



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

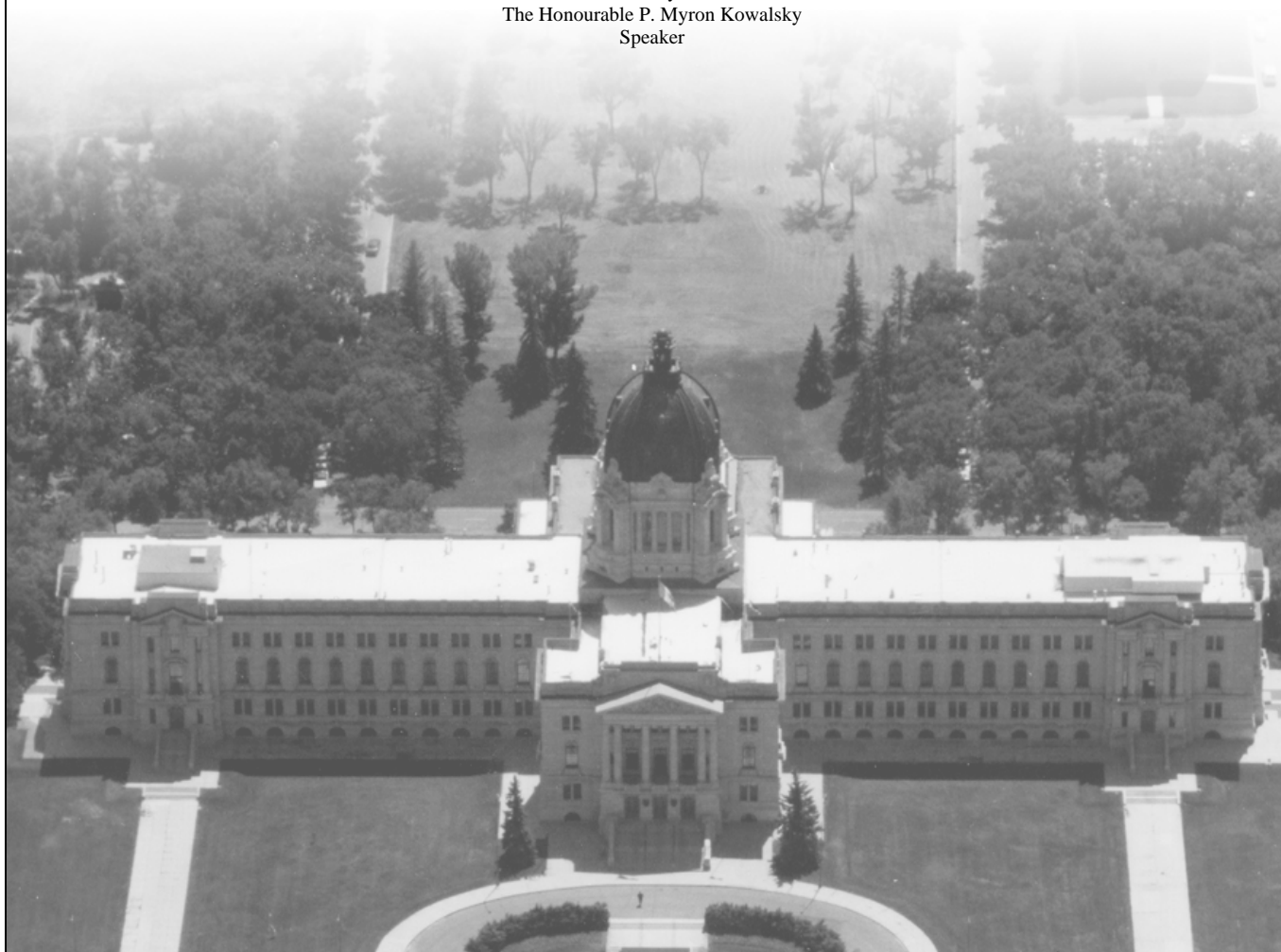
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Hon. Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Hon. Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Martensville

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again today on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills and present the following petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that Highway 18 from Claydon to Robsart is repaved at the earliest possible time to ensure the safety of drivers in the area and so that economic development opportunities are not lost.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of the community of Maple Creek. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to rise on behalf of the people who are concerned about the Bruno access off Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off to Highway No. 5.

The people who have signed this petition are from Allan, Watrous, Bruno, and Florida. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present this morning to do with the access road to Bruno off Highway No. 5. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off Highway No. 5.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Saskatoon and Bruno. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the serious

condition of the access road off Highway No. 5 to Bruno. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access off Highway No. 5.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Saskatoon, Humboldt, and Wakaw. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present a petition regarding the Bruno access road off Highway No. 5. The current condition of this highway is actually very hazardous, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off Highway No. 5.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of the Bruno area. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition that is calling for improvements to Highway No. 5 at the Bruno turnoff. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off of Highway No. 5.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Meacham and Bruno and I'm pleased to be able to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition today with citizens who are concerned about the safety at the turnoff for Bruno on Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off of Highway No. 5.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Bruno, Humboldt, and Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I have a petition that I'd like to present on behalf of people from Estevan who are very concerned about the future of the Estevan Daycare Co-operative. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to review the decision to deny the requested spaces for the Estevan Daycare Co-operative.

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

And this is signed by folks from Estevan, Bienfait, and Redvers. I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from the citizens of Biggar who are opposed to possible reductions of their health care services. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Biggar Hospital, long-term care home, and ambulance service is maintained at the very least at current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of people concerned about the Bruno access road off Highway No. 5, in need of serious repair. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off Highway No. 5.

And in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petition is signed by residents of Bruno, St. Benedict, and the city of Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to keep the highway section shop in Watrous open. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Sask Highways employees who would be affected by such a possible closure.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good folks of Imperial, Humboldt, Simpson, Watrous, and Manitou Beach. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan highway employees who would be affected by such a possible closure.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures of this petition are from Watrous, Young, Simpson, Humboldt, and Davidson. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise to read a petition about people that are concerned with the Highway 5 access to Bruno. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off Highway 5.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, it is signed by the good people of Saskatoon, Carmel, and Bruno. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to maintain the Department of Highways section shop at Watrous.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan Highways employees who would be affected by such

possible closure.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from Watrous, Manitou Beach, and Young. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the Assembly today and present a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to maintain the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer. It is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan Highways employees who would be affected by such possible closures.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by citizens from the towns of Young, Watrous, Zelma, and Nokomis. And it is my pleasure to present this on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise with a petition today on the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan Highways employees who will be affected by such possible closure.

This petition from the people of Young, Saskatoon, and Watrous. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today to join my colleagues in presenting a petition. This one is regarding the Bruno access highway off Highway 5. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off of Highway 5.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the people of Bruno, Regina, and McLean, and I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — Mr. Speaker presents the seventh report of the Standing Committee on House Services which is hereby tabled.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Chair of the House Services Committee.

Standing Committee on House Services

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, before moving the concurrence motion, I would like to make a few comments, if I may.

Mr. Speaker and members of the House, I think today is an important milestone in the future of our Assembly. Today we're going to change the rules of this House in a way that I think and I know are for the betterment for all of our members.

In doing so, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the work that has gone before the current efforts, and in particular the work of the member from Cannington, the member from Regina South, who were sponsors of the initial reforms and modernization that occurred prior or after 2003.

Mr. Speaker, building on that initiative and building on the new committee structure, it was, I think, only proper that early in this new session the Government House Leader at the time, the member from Douglas Park, and myself were able to initiate a trial basis of a permanent fall and spring sitting of the legislature. Mr. Speaker, I think that that has gone a long way into paving the way for the process that we are going to initiate with the motion today.

Mr. Speaker, as well we undertook as a committee, a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on House Services, to survey our neighbouring Western provinces and to take the time to get their advice and their wisdom. And the Government House Leader, myself, Mr. Putz, and yourself, Mr. Speaker, took a few days to actually visit each of those provincial jurisdictions and to listen to what they had to say about their experiences in their own jurisdiction.

But also I think, maybe even more importantly, Mr. Speaker, we took the time to run past them in their wisdom what we were contemplating. And almost universally they said to us that they believe we were very much on the right track, and that we would find in practice very quickly that these new changes and the new rules we were contemplating were going to be of a tremendous benefit not so much to ourselves but to the constituents that we serve.

Mr. Speaker, if there are things that I think that are important to highlight, I think that that is the details. But the most important

concept, I think, that in these rule changes that should be recognized is that this is important work for the citizens of Saskatchewan. It's important for our constituents because I think what it's going to do is give us the opportunity to be more accessible to those people who need to see their member of the legislature on a regular basis. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that that is important.

[10:15]

The other aspect that's important in this is that because we have a more predictable system, I think the public service, the professional civil servants of this province, will also be better served and better able to plan the process of drafting legislation, of preparing budget estimates, and knowing how the process is going to unfold in terms of proper and thorough consideration of both Bills and legislation and the government's estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I think as well, as time unfolds, we will see that we will make greater use of the committee structure that was provided for us by the modernization changes that happened after the 2003 election, that we're going to see the committees meeting intersessionally to a greater degree and making available the opportunity for citizens to comment directly on different aspects of legislation or the budget process. Mr. Speaker, I think that that is important.

And I also think it's important for our families and for members of the legislature to be able to be home in their constituency on a more regular basis when the legislature is sitting. You know, this is not necessarily the easiest job in the world, and at times we find the stresses of our responsibility spill over on to our families. And I think that these modernization changes are going to go a long way into making this job something that people will find more satisfaction in being accessible to their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, in moving this motion, I would like to make sure that the people of this province understand that this is an important bit of work. It's not revolutionary. It's evolutionary. We probably went from being one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to move to this structure, and we have now I believe with the committee structure that we have, actually probably have the most modern set of rules of the House of any jurisdiction in Canada.

And so it's with great pleasure that I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Melfort, the Deputy Chair of the House Services Committee, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North, that the seventh report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in. The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw North.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I listen to the precise words of the motion, as well as the words of the Opposition House Leader who participated in the subcommittee, it strikes me that there is one rule change that we

should ought to have considered, we didn't do — we have yet that dangling preposition at the end of this motion.

But in spite of the dangling preposition, Mr. Speaker, let me concur in the motion that has been moved by the Opposition House Leader, and to express the government's support as well for the rule changes, this modernizing of our legislature that we are bringing to the Assembly for adoption today.

Many of my remarks, I think, will very much complement and reinforce those made by the Opposition House Leader. It seems to me that what we are doing here is accomplishing the final phase of a modernization process that has been ongoing for about seven years now.

And I want to acknowledge the member for Cannington and the Minister of Finance today, who both, on behalf of this legislature, began to do some scrutiny in other jurisdictions, including other nations, that have led to changes that we've seen in our operation over the past few years. And I think what this does, Mr. Speaker, is it brings us to the conclusion of the modernization process that enables us to do our work in the efficient, professional kind of way in the context of modern-day standards.

I want to emphasize one of the things that this enables us to do is something that many of us have felt for a long, long time is necessary, and that's to better balance our responsibilities to the legislature with our responsibilities to our constituencies. And it has been the tradition since the beginning of time, in 1906 when this House first sat, that when we would come to this House it would be for five days a week.

And the reality for many, many . . . in fact I would say virtually all of the members, Mr. Speaker, is that what that meant is during those session times that members had very little time to spend with their constituents, dealing with matters of concern to their constituents — including matters that were before the House — and unfortunately even less time to spend with their own families. And what this enables us to do is to balance that responsibility to the legislature with our constituents.

And we certainly found as we met with people from other provinces — the Western provinces, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia — that it has become common practice. All of them have the calendar and the Monday to Thursday sitting schedule that we're adopting here, that we heard consistently that it was Friday became a regular day for members to do their constituency work. And that was important not only to them but to their constituents in a predictable kind of way. So I certainly endorse the better balance that this enables for us to do our duties.

It also I think should ought to be noted with the changes . . . because there have certainly been some gives, both the traditional positions of the government, for example, to call, to name the beginning of the session and the opposition to determine the end of the session. Those have both been gives that have been done. But it is my judgment, having served in this House on both sides of the House over the period of my career, that what we have left the legislature with, with these rule changes, is a proper balance that serves the needs of both sides of the House. And if democracy is being served well in

the province, then it must enable both sides of the House to do their roles — providing scrutiny from the opposition, providing leadership by way of direction and legislation and budget on the part of government — to enable those jobs to occur in a responsible kind of way. And I am pleased about that. In my judgment, that at the end of the day serves the Saskatchewan people well.

We learned as well from the other jurisdictions two things, that it was of great . . . When they converted — because we're the fourth of the Western provinces to be going to this kind of schedule — that when they converted, it made the most difference to those, predictably, who lived the furthest. The further away you live from the capital city, the greater difference it made in terms of the change for you. And also for those members who have families at home, it also made a significant difference in terms of quality of life and that work and the family balance that is important to all of us in modern-day times.

As the Opposition House Leader has mentioned, it was also a bit of a surprise to us, but on reflection we acknowledged, that the predictable calendar also made it possible for the government administration in preparation for the sessional things, either budget or legislation, to better plan their times and operate more efficiently. And that was a surprise benefit in other provinces that we anticipate to be here in Saskatchewan as well.

I just want to point to one thing that the Opposition House Leader didn't make specific reference to. One of the changes will enable us now, with all of the estimates of the budget with the exception of the Executive Council, they will all now be done in committee. And that will increase our efficiency because, as we have adopted some time ago, our scrutiny committees can meet two simultaneously which is somewhat unique in Western Canada and enables this legislature to be very, very efficient in accomplishing the public tasks of both the government and opposition and doing it in a more efficient way by doing two scrutiny committees at the same time.

So, Mr. Speaker, in concluding I want to say thank you to you for your involvement in the process. I want to acknowledge the very thoughtful and purposeful work that the Opposition House Leader did and also the guidance in terms of process that we got from the Deputy Clerk of the Saskatchewan legislature.

And I do want to acknowledge and say thank you to the Speakers, House leaders, members, and clerks from the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia who helped us in our scrutiny to understand the experience of theirs, and to bring what I think are a good set of changes to the rules here in Saskatchewan. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I conclude by saying the government strongly concurs on the motion that is moved by the Opposition House Leader today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the member from Melfort, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on

House Services be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried, unanimously I believe. The Chair recognizes the Deputy Chair of the House Services Committee.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present the eighth report of the Standing Committee on House Services which I now lay on the table.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That the eighth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Melfort and seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That the eighth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: does SLGA have any VLTs purchased or leased from WMS Gaming? And if so, has SLGA had any contact with WMS Gaming regarding the VLT programming error?

I also give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: has SLGA audited any winnings of its VLTs purchased or leased from WMS Gaming?

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: what are SLGA's standard auditing procedures for VLTs? Who performs these audits? And when were the procedures last updated?

I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Immigration: to date, with the breakdown for each year, how many applications did the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program approve?

Also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Immigration: to date, with the breakdown for each year, how many applications did the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program reject?

And also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Immigration: has the minister or staff attended any immigration trade fairs, conferences, or other events? And if so, who attended from the government? How much did it cost taxpayers? And were there any non-governmental immigration representatives attending since September 2005?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Though I wish it were for a different reason, it is still a pleasure and an honour to welcome some special guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, who are here attending to see us pay tribute to the former member for Martensville — our friend, Ben Heppner.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you would permit, if members would permit as well, I would like to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly Ben's wife, Arlene; Ben's son, Ken; Ben's daughter, Lana; Ben's other daughter, Nancy; and Whitney Friesen, a long-time constituency assistant for Ben Heppner. We welcome them here today, and I know members are looking forward to paying tribute to our friend and our colleague, Mr. Heppner, in just a short time from now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to

introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature my daughter, Kara, who's in your gallery. I think this is my first opportunity to do that. And I was very pleased that Kara could join us yesterday for the Throne Speech and that my son, who is a member of the Communications Squadron reserve, could join us yesterday as a member of the honour guard for the Lieutenant Governor.

Kara is a student at Canada's United World College and needless to say, her mother and I are extremely proud of her. Members do not need to point out that obviously her beauty and brains come from her mother's side of the family. I am already well aware of that. I trust, hope, that members would join me in welcoming my brilliant, beautiful, and brave daughter to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce two people from the Kelvington-Wadena constituency. I have with me today Megan Lazeski and Mark Richards. They were with us yesterday for the Throne Speech and they called it fascinating.

I hope everybody will join with me in welcoming them to this Assembly which belongs to them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce, seated in your gallery, my mother, Lucy Cheveldayoff. Now many of you have met my mom and know her quite well and know that she used to spend all her time watching the legislative channel.

But I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, I now have competition. My brother is on the show *Making The Cut: Last Man Standing*, so she's spending her time half watching that, half watching this. But there's a lot of similarities. In *Making The Cut: Last Man Standing*, what they can't settle on the ice, they take to the boxing ring. And if they can't settle it there, they go and they play beach volleyball.

So, Mr. Speaker, it might be an idea, you know, the boxing ring. I don't know, you know. The beach volleyball might be interesting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would all members please join in welcoming my mother.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Democracy in Action

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the last few days, our province has seen democracy in action. On October 25, the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] held their elections. It was an exciting race, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the FSIN's new leader, Grand Chief Lawrence Joseph. Grand Chief Joseph is a familiar face to many of us, having served as the FSIN's fourth vice-chief since 1997.

I would also want to congratulate Vice-chief Morley Watson for his re-election, the new Vice-chiefs Glen Pratt and Lyle Whitefish, together with current Vice-chief Guy Lonechild. The First Nations of Saskatchewan have an impressive leadership team.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want to extend thanks from this legislature to former FSIN Chief Alphonse Bird for his years of service and former Vice-chief Delbert Wapass.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we know, this wasn't the only example of democracy in action in the last few days. Some of our school divisions, many of our municipalities engaged the democratic process, and we would issue our congratulations to all of those who were re-elected and to all of those who are elected for the first time.

I think what is most significant, Mr. Speaker, in that all of these elections involved a number of very hard-working, dedicated men and women who put their names forward for service. And we've often said the only enemy of democracy is indifference. And democracy is alive and well in the province of Saskatchewan. Our congratulations to all who participated.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Death of Cancer Patient

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with deep regret that I stand today to inform my colleagues and all members of the Legislative Assembly of the passing of Emily Morley of Meath Park. Yesterday at 11:30, 57-year-old Emily Morley's courageous battle with cancer came to an end.

Mr. Speaker, I raised Emily's case on April 19, 2006. She was told that she would have to wait three months to see an oncologist for the first time — three times the national average wait — that after already waiting several months for tests to confirm she had cancer. One week later, after the family came to this Legislative Assembly, Emily got to see an oncologist for the first time, Mr. Speaker, and was told that she only had three months to live. But Emily exceeded with intervention and was able to spend an additional three months with her family — her husband, Warren; her children, Karen and Chris; and her grandchildren.

Emily was well known around the province because she wrote and circulated an Internet petition demanding the government

address the long waits for treatment for cancer. There are thousands of names on this petition from all corners of the province, not only Saskatchewan but across Canada and the globe.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House and all members of the Legislative Assembly, I offer my deepest, heartfelt condolence to the Morley family.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Vision for the Future of Saskatchewan

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, last year our government outlined a broad vision for the future of Saskatchewan. A lot of progress has been made toward achieving that vision and even more progress is planned. Yesterday's Throne Speech provided a clear focus for the coming year — making life better for today's Saskatchewan families and building an even better future here for young people.

Mr. Speaker, the last time the Leader of the Opposition was in government, his party nearly ruined the province. But thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of Saskatchewan people, and 15 years, 13 consecutive balanced budgets, and 14 credit upgrades, the province's economy is re-energized and we're forging ahead.

Our government's agenda has four cornerstones: make Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures; strengthen Saskatchewan's leadership in improving public health care while reducing wait times and improving access to services; advance Saskatchewan as a leader in environmental protection and the green economy; and ensure that today's Saskatchewan families benefit from our strong economy.

Mr. Speaker, our vision is of a province that is down to earth but where the sky is the limit. We are building an even stronger economy where everyone in Saskatchewan benefits, and we're making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada for young people to live, work, and build strong futures. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Estevan.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this month, October, is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The pink ribbon represents the women that are bravely fighting this disease. The pink ribbon campaign supports the prevention, detection, and cure of breast cancer. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Canadian women. In 2006 alone an estimated 22,200 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and approximately 5,300 will die with it.

The Saskatchewan Party is proud to join the Canadian Cancer

Society and support the fight against breast cancer. The people of Saskatchewan are concerned about breast cancer. They are dedicated to finding a cure and supporting research.

Recently Regina held the CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce] Run for the Cure in support of the breast cancer association, and people from across Saskatchewan took part in this great event. They helped to raise \$23.4 million across Canada in support of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

A report released this month by the Health Quality Council shows women in Saskatchewan wait far too long for breast cancer care. The average wait is four months and for many women it is much longer than that. It is simply unacceptable for Saskatchewan women to have to wait this long for the care they need.

I congratulate the Canadian Cancer Society once again naming October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatchewan-Rivers.

City of Prince Albert Declares Itself Violence-Free

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it my pleasure to rise today to announce that the community of Prince Albert has recently declared itself a violence-free city. Every year Prince Albert will host a rally on September 22 in commemoration of this declaration and reaffirm its pledge to make the city truly violence-free. The declaration includes strict bylaws and consequences and is the first of its kind in Canada.

Participants this year were encouraged to sign a guest book commemorating the event. And throughout the evening the people of Prince Albert also had the opportunity to come forward with messages of peace and testimonials of what the declaration means to them.

Mr. Speaker, late September was chosen as the period for the rally because it coincides with national police and peace officers' day. When we celebrate Prince Albert's declaration, Mr. Speaker, we also celebrate the contributions of its police officers to peace.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all members to join with me today in congratulating individuals like Sandy Pitzel and Julie Pitzel for their good work on this initiative, and to the city of Prince Albert for declaring itself violence-free. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Cabinet Membership

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we now know where that tired, old NDP [New

Democratic Party] government's priorities really lie.

When the Minister of Community Resources was negligent in his duties to protect children, mendacious in his answers to this House, only to be shown up by his own deputy minister, that Premier did nothing. Another minister chose to question the direction the Premier was leading this government and that earned him an express ticket to the backbenches.

Apparently the message for everyone else in cabinet from the Premier is this: if you put the most vulnerable in our society in jeopardy, you can keep your job; question the Premier and you'll be sent to the nosebleed section of the government's side of the House. This only serves to exemplify how that tired, old NDP government has chosen to focus on internal issues rather than the safety of children.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Constituent Receives Literacy Award Source

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, every year the Council of Federation Literacy Award recognizes outstanding achievement and excellence in literacy. It's presented annually to an individual in each province and territory in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to share with the Assembly that a constituent of mine, Carey Rigby-Wilcox, is this year's Saskatchewan recipient of the Council of Federation Literacy Award.

Ms. Rigby-Wilcox is a literacy learner, activist, and volunteer who has proven herself to be deeply committed to promoting and advancing literacy at the community, provincial, and national levels. Mr. Speaker, she is a former vice-president of READ Saskatoon's Board of Directors. She is a board member of Saskatchewan Literacy Network and the Canadian Literacy Board of Directors, and she also speaks to various groups about the challenges faced by people with low literacy skills.

Given recent cuts, Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid that list of challenges would now have to include the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Carey Rigby-Wilcox in her personal achievements and all she has done and continues to do in raising awareness, helping Saskatchewan build a social legacy, and enhancing the quality of life of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, Carey Rigby-Wilcox is a worthy recipient of the 2006 Council of Federation Saskatchewan Literacy Award. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Combatting Population Decline

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know what would be even better than Family Day in the province of Saskatchewan? What would be better if more families could have their kids stay in the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear.

Mr. Wall: — That would be even better. That's not happening under this NDP government; it's not happening under the leadership of this Premier. In fact, consider his record, Mr. Speaker. Since he became the Premier, 18,000 people have voted with their feet and unfortunately left this province, Mr. Speaker. Last year in the middle of a boom, while even Manitoba was growing in terms of a net growth in population, what happened in NDP Saskatchewan under this Premier's watch — 4,500 more people left, Mr. Speaker. That is the province's record under the NDP. We're at our lowest population now in nearly 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, to the Premier: why is his tired, old NDP government failing the province on the most important issue facing the province's economy, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, again we see the considerable difference between the Saskatchewan Party opposite and this government, Mr. Speaker, a considerable difference. A Leader of the Opposition who stands and whines and complains will not remember, of course, the time when he was around government when the population exodus of this province was at record rates, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we see the people, we see the young people returning to Saskatchewan. We see young people in this province finding opportunities here. Mr. Speaker, we have a Throne Speech and a focus that says we are making life better for Saskatchewan families and we are building a better future here. And it's a very specific plan and action that we have, Mr. Speaker.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition, once, stand on his feet and give us a different idea. Show us a plan, show us a policy. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it's just not there because every day, every day the only policy over there is, how do you get to government? That's the only question they ask, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting the Premier would want to talk about the considerable differences on this issue we're talking about now in population because here are his words, Mr. Speaker. He refers to Saskatchewan as the wee province. He's done it publicly. He says that our province will be in and out of equalization, that that's our fate. He's got a minister on the front bench who said when people leave Saskatchewan there's more left for the rest of us, Mr. Speaker.

He's got another MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] on that front bench over there that said it's statistically impossible for Saskatchewan to grow at even the national average of 1 per cent population growth a year. That's his government's view — not shared, I would point out, by the people of this province or the official opposition, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier, to the Premier: his record is 18,000 people have left while he's been the Premier, 4,500 last year in a boom. Why is his tired, old government failing Saskatchewan on the most important issue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, to further evidence my point about the difference, Mr. Speaker, here's a government that's speaking positively about the province, a government that is encouraging young people to make their futures here, that's building that future for them.

Mr. Speaker, I have here a copy of an email from a 23-year-old young woman who wrote to the Leader of the Opposition seeking opportunities from his point of view that she might explore to return to Saskatchewan. Now what did he do? Did he tell her, did he invite her in his response to this province? No, no. Did he talk to her about the 100,000-plus young people who are today working in this province? No. Mr. Speaker, what does he do? In a letter to this young woman, he goes into a political diatribe, Mr. Speaker, a political diatribe with no encouragement to that young person.

Is it any wonder, is it any wonder young people have that kind of perception when we have a political party and a leader of a political party, Mr. Speaker, who promote this kind of trash talk about the province, Mr. Speaker? I say join us, join us, Mr. Speaker, join us in building a future for people, for families. Join us in building a better future for our young people here, and stop just leaving your life for getting in this office, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, you know I've written a lot of emails. I've written a lot of emails, but I'm pretty sure I've never engaged in a political diatribe, Mr. Speaker, in those emails to people who have written to the province. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago when the Premier announced his innovation television or advertising campaign for the country, here's a quote from the Premier. He said, "Innovation is not a concept that business people outside of our province generally associate with Saskatchewan."

Well whose fault is that, Mr. Speaker? Last week he told the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* editorial board — and get this — he said, you know what Saskatchewan needs to do? It needs to rebrand. Saskatchewan needs a new brand. I wonder if the

Minister of Industry whispered in his ear about that one, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP has been in government for 15 years. This Premier's been in the chair for six years. If those things haven't happened, it's their fault. And would he explain to the people of the province why he's so late coming to the conclusion that the rest of Saskatchewan arrived at years ago, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, that Leader of the Opposition, that caucus have a very short memory, a very short memory. You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, when we engaged in a campaign to tell the people of Canada, young people across the nation, about the wide open future that was here in Saskatchewan, what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They criticized us. They complained. They whined, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, when we unveil this new campaign to speak to Canadians, to business leaders across the country about the innovative nature of Saskatchewan, what do we hear from them? Complaints, Mr. Speaker. Complaints, Mr. Speaker.

You know, he had an opportunity. He had an opportunity on a very personal basis to say to a young person who wrote to him, what is my future, what is my potential in Saskatchewan? Did he talk about the jobs? Did he talk about the opportunities? Did he talk about the jobs in his very own constituency of Swift Current? Not a word, Mr. Speaker. Not a word. You know what he said? Well I'm going to send your letter over to the Minister of Advanced Education because she knows the truth. She knows the answer and she'll respond, and of course she has.

Mr. Speaker, it's time we had an opposition that wasn't just whining and complaining, never mind tired and old. What we need is a government that's inspired and bold, and that's what we have, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, isn't it interesting that the Premier of Saskatchewan is now saying that we need a new brand in the province of Saskatchewan? When we raised that, when I raised that in an economic paper and in discussions, in debate in this Legislative Assembly, his Minister of Industry I think blew a few blood vessels in his response. I think he might have pulled a muscle ridiculing that very same thing. He might have been so angry that he phoned a talk show, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure.

But now the Premier is admitting that we have a branding problem. The Premier is admitting that businesses outside of Saskatchewan don't see us as a place for innovation. Mr. Speaker, the question is, whose fault is that? Whose fault is it that in the middle of a boom we lost 4,500 people, Mr. Speaker? Whose fault is it that 18,000 have left since he became the Premier? It's the government's fault in large measure, Mr. Speaker. It's their lack of vision, their lack of understanding on the economy. Why has he failed the province so badly on this

most important issue, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we have the third highest GDP [gross domestic product] growth in Canada in 2005. We have more people working in Saskatchewan than ever before. We have over 100,000 of our young people working here, Mr. Speaker. When I became Premier of this province, you know what the problem was? We had more workers and people than jobs. Today we have more jobs than we have workers to fill them. That's a great challenge, Mr. Speaker. We've turned this economy around, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, with no assistance, no assistance from the whining and complaining of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker.

Now with this strength in our economy we are opening opportunities for young people in our own province. We're inviting people back. We're inviting the new immigrants. We're providing new opportunities for our Aboriginal young people because, Mr. Speaker, this government believes in the future of this province. We believe in Saskatchewan families. We're going to make life better for those families. And just hang on to your seats, Mr. Speaker. Get ready for members' statements. We are going to make life better for Saskatchewan families and a better future for our youth right here.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier was just hinting at what might come later today when the government, I think — we think — cuts the PST [provincial sales tax]. We would ask the voters of the province to remember, we would ask the residents to remember that if that's the case, it's this NDP government that campaigned on lowering taxes in '03 and actually increased the PST a few months later.

Now they might feel a little guilty about that. They might try to even do a little bit better than one point. But I think the people of Saskatchewan are going to see through it, Mr. Speaker. I think they're going to see through it.

Mr. Speaker, the good news is this: there's actually going to be two family days next year. There's going to be one in February, and then there's going to be another one on election day in the province of Saskatchewan when a government is elected that actually has a plan to keep families together right here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

That member, that Premier promised in 2001 that within five years, within five years he would reverse the trend of out-migration of youth — that we'd have net youth in-migration. He's failed on the promise, Mr. Speaker, that he made five years ago. Is he prepared to admit that? And better yet, is he prepared to commit to an election soon and very soon so we can have two family days in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well one thing for sure about the Leader of the Opposition — he can't stand good news, can't stand good news. That is for sure.

Mr. Speaker, let me say again, Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago this province was bankrupt, thanks to that party, Mr. Speaker. It took us 10 years, Mr. Speaker, to put the fiscal house in order. It's taken us five years to re-energize the economy. We've done it, Mr. Speaker. Work is completed. We have a re-energized economy today providing opportunities for our people and new opportunities for young people and opportunities for investment. We've changed the climate, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are going to ensure through this Throne Speech and our vision that benefits of this economy are available to today's families. We're going to ensure that we have opportunities for our young people right here. We've set out four cornerstones — the four cornerstones of youth, of environment, of health, and ensuring that benefits come to Saskatchewan families while we build this green and prosperous economy in diverse and growing communities. Mr. Speaker, that's a vision. That's a vision with a plan.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to go beyond the rhetoric, go beyond the rhetoric we've heard now for three years. Go beyond the election signs they've planted all over the province. Go beyond the expenditure of taxpayers' money on his own commercials. Give us some substantive plan to debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Oyate Safe House

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Resources has a serious credibility problem. This morning I was provided with pages and pages outlining how the current and former ministers were aware of serious problems at the Oyate Safe House. They've known about these problems, Mr. Speaker, since July 2003. That's one month after the safe house was open.

Mr. Speaker, how could the minister say in March of this year that he was not aware of any problems? How could he stand outside this Assembly and tell reporters, and I quote, "We have no evidence there have been any problems . . .?"

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, as minister I want to point out that I welcome the scrutiny. And I want to point out to the people of Saskatchewan that we stand by the answers we gave, and that we fully intend to be very fair and open to the public and give as many interviews to the media as possible.

What is really important, Mr. Speaker, is to point out to the people of Saskatchewan is that while we're finding solutions, what the opposition wants to do is they want to talk about what the minister said when and where. And I welcome that scrutiny; I say that again.

And the most important thing is I take the role very seriously, as this government does, to work with these most disadvantaged children, and to point out our solution is not to lock up these kids and talk about it. Our solution is to put some very tangible action plans, which we fully intend to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, documents I received this morning indicate that the current minister was again briefed on February 6, 2006 about the problems at the safe house over the last two years.

Yet one month later here's what the minister said. "We have no concerns as to glaring problems in relation to money management." Here's what he said days later. "We have no evidence there have been any problems . . ." Here's what the minister said in June: the information that we had was that there was no problems.

Mr. Speaker, why did the minister say these things when we know that he was fully briefed on these problems?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that I welcome the scrutiny on what's been said when, where, and certainly to whom. I would point out that right now we're spending an incredible amount of time trying to find solutions to make sure that we have a full response as indicated by the advocate — which is necessary — as indicated by the auditor and indicated by many, many people. We intend to follow that blueprint to make sure that we're successful. And as I mentioned earlier, we take the role very seriously and as a minister we want to fix this problem.

But what I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, which is really important, we have to go through the political games that that party likes to play on many, many issues. Their primary focus is to seek power no matter what they do and no matter what they say. And I'll point out, on this side of the Assembly we take that role very seriously. We plan on putting in a full, a full court press to make sure we provide as many options to these children, to make sure that they're taken off the street and given opportunity in life. That's where we're going to spend our time concentrating. In the meantime we'll go through the process of explaining to that party what we said when. In the meantime we've got work to do in Saskatchewan. That's exactly what we intend to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — You know, Mr. Speaker, definition of taking it very seriously . . . He knew about it for three years. And if it hadn't have been for a report in television, he would not have taken it at all.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor says this government knew about the problems at the Oyate Safe House, and yet the safe house was not closed until after the media reports shed some light on how these young women were being endangered at the very place they're supposed to be kept safe. Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate says there were ongoing problems at the safe house. Mr. Speaker, it appears everybody knew about these problems except the minister. Would the minister care to explain himself today to this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the minister was aware that there was questions from Jeff Leo of CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] to an FOI [freedom of information] in which they asked information on the safe house. We were apprised of that fairly early. And given the fact that we knew Mr. Leo was looking into the safe house, we knew that they certainly had their problems in the early stages.

And the information I got from the officials is the fact that these problems were resolved, things were moving forward, and Oyate was heading in the right direction. And given that information at that time, Mr. Speaker, I did indicate that things were moving forward with Oyate, things were fine with Oyate, because that's the information that we got. Of course in hindsight after we hear from the auditor and the advocate, we find out there's more problems.

Mr. Speaker, the most important thing is, as minister we're apprised of some of the problems, and we knew that the problems were being resolved and there was good progress being made. And that's why we made the statements that we made in this Assembly. And I point out again, our effort is to make sure that we put the work in necessary to make sure that these children have as much opportunity to get off the sex trade as possible. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, it's a shame that it has to be the auditor and the Children's Advocate that explains there's been issues, when they knew from July 2003 there were issues. Why wouldn't they respond and take up the issue on their own initiative, except to be forced there by public scrutiny?

Mr. Speaker, these children are being sacrificed. They were supposed to go to a safe haven. The minister, this government, failed those young women. Mr. Speaker, the problem of sexual

exploitation of children continues. These girls are still out there on the street, and now they have no place to go because of this government's incompetence. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us where these children will sleep tonight?

[11:00]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the children that were out at Oyate are now within our own facilities, and we have many staff members that are committed to working with these children. So the answer to the question, the children are in our care and certainly they're in our facilities.

I will point out, Mr. Speaker, what's really, really important on this issue is where we go from here. And I point out that the Children's Advocate give us a good road map on what we need to do to be effective in terms of making sure that many options exist so that these children no longer participate in this unsafe activity. That's what's really important.

And from my perspective, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I certainly welcome the scrutiny, but the most important thing is we're going to spend much of our work on the solutions. And what I'd much rather do is take advice from the Children's Advocate as opposed to the members opposite who are purely a political agenda and, Mr. Speaker, that is insulting to the process. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On listening to that previous answer I think we understand that this government does not understand the word responsible or honourable. And it's not surprising, Mr. Speaker, when you listen to the Premier's answers earlier when he clearly demonstrates that he doesn't understand math or how to use a calendar when he suggests the Sask Party was responsible when the Sask Party was formed in 1997, not prior to 1991.

Mr. Speaker, it's often said that punishment should fit the crime. However the NDP caucus seems to operate under a different set of rules. If you speak the truth, your career in cabinet is cut very short. However if you risk the lives of vulnerable children, you get to stay.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier if he read the report of the Children's Advocate on the Oyate Safe House. Because if he had, surely the Minister of Community Services would no longer be in cabinet.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Services.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, what I planned out earlier

is that again I point out I welcome the scrutiny of what I said when, where, and to whom. And we'll go through that process. To the people of Saskatchewan I say this: we'll go through the process to satisfy that political agenda because we have to do that, because they want answers and we'll give them answers.

Secondly, what I want to do is I want to spend much more of my time, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Saskatchewan what . . . much more of my time working on the solutions. Where 99.9 per cent of the work should be is on the solutions. Now what those guys opposite want to do is they'll use any group, any organization for their political agenda. All they have is this grasp for power. And it doesn't matter who they use in the meantime; it doesn't matter what means they have to achieve that. All they want is power and they will continue using people. In the meantime we have work to do, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Support for Premier's Leadership and Government Agenda

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Resources says he has to do it. He's not doing it because it's his responsibility. He could have come before the Public Accounts Committee, which invited him, but the government members blocked that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another well established principle of justice is fairness. Now we know that certain ministers . . . We know for certain that the former minister of Corrections and Public Safety isn't the only person questioning the Premier's leadership, yet the former minister of Public Safety is the only person who has paid the price for doing that. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? To the Premier: when will the other conspirators receive their just rewards?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, well someone has just asked, where's Brenda? Mr. Speaker, here again we see the difference. Here is a government with a vision for the province, a vision for Saskatchewan's families, a vision for our young people, four cornerstones, a Throne Speech to debate, a plan, strategies, an eight-point plan in terms of education, skills training, and labour market development.

What do the opposition want to do? They want to engage in politic, in politic, in politic. What's the motivation, Mr. Speaker? It's not to make life better for Saskatchewan families. Their only motivation is to try and make life better for the Saskatchewan Party. Well I'll tell you that if anything is an old and tired agenda, it's that agenda. If anything is inspiring and bold, it is the agenda of this government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We on this side of the House are concerned about the future of Saskatchewan and the youth in this province. And in fact we just elected the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, the youngest person in this House, Mr. Speaker, and that is the future of youth in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, only one person was forced to leave cabinet. What about the others? What about the Minister of Highways and Transportation? When is he going to be forced from cabinet? What about the Minister of Government Relations? What about the minister of . . . the other ministers of Highways? Even the new Minister of Corrections and Public Safety was less than glowing in his support of the Premier. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when he was sworn in, he failed to find the word yes when asked if he would support the Premier's leadership. And this, Mr. Speaker, was just after he was sworn in.

Mr. Speaker, why is only one person paying the price for questioning the Premier's leadership?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Cannington wants to talk about the youngest member. I think the member from Moosomin was once the youngest member in the legislature when he was part of the Conservative government, Mr. Speaker. And he wants to talk about young members. Well our Minister of Finance is a young man, a young member. But you know, it's been 10 years since he was elected, Mr. Speaker, and I predict it's going to be well more than 10 years before the member from Weyburn, now elected, ever sits on the government side, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are here, Mr. Speaker, to debate vision and plan for the future of Saskatchewan, our families, our young people. This government lays out an agenda, a plan. This government lays out a vision. We are committed, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to working for Saskatchewan families, making their life better. We're working for young people. We're not in here just to play the politics as are the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Tax Changes

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the Speech from the Throne we indicated that our focus over the next year will be making life better for Saskatchewan families. We indicated that would be our focus in terms of strengthening public health care, advancing environmental protection, building an even stronger future for young people, and ensuring Saskatchewan families enjoy the

benefits of our strong and growing economy.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, our economy is strong. Today, after more than a decade of work, we are a have province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Today Saskatchewan has the third strongest economy in the nation and is one of only two provinces to have consistently outperformed the national average for economic growth in each of the last three years. Today, Mr. Speaker, we are enjoying a fiscal freedom that is a result of 13 balanced budgets and 14 consecutive credit rating upgrades.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Today, Mr. Speaker, we have gone from having one of the worst credit ratings in the country to one of the best. We have gone from having one of the highest marginal tax rates to one of the lowest. We have invested in health care, we have invested in education. We have increased access to services and increased opportunities for young people.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested in tax cuts for businesses in industry to help stimulate further economic growth and development. Our vision, our plan for a strong and prosperous Saskatchewan is working. And indeed, Saskatchewan is working.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Today we have a record number of people employed in the province. In the past year alone, we have seen nearly 19,000 new jobs created, including more than 23,000 new full-time jobs. This means opportunities for young people. It means more Saskatchewan families have more spending power and it means there is stronger consumer confidence. It also means increased sales and increased profit for our businesses.

Mr. Speaker, today we are in a period of sustained economic growth. As such, I am pleased to announce that effective midnight tonight the sales tax will be lowered from 7 to 5 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this two point cut on behalf . . . Mr. Speaker, this two point cut to the PST represents a \$325 million tax saving for Saskatchewan families and business and municipalities each and every year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — With this, we have cut taxes by half a billion dollars this year alone. And since this Premier took office we've reduced the tax bill for Saskatchewan families and businesses by nearly \$650 million a year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, in the coming days I'll table legislation to enact this change although it is effective midnight tonight. It will be accompanied by legislation to adjust the input tax credit for manufacturing and processing accordingly. It will increase tobacco taxes to maintain the prices. And to maintain . . . We will maintain the sales tax credit for lower income families at existing levels.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, together we are building a better future for Saskatchewan families, and in so doing we are making life better for Saskatchewan people right here at home. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you, and I would like to ask all members of this House to imagine, maybe just close your eyes for a minute and imagine for a moment that we are back in the 2003 election, Mr. Speaker. Imagine what you would hear at that time going back three years to that election, Mr. Speaker. You'd hear that Premier and that government saying trust me, trust the NDP, no new tax increases, Mr. Speaker. That's what we heard in the last election. That's what we heard in the last election.

We heard other things. We heard other things. Just imagine you're back there in that election campaign. We heard about greedy corporate hucksters. Yes we did. We heard about governments running ads saying reducing taxes would be the end of social programs in our province, Mr. Speaker. You don't need much of an imagination to think back only three short years ago what this government was saying, what this government was saying, Mr. Speaker.

And imagine, imagine what Saskatchewan people felt when the first economic thing that this government did, the first thing that they did, Mr. Speaker, was raise the PST. They broke their promise. They erased any credibility they might have on any economic issue, Mr. Speaker. That's what they did. Imagine how Saskatchewan people felt after that election. They felt betrayed, Mr. Speaker. Imagine now, Mr. Speaker, how people feel three years later. Imagine how they feel, Mr. Speaker, three years later when this government through that tax increase that they said they wouldn't do took \$500 million out of the provincial economy. Imagine how people feel now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's what they did. That's what they're trying to do now. They're trying to say that it's time to make up for past mistakes, to buy people back with their own money, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, they couldn't be bought by this government and the people of Saskatchewan will not be bought with their own money, Mr. Speaker. They will not, Mr. Speaker. The best before date has expired on this government, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it. And one day, one day that Premier and that

government will get the courage to call an election, and it will be welcomed by members on this side of the House and it'll be welcomed by families and people across this province. We will wait for that day, the true family day in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[11:15]

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for finally, finally admitting something that the opposition and the people have known for years now. This NDP government is on the wrong track, Mr. Speaker. They've been on the wrong track for three years and now they're saying, they're admitting it, that they were wrong.

Now just months before the next election they're finally admitting it was wrong in 2003, it was wrong in 2003, to mislead the people of Saskatchewan during the last election campaign. I suppose we should congratulate the minister for seeing the light and finally returning the money back to the people of Saskatchewan, the people whose money it is. But that would be like congratulating the grinch, Mr. Speaker, the grinch for finally returning the presents that he took away only three years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people understand and remember that this tired and old NDP government, that's it this government that raised their PST after the last election. They remember that Boughen report, Mr. Speaker. The Boughen report that recommended increasing the PST and using that money to provide long-term sustainable property tax relief. What happened, Mr. Speaker? They read half the report; they increased taxes, but they forgot to read the other half, Mr. Speaker. And also, Mr. Speaker, remember what this NDP government did with that recommendation? They raised taxes all right but they did nothing to provide for long-term property tax relief. Nothing to this day, Mr. Speaker, and that's a shame.

I suppose this tired, arrogant NDP government will spend today trying to brag about reducing the PST. But the people of Saskatchewan understand, Mr. Speaker, that the only reason, the only reason the NDP would ever return the money back to the people voluntarily is because they are in deep trouble politically, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you don't have to be a political junkie to know that. You only have to look at the returns from the Weyburn-Big Muddy by-election and you'll know that this government is in deep political trouble.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people understand that their hard-earned tax dollars have been swallowed up by this NDP government and they are still sitting on a mountain of money from oil and gas revenues. They understand — and certainly the voters of Weyburn-Big Muddy understand — that this old and tired NDP government is more interested in trying to stay in power than fixing the health care system or repairing this province's crumbling highways.

And Saskatchewan people understand, Mr. Speaker, that a PST reduction just gets us back to where we were when we began. Mr. Speaker, it's the NDP shuffle — one step backwards, two step forwards. Then they'll bring something else out. It'll be

two steps forward, one step back. And where are you, Mr. Speaker? You're right where you began. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? When you're standing still in this province, you're falling farther behind and that's what we're seeing here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's the NDP shuffle.

It's no doubt that Saskatchewan people deserve a break from this NDP government, but that break should be more than just a cut in the PST. It should be a break from high property taxes, Mr. Speaker. It should be a break from crumbling highways, Mr. Speaker. And it should be a break from the labour shortage that is the largest single barrier to economic growth in our province today, Mr. Speaker. It should be a break from the continued out-migration of our young people, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, most importantly it should be a long break from this NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Unparliamentary Language

The Speaker: — Members, before orders of the day I wish to speak to a point of order. Earlier this day the member for Wood Mountain, in his member statement, did use the word mendacious in a way that imputed dishonourable action on the part of another member. I found it rather personal and unparliamentary. I want to bring it to his attention and ask that that word not be used in that fashion again.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker: — I also have several items that I wish to table at this time. I have received . . . Order please. Order please. I have received a letter from the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan which advises the Assembly that the members whose names are Kowalsky, Hagel, McCall, Harper, Junior, McMorris, and Harpauer form now the current membership of the Board of Internal Economy effective September 15, 2006, which I now table. I also wish to table the members' accountability and disclosure statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

I also wish to table at this time, the New Democratic Party caucus financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2006. And I also wish to table the Saskatchewan Party caucus financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — Why is the Premier on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, to ask leave to move to a condolence motion.

The Speaker: — The Premier's requested leave to move to a condolence motion. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the Premier.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the close of my remarks, I will make the formal motion of condolence to note the passing of Ben Heppner. And the motion will be seconded by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, when we do our condolence motions in this legislature very often it will be for members whom some of us may have known or perhaps only a few of us may have known. It is much, much rarer and therefore all the more difficult when we pay tribute to a colleague; someone we have all known and all worked with, and someone we had all hoped would be here with us today.

It is certain that Ben Heppner will be fondly remembered by members of both sides of this House. We will pay tributes to him here today, and of course hope that in some small way our tributes will help bring a measure of comfort to Ben's family, his wife, Arlene, his children and grandchildren, and to his many friends, both within this Chamber and beyond this Chamber.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that clearly all members knew and respected Ben and his abilities in this House, but clearly his closest colleagues will have been in his caucus and we extend our sympathies to his close friends in his own caucus.

I think it is very safe to say — there would be no dispute about this — Ben Heppner led a very, very full life. Now we know his work here in the Assembly. We know his dedication. We know his passion as he served as an MLA. But in many ways that was only the most recent chapter in Ben Heppner's story — a teacher, school administrator for many years, successful businessman, mayor of the town of Rosthern, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Martensville. In addition to all, he had seemingly endless time for community service and community support and community activity. He was very active in his church — Sunday school teacher and a board member. He was active in the army cadets, the Seeger Wheeler Farm, and a host of other community endeavours. He found time in his own life for pursuits he enjoyed — hunting, fishing, and restoring vintage automobiles.

Ben Heppner and I may have had our political difference, but there was no difference when we were on the floor of the Saskatoon car show and Ben was restoring and showing, and we fans were there to observe.

In the last year and a half we saw another side of Ben Heppner that I'm sure his family knew but we certainly saw it. We saw a brave man who fought his own battle with courage and with dignity and then used that experience to help others. So it was last November that Ben introduced into this House the Bill to designate September as Prostate Cancer Awareness Month in Saskatchewan, making our province the very first Canadian jurisdiction to proclaim an entire month for prostate cancer awareness, and every member of this House was pleased to support that Bill.

In some ways, Mr. Speaker, The Prostate Cancer Awareness Month Act is in this legislature a legacy of a man who found his way to translate his own struggle into a real benefit for others,

and there is no question he will be missed here and missed far beyond here. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would then move the formal motion:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

Benjamin Dave Heppner, who passed away on September 24, 2006, was a member of this Legislative Assembly from 1995 until 2006 representing the constituencies of Rosthern and Martensville for the Progressive Conservative and Saskatchewan parties.

Mr. Heppner was born on March 18, 1943 in Waldheim. He attended local schools before graduating from Briercrest Bible College in 1964. Mr. Heppner continued his education at the University of Saskatchewan from where he convocated with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees. Mr. Heppner married Arlene Fast on September 3, 1965, and together they had three children.

A teacher by training, Mr. Heppner taught for 23 years in rural and city schools around Saskatchewan. He also served in an administrative capacity at three high schools. Mr. Heppner was a small-business owner operating a John Deere farm implement dealership and a lumberyard in Rosthern.

Mr. Heppner was an active participant in the affairs of the communities in which he lived. He was very involved with his church and served in a number of capacities, including serving as chairman of the board of elders and as a Sunday school teacher. He was involved with the army cadets in Swift Current, the Community Bond Corporation, and the Seager Wheeler Farm committee.

Mr. Heppner first sought to represent his community at the municipal level. He served as a councillor and as mayor of the town of Rosthern. He was elected to this Assembly in 1995. He successfully retained his seat in the 1999 and the 2003 general elections. He was a founding member of the Saskatchewan Party in 1997 and served as caucus Chair from its inception.

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Speaker: — The motion of condolence moved by the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, seconded by the member for Swift Current with respect to Benjamin Dave Heppner. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Premier for those very elegant and articulate words of tribute to

our friend. I also want to say on behalf of the members of the opposition and I'm sure on behalf of members of the family, I want to thank the numerous members opposite who have reached out to Ben's family, to our caucus, who were able to attend the funeral, and the many cards we received. And we received a number of them. And the member for Eastview sent a kind card, and I hate to name just one because there were a few others and we appreciate all of those. And let me offer that thanks on behalf of our caucus.

On the Monday after Ben passed away, I phoned Arlene. I probably should have phoned sooner but I doubted my own strength to do it, and I wasn't very stable when we talked on the phone. But of course Arlene was, and more about that in a moment. But she comforted me of all things, Mr. Speaker.

And then she asked me if I would speak at the funeral, if I'd say a few words. And I said I'd be honoured to do that, hopeful I could get through it. And so I'm not going to go on at length today, Mr. Speaker. There's a few things I would like to say for the public record, but I know there are other members who want to get a chance to pay tribute to Ben.

[11:30]

You're going to hear in the course of those tributes today I think more of a focus on Ben as an MLA and as our caucus Chair because that's how we knew him the best. But throughout all of this, throughout this very trying and tragic time and from his family, we've learned about Ben the father and the husband and the business person and the teacher and some of the things that the Premier has mentioned that Ben did in his life.

And we can actually comment on each of those I think on this side of the House — and maybe members opposite, for those who have had the chance to talk to Ben — based on his own stories from those other parts of his life and phases of his life. Certainly it's easy enough to do from a family perspective because Ben was so very proud of his family and very grateful for his partnership with Arlene, that he relied on very significantly for all he did.

But even for me. I mean I didn't . . . Ben Heppner actually taught in Swift Current. He would have taught at Irwin School when I was at Beatty. Those were two junior highs in Swift Current, so I never had Ben as a teacher. I'm pretty sure he taught industrial arts in Swift Current among other things. And I know a number of people that . . . they went to the same church at Trailview and some were pallbearers at the funeral.

But I have met since someone who was actually a student, who lives in Swift Current now; someone who was a student of Ben's when he taught, when he wasn't in Swift Current. He's an owner of a business in Swift Current, a very successful business. He's recently moved there — I guess maybe not so recent; it's been a number of years — this young entrepreneur. And he moved from Saskatoon where he was a successful lawyer and decided to get into the fast food business, and he moved to Swift Current.

And when I first had the chance to meet him, because on occasion I may accidentally go to fast food restaurants, one of the very first things he said to me was, did I know Ben

Heppner? And I said of course I knew him. He was at the time a caucus Chair as the MLA for Swift Current. And I think Darrell knew that I obviously would know Ben, and that's what he wanted to talk about. He didn't want to talk about politics. He didn't want to talk about . . . The first thing on his mind wasn't any political issue or the business or even Swift Current. He wanted to ask if I knew Ben and what did I think of Ben because he thought a lot of Ben. He confided that he may not have been the best behaved student, but Ben saw some great potential and intervened personally. And the rest of course is history in the case of this young individual and Ben's relationship with him and his recollections of Ben as his principal.

We've heard stories of Ben the entrepreneur. Ben was pretty good I think at business, although not perfect — nobody is. But I think Ben was good, from the stories he would tell us, although he would never brag about it. But there was the odd story of a deal that he had made that you could kind of get a glimpse of the fact that while being fair and conducting business with nothing but integrity, I think Ben had a talent there as an entrepreneur. And we heard some of those stories. Certainly he made a lot of deals with respect to cars — and the Premier has pointed that out — and trucks.

And even for me he tried to provide some counsel. I have recently purchased a 1971 Plymouth Scamp, Mr. Speaker, which I did that in the fall. It seemed like an excellent idea at the time but it needs a little bit of work. And so the first person that I called prior to buying it — and I did mention this at the funeral — the first person I called was Ben. And I asked him about it because, you know, there is quite a trend nowadays — the Premier will know this very well better than I — but there is quite a popularity for muscle cars, specifically mopar muscle cars. The prices are, you know, they're climbing. Values are climbing if you can have a nicely restored vehicle and maybe even more so than Chev and Ford, and I think Ben knew this.

There is muscle cars, mopar muscle cars that I may be too cheap to purchase. They might be out of my reach. That would be your Challengers and your 'Cudas and your Chargers. But more of a maybe thrifty or some would even say a Mennonite muscle car might be a 1971 Plymouth Scamp with a 318 that I just found out yesterday is completely seized. And I phoned Ben, and I asked him about it. And I know he was trying to be encouraging. He said, well you know, I think that's an A-body class, and the E-body classes are the Chargers and the Challengers and the 'Cudas. And those are the ones that are actually worth quite a bit, and I don't have that kind.

But so he was trying to be encouraging. He said it was a good . . . you know, the values of those were climbing, and it was a good engine if it ran. And like I said, I wish he was here today because I found out yesterday that it is seized. But, you know, I could just sense that he wanted to be encouraging, but he was also giving me the realistic advice that this may not be the best investment in terms of cars that I could make and there might be other choices. And that's the way Ben was.

Ben, I think was concerned for how people felt about any number of issues, including his constituents. But he was also very concerned about the truth and that people would know that as well.

So we know Ben the entrepreneur. And we know a little bit about Ben the educator. But as I say what we know best on this side is Ben the MLA and Ben the Chair of our caucus. And I think members opposite have come to know him through that role as well and probably seen glimpses of the Ben Heppner that we met unfortunately in an all too real way over the last number of months as he battled cancer. We miss him, Mr. Speaker.

It was interesting yesterday. We elected a new Chair. Congratulations to the member from Lloydminster for receiving the support of caucus in that. Milt would be the first one . . . The member for Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, would be the first one to say, no one's going to replace Ben. He did that job for us since the party's inception. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, it was strange yesterday. It wasn't a difficult . . . It wasn't necessarily a difficult thing to do to elect a new Chair and to move on. And Ben made it easier.

He made it easier as he met with so many of us, as we met with him and visited with him in hospital. He was always one to talk about what was next, what was going on, what about the . . . He wanted to talk a little bit about politics and also what was next in our, you know, in our lives personally, what was next in his family's life. And in a strange way, yesterday he made it easier to replace him with a new permanent Chair for our caucus.

I had the chance to visit with Ben in the hospital the last time he went into RUH [Royal University Hospital] and then before he went back to Rosthern into first at home for a while and then palliative care. And I'll never forget those times. Those were great because as I said at the funeral, I think we all . . . I didn't want to go. I didn't want to see Ben without his hair or his beard, and I didn't want to meet cancer and death, especially of someone so dear. And for all of us that did that, you know, we didn't meet any of that in his room. We found Ben. Ben was still there with a twinkle in his eye. And he wanted to talk, sometimes mischievously, about the political situation that was going on in the province. He wanted an update on that. And, you know, he cheered us up. What kind of man is that, that would cheer us up? That's what we'll miss.

We're going to miss his sense of humour. He always had a good story or two at caucus. We're going to miss the twinkle in his eye. And you'll all, members of the opposite, even opposite will have known even when he was, you know, pointing that .44 Magnum finger or taking off his glasses or, you know, from on occasion talking from his seat as he may have done, members will probably have seen that he would turn around and smile and wink. He never had an unkind word privately where members opposite wouldn't have heard to say about any of them.

But for him politics was very important and being partisan was okay. He felt very strongly that, you know, with all due respect, the folks over there should be over here and we should be over there. And he fought those pitched battles as hard as any in this Assembly and that too is why we'll miss Ben. He did it sometimes with a little bit of sound and fury and often with that smile even after he was done.

He was the . . . Interestingly enough when his caucus colleagues, before my time, decided that they ought to ask some

questions about what had happened, what the Government of Saskatchewan had planned to do with thousands of sex education wooden demonstrators that they had — and some members will talk about that, that the government had in a warehouse — it was Ben Heppner, who was a man of integrity and faith and Sunday school teacher and church board member, that they took great sardonic glee in the fact that he got to do it.

And if you read *Hansard*, he asked the government if they would be using them to fill highway potholes or maybe hold a great weenie roast in the parks, Mr. Speaker. That was the question in *Hansard* in the verbatim transcript. And in addition to that kind of humour, if you look through *Hansard* especially as the Premier has noted in his speech for declaring September Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, you will also see an eloquent side of Ben and a very serious side of Ben. But we will miss all of those sides.

I will just conclude by telling you that I'll always remember, in that hospital room, I asked Ben if he had any advice for me as a young dad. He said spend time with your kids and then he said pray with your kids. He wondered if he had done it enough himself. I told him that I thought he had and as we had met his children, we know it's the truth.

I also got to tell him one other thing that I wanted to, that I thought about driving and walking up to the hospital, and I'll just conclude with that, Mr. Speaker. A friend of mine had come from Swift Current, a good friend of mine had come up with a line a number of years ago that he thought would be good if someone could put a verse to it or maybe even write a song. And the line . . . And it's pretty good. In fact, if there's a . . . Well, there's a Brad Paisley hit that's kind of like that that's come out since. But his line was this, and he told me — I thought it was pretty good — he said . . . The line was, if I was half the man that he was, I'd be twice the man I am.

So I thought, you know, that's how I feel about my own dad. I thought, you know, I'm going to try to put a verse to that and I even tried to set it to the all three chords that I know on the guitar. And some people tell me there are more than three but I haven't found them yet. I'm sure it's absolutely nothing special but I wanted Ben to know that while that's how I feel about my dad, I told him in the hospital that's how I felt about him. I think that's how many of us feel about Ben. If we were half the man that he was, we'd be twice the people we are.

We thank him for that example and we thank his family for sharing him with us. We are so grateful that they sacrificed as well so Ben could do what he has done in this party and in this Legislature and across this province. Arlene, and Nancy, and Lana, and Ken, and Whitney, thank you very much. God bless you all.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure and a privilege to rise today to celebrate Ben Heppner's years in this Assembly and Ben's life. Ben was the MLA for Martensville, but for me he will always be the MLA for Rosthern.

I first heard about Ben — I didn't know his name; I didn't know very much about him — in 1971. That was a long time before I even thought about getting involved in politics and probably a long time before Ben thought about getting involved in politics. But I was living in Swift Current at the time, and the Leader of the Opposition was talking about mopar muscle cars and my friends and I were all into those kind of things back then. But there was this teacher in Swift Current who had a special car. He had, I think it was about a '56 or '57 Ford hardtop and the hardtop would lift up and go right into the trunk, and we thought that was amazing. Never did get to see the car, never met the school teacher, but it turned out to be Ben.

Ben and I were seatmates for many years here, and Ben was always an enthusiastic parliamentarian. And as I'm sure the government members know that he loved to stand in his place and point his finger at them and wave his glasses and just give them everything he could, to use parliamentary language. And Ben liked to stretch that as much as possible and while he didn't have all the \$10 words that the member from Cypress Hills has, he certainly did his best to express his indignation and his passion for politics.

[11:45]

He was . . . I remember before he got elected, and the previous member here for Rosthern was Bill Neudorf. And in caucus one day Bill said to me, he says don't worry about the new guy from Rosthern, he's a good guy; he's a hunter and shooter. It wasn't anything about his politics. It wasn't anything about the rest of his life, but he was a good guy because he was a hunter and shooter.

And Ben certainly was an outspoken opponent to the Liberal gun control. He went across this province in the '95 election as did a good many of the government members as well — Bob Mitchell was doing the same thing — and speaking out against the Liberal's gun control and the huge waste of money that everybody believed it was going to be, and in fact turned out to be. But Ben was one of those people who had the creditability and the ability to go and speak to a crowd and inform them and convince them that that piece of legislation that was proposed was absolutely the wrong direction.

He would have loved today in the House, in question period. That was what Ben liked about the legislature. He loved to be able to get in there and mix it up. He loved the tough questions; he loved to be able to ask them. He loved the debate and the banter back and forth, and the heckling. And I know that Mr. Speaker from time to time has had his hearing aid turned up enough that he actually could hear Ben from time to time and would scowl at him a little bit. And Ben just . . . He loved taking it to the edge on that matter, and would watch Mr. Speaker to see if he paid attention and started the slide forward in his seat. And that was the end of it. Then you backed off a little bit.

Ben loved to do filibusters. Now there's two kinds of filibusters in the House here. There's the kind where you stand up and talk for hours and hours on end as the member from Moose Jaw North can do. And then there's the filibusters that you do when you're asking questions, as in committee. And I remember one night — premier's estimates with Roy Romanow — and it's

getting towards the end of the evening. It's heading to 10:30, but it's probably still an hour to go. And we wanted Ben to stay on his feet and ask questions. We didn't want to let anyone else in. And there was an issue that came up while we were in the House asking questions. We got this information, so I'm trying to tell Ben what's going on. Ben's trying to ask questions. And the way it works in opposition has to ask the questions, the ministers get to answer but they have time and the luxury of turning to their officials and discussing the issue and then responding. Well in opposition you don't have that luxury. If you're not on your feet when the minister stops answering then the committee Chair will call for somebody else. So you don't have time to sit there and talk to your colleagues, to think about your question.

So the premier of the day, Roy Romanow, was not real happy with the fact that we were dragging this out so he's giving very short, terse questions and I'm trying to . . . answers. I'm trying to explain to Ben what this issue is about and so he is thinking about his next question, trying to listen to me, trying to listen to what the premier is saying, and this isn't working well. And this went on, Mr. Speaker, for about an hour.

And the premier . . . We were asking questions related to one of the premier's staff who was actually sitting behind the premier right at the time and the premier for some reason didn't know who this person was any longer. And Ben's trying to explain it to him and it's just not working. But Ben, being the trooper that he was, dragged that hour out. It was tough work. It was tough sledding but Ben did it because that's the kind of person he was. He believed in doing his job.

It's already been mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current, but Ben was a professional. And when you look at that series of questions with the wooden demonstrators — you're on camera and the member from Saskatoon Massey was answering the questions, so you have to be very serious — the questions were phrased in a manner that were very funny and yet to ask them you have to make it a serious issue. The minister answering has to be serious but what the rest of the legislature knew, what the press gallery knew, but what the public doesn't see on TV is everybody else was falling out of their chairs laughing. And Ben, the consummate politician, stood there in his place, as did the minister, and answered with a straight face. And that particular story was picked up all over North America. It became a very pointed issue.

Not long after Ben found out that he had cancer he came and talked to me about it. And he said to me, how should I live. Should I live like I have two years, or should I live like I have 10?

I said, well okay, I know you've said you've got cancer, but why are you asking me? He says, well my son wants to go caribou hunting . . . with Ben. And I said you don't have to have cancer to go caribou hunting, why don't you just go caribou hunting? So him and . . . Ken and Ben went and did their caribou hunting together. I'm sure that's one of the things Ken will remember.

Ben was very proud of the fact that he was a Luddite. I love all the little gizmos. Ben thought they were great paperweights. I

remember going up to Saskatoon with Ben one evening for a meeting and his cellphone is on the seat between us in the car. And if you ever tried to phone Ben there was never an answer. So I . . . well, Ben, you've got a cellphone, why don't you ever answer it? That's for me to phone out, not for you to phone me.

I said, well at least, you know, you could answer. You could take the messages. I don't know how. Half the trip to Saskatoon was me eliminating the messages that he had in his message manager. From up to two years or three years before he had never listened to any of them. He had no intentions of listening to any of them. And even when I would listen to them and tell him about them, he didn't want to know. Technology was not for Ben, but old cars certainly were and more specifically old trucks.

I remember him coming back into the House one Monday morning and saying, well I bought another old truck. Okay, what'd you get and he'd tell me. And he said, but Arlene told me that if I get another one, I'm going to cut down a tree in the yard. Oh that's kind of serious for the trees. So fine. Next week he comes back, well I bought another old truck. Well how's the trees I asked him. One of them is gone. But he loved to get his old trucks. And I found out later that the threat from Arlene to cut down the trees was they were making some changes in the yard and it wasn't a threat or a retaliation. But it sure made for a good story.

Ben was very proud of his Mennonite heritage. He was always very frugal. And if you took a look out in the parking lot when Ben was here, he never had a vehicle that was newer than ten years old and was very proud of that fact. He made sure that while he had a good vehicle, it was one that he got for the minimal price.

And fact is when we formed the Saskatchewan Party, I had a couch in my legislative office. And when we moved, I didn't have room for it so Ben borrowed it. Now that's in 1997. It's still in Ben's office and he didn't have any intentions of letting that go. His cellphone he could let go but not the couch.

And fact is, just before Ben passed away he lived up to his Mennonite heritage. A few days before, he was negotiating with the funeral home on the price of his funeral. He wasn't going to let them take any advantage. He was going to make sure that he got the best possible price.

And fact is, Ben used to come back into caucus after an election and brag about how little he spent. He'd always want to know, you know, what was your dollar to votes ratio, you know, because he always had the best. There was no way that you were going to spend less than Ben did, or spend more . . . He always spent less than the rest of us.

Ben was, well he was very outspoken in the House. He was also very, very concerned about his family and his constituents. And he was loved by all of them. He was our colleague, our companion, our friend, and a leader in caucus. And we loved him all. We loved him. So Ben, farewell.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trewh: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tough, tough to follow such heartfelt speeches in the Chamber. Tough to express to Ben's family our feelings about Ben. I'm going to try and do it briefly.

But I want to share, Mr. Speaker, and with the family, it was a pleasure in a perverse sort of a way to be at Ben's funeral. And it was a pleasure to see the great strength that the family exhibited. And, Arlene, you sang at Ben's funeral, and it's just a testament to Ben's and your huge belief that what that funeral was was delivering Ben to his Saviour, his Lord and Saviour, and, you know, bless you for that strength. And I want to share how meaningful that was to those of us that were there. Boy I'm not supposed to be feeling emotional at all, but it's difficult not to.

We fortunately often don't have to say goodbye to someone who has sat with us and is a colleague, as the Premier and members opposite have said. There were times when we wished Ben was somewhere other than here, but those were often the same times when he wished we were somewhere other than here. But there was always a respect. There always was a respect. That was business.

And I got to know Ben a little bit more after I got elected to be Chair of the government caucus. And we have a quaint little thing called a teachers' institute here that the Speaker has set up. And it's actually quite a nice thing because we invite a select group of teachers from across the province to come, and for about three-quarters of an hour the Chair of both caucuses spend some time and we sort of bare our souls.

Now I ask hon. members opposite and on this side, please, please acknowledge Ben was a professional. He didn't give away any Sask Party secrets. I like to think I'm reasonably professional too, and I didn't give away any government secrets to Ben. But we had very, very good, open discussions with the teachers about how the process works. And Ben was really genuinely a treat for me to work with, and I looked forward each year to sharing that little bit of time at the teachers' institute with him. Perhaps his experience in the education field made him comfortable and at ease in doing that, but it really was, it really was fun to spend that little bit of time with Ben.

I noted, Arlene, that you were married in 1965, and it struck me that in many ways that was like a couple of days ago. I remember the year 1965 vividly. And I remember it being a very, very wet year. The harvest that year didn't get completed until October, November. Some people never did get the harvest. But after that, I'm sure that the time literally has flown by, and in many ways it must seem like just yesterday when you were exchanging your marriage vows. And in other ways of course it's a whole lifetime when you look at your family that's gathered — many with you today and many not able to be with you today. And it must bring great strength and joy to you, the time that you were able to share with Ben.

I want to join with members opposite in thanking you and your family for the support you gave Ben in allowing him to offer himself up for public service. With those few short words, I want to again express that I think much was said at the funeral and it was a perverse sort of an honour. I wish we could have delayed it for a few decades but, as funeral services go, I was

honoured to have been one of many that attended Ben Heppner's funeral. My condolences to you and again my thanks for your support for Ben Heppner, our colleague. Thank you.

[12:00]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Benjamin Dave Heppner could be an intimidating figure for a young wannabe politician. So you want to be an MLA, he would ask. Yes, I would reply. You want to win an urban seat for the Saskatchewan Party? Yes, I said. So how are you going to do that? My answer would be work hard, door knock, and build a team that's unstoppable. That's good, he said, and then a matter-of-factly he said, you'll win, just don't get cocky. There are enough arrogant politicians. We don't need another one.

Then he had a wink and a smile and a pat on the back, and it was good advice from a friend. It was good advice from a friend. And it always had a message. And that's what I felt every time I talked to Ben — he'd have some advice and he'd have a message.

I actually came to know Ben much earlier when I was growing up in Blaine Lake. And being a bit of a newspaper junkie, I often read the *Saskatchewan Valley News*. I would see Ben featured in the paper long before his career in the legislature, as a teacher and as a businessman and as a member of a church board and the mayor of Rosthern and finally as a member of the legislature.

After following his career at a distance, then occupying this seat — this very seat right behind him — it was natural for me to consider him as a mentor. When you're a rookie MLA with the Saskatchewan Party, you know Ben as the straight and narrow, no-nonsense caucus Chair, a person not to be messed with. In this legislature Ben was known for his quick wit, an icy stare, and a sometimes scolding finger. In fact sitting right behind Ben I feel that I had the best view in the whole place. When the glasses went down and the finger went up, I knew somebody over there would be sinking a little bit in their seat.

However when you're a rookie MLA in this legislature, you also see another side of Ben — the supportive, encouraging, confidence building, colleague that was always the first one to tell you when you've done a good job.

And I remember, and I have told my colleagues this, a story about my maiden speech in this Chamber. I talked about being in Blaine Lake and meeting John Diefenbaker for the first time when he came by helicopter with Ray Hnatyshyn into the school grounds and running to the front of the line to meet Diefenbaker and then running to the back of the line to shake his hand again. And Ben just laughed and laughed at that story for . . . About a month later he turned around in his seat and he said, I could see you little . . . [inaudible] . . . running around there in the front and then to the back, you know, doing that. And that was just a special way of him saying, you know, welcome to this Chamber and joining them.

When my kids were here for the legislative . . . when the

signing in took place here after the swearing in at the last election, Carter and Paige, my son and daughter, were over here and they did the wave when we signed in. And he just told me about the look on the Lieutenant Governor's face when they did that. And of course myself and my wife were worried about it, and he just laughed about the beauty of kids and the beauty of family. And getting to know Ben you really, really got an appreciation for his feeling about family.

He always joked to me about my wife, Trish, when he saw her on the news. He said that she was the only anchor that spoke slow enough and clear enough for old guys like him to understand. And then he complimented me on my choice of constituency assistant, Beth Epp, a Mennonite girl from Waldheim who was a friend of his daughter. He said, they just don't come any finer than that.

And if you had five minutes to spare, you just ask Ben about hunting with his son or how Nancy was doing, and fifteen minutes later you'd get a comprehensive update. And you could see the passion that he had for his family and for his wife, Arlene.

We had a special time, my wife and I and Arlene and Ben, at the Midwest Legislative Conference in Des Moines. Arlene and Ben and Trish and I sat at the same table, and we just talked about, you know, he was asking me how I enjoyed this job and about being at the Midwest Legislative Conference. And Arlene and Ben were going on to attend a couple of different country music concerts. And I heard Ben talk about his, you know, his favourite concerts and he asked me . . . and, you know, we talked about seeing George Strait at Texas Stadium. And it was something that I've never really talked about with Ben in this legislature when the, you know, priorities of government and opposition were at the forefront. But I saw something in Ben that day and it was a very special time.

Another story that really struck me was . . . It comes from Bill Boyd, a former member of this legislature, and it was when Bill first approached Ben about running for public office or about running to become the MLA for Rosthern. And, you know, Bill tells the story about how it's kind of intimidating. At the time the people weren't beating down the door to join the party, to become a MLA, and here was Ben Heppner — mayor, former councillor, businessman, teacher, very well respected in Rosthern. Bill said he was willing to spend two hours trying to convince Ben to run for public office. He had a volunteer driver that day and he told the driver, well give me two hours and I'll work on him and I'll try to convince him that this is what he should do.

Well Bill Boyd asked Ben and he told him, he said, you know, you should run for political office. We need you as an MLA in the legislature. Bill said Ben just looked in the sky for about a minute and said okay, I'll do it. What's next? And Bill went on to say well the most difficult time, the most difficult portion of that conversation was killing the next hour and forty-five minutes till his driver came back to . . . You know, Ben wasn't much for small talk sometimes, but he was ready to get rolling and ready to do the job that it would take to become a MLA and to represent his area.

I had a special honour last year when . . . or earlier this year

actually, in April, when the Leader of the Opposition wasn't available. And I know it's more because Ben didn't want to overload the leader, and he asked me to speak at his nomination. And I felt pretty special about that. And, you know, Ben just said that he, you know, he'd been there a while and he wanted somebody new to this legislature to bring a different perspective to his nomination.

It was a special night for . . . and I know many of my colleagues were there when we saw Ben struggle somewhat to get to the mike. But within a few minutes or within a few seconds, actually, it was vintage Ben. As soon as he saw that mike and he put his hands on the podium, he was back at it in all his furor and all his glory. And I know at the end of that evening we all kind of looked at each other and said, you know that's the Ben we know and that's the Ben that we treasure. There was some magic in that room that night and I'll always cherish that.

Another special time was sitting behind Ben in this chair when he introduced the private member's Bill regarding the awareness of prostate cancer. It was a special time and I knew that it would be a time that I would treasure so I tried to listen to every word.

And, colleagues, I can tell you because of Ben's Bill, prostate cancer awareness will benefit. Because of Ben's devotion, his family, friends, and colleagues in this legislature will benefit. Because of Ben Heppner, Saskatchewan is a better place. Rest in peace my friend.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader, the member for Moose Jaw North.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to say a few brief words of tribute to my friend, Ben Heppner. And I want to first of all express my condolences to Arlene and the family and to say thank you for letting your husband and dad be a part of making Saskatchewan a good place to live. We all understand how none of us come here alone; we come here together with our families. And for being part of that, a very important part of Ben's life in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize, in this room today, this is a room that is feeling a sense of sadness about a loss of that passionate parliamentarian, Ben Heppner. And I just want to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that I understand there is a special sadness in the colleagues opposite. We understand when we come to serve the province of Saskatchewan with those that we share passionate values and a sense of closeness that the loss is greater. And I do want to say, to extend my condolences to all of the members opposite as well.

It is a very unique thing that is happening here today, Mr. Speaker. When Houses come and the Throne Speech is given, the next day we begin the Throne Speech debate. And this is a House that by mutual agreement has agreed to set aside that normal procedure. We'll get to the Throne Speech before we're done, but before we begin that time-honoured tradition of the processes of this House, that we take time to set aside to honour our good friend and parliamentarian, Ben Heppner.

I too am a formal caucus Chair. And maybe sometime there'll

be some kind of an old geezers' club of former caucus Chairs that'll be formed. And good luck to the member from Lloydminster.

I've had the honour of serving as caucus Chair and of serving in the Speaker's Chair, and I have said this many times: when one understands the political dynamics of serving as a good Chair of your own caucus, making decisions that they feel to be the right decisions and allow everyone to have their voice and their say, it is in my judgment a tougher job to be a good caucus Chair — and with all due respect, Mr. Speaker — then to serve in the Speaker's Chair in the administration of decision making. And I simply want to acknowledge that Ben has been a long-serving, good caucus Chair who has served his caucus well.

As Speaker I got to see first-hand Ben's ability to push the limits and wander up to the edge of the pool without falling in, and how he would be only making his remarks as only Ben Heppner could, while looking away from the Speaker, but just occasionally glancing over to see where you are. Ben understood the importance of passion in this place and he brought passion here, and it belongs here. And it was a part of how he participated in this great institution.

It was also as Speaker that I had the very special privilege of visiting a school in Ben's riding along with Ben and to see together with him his passion for education and for young people and that very important part of his life, part of what Ben gave to make his world a better place. And I will long remember that. I will value the private, brief conversations we had during the last sitting on those occasions when Ben felt good enough to be here and will cherish his comments, much of which was around how much he valued time with family.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with that let me conclude by saying that this province, this legislature, these people here, those of us gathered here today have lost a good friend. We've lost a strong parliamentarian and that Ben Heppner may be gone but he will not be forgotten.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

[12:15]

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll say that this is the first time that I've stood for a condolence motion.

I don't find this a very easy thing to do. But I can honestly say as I've thought about this for the last number of weeks I've never felt more wanting to do something like this than I do today, and especially because of who we're talking about today. And we've heard many, many tributes. And Ben, like the rest, was a colleague of mine, truly was a mentor of mine and a very good friend.

I hadn't met Ben before the 1999 election; I met him shortly after the 1999 election. And like a number of us, I think there was about 17 of us elected for the first time in 1999. And, I mean, any newly elected member will know it's a bit of a whirlwind. That first month or two months there's just a lot going on and you're supposed to be doing this and getting offices set up and, oh, now we've got a caucus meeting.

And I remember going into that first caucus meeting and there was a lot of excitement after that '99 election. And going into the caucus meeting, and I had met Ben just once or twice before, didn't know a lot about what a caucus Chair did — didn't know a lot about a lot of things, quite frankly — regarding the whole operation of a caucus.

But it sure didn't take long, like a meeting or two, that I certainly knew when I looked to the front of the room that that's were Ben belonged. You know, you'd look at the front of the room with that snow-white hair and — with all due respect to every one of my colleagues — I don't know if there would be anybody that should have sat at the front of the room other than Ben, because he filled that role so well.

I remember the first couple of times, as intimidating as it was, you know, you'd put your hand up — I have a point to make. And I think it was probably a couple of meetings before I really felt confident to have Ben look at me when I had my finger up in the air that I do have a point to make.

And I certainly remember making sure that when I did get that nod — okay you're next — that I had my thoughts in line, because he just had that way of keeping the ship running straight. We didn't get off this way or that way. He was really suited for that role. And quite frankly for a, you know, a newly elected member it was intimidating. He could be very intimidating even within our own caucus. But that wasn't a bad thing. That I think really what it did was test our mettle and make sure what we did have to say was worthwhile saying. And he really certainly kind of put that in our minds.

I really got to know Ben though, I wouldn't say so much in the first six months to eight months, but I got to know Ben shortly about eight to ten months after the '99 election when Elwin asked me to . . . when the member from Rosetown-Elrose asked me to be the Whip. And as the Whip of course you sit right beside the caucus Chair. So I sat beside Ben for about four years at the front of the room and really got to know Ben much better sitting beside him.

Ben had a . . . He didn't do it every caucus meeting, but certain caucus meetings he'd start out with a bit of a story. And I know this is a tribute to Ben but I have to be honest, some of them just weren't that good. He'd have a great joke or a great story. And it was always interesting because you'd look around the caucus table and you know some guys would hang their heads. You know you're kind of waiting for the buildup and they'd hang their heads. But what it did do is, you know, maybe four meetings later Ben would start with a story — and some of them were quite good — but about four meetings later he'd start with a story and he had everybody's attention because you thought, now is this going to be the good one, Ben? But I think Ben enjoyed it more when everybody kind of . . . oh, what are you talking about, or what kind of a story was that? I think he kind of enjoyed that more, just to see the reaction on everybody's faces. And you know I think he enjoyed it you know to think almost . . . are my colleagues, the rest of caucus here, think I'm losing it a little bit? Because it was really, really entertaining.

But I think, you know, sitting beside Ben, when I saw Ben do his best work is when it got very tense. When the debate was

strong around the caucus table, when people were voicing their opinions strongly for whichever side it was, Ben did his best work at bringing that caucus room back to a common ground and did great work there. I think also knowing Ben and seeing him operate in this Chamber, when he enjoyed it the most is when it was the most tense, the most pressure packed, the most . . . the harshest debate, the strongest debate — that's what he thrived on. He really did thrive on it. You know there are days go by in here where it's maybe just not that interesting. Sorry but it's not just that interesting. But when it got to be a really hotly contested issue, a strong question period, you could just sense it in Ben. That's truly what he loved the most.

I remember a couple of years ago . . . And it's funny in the political life how an issue is so big at a time. And you know days pass, months pass, years pass and you can't even remember what that issue was. But I remember Ben standing in the House, standing here in the House and asking questions as only Ben could do — with the finger, or the glasses off — and really going after the government. And then of course when you're done, of course the government asks is . . . has the news scrum in the rotunda after. And then we often are questioned too by the media. And you know I just remember Ben coming back into the lounge and he . . . Oh, that didn't go very well. He loved it, but he just knew it didn't go very well, you know. And it was such a big issue and I can't for the life of me, I've been thinking for about two weeks what that issue was and I can't think about . . . I don't know what it was. But Ben, I just know at that point he was loving politics the most. Even though it didn't go maybe the way he wanted it to go, that's what he loved the most.

You know I guess in hockey terms, I mean, he would be the first into the corner and he'd come out with the puck. You know, he just loved to get into the corner and mix it up, as many people have said.

For the last year or better as was mentioned, we all saw the effects that cancer had on Ben. Last spring I was asked to — because you know Ben was going to be here some but didn't know what . . . he wasn't sure how often he could be here — the leader asked me to take his place where I stand today. And I remember talking last spring about how I'd be very glad to take this place only for a temporary basis. And I really believed it would only be on a temporary basis, but unfortunately that's not the case.

But I remember one day shortly after, I was standing here and I guess . . . I don't know whether I was up for questions, but it was very loud in the Chamber — very loud, lots of heckling going back and forth, again probably what Ben would enjoy the most. But Ben had a knack of . . . I mean, we can all holler back and forth and maybe not all of us do, I know some of us do, you know, holler back and forth.

But that silence. There is this point in this House where, whether the Speaker is just about to stand, but there's just a second of silence where it's . . . And Ben, from the back corner, said, because it was very loud, he said — and I don't know whether you had just ruled or were just going to rule — he said, yes keep it down; I can't hear back here.

And I thought, that's just vintage Ben. I mean, he would far

rather be here, but he was sitting back there. Keep it down so that he could hear.

You know, over the last couple of weeks I've been thinking of the different stories and different memories of Ben. I can honestly say I don't know of a time that I didn't enjoy being in Ben's company.

The Sask Party caucus and staff put together a one-time scholarship in recognition of Ben and it's going to be presented to a grade 12 with English proficiency at the Waldheim high school. And I can't think of a better tribute in the education field than that for Ben Heppner, because he truly was an inspiration to many. I know his family deeply miss him and so do we. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to participate in the condolences for Ben's family, both his family in the legislature and, more importantly, his family in the gallery. I know there's many, many, many members that do want to speak today and so I'll keep my comments brief. But I agree with all of the comments that have been made prior about what a great man Ben was.

There's three points that I want to make about Ben. There's many more that could be made but these are the three that I felt were the most important in the time that I had. First was recognizing Ben's kindness. Once you could get past the intimidating and gruff exterior he would always have a twinkle in his eye. Of course as a rookie MLA on the opposition side when there was, as one person indicated, 17 new members in '99, he certainly didn't need to be kind to or welcoming to an opposition MLA, but he was. In short chats on the way out of the Assembly, on the way to the car, outside of committee meetings, he always had a kind word, a gruff comment with a twinkle in his eye and then have a very real, kind discussion.

As well, as a member of the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], I would see Ben there periodically walking around the track. There's not very many people that you see walking around that track that looked less happy about it, but he was doing it and when you talked to him about it, it was very clear he was doing it for one reason and one reason only and that was for his family. He certainly didn't want to be at the Y walking around that stupid track but he wanted to do it for his family.

As Deputy Speaker, I actually got to call Ben to order occasionally and I got to see first-hand how close he would come, and how angry he would get, and how threatening he would seem to be, and how intimidating he would be, and it was a little intimidating calling him to order and he would be very upset. And then, not five minutes later, you'd see him outside. How are you doing, Graham? Oh good, how are things? Have you got any plans for the weekend? He'd leave it in here. It was an absolute love of democracy and he understood the theatre of this place and he never let that spill out into the real world.

I saw that as Deputy Speaker with the school visits and how he

treated his class. And you could tell that he was a teacher because there was no misbehaving; there was no words said that weren't appropriate. But you could tell that he absolutely loved democracy and he treated the role of Speaker and Deputy Speaker with the utmost of respect regardless of who was holding that position at the time.

The second one that was very clear to me was his absolute love of family. That's the second point I wanted to make. Often politicians use their families as an illustrative, an example or as some might say, for political gain. Ben was absolutely not one of those people. In fact you could very rarely get him to talk about the family unless it was something that he wanted to do.

But when he did it was with an absolute pride as a grandfather and how the best time of his life was when he had all of his family together as a grandfather. And the other point, and I want his family to know, is how much he spoke with absolute deep pride for how well each and every one of his kids did. He was very, very proud of his children.

The last point, and probably the most important point, was his complete and deep faith in God. We saw how he handled cancer with a dignity and with courage. But his faith in God was probably the one thing that carried him through. It wasn't very complicated. It just was. A lot of people debate and discuss and are philosophical and what about this, what about that. With Ben it wasn't. It was this is our life on earth and there will be an afterlife and he'll be with God.

Some MLAs will periodically get together for a brief prayer time and Ben was one of those individuals, and so we had God talks, as what it became to be known. And I married into a Mennonite family, so I know that they have a very specific way of looking at things and very stubborn — in a nice way — and very direct and have a very strong point of view. And so you would expect that he might stay with those lines. But we could talk about anything. It was very matter of fact. He had a very big heart.

And when we talked about different aspects that may not fall within precepts of the Mennonite faith, he said this about people on one side of the spectrum or the other. And this stuck to me. This is what started . . . this one next sentence is what started me to want to speak today. He said there's going to be a lot of surprised people when they get to heaven to see who God let in. And that's on all spectrums, on all sides. There will be no surprise that Ben is already in heaven though.

[12:30]

I do have one regret. I had heard that Ben was in the hospital and was open for visitors. And so I actually skipped out of some events that I was supposed to be going and made my way up to the Royal University Hospital on the Wednesday before his passing. And they said that they were sorry, that he'd already been discharged. So I regret that I wasn't able to visit with him that Wednesday in the hospital. But I do know that if I were to see Ben today he would forgive me very easily, but with a laugh and with a gruff talk and a joke and probably a twinkle in his eye, and it would be all right. Ben's life was too short but Ben's life was a life well lived. Farewell, Ben, until we meet again.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was first introduced to Ben by a former member of this Assembly, a colleague and a friend, Bill Neudorf — at that time member for Rosthern — who told me that Ben would be an excellent MLA representing then Rosthern constituency and now known as Martensville. And it was certainly an honour and a privilege to be a colleague and a friend.

When Ben arrived in Regina he asked me if he'd mind if I had a different roommate in this suite that we were renting, at the basement suite. And I said no, that would be great. I'd love to have you. And I found out that Ben loved Southern gospel and he loved *Law and Order*. We'd get to the suite at night; if he was there before me he'd either have Bill Gaither in the video or we'd be watching *Law and Order*.

Ben Heppner also, in his trench coat, if you didn't know him, could certainly be mistaken for Kenny Rogers. And if someone said they were going to hear or to meet Ben Heppner and you hadn't really known him, you might have thought of the Canadian tenor. Although both of these men are excellent singers, the Ben Heppner we knew would however be the first to tell you, don't ask me to sing.

Ben certainly had a passion for politics and enjoyed the boisterous debate that would take place in this Assembly. And with his finger pointing, Ben could be a very intimidating figure in this Assembly as he made his point.

He was also honoured to be a part of the original eight who established the Saskatchewan Party. While he was elected as a Conservative, he also had his strong views in regards to the direction the province was going and how he felt the province was going. And I remember many trips that Ben and I took, and a number of my colleagues, as we criss-crossed the province to inform people as to what our purpose and reasons were for forming the Saskatchewan Party. And it was just enjoyable having Ben along and travelling with Ben.

Besides politics and serving his constituents well, Ben also had a passion for restoring old cars. In fact many a time, Mr. Speaker, Ben would arrive back in Regina, not in his car but with his half-ton equipped with tools, cutting torch and dolly, to take back home with him parts of an old car he spotted in his travels which would work well in allowing him to complete the restoration of a vehicle he was currently working on.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, on one occasion when Ben was undergoing treatments for his cancer, I called to see how he was doing. His wife, Arlene, answered the phone and when I asked how Ben was doing, she said very well. In fact he's currently in the shop working on a car and if you give me a minute, I'll call him and you can speak to him directly.

Mr. Speaker, Ben was a family man with a tremendous love, affection, and admiration for his wife, Arlene. He was proud of his children, Ken, Lana, and Nancy, and loved his grandchildren dearly. And, Mr. Speaker, the last opportunity I had to meet and visit with Ben Heppner he was very upfront with me, and as he told me that he felt this was his time, that he

would no longer be coming to the Legislative Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, as only Ben could do, he also said, the only regret I do have is not being there to fight the next election, in joining, you know, that election.

If I could add some words about Ben, I would have to say that he probably fits very well the words that Paul gave to Timothy when he said, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Mr. Speaker, I believe very dearly that Ben today is enjoying that crown of righteousness which the Lord promised would be his when he finished the race. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There aren't many times in the life of a Legislative Assembly where you get to talk about a colleague that you have known for 11 years. And there aren't many times in the life of a Legislative Assembly where a colleague passes on. And when you think about the last 20 years that I've been a member of the legislature, we've had three colleagues in the last short while that have left this Assembly for the other side.

Mr. Speaker, I knew and have known Arlene longer than I've known Ben Heppner. And Arlene and I got to know each other when she was the Chair of the Sask Valley School Division Board when I was the minister of Education in the early 1990s.

Ben Heppner was a husband, a father, a grandfather, a brother, an uncle, a teacher, a school administrator, a political colleague, and from my point of view Pat Atkinson's personal tormentor, Mr. Speaker.

When I think of Ben Heppner I think of the longest index finger that ever existed in the Legislative Assembly's history. And that finger, I'm sure it was a foot long and it could be seen from all parts of this Assembly, particularly on the government side. When I think of Ben Heppner I think he has the longest finger I ever met in my years. When I think of Ben Heppner I think of his grey Bonneville — I had a grey Bonneville — which he was very proud of. When I think of him I think of his frugality because he made sure that Bonneville . . . I think it went close to half a million miles. And I'll tell you a story about that Bonneville in a minute.

And when I think of Ben Heppner I think about 800, as we came to know them, wooden demonstrators. And when I think of Ben Heppner the most I think about his passion and the fact that he was a hard worker and he worked hard on behalf of his constituents.

Now I want to tell you about the grey Bonneville. I had a 1988 grey Bonneville which I had for many years even though I had a cabinet car. And he had a Bonneville that was a bit newer than mine. His Bonneville had hundreds of thousands more kilometres on it and he said he was going to keep that grey Bonneville going. And I think there was a Sask Party convention and NDP convention on the same weekend in Regina. And I was making my way home to Saskatoon, and I saw this grey Bonneville on the back of a tow truck. And I

thought God, that looks like Ben Heppner's Bonneville. And I thought I'll just zip by because this car was going to keep him going until the next election, right. And I zipped by, and I look and there is Ben Heppner. And I sort of — you know, you have to tweak a bit — and I just sort of gave a little wave as I went by. And he wasn't smiling at all. He was glowering.

Now I want to talk about his finger and the glasses. We have all come to know the finger and the glasses. I used to sit on that side of the legislature right across from Ben. And you know, we had the thrust and parry of question period. And question period is all about a psychological game, right. And there were times on the government side, and I know we shouldn't admit this, but sometimes we simply got whipped.

And Ben Heppner would lean across his desk and just drive me crazy. And I of course would try and say oh, you know, blah blah blah. And you know, call him the, I think we used to call him the foghorn or the bullhorn — I just can't remember. But that finger was infamous. And then he would throw his glasses down to the tip of his nose and just glare at you and wag his finger.

Now I want to talk about the 800 wooden demonstrators which he referred to as the great weenie roast. I was the minister of Education and it came to my attention that some thoughtful person in the bureaucracy had purchased 800 kits that had been put together by the ministers of Education from across the country. And contained in those kits were 800 wooden demonstrators, as we so eloquently called them.

And the member from Massey Place was the minister of Health. And in those days we had a very substantive number of colleagues on this side of the House. And we used to spend, try and spend one day in our constituency and we took turns Fridays and whatnot. But I was getting ready for these questions and I thought, how am I going to respond to this question, particularly when there are 800 schools in the province of Saskatchewan and there are several hundred Catholic schools. And I couldn't imagine why some thoughtful person in the Department of Education had purchased 800 kits, because it was unlikely that 300 of those kits would go into a Catholic school. But nevertheless, the minister of Health was on deck if the question came up.

And I was thinking how don't we laugh, how don't we laugh when this is raised. And of course we were dealing with HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] and AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] and so on and so forth. So people got it . . . They just steeled themselves for this question. And whoever said earlier that this was just guffawing all over the place, they were absolutely correct.

And then we got calls from, I think, David Letterman. I was worried we were going to get calls from David Letterman, stations all over the United States. And I chalked it up to Ben Heppner.

Mr. Speaker, what I appreciated most about Ben Heppner was that he was a passionate member of the legislature. There are people that come here and their demeanour is not quite as full of passion and the thrust and parry of debate. Ben cared. And he cared deeply about his constituents. He cared deeply about his

political views, and that's what I'm going to miss. We need passionate politicians who are spokespersons for their particular viewpoint.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say this. The biggest compliment that Ben ever paid me . . . And it's nice to have a compliment paid to someone. And he used to call me Patty which drove me crazy too, but anyway.

An Hon. Member: — You shouldn't tell them that.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I shouldn't tell you that, but anyway, I'm getting too old to care, right. Mr. Speaker, the biggest compliment that he ever paid me was he said, you know, you're a hard worker. You never quit. And Ben Heppner, he too was a hard worker and he never quit.

And just to make a long story short, in terms of the wooden demonstrators. There was some thought in the officialdom that we should simply get rid of these wooden demonstrators. And I said no, we are going to sell them. Someone will want these things. And I am pleased to report to the public, those wooden demonstrators, every one of them were sold and we even made a buck.

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly there have been some very eloquent words expressed here today. I would just ask leave for about two minutes to comment on them.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — It's an honour to pay tribute to the family of Ben Heppner and to pay tribute to Ben Heppner himself. And I was very pleased that my wife and I had an opportunity to meet Arlene. We got to know her through an informal organization of parliamentarians in their 60s. We called ourselves the OWLS [order of wily legislative sexagenarians] and we would meet monthly during session. It was kind of a special time for me. And I'll show it also that this organization, informal organization, the OWLS, was something that allowed us some camaraderie of members from both sides of the House and I genuinely appreciated that. Ben was a founding member of that little informal organization.

I just wanted to add one thing as I was listening to what the members were saying, and that was a visit that I made to a school — I believe it was in Martensville — and Ben was with me. And we were going through the model parliament with the students. And as you know we set the things up so that there's a question period in this. And the students are very, very well behaved. And so question period started and there was a couple of questions and a couple of answers.

[12:45]

And then Ben sort of got up and he says, just a minute. Just a minute. This is a very, very competitive part. I want you folks . . . I want you students to think of this as being a hockey game. And when you go into a hockey game you're competitive. You've got to skate hard. You've got to body check. You've got to keep your head up. You've got to push and shove in the corners but watch your elbows. And you've got to holler once in a while to distract the other member and maybe even

intimidate him. But don't take any penalties.

And as I was listening to what the other members were saying, how true that was. That was his philosophy of the legislature, of question period in the legislature. He did speak very distinctly in the House. He made sure that the Speaker could hear him. He understood the rules of the Assembly to a tee. And he also understood the role of the Speaker and the psychology of the Speaker, knowing exactly how far he could go and what the Speaker's limits were. I sincerely appreciate that characteristic of Ben. And I think that, as was said by many members today, that Ben Heppner lent a character to this Chamber that we shall all miss.

And I want to take this moment to express my condolences publicly to Arlene and to his children and to his constituency assistant who are here with us today. Thank you, members, for that moment.

The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Premier, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency and to the province.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Opposition House Leader, the hon. member from Melfort, by leave of the Assembly:

That the resolution just passed, together with a transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Moose Jaw North, seconded by the member for Melfort, by leave of the Assembly:

That the resolution just passed, together with a transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. I would ask at this time, members of the Assembly, for leave to have a two-to-five-minute recess and then we would reassemble again here shortly after that time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

[The Assembly recessed for a period of time.]

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — I thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, members of the House, for that welcome. It's good to get to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by saying thank you particularly for the job that you do in chairing this august Assembly and the job that you do with such wisdom and humour. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased and honoured to have this opportunity to move the 2006 Speech from the Throne. And of course I'll be moving the official wording of it in the official form at the end of my remarks, before the hon. member for Regina Wascana Plains seconds the motion.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that my constituency, Regina Coronation Park, is in the north end of Regina. And I want to in some ways apologize to everybody — I don't speak often enough of my true feelings for these constituents. We have in the north end of Regina, in Regina Coronation Park, people that are just, just absolutely salt of the earth. They call that area home.

We're all proud to call Saskatchewan home. They're real people with real jobs and real hopes and aspirations. And we're all very proud of our families. We're proud of our city, Regina, and we're very proud of Saskatchewan.

It has been my honour for 20 years to represent most of those people, Mr. Speaker. And it is an honour to represent my constituents of Regina Coronation Park. I want to thank my colleagues for their support, friendship and the work that we all do together to make this government work and to make things better for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this speech has been in some ways days, weeks, years, and even lifetimes in the making. It's taken days to write it, weeks to develop specific themes, years to build our economy so that everyone in Saskatchewan can benefit, and it's taken lifetimes of planning and building values that look always to the future — a future we're making now. A future where young people live, work, and raise families in the best place in Canada, Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, we've come a long ways in 15 years. Fifteen years ago the Leader of the Opposition was near the end of his senior ministerial position with a Devine Conservative government. Fifteen years ago the deficit, the annual deficit in Saskatchewan, was \$1.1 billion and the total debt was fifteen and a half billion dollars. Such huge debt, Mr. Speaker, and one million people left with the mortgage.

Well Saskatchewan people rose to the challenge, Mr. Speaker, and now after 13 consecutive balanced budgets, 14 credit upgrades, things are better. Debt is being paid off.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has more jobs and better job quality now than any time before in our history. And our quality of life is improving. Our economy is growing and Saskatchewan families are getting the benefits.

The table is set and the good stuff is being delivered. We are doing what's best for Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan families with actions like reducing the PST to 5 per cent effective midnight this evening. These things are helping make life better for Saskatchewan's families and building an even better future. Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, a credit to the people of Saskatchewan that we're able to do this.

Mr. Speaker, making Saskatchewan the best place for young people involves four cornerstones in this Throne Speech. Our agenda has four cornerstones. Our workforce has a long history of working hard. Our education levels are rising in Saskatchewan.

We have long known that today's Saskatchewan families need to balance work and family, Mr. Speaker. And in work and family balance we've announced that the third Monday in February is a family holiday. This helps provide that family time balance needed in our busy world.

And, Mr. Speaker, by February many of us will welcome a day of not scraping windows and sliding to and from work in the dark. I'm delighted that we're putting this family holiday into being and we are making Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — We will continue to develop Saskatchewan's early learning and child care program. Literacy programs will expand despite the federal government's withdrawal from its commitments. Training opportunities are being expanded to meet market's demands. And, Mr. Speaker, for the third year in a row university tuition fees are frozen.

We will be receiving and acting upon a comprehensive review of access for students to post-secondary education and more. Mr. Speaker, these actions will address access issues for students and promote the exceptional range of career opportunities that are available right here in the best place in Canada for young people to live, work, and build strong futures.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party are driven by envy and negativity. So we're going to continue to spread the word about Saskatchewan's quality of life and strong economy and let it be known that our welcome mat is out. There are great opportunities for workers from home and from abroad. Our initiative to attract 5,000 immigrants annually by 2008 to the province is on track, and I'm delighted that we are investing in a program at the College of Medicine to certify international medical graduates living in Saskatchewan.

[13:00]

Our second cornerstone focuses on health care. Mr. Speaker, our commitment to medicare is unwavering and it's highlighted by the fact that we're the only have province in Canada that does not charge its citizens a health care premium. Let me repeat that — the only have province in Canada with no health care premium for its citizens.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — And of course building on that, we're continuing to invest in health care and strengthening the best health care system for families. We are continuing to reduce wait times and improve access for services. In this session we will be introducing new measures to benefit seniors. Seniors are the men and women who struggled and fought for the innovative and forward-thinking policies — things like medicare — that are a proud heritage of all of us in Saskatchewan. They worked to create a better life for their families, children and grandchildren, Mr. Speaker, and we continue that work honouring their contributions and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, the third cornerstone recognizes that neither families nor the economy can prosper for long in an unhealthy environment. We now have in Saskatchewan the world's largest carbon dioxide sequestration project. We now have more wind power in Saskatchewan per capita than any other province in Canada. Saskatchewan will be a leader in the protection of the environment and the promotion of clean, renewable energy. To demonstrate the national leadership in conserving, protecting and restoring the health of our environment and our diverse ecosystems, we have a goal of meeting one-third of our energy requirements through renewable resources and in this session we're going to be doing more to move us to that goal.

Mr. Speaker, we will be working in partnership to research the feasibility of the world's first Saskatchewan-designed clean coal-generating facility. At the other end of the energy equation we'll be implementing measures to assist in energy conservation. We will continue our leadership in carbon sequestration and wind power development, and we'll be implementing the Saskatchewan Green Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is strong and growing stronger. Our Saskatchewan economy is truly far more diversified today than at any other point in its history.

The fourth cornerstone of our agenda is ensuring that Saskatchewan families will benefit from our strong and prosperous economy. These benefits will take shape in many ways within communities, rural and urban alike. The new February Family Day is one such benefit. The sales tax

reduction is another benefit.

Saskatchewan's competitiveness is leading to more job creation and employment opportunities for Saskatchewan people. We've got more jobs here than ever before. We have better quality jobs than ever before, and we have a better educated, better trained workforce than ever before.

And throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal economic development is significantly contributing to growing employment numbers among Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis peoples. In partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, Saskatchewan will host a national summit on Aboriginal economic development to further that progress. All of this helps make Saskatchewan an even better place to live, work, and build strong futures.

Our families, Mr. Speaker, deserve to enjoy our share of the benefits that our growing economy is providing and this is at the heart of our fight with Ottawa for a fair, equitable equalization deal. That and the fact that they told us that we had a deal. In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we elected 12 Conservative MPs [Member of Parliament] because they said fairness is what this is all about. Saskatchewan will get the same energy accord that Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia got. The election language was clear and it was driven home throughout the federal election.

And, Mr. Speaker, Canada's fiscal situation has strengthened since then. The latest federal surplus was more than \$13 billion.

Our joy as Canadians is that our country, Canada, is doing well. Our frustration is that we thought Stephen Harper was our ticket in. I want to remind our Conservative MPs of their genesis in the Reform Party, Mr. Speaker. The Reform Party took hold in Western Canada because Western Canadians saw a federal Conservative Party turning its back on the West. Who can forget the fact that in 1986 the federal Conservative government of the day awarded a \$1.4 billion CF-18 maintenance contract to Canadair of Montreal over Bristol Aerospace of Winnipeg, despite the fact that the latter tender was cheaper and superior.

I say to our Conservative MPs when it comes to equalization, don't turn your backs on Saskatchewan. Don't turn your backs on the West in order to curry favour with Quebec. If they think they can get away with that, Mr. Speaker, they got another thing coming. And I look forward to hearing the Sask Party on a fair equalization deal for Saskatchewan, just like I look forward to hearing them condemn the federal government's ham-handling mishandling of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The Canadian Wheat Board originated in World War I. Farmers immediately recognized it was putting cash in their coveralls and they liked it. Studies more recently show that the benefit to Saskatchewan farmers from Canadian Wheat Board single-desk marketing, selling, is the benefit for Saskatchewan farmers is more than \$300 million each and every year.

The federal Agriculture minister has done two things recently very wrong. First, he gagged the Canadian Wheat Board by directing the Canadian Wheat Board to not advocate single-desk marketing. Don't talk about what you do. It's what he said.

Second, he directed the Canadian Wheat Board — this is more serious — he directed the Canadian Wheat Board to eliminate one-third, that's one in three farmers, from the Canadian Wheat Board voters list. And they've got elections for directors coming up right now. This is ham-handed handling. And where's the Sask Party on this undemocratic process, Mr. Speaker? Where are they?

Well, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. We have . . . October 25, two days ago, I have a copy from the *Leader-Post*, and I want to quote the member for Saltcoats in that. I'll just go straight to the heart of my issue in the interests of time. I'm going to quote the last paragraph which says, quote:

"I think . . . [that] Wartman is trying to . . . create a wedge between the Sask. Party and the federal government," said Bjornerud of the close relationship between members of . . . [the] provincial party and governing Conservatives.

"Why doesn't he mind his own business?"

Mr. Speaker, two days ago, that's the quote for the member for Saltcoats.

Well let me, let me remind the hon. member for Saltcoats of a few of his other quotes. Let me go a little bit further back. Let me go to November 15, 2005, page 171 of the *Hansard* from this very institution. Well what did the member for Saltcoats say then? He said, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, will that government this week finally debate the issue . . . [of] agriculture, [and] finally help us get the message through to the federal government?

Well there's agriculture, and he's saying let's get on with lobbying the federal government. Or we can go to March 22, 2006, even more recently, where the hon. member for Saltcoats said, quote:

We should continue to lobby the federal government for help for Saskatchewan farmers.

Well, Mr. Speaker, help for Saskatchewan farmers. And now, now when the Canadian Wheat Board is in danger of being collapsed by an ideologically driven national government, the ideologues on the other side just say, argh, argh, argh, us too. Shame.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, I ask for opposition members to stand up and speak out and act in the best interests of Saskatchewan people. And in every instance to act in the best interests of their Saskatchewan farming communities. Tell your right wing. . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Tell your right wing ideological buddies in Ottawa three things. One, deliver on the promised fair energy accord. Second, deliver some fairness for farmers. Stop being so bull-headedly ham-handed or put another way, simply let farmers democratically decide the future of the farmer's Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. Speaker, New Democrat MLAs . . . oh pardon me. And

third, third thing you should tell them is, stop being so wrong-headedly stubborn about literacy. Stop being so stubborn about literacy.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, New Democrat MLAs have a hockey history of fun fundraising. Our first hockey game fundraiser was in Saskatoon Riversdale. We raised money for literacy that night. So you can imagine our collective horror when the federal government cut literacy funding.

Leave the tragedy of that for a moment, leave that aside. Since adult literacy, adult literacy is taught mostly by volunteers with some administrative support, the federal government has said volunteers aren't working cheap enough so let's cut off that little bit of administrative support that they have too.

Mr. Speaker, the divide has never been clearer. New Democrats say people sometimes need a hand up. Conservatives just blame people and say they're lazy or stupid or both. Shame.

If anyone was uncertain about where the loyalties of the Sask Party lie, all they have to do is look at their shameful performance on equalization, the Wheat Board, and literacy — all areas targeted by their federal right wing buddies, all issues that adversely affect Saskatchewan families, all issues where the Sask Party has stood against Saskatchewan people and taken the federal government side.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, some people say it doesn't matter who you elect. And I can remember the Devine Conservatives trying to sell that snake oil in 1991. Some people say having all-time record high employment, having all-time record low unemployment, having a fast, improving educational level of Saskatchewan people, being the only province that does not charge a health care premium, having the lowest PST of any province with one PST, with taxes going down in some way in every budget for the last eight . . . And did I mention the PST is going down to 5 per cent effective midnight tonight?

Some people say this isn't good enough, Mr. Speaker. I say it is always good to do better.

Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest cost utility bundle in Canada. We are handling our tax money wisely. Under this government, Saskatchewan families are enjoying the real benefits of our strong economy. We enjoy many benefits, and to those good things we are adding the multi-year road and rail strategy. And to aid in that, we're deducting every fuel dollar collected by the province to building and maintaining roads. And I'm pleased to say we will also be establishing a multi-year infrastructure fund.

And now, Mr. Speaker, my time is I know very near the end. I wish to make . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I know. There's much more I want to say, but I have to draw this to a close.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make the official statements of the motion, seconded by the member for Regina Wascana Plains:

That a humble address be presented to His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor:

To His Honour the Honourable Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Mr. Speaker, I so move, seconded by the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:15]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Coronation Park, seconded by the member for Regina Wascana Plains:

That a humble address be presented to His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech that Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? Why is the member from Melfort on his feet?

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege.

The Speaker: — Would the member just briefly state his point.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a long-standing parliamentary principle that tax measures should be introduced in the Assembly before they are introduced anywhere else. It has come to our attention that the Minister of Highways violated this important principle by doing an interview with his local radio station prior to this morning's announcement by the Minister of Finance.

This member is an experienced member who knows the proper procedures of this House as he was first elected in 1986, and this information was broadcast to members hearing the minister's announcement prior to members hearing the minister's announcement during ministerial statements. It was important that we were only delivered this information when the minister took his feet in order for us to respond. We were not, on the opposition, given the opportunity to have this information beforehand.

It is my view that these actions by the Minister of Highways have resulted in a breach of members' privilege, and I would ask that the Speaker give us the opportunity to move a privilege motion referring this matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges for further investigation.

The Speaker: — Speaking to the point, the Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, speaking to the point raised by the leader . . . the House Leader, I should say, of the opposition, it is the fact that the minister did speak in an embargoed . . . with an embargoed agreement with the media. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it was an understanding that was not honoured.

Mr. Speaker, we will recognize two things. It has been the case, Mr. Speaker, in the course of Saskatchewan history that there was — and I can recall — a sales tax change that came into effect on the eve of an election, on the eve of an election, with a statement having been made clearly outside of the Assembly. The Assembly was not in fact convened at that time, Mr. Speaker, and that sales tax change was put in place retroactively by legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has, the Minister of Finance has announced today that he will be introducing legislation but made the announcement today that it will be in effect this evening. There is no way that anyone who heard the message that was given by the media, that had violated the embargo agreement, will be in a position in order to benefit from that. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate. It was not planned.

It is a long-standing tradition that there have been embargo agreements with the media and there will be, I think there will be members of the media who will be disturbed by the conduct of one of the medias in this regard, Mr. Speaker. However I respectfully suggest that that is not a case of privilege and is not appropriate to bring before the House.

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. I take matters raised as points of privilege in a very serious way. The rules provide time for the Speaker to make a decision. Under ordinary conditions, two hours are requested. In this case, I allowed the members to make their point.

But I would like to at this time reserve an opportunity, reserve time to look at this situation in detail and bring back a ruling whether or not it is a prima facie . . . whether a prima facie case has been established. And I will do so before orders of the day on Monday.

And we will now proceed with the debate, and the Chair recognizes the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to be the seconder in this great debate. But due to the lateness of the hour, Mr. Speaker, I would want to be proud out loud on Monday. And with that, I now would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Wascana Plains that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:20.]

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Minister of Advanced Education and Employment
Minister Responsible for Immigration
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