



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

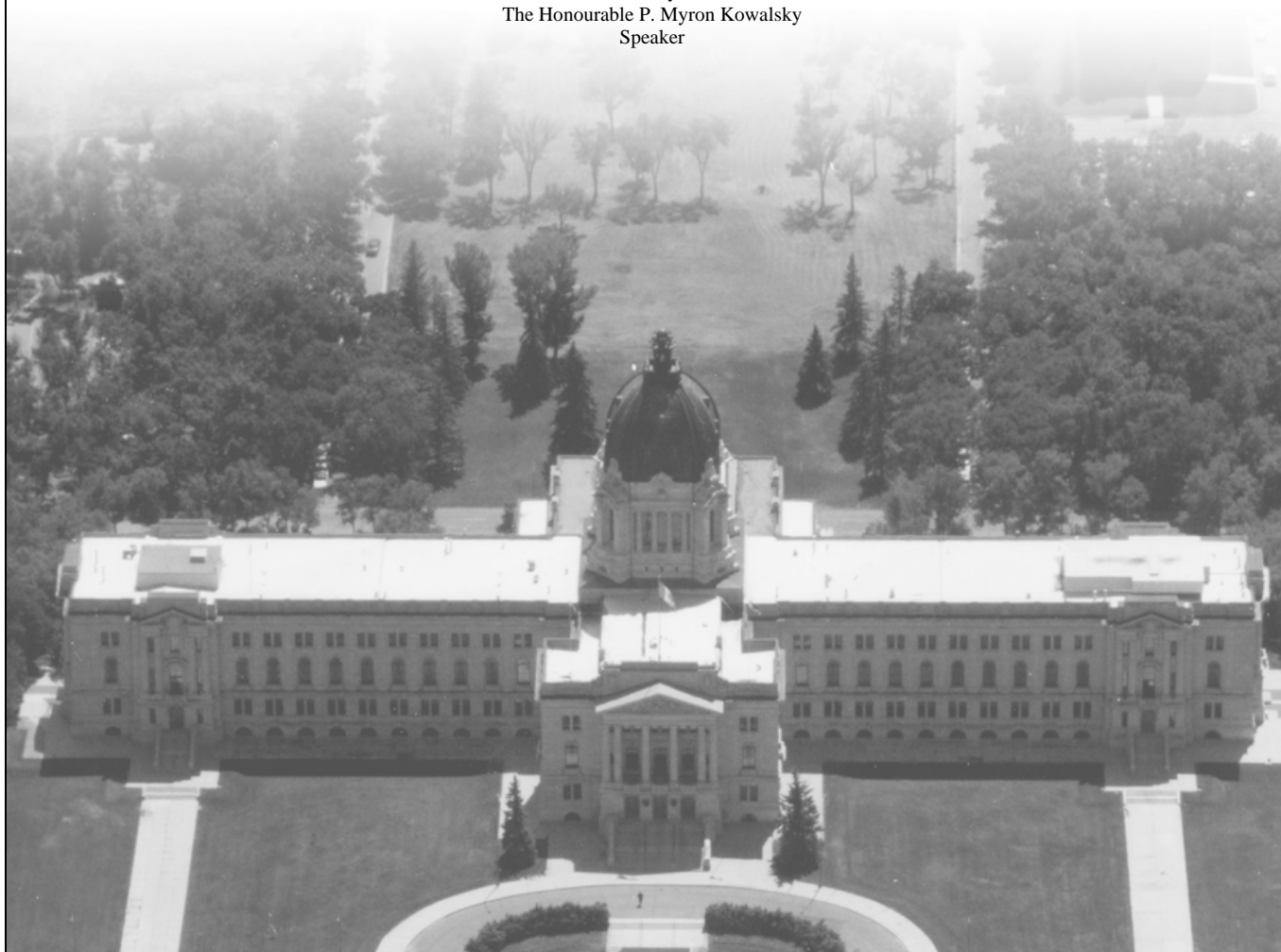
of the

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

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Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Martensville

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Trew, seconded by Ms. Hamilton, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Duncan.]

The Speaker: — Order, order. Debate resumes on the motion for an address to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in response to the Throne Speech as moved by the member for Regina Coronation Park, seconded by the member for Regina Wascana Plains, and concurrently on the amendment to that motion as moved by the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy and seconded by the member for Cannington. The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw North.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with much enthusiasm that I enter into the Throne Speech debate. The Throne Speech traditionally, Mr. Speaker, is a time for all of us in this House to state the vision of the future and how we see ourselves getting there. And it's very, very clear that when you look at the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, as has been said before by previous speakers, this is a presentation which identifies four cornerstones for getting the job done as we build a future for Saskatchewan families and for Saskatchewan young people.

Cornerstone number one, it's the best place for young people to build their better futures and, Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to that a little later. Number two, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan will continue to be a leader in public health care. I appreciated the comments of the Minister of Health in that regard to a very large extent. Saskatchewan as a leader in a green economy, we'll be hearing more about that from other speakers later on.

But, Mr. Speaker, where I would like to go is to the fourth pillar — ensuring that Saskatchewan families benefit from our strong economy — and to direct the bulk of my attention there because that's what my constituents I think are telling me, that they have appreciated what they've already heard and where they expect that we will go.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me paint a bit of the context for the speech and where we're at here today as we listen to the debate here in the House. It's kind of interesting. What we see is a government that is putting forth a positive plan for the future. What we see is an opposition interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, an opposition that is more interested in running from its record. And, Mr. Speaker, if you listen very, very carefully — I'll come back to the running from the record in just a moment — but if you listen very carefully to the positive ideas that you will have heard so far in this debate from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, you would have one great big zero, a big void.

Now it's kind of interesting and I want to ask the members of the Saskatchewan Party and I want to ask the people of Saskatchewan to take note of the lack of concrete alternatives by the opposition. Interestingly enough they see the Throne Speech debate as having one purpose, and that's to attack the government without any alternatives. Why is it that the opposition is afraid to tell us where they're going to go? And, Mr. Speaker, could it be because, could it be because they intend to go where they have been? Let us be very aware, Mr. Speaker, there's a context here. There is a context that the people of Saskatchewan are going to be able to benefit from the state of the economy today because some things have happened, some very positive things have happened.

Mr. Speaker, in this province we spent the '90s paying for the debt of the '80s. That's what we did in this province. The debt of the '80s, when the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, was a top advisor in the Devine government and left this province bankrupt for a New Democrat government to put back in order. And we spent the '90s paying for the debt of the '80s. They won't want to talk about their record there, Mr. Speaker.

And is it the fact as well, that they don't want us to understand that if they ever got their hands on the treasury of Saskatchewan again, if they ever got their hands on the treasury of Saskatchewan again, we know, we know where they would take it. Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan would reject it outright if the Saskatchewan Party dared to tell Saskatchewan people what they intend to do if they ever had the opportunity to do it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we spent the '90s paying for the debt of the '80s. In the first half of this decade, Mr. Speaker, since the member for Riversdale has become Premier, we have been putting the economy of Saskatchewan in order and getting Saskatchewan in shape to move forward with a sense of confidence and with a sense of optimism. That's what's been happening.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we come today. We come to the time now, and we say in this Speech from the Throne that now is the time — now is the time — for Saskatchewan families to benefit from a state of a healthy Saskatchewan economy with the foundation being established by a New Democrat government pulling it up from the horrid, horrid Tory years, with the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party there as their adviser. So, Mr. Speaker, there we are — there we are.

So we talk about, Mr. Speaker, we talk about doing what will provide benefit for Saskatchewan families and enable young people to build a better future in the province of Saskatchewan. And we've had two concrete examples, two concrete examples.

I don't know what the Saskatchewan Party heard when they went home this weekend. I suspect that they didn't spend a lot of time out and about, Mr. Speaker, because I think they were hearing, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan people took note of two concrete examples of Saskatchewan families benefiting from the state of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time, for the first time in

Saskatchewan, there will be a holiday between New Year's Day and Easter Day. Now if there is, if there is, Mr. Speaker, anything that I have had a lobby on over the course of the last many years about something that Saskatchewan people would like to see, they have proposed that there should, ought to be a holiday in that long period between New Year's Day and Good Friday. And, Mr. Speaker, because of the state of the Saskatchewan economy, because of the good work that Saskatchewan families, that Saskatchewan working people have done, Saskatchewan people will be the benefactors. There will be a Family Day to celebrate the contribution of Saskatchewan families, and it will begin on the third Monday, February 19 of next year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — There it is. And what was the reaction of the Saskatchewan Party? Was it a sense of celebration for Saskatchewan people? Well then, Mr. Speaker, to make matters worse for the Saskatchewan Party, on Friday my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance, stood in his place and reported that, because of the healthy state of the Saskatchewan economy, we are in a position where we can afford now to provide a sustainable benefit to Saskatchewan families and that they will be able to pay 2 per cent less sales tax on everything they purchase from this day forward.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Now surely, surely, surely you would think, Mr. Speaker, that if you were truly interested in what is good for Saskatchewan families — what the Saskatchewan families want — you would say that's good news for Saskatchewan families. Surely you would say that. Well, Mr. Speaker, what I am told — I didn't hear it — but what I am told, interestingly enough, that one of the observers of Saskatchewan politics who conducts a daily radio talk show says that he found the reaction of the Saskatchewan party churlish. Churlish. Well, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of some of the members opposite, that means kind of glum, down in the mouth.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why is it, why is it that when you announce that for Saskatchewan people there would be a day to celebrate, to celebrate Saskatchewan families and also, Mr. Speaker, as a statutory holiday, but also, Mr. Speaker, reduction of sales tax, why is one side churlish? Mr. Speaker, I think, simply put, it's because there are two sides in the House today. There is one side of the House, Mr. Speaker. There's the New Democrat side of the House, the government side of the House, that is focused on doing what is good for Saskatchewan. There is another side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It's the Saskatchewan Party side of the House, and they are focused on what is good for the Saskatchewan Party. There's the difference. There's the difference, Mr. Speaker.

And the fact of the matter is we have seen already — and I forecast that through this session we will see it over and over again — this is an opposition that cannot stand good news. Good news for Saskatchewan is bad news for the Saskatchewan Party. Mr. Speaker, I think they had better get used to it because Saskatchewan people are used to good news, and they are going to see more good news coming from this legislature, Mr.

Speaker, on this side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there is the hon. member from Wood River who just before supper was badmouthing his own constituents. I found it . . . It's an interesting thing. It's an interesting thing that he'll come here, and off the record he'll badmouth his own constituents. He wants an election, Mr. Speaker; he's going to get an election. I say if he . . . if, if, if, if his constituents don't come to know what he thinks about them, says about them when he's in this House off the record, if they send him back, he should get used to sitting exactly where he is because that's the closest he's ever going to come to sitting on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there will be . . . In this session of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, we will see real benefits for Saskatchewan families, and we're going to see them a whole host of ways. And I'd just like to turn my attention to some of those that are relative to my areas of responsibility.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there is, in Saskatchewan there is a craving for something that we have come to value, and that is a celebration of quality of life — a celebration of the arts, Mr. Speaker, a celebration of the arts.

There is also, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan, we have needs here that are felt across the nation. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that in Canada about 40 years ago in preparation for the centennial celebration, along with the significant support of the federal government of the day, Mr. Speaker, there were a number of cultural and recreational facilities that were built across the nation. Mr. Speaker, they were built about 40 years ago to last 40 years. And here we are 40 years later. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that the ministers responsible for sport and physical activity have assessed that there is a deficit in the nation of about some \$15 billion. What we have proposed in concert with one another to the federal government, this is that the federal government become a partner, to join with the provinces and municipalities across the nation to engage in bringing the kinds of facilities that Canadian people, including Saskatchewan people, need in order to enjoy good health in the times in which we live.

And, Mr. Speaker, what was announced in the Speech from the Throne is the Building Communities Fund. And, Mr. Speaker, this will be an opportunity for some of the projects that are looking to be able to move forward in the best interests of the good health of Saskatchewan people in order to be addressed. And we will be looking, Mr. Speaker, we will be looking for the federal government to become a significant partner, to become a significant partner with Saskatchewan communities and communities across the nation as part of that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the portion of the Speech from the Throne that also identifies the status of the artist agenda, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is we have a number of talented artists here in the province of Saskatchewan, a number of talented artists. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, is that artists — not only in Saskatchewan but across

Canada generally — do not make incomes that are anywhere near what would be typical of their levels of education. To put it in its bluntest and simplest terms, Mr. Speaker, on balance, artists, professional artists here in the province of Saskatchewan, would have about twice as many post-secondary degrees or diplomas as would the general population but unfortunately experience only about half of the income. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough.

And in this place in which we enjoy quality of life and which young people are increasingly looking to opportunities for quality of life — including the arts — as they choose where they're going to build their future, we will be moving forward on the status of the artists' agenda including introduction of legislation to assist in this regard. And we will be looking for the support and the co-operation of the opposition to do that.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . okay. I'm much encouraged by the hon. member for Canora who has indicated his full support. And I welcome that because that would be the first thing, the first positive statement. And so let me say to the hon. member for Canora that I welcome his . . . although it's off the record, I'm looking forward to his remarks in which I'm sure he'll want to express his support on the record and that of his colleagues, I suspect.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention to page 13 of the Speech from the Throne entitled, a year of music — Saskatchewan on centre stage. Mr. Speaker, on the Thanksgiving weekend here in Saskatchewan, something kind of special happened; the Rolling Stones came to town, Mr. Speaker. And they came to town, and some 90,000 people here in the province of Saskatchewan, including the number who came from outside of the province, to come to this province to take in, to take in this world-class tour of what many would call the world's number one rock group, the Rolling Stones, the Bigger Bang Tour.

And it's kind of interesting, Mr. Speaker, because they are coming . . . the Rolling Stones came to Saskatchewan because of what's happening in this province next year. How did the Rolling Stones come to Regina? And in fact, Mr. Speaker, even more impressively how is it, how is it, Mr. Speaker, that here in Regina, Saskatchewan there was only one place, only one place outside their home town of London, England in the entire world, that the Rolling Stones performed two shows on the same weekend. Only one place in the world — right here in Regina, Saskatchewan.

In fact as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, I predict that Regina and Saskatchewan are now increasingly on the map for top-notch entertainment. And you better believe that that's an attractive thing to young people wanting to make their futures here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well it was because when the Rolling Stones decided they were doing the Bigger Bang Tour, they knew that they wanted to come to Canada. But where in Canada? And what they heard is that there is something happening. There is something good that's happening out in Saskatchewan and fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, because, because four cities — the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Moose Jaw — joined in partnership with the province of Saskatchewan and decided that

we were going to do something that was outstanding to recognize the arts and artists here in the province of Saskatchewan and would continue that sense of celebration and pride that was part of our centennial celebration, decided that we were going to go after a Canadian first.

Truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, in 2007 for the first time, all of the major music awards in Canada are happening right here in Saskatchewan — right here in Saskatchewan.

[19:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we've had the Rolling Stones here because they knew that there was something happening in the world of music. What they knew was that in April, the Juno Awards which will be televised to some 250 million households worldwide are going to be held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. They knew, Mr. Speaker, that in September the Canadian Country Music Awards were going to be held in Regina, Saskatchewan. And they knew, Mr. Speaker, that the Western Canadian Music Awards, for the first time in a city that is not one of our major cities — but I'll tell you she's going to be a bang-up effort — will be held, the Western Canadian Music Awards will be held in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, hang on to your hat because it ain't done yet. I'll guarantee that in 2007 this will be the place for music. This is where it's happening. You talk to musicians in any province, in any territory, at any level, Mr. Speaker, and they will tell you that if you're interested in music, if you like having a good time, if you enjoy a party, there's one place to be in 2007 and that is in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — But it's not all about fun, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we're going to have fun. We're going to have fun, and we're going to welcome people from across the nation. They will come and they'll visit. And they'll spend their money here, and they'll watch on their televisions, and they will appreciate that there is something happening in the province of Saskatchewan.

But in addition to that my friend and colleague, the Legislative Secretary to the Premier, will be offering her advice as to how we build the music industry in the province of Saskatchewan. We'll recognize it. Not that long ago, Mr. Speaker, the film and video industry in Saskatchewan was virtually null and void, but because of government policy it has become a thriving industry that has made a difference economically and has affected a number of communities in our province. And it is with that same intention to take advantage of the talent that we have in our province that we will be looking to move forward in the music industry to make it a part of the economic development story in the province of Saskatchewan as well, and that will be happening in the year 2007.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And so, Mr. Speaker, as I prepare to take

my place, and I summarize why it is that I am so enthusiastic about this Speech from the Throne, this statement about the future, this statement about positive alternatives, this statement about plans for Saskatchewan families to continue to benefit from a sound and solid economy — this place, Mr. Speaker, where young people, young people can build a better future, where they can take advantage of the Saskatchewan advantage, the Saskatchewan advantage for young people where there are jobs aplenty; Mr. Speaker, where there is music aplenty; Mr. Speaker, where they can afford to insure their cars with the lowest rates in nation; Mr. Speaker, where they have the best access in the nation if not on the continent for Internet.

Mr. Speaker, those are the Saskatchewan advantage for young people. That is part of why I am confident and optimistic about the future of Saskatchewan and that this Speech from the Throne will be an important part of building our future. For all of those reasons and because, I will listen with interest as the Saskatchewan Party continue to run from their record. They continue to hide what they would say that they would do if they were ever given the right to turn over to . . . given the keys to the treasury of the province of Saskatchewan. They are scared to tell us. They are running from their record.

We're proud, Mr. Speaker. We're working for Saskatchewan. They're working for the Saskatchewan Party. There's no doubt which side I'm on. I'll be voting in favour of the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to reply to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker. And after what we just listened to, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure whether I'll be quite as energetic and quite as boisterous as the member opposite, but I know the member opposite always enjoys these debates and certainly livens this place up, Mr. Speaker.

But I think perhaps for a bit we'll try and bring a bit of reason, Mr. Speaker, to this debate and perhaps put some real comments, legitimate comments, on the record rather than a lot of political rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, although we may have to indulge in a bit of that.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to congratulate our youngest, our newest colleague, our youngest and newest colleague, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy for the great speech that he gave this afternoon in the Assembly. It was certainly a . . . he set the bar high for future members, Mr. Speaker. And if that's an indication of what's to come from this young member, I think we are in for a lot of good things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the text of the Throne Speech, I thought I would like to make a few comments on the Minister of Finance's announcement on Friday of the cut to the sales tax, Mr. Speaker. I looked at some of the headlines and articles in the papers from the weekend, and there's a couple that caught my eye, Mr. Speaker.

One, the editorial page of *The StarPhoenix* headline is, "Sales tax cut cynical ploy." And they go on to talk about how desperate this government must be to come up with a 2 per cent sales tax at this time when as late as last spring's budget they said they couldn't afford it and they weren't going there. And the Finance minister talked about and was questioned during the summer months about a cut to the PST [provincial sales tax], and he at that time had indicated he had no intention of doing that. In fact I understand that the Premier two weeks ago didn't even know that his government was going to be doing this, and here at the 11th hour they try to pull a rabbit out of the hat, Mr. Speaker.

But the other article that caught my attention is again in *The StarPhoenix*. It's a column by Randy Burton, and the headline is "Tax cut signals NDP panic." And I think, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this tax cut is.

In the last six months, Mr. Speaker, there's been a couple of polls taken that are public. One is a regional poll, Mr. Speaker. It occurred near the end of June, and it occurred in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, Mr. Speaker, when this government, this NDP [New Democratic Party] government opposite, finished third in the polls, Mr. Speaker. I think my colleague made reference to it earlier this afternoon. I think we could aptly call this 2 per cent tax cut as the Weyburn-Big Muddy tax cut. And so if that in fact is the case, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of this province should look forward to another cut in the PST or perhaps some other tax cut, and we're going to call that the Martensville tax cut, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as columnist Randy Burton has pointed out, this is nothing more than a government that's in desperation mode. He asks some very legitimate questions in his column. He says, did the Minister of Finance and this government look at other options that perhaps would be more beneficial to the overall economy? Did they do any analysis on spending a similar amount of money in cutting property taxes? And I would guess, Mr. Speaker, that the answer is no. I think they looked at the simple political fact that more people pay PST than pay property taxes, and so that's what they were going with, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at this year's Throne Speech, I thought a Throne Speech is a government's vision for the next year. So in order to judge this year's Throne Speech, I thought I should go back and look at last year's and particularly in the environment area because we hear many times about . . . these people across the way are the defenders of our environment. They're the green party in Saskatchewan. Well there is a real Green Party that actually does have a real grasp on environmental issues and is putting forward some credible environmental policies, Mr. Speaker, but these people prop themselves up and pretend that they're the protectors of the environment.

So what did they say, Mr. Speaker, in last year's Throne Speech, comments pertaining to the environment? Well he talked about a green strategy. They're going to be bringing forward their green strategy. Well they underwent a year and a half or two years of work which culminated in a series of public meetings around the provinces on various issues dealing with the environment. In last year's Throne Speech, they said they were going to be rolling this green strategy out. Well has

anybody seen it yet? No. The answer is no. When I asked the Minister of the Environment this spring, in the spring sitting, where they are with their green strategy, well he said he hoped it's going to be coming forward. Was it even mentioned in this year's Throne Speech? No, not a word, Mr. Speaker, not a word.

Last year's Throne Speech, they talked about a climate change package. So they're going to develop this climate change package to deal with a number of issues, and the biggest one of course is greenhouse gas emissions. Was there mention of it this year? Not a word, Mr. Speaker. Again they prop themselves up as the protector of the environment, and yet when it comes to bringing some concrete plans forward, we see nothing.

So what are some other organizations that are knowledgeable in this area have to say about this government, Mr. Speaker? Well just recently the David Suzuki Foundation issued their 2006 report, and it's the *2006 Status Report of Provincial Climate Change Plans*. So what does that report say about Saskatchewan? Well I'll read you what it says, Mr. Speaker. It says Saskatchewan remains the Canadian jurisdiction with the fastest growing greenhouse gas emissions and the highest per capita emissions in Canada of some 62 per cent above 1990 levels — 62 per cent above 1990 levels. We're the highest per capita jurisdiction in Canada. And is there a plan? In bold print, Mr. Speaker, "No climate change plan . . ." These people have no climate change plan. Yet they're the protectors of the environment, and they're going to make all these good things happen in the environmental field, Mr. Speaker.

So what have they got? Well the Suzuki people say Saskatchewan doesn't have a plan, but they merely have a perspective. Well what does that mean, a perspective? Well they have some sort of an idea that maybe climate change is something that should be addressed, and maybe someday we may do something about it. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's good enough. I don't think the people of this province think it's good enough.

But in order to compare what's happening in Saskatchewan, see how we measure up . . . I mean the people have already told us, but what do they say about other provinces? Well let's have a look. Let's have a look, Mr. Speaker, what the same report says about Manitoba. It says Manitoba, our neighbouring province — governed by an NDP party — what are they saying? What are they doing? They have "A reasonably strong climate change plan . . ." Manitoba has "A reasonably strong climate change plan . . ."

What has Saskatchewan got? Nothing. They go on to say that Manitoba's plan is possibly the most ambitious or their 2002 plan was probably one of the most ambitious in Canada. I believe in this year's report Quebec came out with a new plan, and I believe they're rated as probably the strongest plan.

Well what about that neighbour to the west of us? You know the ones that the people across the way don't really like that much and perhaps they're fairly envious of? What do they say about Alberta, Mr. Speaker? Well they say that at least Alberta has a plan. These people aren't entirely happy with the plan, but they do have a plan. And they say, interestingly enough, one of the strengths is that it's "A promise to buy 90 % of government

power from renewable resources." The Alberta government has made that promise. What do we hear? Have we heard anything similar from these people? Not a word, Mr. Speaker. Not a word.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at how Saskatchewan stacks up to our neighbours out to the East and the West, I'm afraid we don't stack up very well, Mr. Speaker.

So we heard last year that they're going to work on this climate change plan and address this whole area of climate change. They don't even mention it this year because they haven't got any idea of how to really go about it I would think, Mr. Speaker.

One other thing — so last year what else did they say? They talked about the forestry sector, and they're going to work with the industry to capture new opportunities. Well I wonder how's that going for them, Mr. Speaker. How's that going for them? Ask the people of Hudson Bay and Carrot River how it's going for them. I think the people there are saying don't help us; please stop helping us because, if you help us, we're going to lose more mills. I think that's what's happening, Mr. Speaker.

This year though, they said, well we're determined to continue to help. So the forestry operation that we do have, that's still operating in this province, I'm guessing . . . I hope I'm wrong, but I'm guessing by the end of this year or at the very earliest, longest, the middle of next year, we may not have a forestry industry left if these people continue to work the way they are, Mr. Speaker.

[19:30]

So then what was the . . . What else did they say in last year's Throne Speech in the environment area? They talked about agroforestry. And you know what they said they're going to do, Mr. Speaker? They're going to convert, over 20 years, they're going to convert 10 per cent of all of Saskatchewan's arable land to agroforestry. And this year they said, well we're going to enhance our plan.

Well let's see how they're doing. Ten per cent of Saskatchewan's arable land is somewhere over 3 million acres. So how are they doing, Mr. Speaker, with this agroforestry plan of theirs? Well I haven't got the latest numbers, but I'm guessing if they've got 2,000 acres in agroforestry we're doing real well.

So how long is that going to take? If we're going to convert about 3 million acres, and if we've only got 2,000 acres over the last couple of years, we're somewhere about five ten-thousandths of a per cent along our way. So we're really moving down the road here. I mean we're, you know, I think perhaps we'll see the next ice age before we see their plan in effect, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, one other thing. The Throne Speech talked a little bit about agriculture and talked a bit about highways. And highways, Mr. Speaker, is one thing in my constituency that is a very controversial issue. And I should tell you what this government has done to some of the highways in my constituency, particularly Highway 22 between the junctions of

No. 6 and No. 20. This is a chunk of highway . . . We've got a grain terminal there. It's used by many producers to deliver their grain. There's heavy traffic on that chunk of highway, Mr. Speaker. It's been in a state of disrepair for the last six or seven or eight years.

And what's the answer? What is their answer, Mr. Speaker? The people of the area have been asking that this government does something about this highway. And so for six years they haven't done anything, you know. But finally this summer they did something. You know what they did, Mr. Speaker? They turned it back to gravel. That's their answer. A busy highway where you have 40 semis a day, perhaps, crossing that highway. And I'm not exaggerating because the majority of grain deliveries to the terminal situated along that highway come in from over that . . . from the west, over that stretch of highway.

On hot summer days I've been over that highway in the middle of the day. There's so much dust there that you'd think you're in a snowstorm. It's an unsafe highway. School buses travel that highway. People of Earl Grey are fearful that we don't have a tragic accident because of the unsafe driving conditions.

Within the last three weeks, Mr. Speaker, there's been a couple of very serious accidents. Luckily no one was killed. One of the accidents an individual, because of the dust and the heavy traffic, lost control, spun off into the ditch, hit a power pole, and the communities in the areas were without power for several hours, Mr. Speaker. That's the answer that these people have for highways.

Another highway in my constituency, 310, between Balcarres and Ituna, the people of that area have been asking of this government to do something about it for many years. That highway extends on up to Foam Lake so we . . . I think that highway's been in the news enough that I don't need to describe the condition of it.

What is the answer of this government? Well we're not going to fix it unless local governments pony up and put some money into helping fix the highway. It seems to me, isn't that a provincial government's responsibility, to provide the infrastructure so that people can travel safely, children can come to school, that business can do what they need to do, Mr. Speaker?

But no. What do they do? They say no, we're not going to do anything unless you folks put some money into it. And so what they've effectively done is they've pitted council members one against another within councils. They've pitted one RM [rural municipality] council against another, Mr. Speaker. They've created hard feelings within the area, and then even if the area begrudgingly says, well I guess this is the only way we're going to get our highway fixed . . . And one RM led the way. They didn't agree with it but they felt this was the only option they had. They're levying an extra mill a year for five years to help fix this highway.

Even after all of that, what are they told? Well okay, we may look at the highway. We may fix a couple of kilometres a year. It'll take another 14 years to do 30 kilometres or some such thing, Mr. Speaker. By the time they get one end of it done, the other end will be wore out, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the direction of this government, Mr. Speaker. But to top it all off, Mr. Speaker — as I mentioned we've got an RM that's levying one mill per year for five years to help fix the highway — what do these people who are digging deeper into their pockets to not only look after their municipal needs but now help fix a highway, what do they see in their newspapers in their mailboxes, Mr. Speaker?

Look, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine? Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? Can you imagine \$300,000 spent on an ad campaign? That \$300,000 could have been put into fixing highways, Mr. Speaker, but no, they launched off on an imaginary ad campaign that, at the end of the day, is it going to help? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. In their document they say, they explain that the way equalization works and that the . . . there's a formula that works on the basis of a province's ability to raise its own revenues. And then what do we do because of political desperation? They weaken that position, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, for all those reasons that I've outlined, Mr. Speaker, I certainly cannot support the main motion and I certainly will be voting for the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier, the member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this evening to join with my colleagues of the legislature in the Throne Speech debate. I want to first recognize and thank the member from Coronation Park for the delivery of the Throne Speech late yesterday, and to the member from Wascana Plains for seconding the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to extend my appreciation and congratulations to the member from Weyburn in the delivery of his maiden speech in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, because it's not an easy task when you are first elected to this Assembly, and to get up and give a speech in the Assembly and so, Mr. Speaker, I extend my congratulations to him as well.

I want to, Mr. Speaker, to say first and foremost that I am very proud on two fronts. I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, to be the member from Yorkton, and secondly to be a member of the Legislative Assembly on this side of the House in government. I say, Mr. Speaker, to be proud to be a member of the Yorkton constituency because we have in our part of the country, or east side of the province, a city that's alive, that's growing and thriving and inclusive, modern and progressive.

Outstanding services in a regional area, Mr. Speaker, which is not unlike what happens around the province in many of our regional centres where we now have dialysis machines, we have CT [computerized tomography] scans, we have state of the art long-term care facility in our community, a bank of pathologists today that are working out of our health care centre, a full team of surgeons, Mr. Speaker, and many, many family physicians that are now coming and working within our environment in the city area.

New schools in education, Mr. Speaker, over the last 15 years, brand new schools. The first joint-use school facility in the province is in our community. The SIIT, the Saskatchewan Institute of Indian Technology, in our community, Mr. Speaker, providing educational services to Aboriginal people. A program called Dream Builders that brings young people — Aboriginal and non — working together to enhance and expand their knowledge base; and a very, very extensive community college, Mr. Speaker, that provides post-secondary education to people in the region.

And certainly a very vibrant retail centre, Mr. Speaker, with all the box stores and the tremendous amount of activity that happens on the retail side, a vibrant downtown, an active downtown, Mr. Speaker, with new buildings and a library and a new look that the city has just provided in the last little while.

A state of the art recreational facility that is probably the finest recreational centre in Western Canada in our city that was built over the last couple of years, the Gallagher Centre. A casino, Mr. Speaker, and some extensive industry and that of Grain Millers which is an international company doing business out of our community, Morris and Leon's which are outstanding community industrial leaders, Premium Brands which is an international meat packing plant, and of course just recently Louis Dreyfus and also . . . [inaudible] . . . have now come to our community, Mr. Speaker, bringing 100 jobs, \$200 million of investment into our community, Mr. Speaker.

And that says to me, Mr. Speaker, that in our community in east central Saskatchewan we are alive and vibrant and busy, which is exactly the same picture that is painted across the province on many, many fronts, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I'm so proud to be a part of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Because 15 years ago in this province, Mr. Speaker, you couldn't cash a cheque — you couldn't cash a provincial cheque, Mr. Speaker, because the opposition party or the government of the day, the Conservative government of the day, had bankrupt the province, Mr. Speaker. And many of those members, Mr. Speaker, who were responsible for the state of condition of this province still exist in the opposition party of the opposite, Mr. Speaker. They're still here.

And there are many members, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly today who sit in the opposition who were strong participants and involved in that administration to a large degree. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would say that there are 50 per cent of the members who sit opposite today were very much involved in the activities of the Conservative Party of 1980s. They're still there, Mr. Speaker, and they're involved in a variety of different ways, Mr. Speaker, and participating in that. And I can provide that for you, Mr. Speaker, as they can.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan people have made a huge sacrifice. Saskatchewan people made a huge sacrifice and so today this is why we, in fact, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes well, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly right. The member from Weyburn says he was only five years old or seven years old. He was only one year old. He was only one year old, Mr. Speaker.

And that's exactly what the Leader of the Opposition said. He

was far too young, Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party or the Conservative Party was in government. He was far too young to have any influence. He was 27 years old, Mr. Speaker, exactly the same age as the member from Weyburn today who arrives in the legislature who's making decisions on behalf of the province, who's involved, Mr. Speaker, in engaging in public policy, who's involved today in providing leadership in a constituency who people trust.

And the Leader of the Opposition says, you can't blame me for being involved in the 1980s because, you know what, I was too young. I was too young to be involved in that process, Mr. Speaker.

And I say that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, was groomed in Conservative politics. He was groomed in Conservative politics. And today he brings them into this legislature and he espouses the virtues of the '80s every day with the team of men and women who are conservatives as well, Mr. Speaker, conservative members who hold the same ideologies and practices of the 1980s. And we see it every place today when we look at the kinds of policies of which they espouse. And I will provide some of that information for the member from Canora-Pelly in the next couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say that this Premier and this government, Mr. Speaker, through the course of the, over the last five years, have provided opportunities for this province, Mr. Speaker, that are outstanding. It didn't happen by accident, Mr. Speaker, as the member from Canora-Pelly speaks on many occasions, that we have a new tax regime in Saskatchewan.

It didn't happen by accident. It's because the Finance minister, this Premier, and the member from Massey Place, they're the ones who conducted the personal income tax reduction in this province. They're the people who helped, Mr. Speaker, in changing the royalty structures in this province . . . the member from Prince Albert Carlton. That's how it happened, Mr. Speaker, not by accident. It was by design is how it happened, Mr. Speaker.

And the new tax policies that we have today as they relate to the taxes, the tax cuts that we have today in the sales tax, they didn't happen by accident, Mr. Speaker. They happened because there has been a process in this province, a process of rebuilding the structural design of the province, Mr. Speaker.

And so today we have a tax cut. Why? Because we can afford a tax cut, because we've rebalanced the taxation piece in the province of which this Premier has provided that kind of leadership over that period of time, Mr. Speaker.

And all along the way . . . And the member from Canora-Pelly and others over on the other side of the House will say, well it happened by accident. Didn't happen by accident, Mr. Speaker. It happened through design. And through that very same period, Mr. Speaker, we have unprecedented expenditures in health care, unprecedented expenditures in health care, unprecedented expenditures in education, unprecedented expenditures, Mr. Speaker, in transportation. Why? Because we've built a province today, Mr. Speaker, that we brought from the ruins of the 1980s of which we had a Conservative government in

Saskatchewan of which many of the members still today reside in the party opposite, Mr. Speaker, I would say.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that our economy has never been stronger. Our economy has never been stronger in this province, and it's time for us to give things back to Saskatchewan people as we've been giving back to Saskatchewan people.

[19:45]

I hear on a regular basis that there are people who are leaving our province. Mr. Speaker, I was in Mossbank a couple of days ago. In Mossbank, Saskatchewan, 10 brand new people living in Mossbank, Saskatchewan, who've come here from other parts of Canada. I was in Assiniboia, and in Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, 20 brand new people have moved to Assiniboia from all over Saskatchewan, or from all over Western Canada, have moved to the little community of Assiniboia. I was the other day, Mr. Speaker, in North Battleford. You can't buy commercial property in Battleford today, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because it's been purchased by people who are coming to do business in Battleford, Saskatchewan.

I was in Swift Current 10 days ago, Mr. Speaker, and you can't find a piece of real estate for sale in Swift Current. Why? Because there isn't any available. Because there is a huge boom happening in Saskatchewan. When you come to the constituency of which I come from, and the member from Canora-Pelly and the member from Kelvington, there are 100 new families who've moved to our area within the last five years — 100 brand new families who have taken up business in our area, who are today farming in our communities and are making a difference.

And all we hear from the members opposite is that there is no activity going on in Saskatchewan — absolutely wrong, Mr. Speaker. We have all kinds of growth happening in every community in the province. It is demonstrated by those communities who are making a statement today about it happening.

I hear the members opposite on a regular basis saying, Mr. Speaker, that there is no investment happening in Saskatchewan. We have in the city that I'm from today, Mr. Speaker, two brand new companies that have arrived in our community, who said to us that we are going to build state-of-the-art crushing plants in our city. And we have \$200 million of investment in our city today, Mr. Speaker, because they say that Saskatchewan is the best place to do business.

And I have a quote, Mr. Speaker, from that of Mr. Brant Randles, who is the president of Louis Dreyfus. And what does he say to the members of the Saskatchewan Party and the people of the province? He said that "establishing the plant in Saskatchewan was also prudent, said Randles, suggesting that the tax situation for processing in this province is 'the best in Western Canada'", Mr. Speaker. It's the best place in Western Canada to do business, Mr. Speaker.

And when we talked to the members of James Richardson International, Mr. Speaker, who put the province to the test in the canola crushing plants, what did they say to us? They said, when we compared you against North Dakota and we compared

you against Brandon, Manitoba, and when we compared you against the plant that we have today in Alberta about where we're going to do business, where did we come? We come to Saskatchewan to do business because it is the best place, the best climate in Canada to do work, Mr. Speaker.

And the member from Saltcoats says that it's about having canola. Yes, it is about having canola for sure. But when you speak to them, they say it's more than about having canola. It's about having the best tax policy incentives in Canada, and that's why they're there, and you should have a conversation with them. And that's exactly what they'll say to you, Mr. Speaker.

I hear on a regular basis from the members opposite about the fact that we have in this legislature . . . old and tired. Well you know what? When you add, when you add, Mr. Speaker . . . Take the average of the members who sit opposite on the other side of the House and compare them to the members that sit on this side of the House, and you'll find that the average age of the members on the other side are the ones that are old and tired because it's a greater number, Mr. Speaker. That's a greater number. So just add it up, Mr. Speaker, and you'll see where the old and tired is. It's right over there, Mr. Speaker.

And when you take a look at where those members have travelled over the last 20 years, you'll find that they travelled in the Reform Party. You'll find that they travelled, Mr. Speaker, in the Alliance Party. You'll find, Mr. Speaker, that they are long-time conservative supporters of the previous administration. You'll find that they make contributions today to the federal government members. You'll see them at their annual meetings, Mr. Speaker. You'll see the federal members in their annual meetings. You'll see them doing things collectively together. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because we got conservatives across the way today that are exactly the same ilk as the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

And we will be sure on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, as long as we are here and as long as we continue to have voice in this province, that we will expose them for who they are. We'll expose them for who they are. They're members of the Conservative Party of the past and hold exactly the same philosophies, and they're evident, Mr. Speaker, in the brochure that was circulated, in the brochure that was circulated just a couple of days ago in the member from Silver Springs.

The member from Silver Springs has circulated around his . . . a couple of weeks ago had circulated in his riding, *Saskatchewan Party: Building from Strength*. Darn right, building from strength, Mr. Speaker, building from strength because in Saskatchewan today we have the strongest economy. And we built it here. And finally, the Leader of the Opposition says, we finally built a province from strength, and it's time for us to take it over, Mr. Speaker.

And what will we do when we're the government . . . if we ever become the government? Well this is what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker. This is what the Leader of the Opposition, the Saskatchewan Party, the old conservative guy who was groomed in conservative politics, where he says, I've learned a lot having served under Grant Devine. Well this is what he's learned, Mr. Speaker. He's learned exactly the language of Grant Devine. And you can pull the history. You just look at

their history record, and you'll see exactly the same language.

And this is what he says. He said we're going to have smaller, less intrusive, more efficient government. Remember Grant Devine when he was going to have smaller, less efficient government where he's going to reduce the Regina services and put them out in small parts of Saskatchewan, exactly the same language — smaller, less intrusive, effective government.

I want to know from the Leader of the Opposition which government departments is he going to be cutting. Who is that he's going to be cutting? The member from Saltcoats tells me that it's going to be Rural Development offices. Is that what I hear you say? Which government departments are we going to be cutting, Mr. Speaker?

And then he goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, then he goes on in his third bullet to say, we're going to reduce government spending. Well that's exactly what Mr. Grant Devine said. He said, you pick me and you know what we're going to do? We're going to reduce the spending in government 15 years ago in a way in which you won't even recognize it. And we've heard, Mr. Speaker, we've heard, Mr. Speaker, the past leader of the opposition from Rosetown, where he says, you know what? We know where the skunks and the deadwood are. That was his comment. We know where the skunks and the deadwood are.

And you know what? The thing about this leader, Mr. Speaker, is he's a little bit more articulate. He doesn't talk about the skunks and the deadwood in the way in which the leader from Rosetown did. He's a little smoother about that. But what he does say, Mr. Speaker? He says exactly what Grant Devine says: we're going to reduce the government spending and we're going to cut government. And I want to know from the opposition members opposite, which government departments do you have on the block that you're going to be cutting? Let us know.

The Speaker: — Order please. The member from Yorkton has a couple of times . . . And I bring it to his attention at this moment that ought to direct all of his remarks through the Chair and not directly across the floor. The member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's you that I wanted to look at mostly and speak, Mr. Speaker. You're right. I will be speaking directly to you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say on the third bullet or the fifth bullet of this document that was prepared for the Saskatchewan Party — which has the same stench of the Conservatives of the '80s, Mr. Speaker — and it says this: a strong, social safety net which will protect those who truly need support; those who truly need support, Mr. Speaker. It was exactly the very same Conservative government in the '80s that slashed the non-government agencies in the province, and I know it because I worked in it, Mr. Speaker, and we were one of the agencies that received the wrath of the '80s. Because you know what, Mr. Speaker? You know what, Mr. Speaker? Because we truly weren't . . . we truly need the support.

I want the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, the new conservative party, Mr. Speaker, of Saskatchewan, to tell us who it is in Saskatchewan today who is receiving public services that don't need it. Who are those people that don't need

it, Mr. Speaker? Tell us who they are, Mr. Speaker.

I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this further, Mr. Speaker. We have, Mr. Speaker, today, we have today, Mr. Speaker, a group of men and women who are the most significant apologists for the federal government that we've seen in a long time, a long time, Mr. Speaker. We have now apologists across the way.

And you pick the subject area, Mr. Speaker. The member from Saltcoats, the member from Saltcoats Melville is chirping again out of his chair. But he's the guy, Mr. Speaker, who on a regular basis called for us to be going to Ottawa to fix the 60/40. He's on record saying it should be 80/20, as are a number of the other members saying they're on record for 80/20. And you know what he's going to say when we get to the agricultural policy? He's going to say it should be 60/40. Why? Because that's his brethren of which he's supported out of Ottawa today, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're going to hear from him.

And what about, Mr. Speaker, the piece that's happening on the infrastructure work where we have said that we need to get the equalization piece fixed? What's happened across the way, Mr. Speaker? How many letters has the member from Swift Current written to the opposition leader or the government leader in Ottawa? How many letters has he written? How many times has he travelled to Ottawa, like he called on when the Liberals were in power, to fix the equalization piece? I'd like for him to produce that. And I bet you, Mr. Speaker, we won't find any. Why? Because this is an apologist party — a conservative apologist party — for the Conservatives in Ottawa.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, I say to the members opposite, you need to stand up for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. You need to stand up for Saskatchewan and help us build an economy like we're building in the province today. If they say, Mr. Speaker, on the other side of the House that in fact they want to see a difference, they should be voting for this Throne Speech. They should be voting, Mr. Speaker, for the fact that we're going to add more spaces in post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker.

They should be applauding the people of the province for getting a 2 per cent tax cut because they deserve it, because they've experienced the wrath of the '80s of which their party in fact created the kinds of decimation on Saskatchewan people. They should be applauding it.

And they should be voting, Mr. Speaker, for a public holiday in Saskatchewan, additional public holiday, of where you can recognize men and women who roll the economy or keep the economy rolling in this province. They should be supporting that, Mr. Speaker. And they should be supporting a green economy where you have ethanol plants and biodiesel plants that are springing up in all of their constituencies across the province.

And what do we hear them say? There shouldn't be any public money putting into those affair, in any of those, when in fact it's their constituencies, Mr. Speaker, who are asking for it to happen. How can you in fact be that disconnected?

And the member from Saltcoats says, is that right? Well he just

needs to attend the meeting in Neudorf like I did the other night where members opposite in their own constituencies were asking, where are they? And they would have heard clearly and loudly that what those people in that constituency want is they want some support, as they want support in Tisdale, as they want support in Shaunavon, as they want support in Unity.

People in their own constituencies are saying, wake up and smell the coffee, boys and girls, because the reality is, is that in order for us to build the green economy we need to have some public support. But they're not there, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because this is a conservative party. This is a conservative party, Mr. Speaker, that addresses and speaks to the issues of Ottawa. And I say this, Mr. Speaker. As long as we're in government on this side of the House and we have enough energy to make a statement in Saskatchewan, we're never going to trust the treasury in the midst of those conservatives, Mr. Speaker, because we know what happened the last time they had a go at it where they decimated the province. And that's why we have today, Mr. Speaker, 27-year-olds in this province who are carrying debt. My children and the member opposite from Weyburn's going to carry debt for the next 15 or 18 years because of what his party contributed to the people of Saskatchewan.

And so I'm not going to be voting, Mr. Speaker, for the amendment and will be supporting a Throne Speech as it's progressive, creative, expansive, and is going to build a new economy in Saskatchewan in a new era because that's where we are today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to stand in this, my place in this Assembly today to address the issue of the Throne Speech as it was presented by His Honour a couple of days ago in this Assembly.

But first of all, I'd just like to comment a little bit about the constituency of Moosomin and a number of the activities that I had the privilege of being a part of and a number of issues that people have been dealing with, some that they're beginning to see some work being taken place on.

And first of all, I'd like to talk about the community of Moosomin and the new hospital that that community has been working for for years and the number of announcements that this government made in regards to the construction of the new facility, the facts that the community and surrounding area have worked very diligently to raise the funds.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, when the government finally got around to getting the tender let, we ended up with a 30 per cent cost of the project which meant the community had to go and find more funds to put in their facility. So while the people of Moosomin and surrounding area are more than pleased — in fact on a daily basis, they drive by the site just to see how work is progressing — it's somewhat irritating that in rural Saskatchewan, rural residents have to contribute such a high capital expenditure in order to achieve the health care that they

are so looking for.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as well, the community of Windthorst this year celebrated its 100th year — its centennial anniversary year. And I would have to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that as rural communities go, the community of Windthorst certainly was second to none when it came to celebrating their anniversary. They celebrated with pride. They committed extensive hours to planning for this weekend.

And I know that each and every individual who came back from all parts of Canada and certainly other parts of North America found this to be a wonderful time of getting together, renewing acquaintances with family and friends. And so a special thank you to Mayor Tim Dew, the council of Windthorst, and the many volunteers who made this such a successful centennial weekend.

[20:00]

And as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't know if there is very many people in this community or in this Assembly who are not aware of the red paper clip and the exposure the town of Kipling has received as a result of the red paper clip and how that event . . . Actually two major events this summer drew people from all across Canada and the United States, in fact, Europe. We had a film crew that had come through from the world soccer finals cup in Germany, stopped off in Kipling for the red paper clip day, and then were on their way for the blast-off of the space shuttle in Florida.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, here again was a community with an economic development officer that had done some major work in enticing the young gentleman who had begun the trade of red paper clips and presented him with a house in the community of Kipling. And as a result of that, we are beginning to see a lot of interest from groups and individuals, small businesses who are looking at Kipling as maybe a place to invest in because of the services that community provides, and as well because of the type of spirit that the community has and certainly the work that council and all the volunteer groups have done.

Also, Madam Deputy Speaker, we can talk about the Wolseley arts guild and their most recent arts and crafts show.

And I would also like to acknowledge the fact that twinning of No. 1 Highway is now complete to east of Whitewood, and certainly people in that area on the east side of the province are beginning to reap the rewards of their labour, their hard-earned work. And that twinning project, while there has been a number of difficult issues we've had to deal with over the years and the planning as the highways had to move and in some cases move individuals and make arrangements for those individuals to have their homes moved or their yards changed, Madam Deputy Speaker, the twinning of No. 1 Highway is something that will be an economic boom for not only eastern, the eastern part of the Moosomin constituency, but all of Saskatchewan.

I would like to say however, Madam Deputy Speaker, that despite all the warnings that were given to the Department of Highways and all the questions that were raised about the intersection of No. 9 and the No. 1 Junction, while the

department had indicated that the new twinning project would make it a much safer junction at Whitewood, we have found, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this is anything but the case. In fact there have been four major accidents at that intersection in the short time period that the twinned section of No. 1 has been open. And I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that had the Department of Highways and some of their officials spent a little more time really assessing the junction there of No. 9 and No. 1, we may have alleviated a number of the problems that have continued to crop up as a result of how that junction was designed.

I would also like to make a mention of and congratulate the many mayors and reeves and councillors, many incumbents and many new members who were elected to councils across the province of Saskatchewan. And I think as we have seen in the Moosomin constituency, a number of communities this year actually had active races and actually had elections where people had to get out and cast their ballot to elect members to council or elect reeves or new reeves or mayors. It speaks well of democracy in the province of Saskatchewan.

However, as we get into the Speech from the Throne and I listened with interest to the member from Moose Jaw North and the member from Yorkton and, Madam Deputy Speaker, it seems to me that they have selective memory. It certainly appears that part of their memory, there's certainly blanks in that memory capacity of the two members or many of the members that have spoken in regards to what they like to remember and what they like to forget about. The fact that when I talk of selective memory and I really . . . Madam Deputy Speaker, it just seems to me that this government has certainly been fond of playing with the truth when it comes to, especially when it comes to the economy of the province of Saskatchewan, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we talk about finances. We talk about . . . I believe it was the member from Moose Jaw North and the member of Yorkton I believe may also have mentioned . . . I think when I talked about selective memory, Madam Deputy Speaker, I talk about the fact they like to go back to the '80s. However maybe I should remind them as well that prior to the '80s, there was also a period of time where governments were not running surplus budgets. It depended on how you reported the funds.

And the members are very well aware of the fact that one of their own members, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this Assembly stood up and acknowledged the fact that the provincial government in 1982 went to the polls and by manipulating, by drawing funds from the Crowns and putting into the general fund, they left the view that there was a surplus available, while at the same time they put the Crowns into a major deficit position.

And a former member of this Assembly acknowledged that was actually the truth, Madam Deputy Speaker. So that's why I say it's interesting to listen to the members and their selective hearing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my colleague talked about the finances of the province of Saskatchewan. And I think my colleague from Cannington raised the issue of debt. And when I

talk about this, I go back to the Speech from the Throne, and I also go back to the announcement the other day from the Minister of Finance.

And I believe the Speech from the Throne they talk about 13, 13 consecutive or surplus budgets in the province of Saskatchewan. And yet the Provincial Auditor is pointing out the fact that since 1991 there have been actually seven deficit budgets that have been presented. That doesn't look like 13 surplus budgets unless their ability to . . . their math isn't the same as the Provincial Auditor's or the member's or mine, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It would seem to me that at least you could be somewhat more honest with the people of Saskatchewan. And I think as the Provincial Auditor has tried to point out time and time again, it's important that the people of Saskatchewan understand the total picture of government.

Now one of the areas that I think needs to be raised very significantly when you look at the provincial budget and when you look at the total liabilities of government, back in 1991 the total liabilities of government was 17.6. Today they're over 21 billion. And what's very significant and should be of major concern to many people in the public sector, in fact many individuals who will be retiring in the near future, is that this NDP government has allowed the unfunded pension liability to grow from \$2.7 billion of deficit to 4.3 over the last 15 years.

I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is significant because at the end of the day, while it may not be something you have to deal with today, someone is going to have to deal with that issue, and it's important that the individuals involved or the individuals who may be impacted are aware of that fact.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and the member from Moose Jaw North talked about no new ideas, but he forgot to talk about population loss. He talked about how . . . And the member from Yorkton talked about their achievements and the population growth. And yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are some families that have moved into the province. There are a number of families that have moved into my area.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, the bottom line is more families have moved out than have moved in. In fact the unfortunate part about all of this, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I hear it every day, is parents are watching as their young, their young people, the young and bright individuals in the province with their university education that we have helped them achieve, are leaving the province because of the lack of real opportunity in this province. And as a result, I must admit that maybe the public holiday that the government recently announced is one that many people are going to welcome because it gives them an opportunity again, Madam Deputy Speaker, to actually go and visit those young people that have left the province, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government in the Throne Speech talked about hard work and sacrifice in the following decade to restore the provincial fiscal foundation. Madam Deputy Speaker, it wasn't this government. It was the people of Saskatchewan. And yes, Saskatchewan residents are hard workers, and they're dedicated to building their communities.

They're dedicating to pouring the funds into the services they need to provide the economic well-being for their community. And yes, they played an important part in helping, and will continue to play an important part in building this province, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other day we had the Finance minister lower the provincial sales tax. And no one's opposed to a sales tax reduction. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, the one thing I guess we could add is we wonder why it took them so long to actually adopt another part of the Saskatchewan Party's plan of reducing the taxes. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan need to know that in 2003, following the 2003 election, which government actually increased the tax. Which government actually put their hand in the back pocket of the taxpayers and increased the tax? This government. So while they're taking credit for reducing the tax by two percentage points, from seven to five, they actually increased it from six to seven. So however, Madam Deputy Speaker, a reduction is a reduction, and all Saskatchewan people at the end of the day will be more than, more than happy for it. At the end of the day however, it doesn't mean that much to them.

But let me say this. I think when it comes to it, it's . . . A well-known columnist I believe has put it very accurately when he says, "It may sound a bit cynical, but maybe we owe former cabinet minister Kevin Yates a big 'thank you' for yesterday's massive provincial sales tax cut to five per cent." And thank you, Mr. Yates. Thank you, Mr. Yates.

"And maybe [Madam Deputy Speaker] a few congratulations should also go to new Saskatchewan Party MLA Dustin Duncan from Weyburn-Big Muddy." And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we may remember that by-election that was held last June, a by-election where the NDP kept telling their supporters, we're on the way up, and we're going to win this by-election. In fact you just watch us. Well everybody watched them, and where did they go? They went to a position they've never had. The home of Tommy Douglas, and they came in a poor or distant third. And I would think, Madam Deputy Speaker, the 2 per cent sales tax has more to do with how poorly they did in Weyburn-Big Muddy than it has to do with actually doing what was right for the province of Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the columnist goes on to say:

The NDP government's spin doctors can argue all they want that this is all about sharing Saskatchewan's newfound prosperity with the families of the province — the theme of Thursday's throne speech — but when a government cuts the sales tax a year before the election, it's really about getting re-elected.

He also goes on to say:

But when you provide Saskatchewan people with what was likely the biggest single-day tax cut they've ever enjoyed and when you do it as a ministerial statement in the middle of the fiscal year and outside the confines of a budget, you are making a statement about something else.

As much as Friday's tax cut was about the NDP getting re-elected, it was also about Premier Lorne Calvert

holding on to his leadership in the face of criticism that he has been too timid, too indecisive and too myopic.

In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, "The first challenge for both Calvert and the NDP was to stop the bleeding." That's what this columnist said, the first challenge was to stop the bleeding. And that's what the holiday was all about, and that's what the tax reduction at this time was all about — to stop the bleeding. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we'll see whether or not Premier Calvert and this government's been able to stop the bleeding.

One other comment I'd like to make that was made by this columnist: "After all, what makes great politics often makes . . . pretty bad government policy." And it says:

There are obviously reasons for the public to be legitimately concerned about how sustainable these tax cuts are — especially given that the first thing the Calvert government did after getting re-elected in 2003 was to hike the PST in the 2004 budget to seven per cent from six per cent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that's one of the issues or one of the concerns that I actually heard on the street when I was on my way home the other day. So it goes to show you that I believe the people of Saskatchewan are beginning to look a little more carefully at government policy, what they say, and what they do.

As we come back to the Throne Speech, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we look at the commitments . . . And I believe the member from Moose Jaw North talked about no new ideas from the opposition. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, who's government? Who's responsible today to lay out a vision for the future of the province of Saskatchewan?

Madam Deputy Speaker, my colleagues and our leader, we've been laying out a vision. We've been laying out a very systematic vision. Now we may not have put all the pieces in it yet, but they are being laid out. But this government had 15 years, and how well have they done? How well have they done at laying out a vision that people can really believe in and catch a hold of?

I'd like to just quote another quote from one of the columnists. In fact he says from the Speech of the Throne:

In fact, short of the commitment . . . to spend all the gas tax collected (about \$370 million this year) on highway operational and capital spending . . . there really wasn't much of anything new in terms of government policy.

Most of the supposed highlights — expanded literacy programs, a continued freeze on . . . tuition, more training opportunities . . .

Fully funding the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] agricultural income stabilization program long ago had been announced. I find that very interesting. The minister of Moose Jaw North asked for what our ideas were. The columnist, the well-known columnist says there really was nothing new. So I can understand why the member from Moose Jaw North is looking for new ideas, because it would seem to

me if there were any new ideas, and the few there were, they really came out of the 100-point policy book the Saskatchewan Party has had out for the last three years, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[20:15]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Premier, through the Lieutenant Governor, announced that there were four foundations, four cornerstones for their government's agenda. "Make Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures." Well that sounds like a policy that Saskatchewan Party has had for a number of years now. "Strengthen Saskatchewan's leadership in [improving] public health care while reducing wait times and improving access to services." That sound's like a policy the Saskatchewan Party has had for a number of years. "Advance Saskatchewan as a leader in environmental protection and the green economy." And, Madam Deputy Speaker, ensuring that today's "Saskatchewan families benefit from our strong . . . economy."

Madam Deputy Speaker, these four cornerstones that the government lays out as something new really in reality are nothing new, and unfortunately the people of Saskatchewan are still looking to see exactly what this government means when it talks about new cornerstones, new ideas, or new vision for the province of Saskatchewan.

There's one thing though I would like to just make a comment on. The Premier and this government talk about investing in training. They talk about expanding training opportunities to meet market demands. They talk about:

[unveiling] a new partnership between business, labour and our training institutions to provide counsel to government to meet Saskatchewan's evolving labour market needs; and [to] strengthen and expand our regional training model to bring education closer to students and better link training to learners, job-seekers and employers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we can agree with those points because, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has brought out a number of ideas in that regard and my colleagues have already laid out a number of points that could be followed. And it's interesting to note that what the government's talking about, as I mention again, certainly isn't much different than what the Saskatchewan Party has already laid out.

But I would like to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, when this government talks about strengthen and expanding our regional training programs, Madam Deputy Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's unfortunate that it's taken this government 15 years, 15 years to finally realize that many of our regional colleges actually have been doing this for the past 15 years.

Let me talk about the Southeast Regional College. One of the programs, the home care aide program that has been involved in Whitewood for, been hosted in Whitewood for the past number of years has been full every year. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, every time, every time, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I have been at one of their graduations, everyone of the individuals that took that program graduated from the program with a job that they were already prepared to go to.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are so many other issues that could be raised in regards to this Throne Speech. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, what I have found that regardless of what this government has done, the people of Saskatchewan have moved beyond the NDP government and their policies. And I would like to thank the people of Saskatchewan for their resolve to move forward despite the inability of this government and the NDP Premier to actually bring a real vision to help grow the province of Saskatchewan.

As a result, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not be . . . unable to support the Speech from the Throne. We will be voting in favour of the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, the member from Meadow Lake.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to, I would like to begin my remarks as many others have, Madam Deputy Speaker, by first of all congratulating the member from Regina Coronation Park, and of course I also want to also congratulate the seconder, yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member from Regina Wascana Plains who moved and seconded the Throne Speech and did a very, very good job. Both speeches were very good and as I say I want to congratulate you.

I also want to say just from the on-set that I'll be speaking in favour of the main motion and of course speaking against the amendment as put forward by the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. But when I say that, in saying that as well, Madam Deputy Speaker, along with others I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the new member from Weyburn-Big Muddy for a victory there, well-deserved, and congratulations to him and his family. I know it will be a new and an interesting experience for him.

As well I'd like to say — talking about family — many others have said in this Assembly and it's very true that these jobs are difficult at times, and we really do need the support of our family. So I want to take this opportunity to thank my family as well — my wife Virginia and my two children, Mayson and Meika who . . . By the way, I don't know if they're watching or not, but my son is celebrating his seventh birthday tonight. And the irony of that is that some members in this legislature, on both sides of the House, will remember exactly seven years ago tonight when we were in Ottawa making a frantic trip back to Regina so that I could take part in my son's birth here in Regina, and we made it on time. So anyway, that was a great experience.

I'd like to as well just very briefly thank my constituency assistant, Elaine Yaychuk back in Meadow Lake who has served me extremely and exceedingly well. She does a huge amount of work for me, and I am deeply appreciative of that.

I want to get into the sort of the, a bit of the meat of the Throne Speech. I, being one of the members who was first elected back in 1991, I can remember some of the incredibly difficult

decisions that were made on behalf . . . I should say as a government that we made in trying to reduce expenditures when we felt that there was literally no capacity anymore to squeeze departments or community-based organizations any tighter, but being told really by our bankers that we had to reduce expenditures further. We had a province that was literally on the verge of bankruptcy that we had to go through so many difficult decisions. And when I look back and realize that we've now brought the province's finances together and in a good standing after 10 years, it is in my view quite a feat that we have accomplished.

And I find it a bit ironic, you know, I listen to sometimes the public, but most often members opposite, who say that you know that's the past and we shouldn't talk about that anymore. And you know my background is financial, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I'm often reminded of the circumstance where you would see somebody who would have a \$200,000 mortgage they might have borrowed a number of years ago. And coming in, if you could imagine, coming into their banker and saying you know I know I owe you \$200,000 and I know there's a lot of accumulated interest, but that's in the past. I don't want to talk about it anymore; therefore let's get over it. I'm not going to pay it.

I mean it's the most ridiculous argument that you could ever put forward that we shouldn't remember what we've gone through. And the fact that we still owe a huge amount of money . . . We pay something — I don't know — it's in excess of \$500 million I think a year just in interest on that debt that was accumulated during the 1980s. It is nothing short of amazing that most of these people across the way would want to say that we should forget about it, Madam Speaker. It isn't any wonder that you hear members like the member from Wood River saying just get over it; let it go.

And after we put our fiscal house in order, Madam Deputy Speaker, under — I hasten to say — the Premier's very good leadership, we put our economy in order. And that really, over the last five years, has brought us to where we are today.

And there were major changes in those five years. We reformed the income tax structure in Saskatchewan I think in a way that Saskatchewan has never seen before. We made major changes in royalties and improvements that were put in place for the oil, gas, and mining sector.

We've made major changes to the business tax structure to the point where when new businesses are starting here in the province there's no corporate capital tax, and the corporate capital tax on existing businesses are reducing. And those who are expanding there are far less corporate capital tax. And that's a huge step forward, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And the oil and gas revenues clearly, clearly have helped us, Madam Deputy Speaker. But I want to say that even though they've helped us, I would argue many of the changes that I've just talked about here that in fact have allowed the oil and gas sector to expand in Saskatchewan and have really been the root cause of why we've had the revenues that we now do. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it goes almost without exception to say that all of these changes that I've talked about from 1991 those members opposite voted against them every single time. Every

positive change that we enacted they voted against it.

I think of one exception, and that's the former member from Kindersley who actually voted in favour of one of our budgets one time, and I give him credit. And maybe when he comes back here not too long from now in the next three or four years when the next election's called, when he comes back in opposition again he might be able to vote in favour of one of our budgets in the next five or ten years again.

But, Madam Speaker, I think now that our province is really well positioned for growth . . . and you know I saw testimony of that actually this past week and in my own local newspaper on the front page. We have an initiative by the chamber of commerce that is seizing upon some of the opportunities that we think our community has.

And in fact we have affordable housing here in Saskatchewan. We have — as many have talked about — some of the most competitive tax regimes in all of Canada right now. And, Madam Speaker, I noted in our paper just this past week there were two families actually who have moved from Fort McMurray into my community of Meadow Lake and are now commuting back and forth. And I will argue that you will see more and more of that. Housing sales in my community of Meadow Lake last year exceeded the year before by quite a significant amount, and in fact these people have often upgraded to another house I'm told by the real estate agencies. There isn't a sell-off of housing. In fact the housing prices have stayed exactly where they have been, so it shows a lot of confidence in our community even given some of the tensions that are currently existing in the forestry sector.

And, Madam Speaker, I want to, if I could, just quote a couple of independent observers if you will who have talked about what's going on in Saskatchewan right now. And this is from David Pryce, the vice-president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, who said that:

Pryce said [and I quote] the Saskatchewan government also deserves some credit [as I've just indicated] for the increased oil and gas activity in the province.

"Look at what Saskatchewan has done over the past four or five years. They started with the royalty (reduction) initiatives, they moved to enhance oil recovery initiatives, [and] . . . then just recently the (business) tax changes.

"All of those are important signals to the investment community that here's a province that's trying to maintain its competitive edge."

That's in the Regina *Leader-Post*, of June 16 of this past year.

From Roger Thomas, senior vice-president of Nexen Canada, on CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.], he said:

We have a long association with the province of Saskatchewan. And as far as I'm concerned, it's a great place to do business. They're very entrepreneurial, very . . . [responsible]. And they understand the oil and gas business very well.

The Fraser Institute, I don't quote them very often, but they say that:

Western Canadian governments . . . all have dramatically reduced personal income taxes and business taxes . . . with improved investment climates, lower taxes, and generally more vibrant economies. The fortunes of Western Canada will continue to rise . . . Saskatchewan [note Saskatchewan] . . . has now joined Alberta and British Columbia by pursuing the strong pro-growth, incentive based relief.

That's from the Fraser Institute. In 2006, Nesbitt Burns stated that "Saskatchewan was also one of only two provinces to exceed the national growth for five years in a row; the other, of course, being [our neighbour to the West] Alberta."

Statistics Canada reports that 17 of 18 major economic sectors contributed to Saskatchewan's growth last year. And this is not just an oil-driven boom, which further reinforces the remarks that I made earlier, Madam Deputy Speaker, about the changes that this government has put in place to ensure that we have a strong, vibrant and diversified economy.

And, Madam Speaker, that brings me then to what I think really is the basis for this year's Throne Speech, the four cornerstones or the four pillars, if you will, of the Throne Speech that will I think allow young people the opportunity to at least choose and stay here in our province of Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our first cornerstone is to "Make Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures." And I see more and more and more of that happening across the province. And as I travel through the different communities, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm convinced that this will happen in greater and greater numbers into the future.

And we are going to "Strengthen Saskatchewan's leadership in improving public health care while reducing wait times and improving access to services." We want to "Advance Saskatchewan as a leader in environmental protection in the green economy." And we're going to "Ensure that today's Saskatchewan families benefit from our strong economy."

[20:30]

All of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, particularly the last point when we talk about our Saskatchewan families being able to share in this strong future, led us to the announcement by the Minister of Finance just the other day — the 2 per cent sales tax reduction. And I do want to say that this applies to all the items that it did before, but there was no expansion.

I'll point out for our Finance critic in the opposition Saskatchewan Party again who, unbelievably, as the critic of Finance last year apparently was of the view that we charged sales tax on groceries — we're not charging sales tax on groceries. Never have. We don't charge . . . there's no sales tax on gasoline fuel or gasoline car gas, which I think he thought as well. That's never . . . We're not charging on that either. There's been no expansion, and it's all been reduced down to 5 per cent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another issue that was raised here . . . I think it was by the current member from Kindersley who was talking about the Canadian Wheat Board with apparently some authority, and I think he probably does know a little bit about it. But I'm not sure he understands the process of democracy very well. He was arguing that even though 51 per cent plus have voted in favour of a Canadian Wheat Board, that the other 49 per cent — I suspect it's somewhat higher than that but — shouldn't be restricted to a single marketing desk.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, it defies logic as far as I'm concerned if you just very . . . if you think about the process that brought that very member to this Chamber — a democratic process, a democratic election that elected that member. Now I suspect he got something over 50 per cent in Kindersley. I know I did in Meadow Lake as well, but I know he did quite well in Kindersley. That would suggest that that member should not have any right to represent his constituents in this Chamber. He should not have a right to vote on legislation that comes forward because there's some number — not the majority but some number — who disagree with him being in this Chamber. It's the same logic that he uses for arguing that the Canadian Wheat Board, that farmers, through an election and a democratic process, have said that they want a single-desk marketing board, the Canadian Wheat Board, that they should . . . for those who weren't in favour of that, they should have a second option.

Madam Speaker, I couldn't disagree more categorically than I am now. I think that argument just completely, completely defies logic.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to, as well if I could, get a little bit into the area that I'm responsible for — one of the portfolios — that's the Department of First Nations and Métis Relations.

When I travel around the province — and I think I have visited almost every single First Nation in the province and probably most of the Métis communities in our province — I listen to the members opposite, and I hear them talk in circles, and smoke and mirrors about how they support, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Kelowna accord. And then in the same breath, Madam Deputy Speaker, they talk about how wonderful last spring's budget by the federal Conservative Party of Canada was, what a wonderful budget it was.

If anybody paid much attention to what that budget actually did, it literally ripped the heart out of the Kelowna accord. And you only have to travel across this province and talk to First Nations and Métis leaders to understand what that last federal budget did to the Kelowna accord. Now they can say all kinds of wonderful things about what they're going to do to replace the Kelowna accord, but I can tell you that virtually nothing has been done to replace the many, many gains that our first ministers and Aboriginal leaders came together — many, many accomplishments that they brought to the table and brought together under the Kelowna accord. It literally rips the heart out of that Kelowna accord. So how that Saskatchewan Party can say they support the Kelowna accord and at the same time support a federal party that pulls all of the funding and pulls all of the programs out of that accord is literally unbelievable, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, they criticize our government for not doing enough as it relates to First Nations and Métis people across our province, and you know I will be the first to acknowledge that there is so much more that we have to do. But let me run through for you just a short list of some of the things that this government has done in a very short period of time.

I think of last year when the Minister of Finance stood up in his place, just for one off-the-top, and talked about how we were going to break some of the jurisdictional barriers. We are going to now provide some paving into, access into First Nations where we've never gone before, and that is starting to happen, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Last spring we provided I think it was about \$900,000 for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, no legal responsibility, but I would argue as a province we have a responsibility to train and education all of our young people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the treaty land entitlement framework agreement is seeing literally unprecedented successes. I travel across the province, my colleagues — and my counterparts, I should say, from other parts of Canada — often look to Saskatchewan to see what we've done as it relates to treaty land entitlement. Now I know not every province obviously has treaties or treaty land entitlement, but they look very, very favourably on what Saskatchewan has done.

We've put in place the economic development program, the First Nations and Métis economic development grant program through our department. That's \$20 million that has been really over-subscribed, it's been so popular.

In Crown Investments Corporation, we have the First Nations and Métis equity fund. We have the Entrepreneurial Fund. We have the Aboriginal employment development program that has now over 70 different partnerships, and they have been hugely successful in employing young Aboriginal people across our province.

And I would argue in addition to the Aboriginal employment development program, Madam Deputy Speaker, some of the achievements in that program are a bit hard to measure because what we have done through that program . . . I shouldn't say what we have done, but what those who have signed into this, the partners who've signed into this, it really has provided cultural awareness which is I think probably the most important part of that program, provided cultural awareness for employees and employers and even for many of the young Aboriginal employees, whether they be First Nations or Métis, because many of those young employees say to me, we don't really understand our roots and we want to know more as well. So I think it has achieved success that goes far beyond measuring just numbers, and I think that's a very important component that we need to pay attention to.

And of course in the Department of Health, we continue to work with many of the First Nations on their individual initiatives. In the Department of Environment, we've announced the First Nations resource management system program. In Highways, in addition to what I've already talked about, the Premier last year announced the Roads to Prosperity, the government's northern economic development

infrastructure strategy.

I was talking to one of the members earlier and some in here might be aware, this past fall, in September, I actually took the opportunity to drive all the way from my community, from my community in Meadow Lake, all the way up to Stony Rapids. And it really is quite an experience to drive there and realize what some of the people have had to endure. So when people here complain about roads, they have no understanding of what it's really like.

And I'll wrap up my remarks shortly here. What I wanted to say is that in that northern strategy, Mr. Speaker, it's a seven-year initiative. I actually had the opportunity to see some of the work that was being done. And believe me; the people up there really, really appreciate it.

So I realize my time has drawn to a close, and I will wrap it up simply by saying that I will of course again support the main motion and vote against the amendment. And I'm thrilled to be a part of this government that is advancing such a positive agenda, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand in my place this evening and speak to the Throne Speech.

First I'd like to thank a few people. I'd like to thank my family, my wife and my three children for putting up with me as a politician. As we all know, members have a considerable time away from home as we carry out our duty for our constituents. My youngest daughter is still at home, and my eldest daughter is going to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] in PA [Prince Albert]. And my son who just graduated from high school this past spring, like so many other young people, is working in Alberta. He's working for a plumber who is a Saskatchewan-based plumbing business who basically doesn't have any work to do in Saskatchewan, and he's got projects in Grand Prairie, Alberta where my son is working. And after that project is done, they likely will be moving on to British Columbia to work on projects there.

So I'd like to thank my family, and I'd also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy who made an outstanding speech in his maiden speech, and certainly this member of the legislature will have a real great future in the future Saskatchewan Party government.

I'd like to speak a bit about my constituency. My constituency boundaries run very close to Saskatoon, so I have communities like Vanscoy and Delisle and Langham who basically are bedroom communities. Many people live there and work in Saskatoon. They've had various challenges concerning their infrastructure, their sewage and water, and they're slowly working their way through. But that has been a real, real challenge.

I would like to congratulate the new mayor of Langham who is a supporter and who is certainly looking forward to his duties as mayor of Langham in the future.

Other communities in my constituency are the community of Borden. And they have . . . They are progressive. They have developed a number of lots in the community and attracting new people to live in the community. And many of those people are working in Saskatoon. They have the fortune of still having a school, which is not the case with the community of Radisson. Radisson, which is 12 kilometres down the road from Borden, lost their school and like other communities are trying to attract more people to the community. But once you've lost your school and lost your hospital, it's very difficult to attract people to the community. But they are working together to do that, and they have also opened up many serviced lots and are beginning to attract people to their community.

Further down Highway 16 you come to a community of Maymont which has a very lovely school, was built five, six years ago. But unfortunately the population in there is dropping, and we don't know how long that school will remain viable without a number of new students to come into the community.

Mr. Speaker, there is a community called Cando which I represent. But in this last year, it has basically been, basically been shut down, has become part of the RM of Rosemont so is no longer a town, and that's very unfortunate. Cando's been a thriving community for many, many years.

At the other end of the Biggar constituency is the community of Wilkie. The community of Wilkie, like so many other communities, has been having problems keeping young people in the community. The community's got behind a number of ventures and a pelleting plant which has been very successful and other ventures that they've been working on. But they are struggling, and it's a real challenge for that community to stay viable into the future.

I'm from the town of Biggar. Biggar is the largest community in the constituency, and it has been doing very good in recent years. We've had a couple of scares with the CNR [Canadian National Railway] announcing they're going to close the bunkhouse and the division point in the community, but the CNR backed down in their decision and hopefully they remain in the community. We have Prairie Malt which is a large employer and a very important part of the community, and we have a greenhouse which is under new ownership and management which is doing well, and also a manufacturing business which builds environmental tanks. Of course we also have a number of retired people in the community. And in all the constituency, the agricultural side is a very important part of the economy of the Biggar constituency.

Now when we talk about agriculture, it's a great problem. There's many people, many farmers are going out of business in the constituency of Biggar. Grains and oilseeds side has been hurting for a number of years, and this year did have a better than average crop, better than average quality, and prices seem to be getting a little higher. But it's certainly going to take a number of years of excellent crops and excellent prices to offset the financial hardship that's taken place in the agriculture sector.

[20:45]

The same thing in the livestock industry, as we've seen, there's

still the after-effects of the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis. The cow-calf people have been doing better than the feedlot industry. But certainly there's a number of challenges in the livestock sector as well.

Mr. Speaker, the concern is that the governments — the past Liberal federal government and the current NDP government of Saskatchewan — has not been doing enough to help the agriculture industry in Saskatchewan and in the constituency of Biggar. Farmers need an improved crop insurance plan that works. As we see, so many people have been dropping out of the Saskatchewan crop insurance because of the high premiums. And it just hasn't been an adequate program. It hasn't been a sustainable program for many farm operations.

Mr. Speaker, of course the farm support programs such as CAIS has been, well, less than adequate. Certainly the farming and agriculture industry has been looking towards this plan to help them, but it's unfortunately been very inadequate in a number of areas. First of all, a number of farmers who are retiring or sell down their inventories seem to be able to trigger a payout. Young farmers who are growing their business both in grains and oilseeds and livestock do not get a payment because they're increasing their inventories and they're growing their farms. And that certainly is not fair because both sectors of the agriculture economy has had many losses. And the CAIS program has not been adequate in that.

Now as we've seen, the NDP government has not announced fully funding CAIS until the very last minute. And this certainly has been a problem to the agriculture sector trying to go to a bank to obtain loans to carry on for another year when it's always in doubt whether there's going to be an adequate funding to the CAIS program.

Now under the new Conservative federal government, there's been a number of changes which have improved the program certainly, but talking to my MP [Member of Parliament] and the MPs on the Conservative government, they have said when the NDP government goes to the table to negotiate, they try to negotiate less money for the Saskatchewan farmer. They're not concerned about the Saskatchewan farmer in any way. They're only worried about their own pocketbooks. As far as the government and their . . . Really it's on the backs of the agriculture community, and it's hurting the agriculture community.

Instead of going to the federal government and negotiating for more money for the Saskatchewan farmer, this NDP government and this Agriculture minister goes there and leads the charge to pay less into CAIS, to make changes to CAIS so it pays out less, not more. And that certainly is a very unfortunate thing to have seen this NDP government do in the past number of years.

And of course, all we see from this government is, in the Throne Speech, is the discussion about the Canadian Wheat Board. Well, Mr. Speaker, trust me. Farmers at night don't lay awake at night worrying about whether the Canadian Wheat Board exists or is going to survive. They worry about their survival economically, and it's not whether the Canadian Wheat Board's going to survive or not. That's the last thing on their minds.

And the agriculture industry is in a terrible shape under . . . while we've had the Canadian Wheat Board in place. So this whole debate that the NDP government are going to bring to the legislature in the future, it's certainly a red herring and really deflects what's really out there in the agriculture community, the problems that exist. And the debate over the Canadian Wheat Board is really unfortunate rather than discussing the real issues that exist in the agriculture community.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, the real problem that we have in this problem is the under-subsidization of agriculture for the Canadian and Saskatchewan farmers. The Saskatchewan farmer is fighting the world subsidy war against the European and American treasury. And that's something that this government does not understand, is not willing to stand up and fight for the Saskatchewan family farm.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's quite clear that in this Throne Speech what we have here is a document which quite frankly is just an act of desperation. And I'll give you an example from *The StarPhoenix* written by Randy Burton. The heading is "Tax cut signals NDP panic." I'd like to read some lines from this article which really outlines what's going on with this NDP party.

Everybody likes lower taxes, but the real tough tax problem we have in Saskatchewan is property taxes. All of us can reduce our sales tax expenditures simply by adjusting our discretionary spending. We have no choice about paying property tax.

However, getting the education portion of the property tax down is a much more complicated issue, since it also involves the actions of public school boards across the province.

So if you're a government in need of some help at the polls, a sales tax is the quick way to buy some support.

The question is, how much trouble does it take to [promote] . . . a tax cut in the middle of the year?

Quite a lot, actually. [It goes on to say] Recent soundings of public opinion show that the NDP government is on the ropes.

Environics Research Group periodically surveys the public across the country to see what's going on between elections. The company's latest poll conducted in June has the Saskatchewan Party attracting 53 per cent of decided . . . [vote], compared to 24 per cent for the NDP and 19 per cent for the Liberals.

If a 29-point spread is even close to accurate, it's just not trouble for the NDP, it's [a] disaster.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order please, members. Order, order.

A member, while speaking in the Assembly, should not have to yell to be heard if the member has the floor. And I would ask all members to respect the member's right to use the tone of voice

that he feels comfortable with, and that's got to be said in a way that the Speaker and anybody that might be listening can hear. The Chair recognizes the member for Bigger.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I was speaking about how desperate the NDP is because of the poll results and the reason why they brought in this 2 per cent reduction in the PST and announced a holiday in February.

Well certainly nobody can complain with a holiday. I think families in Saskatchewan deserve that. Unfortunately so many of these families will be driving to Alberta on that holiday to visit their children working in Alberta.

The timing of the PST reduction also . . . I have to be cynical. I mean there's no way around it. Why would the government announce it now? Why didn't they announce it in last year's budget? There was record oil prices last spring. Why not announce it then? Well I think the answer is fairly clear that this Premier is trying to save his political neck coming up to the NDP convention. So he has to have something good to announce at the conventions, or else they're going to dump him. And so they brought out this plan now instead of waiting for what you would normally call a pre-election budget next spring.

Now, Mr. Speaker, also the problem with these announcements is there's no long-term planning in place for the government, but also no opportunity for businesses in this province to prepare themselves for the PST reduction. It cost businesses up to \$350 to readjust their tills to take the two per cent reduction in place. Mr. Speaker, these announcements that we've seen in the Throne Speech and the PST certainly leaves the Saskatchewan people with a cynical feeling, and I think the NDP just only does things for their own political good, and they don't bring in good public policy to the good of the province at the proper time.

Under this Premier and under this NDP government, the province have lost 18,000 people — this year 4,500 people alone, Mr. Speaker. So it's a very interesting statistics concerning that issue.

And also, Mr. Speaker, this government goes around saying that they've had 13 balanced budgets, and that's just not true, Mr. Speaker. In the last 15 budgets, there have been seven deficit budgets.

I'd like to say a few things about my critic responsibilities, Highways for one. It certainly is interesting now that the government wants to enshrine in legislation spending gas tax on maintenance and construction. Well it's interesting. Why doesn't the government just do it? They haven't done it in the past. Why bring in legislation? Just do it. That's what governments are empowered to do, is the right thing. Why didn't they do it years ago? Well now they're talking about enshrining in legislation. Well I think everyone is pretty cynical about those types of moves.

Mr. Speaker, my other critic responsibility is Immigration, and I've spoken to the minister back and forth while this debate has been going on, and it's interesting to hear that there is a consultant firm that has submitted 85 applications for new immigrants to this province through the nominee program, and

the people are coming from Germany. This same consulting firm brings in hundreds of people into Manitoba every year from Germany. They have applied to bring 85 into this province. The same people, the same skills, the same education and this government and this minister has turned down all 85 applications. One wonders why. It boggles the mind why this government and this minister would do such a thing when we need to attract people to this province. But unfortunately this, for some reason — and who knows what the reason is? — they are turning down these immigrants to this province while businesses in this province desperately need truck drivers and welders and other people with various skills in this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting also when you talk about the NDP, they have a history of raising taxes following an election and cutting taxes before an election to buy votes. The Romanow government did exactly the same thing after an election. When they are heading into an election and then right after the 2003 election, this NDP government under the present Premier raised the taxes in 2004. Now we see them cutting taxes again leading up to the next election. So this is certainly a history of this government just playing with the taxpayers' money. This is a sign of very cynical government who is tired and worn out, and certainly it's time for this government to go.

Mr. Speaker, again this Throne Speech has no plans to retain youth and no plans to fix the labour shortage. And it's very unfortunate that this government is not doing anything for the safety of young people in this province who are at risk. We've asked questions again in the legislature, and they don't seem to care or understand or worry about the people that are at risk.

Mr. Speaker, our amendment to the motion is quite clear. It speaks to the loss of confidence that the Assembly has and the lack of vision and initiative in finding solutions to the growing labour shortage, out-migration of youth and families, and certainly is doing nothing for health care. It's unbelievable the waiting lists the people are on to get health care, and again we spoke of that in question period, and the government doesn't seem to have any handle on how to deal with this other than to bring out more plans and more numbers and more ideas, but they never have any results from what they talk about.

As I spoke about also . . . [inaudible] . . . members failed to deal with the agriculture crisis. Certainly this government has a dismal record on agriculture crisis. Rural Saskatchewan is certainly hurting and continues to hurt, and the moves by the NDP government now is doing little or nothing to address those problems.

And I spoke about failing to protect the children who are at risk and all . . . They're failing to deal with very important subjects like health care, like youth, like agriculture. And unfortunately they're so wound up in the internal partisan political problems that they're unable to govern. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, I will be not supporting the motion for the Throne Speech, and I will be supporting the amendment to the Throne Speech debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[21:00]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Saskatoon-Nutana, the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to enter into this debate on the Throne Speech. And after having spent some time — about 25 minutes I think — listening to the member from Biggar who took some time explaining how we were a tired, worn out old government, after that speech I wasn't quite sure who he was talking about, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of reflections that I want to partake in over the next 20 minutes and I realize that we're about adjourn. But I will indicate to the members opposite that I've spent some time looking at their Throne Speech responses prior to the last election. And I think I'm going to have a little bit of fun reminiscing about what they had to say about the government in their Throne Speech responses prior to the 2003 election.

And one of the things I would like to say to the members tonight, before you get too gleeful about taking your place on this side of the House, we've got a long way to go before the next provincial election, and they may very well be sitting in those chairs, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I'm looking forward to tomorrow. I'm looking forward to responding to the Throne Speech. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this House do now adjourn. Oh pardon me, I would now ask that we adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that 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: — The motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 21:03.]

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