon. June Draude

Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Dustin Duncan

Minister of Health

Hon. Donna Harpauer

Minister of Crown Investments
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority

Hon. Nancy Heppner

Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for the Lean Initiative

Hon. Ken Krawetz

Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Tim McMillan

Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Trade
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Don McMorris

Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds

Hon. Don Morgan

Minister of Education
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Rob Norris

Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. Jim Reiter

Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs

Hon. Lyle Stewart

Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Christine Tell

Minister Responsible for Corrections and Policing

Hon. Randy Weekes

Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Gordon Wyant

Minister of Justice and Attorney General