



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

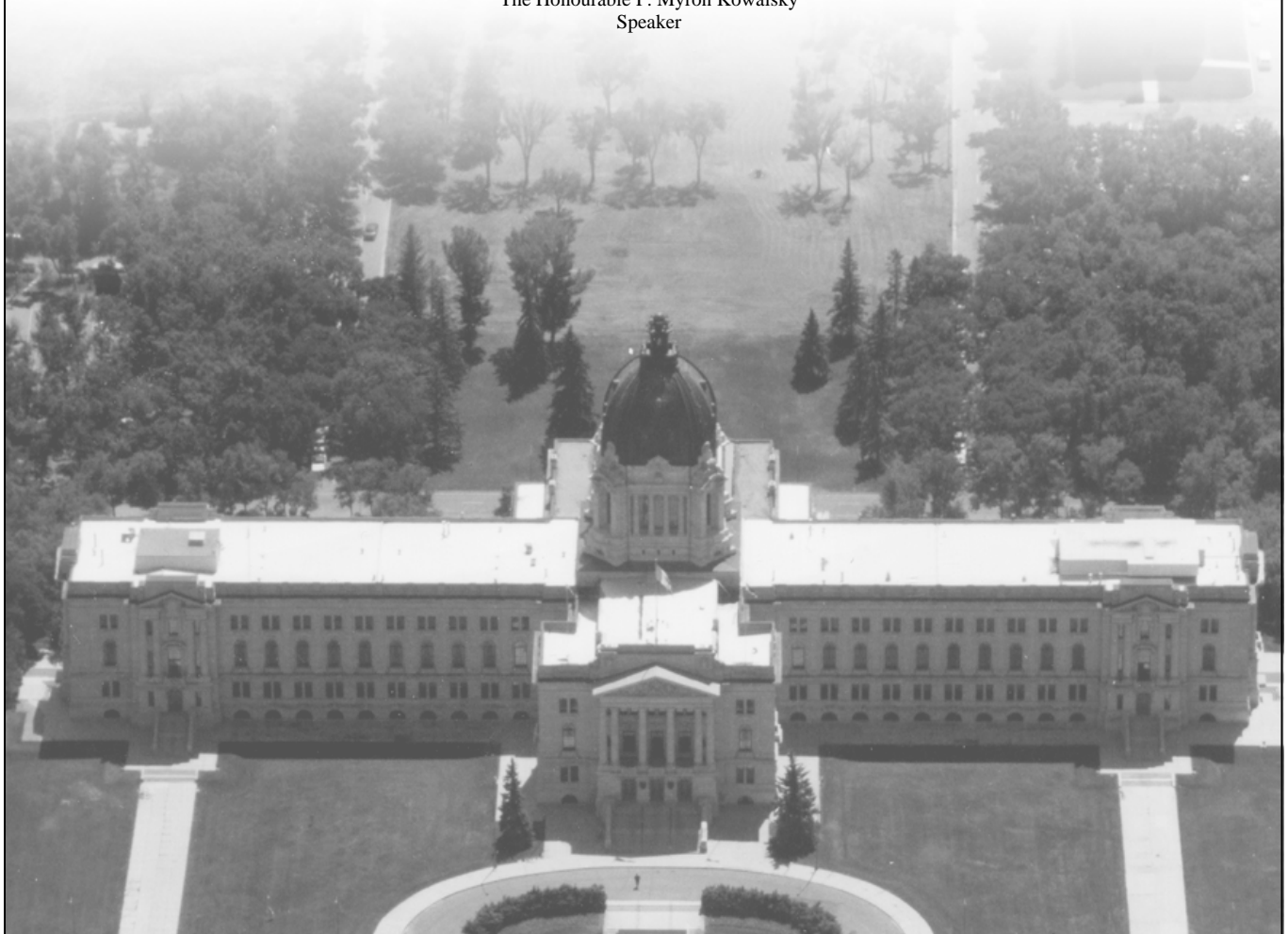
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
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Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
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Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Hon. Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
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Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
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Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Martensville

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, in order to continue the debate on the Throne Speech this evening, I ask leave of the House to move a motion for the adjournment of the debate on the address in reply at 5 p.m. to be rescinded. I ask leave of the House.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave for rescinding the motion of the adjournment of the debate. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Rescinding the Order for Adjournment of Debate

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Okay there, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Saskatoon Southeast, the government Deputy House Leader:

That the order for adjournment of debate, address in reply, moved at 5 p.m., be rescinded.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Moose Jaw North, the Government House Leader, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Southeast, the opposition Deputy House Leader, by leave of the Assembly:

That the order for the adjournment of debate on the address in reply, moved at 5 p.m., be rescinded.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Debate is continued on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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.]

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, before I start the main part of my speech, there are some very important people that I would like to thank.

First my wife, Valerie, without her support none of my dreams of politics would have been possible. To her I say a very deep and heartfelt thank you for your love, friendship, and for always being there. Also a big thank you to Mary Anne Telfer, my CA [constituency assistant], my advisor, and my friend. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their kind support . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's the plan. And last but not least, I would like to thank the people of Batoche constituency. So far this three years has been quite a ride.

And, Mr. Speaker, at this time of year I'd also like to make a few comments on November 11th, our veterans. I am a son of a veteran, and November 11th is very important to me. And I'm very disturbed by the negative comments I hear about the job our soldiers are doing in Afghanistan. Our soldiers know why they are there. Let's all speak up and support them.

I'd like to now speak of my constituency, the Batoche constituency. Batoche is a farming community, small communities. I think our largest town has a post office box of about 600.

It's been a year of mixed blessings, and most of it's been in the blessing of rain. We've had too much. We've had rainfalls where in two hours, eight inches. And I travelled to one side of my constituency where a creek that runs eight feet wide was now flowing a quarter mile wide, where fish had travelled upstream and were now flopping in ditches. And then we've had, during harvest, six inches more. And we've had a lot of areas where they couldn't finish the seeding. It was just too wet. And then to top it off, they couldn't do what seeding they could. They couldn't get the harvesting because of the wet. So it's been a tough year in Batoche, but we have a strong people.

We also have a declining population, and in our small community it is very severe, very severe. We're having that loss of youth. Our school numbers are getting lower and lower, and it's very few schools that are actually adding numbers. And they're all concerned of course with the downloading of costs onto the rural economy, the burden of the education portion of property tax. They are an optimistic group, but they are running out of tomorrows. If we intend to have future generations of farmers, we have to find ways to support them.

I'm very proud to represent the Batoche constituency. It is a very beautiful and scenic constituency, and if you ever want a tour, come see me. I'm very proud and would love to show you Batoche.

In Batoche we have the town of Middle Lake which is my home community, and it's a town of just 300 people. Its biggest industries — which are two — are the regional park which brings in a lot of people to the community. It's a beautiful regional park with a beautiful lake, lots of trees. And it does very, very well. People that visit it say it's one of the finest regional parks in the province.

Our other industry, if you could call it an industry, is Bethany Pioneer Village. It is an old folks' home, and for a community

of 300, has a population of 100 residents. When they measure care levels, Bethany measures as one of the highest quality care levels in the province. Beautiful care home, they've got their own quarter section of land, their own lakefront property, their little trails through the bush, their own beach, their own privacy, and they've built their own community. When someone passes away in the Bethany community and somebody asks, who's going to look after the widow, and everybody says the circle of friends in that Bethany community does that.

There's one little problem that we haven't been able to get fixed, though, in our community, and that's cellphones. The older people when they're travelling would like to have cellphones for safety's sake, especially in the winter. And when they go to buy a cellphone, the map shows that yes, we're right in the heart of good cellphone coverage. But our cellphone coverage is terrible on the best of times. It just doesn't.

We were told last year, after a farmer from Middle Lake right alongside the highway got caught in the machinery and got his leg crushed, and they tried to reach help by cellphone, that cellphones would soon be available. It made the news. It was all over the papers. That's more than a year ago, and we still don't have cell coverage that amounts to anything. We're asking the government, when will it happen? This is a viable, beautiful community. And these elderly people — which is the core of this community — need cell coverage.

I also have in my constituency the village of St. Brieux. And on November 8 of this year, the village of St. Brieux is going to become a town. St. Brieux is the highest per capita income town in Saskatchewan. They are a town that will not sit back. They just keep on advancing and progressing. It's a little town that actually even has condos. It's a growing town.

And just October 28, I was in St. Brieux for the opening of their daycare centre. A town, just reaching this 500 status now, and they've got a daycare centre with 128 kids enrolled. Now there's a town with a future. There's a town that could teach a few lessons to a few other places, maybe even to a government, if they'd care to take lessons.

But of course their big, big problem is Highway 368. And for three years I've been yelling about 368. It's won the award for the worst highway in Saskatchewan. Nobody will do anything about it. We get the patch jobs but no real fixing. Millions and millions and millions — and I'm not exaggerating — that's how much money travels up and down that highway. It is one of the jewels in the Saskatchewan crown, and we can't even give them a highway. Mr. Speaker, it is time. Enough promises. Why not a highway?

Also while on my travel this year, I travelled up to Waskesiu. Mr. Speaker, Waskesiu is a national park. It is big in Canada's crown, and we can't even keep up the highway to Waskesiu. It was a game of dodge . . . [inaudible] . . . hole all the way up to Waskesiu.

Also while I'm on highways, in my constituency I have the town of St. Louis. And I have been told that the bridge on St. Louis on No. 2 Highway is the only winged bridge left in North America. By winged bridge, I mean the train goes down the centre or used to go down the centre, and then there are wings

stuck out on either side. And that's where the traffic travels. It's the only one left in North America. And I'm asking, what is its future? What are the plans with this?

We've heard that there is a new bridge — 8, 10 years ago talk was — but still nothing is there. How long will it be? Three elections or how many does it take to get a promise?

The next item I'd like to talk about is the education portion of property tax. The program used to be 40 per cent for the farmers, 60 per cent for the government. It is now 70 per cent for the farmers and 30 per cent for the government. This is the biggest burden of agriculture in Saskatchewan. This must be addressed and not just with flowery . . . [inaudible] . . . not just with a few dollars. It must be a major concern and must be addressed strongly.

Also my constituency is Wakaw, and Wakaw has a hospital yet. And this year the signs to the Wakaw Hospital had to be covered because there weren't enough doctors on staff. If you knew the fear that the parents of young children and elderly have to see these signs covered. It might be just an insignificant thing to put a black, plastic bag over a hospital sign. But do you know how that affects the people? Mr. Speaker, they need more doctors. They need them now.

This is also a factor in rural population. My wife and I do auction sales, and we do them in that area, and there are elderly couples that in their retirement are saying, I was going to retire in this area, but will we have a hospital? So they're going to the city.

And while we're on the subject of hospitals, also used by my constituency extensively is the Humboldt hospital. Four elections, Mr. Speaker, four elections and we haven't even had a sod-turning. The price goes up 35 million. We're getting loss of population there again. People are saying, if there isn't a doctor here, I can't get an appointment here, I go to Saskatoon. And that's where they end up moving to.

We've got people that are living in Humboldt but they say, well the doctor I see now is in Saskatoon, so while I'm in Saskatoon I do my shopping there. So we have a loss of population and a loss of economic growth, a loss of sales. And once again the rural community suffers.

People are voting with their feet. These are strong communities, but they need support. The cost of the hospital has tripled, Mr. Speaker, tripled. And the communities keep coming to bat and paying that 35 per cent rural health tax, and they're asking why. Why do they not deserve an equal share to what the others have?

We're also experiencing quite a shortage in RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. The rural areas aren't getting the patrolling that they used to have, and it's not the fault of the RCMP. It's a shortage of staff. On the edge of my constituency, I'm also served by the RCMP from Prud'homme. And there one day was a parade, and the officer that was supposed to lead the parade in his bright scarlet uniform missed the parade. And he came in his scarlets and he said that he had to do a domestic dispute dressed in his felt hat and scarlet and high boots because there was nobody else to answer the call. And he said he was

sure glad he didn't have to use his firearms because in the dress uniform, the gun is so high up he doesn't know if he could get his elbow up there fast enough. But he was saying there's just a shortage. They used to have, I think he said nine, and they were down to less than half, less than half.

I also was in Prince Albert, which is at the edge of my constituency. In fact part of Prince Albert is in my constituency. I was stopped by a Department of Highways officer who recognized me and wanted to talk. And he told me that Department of Highways officers cannot give cars speeding tickets. He said it's not in their jurisdiction. He says that's only the RCMP.

[19:15]

Could we not have Department of Highways writing speeding tickets for cars as well as the semis they are already looking after and let the RCMP spend their time on serious crime as compared to speeding? Maybe I don't consider speeding such a serious crime because I do a lot of it myself, Mr. Speaker. But I really don't think it is major crime. The member from Rosthern-Shellbrook has ridden with me, and he will attest to this.

Another item that I find very passionate is geothermal, solar, and wind generation. This definitely comes under the category of green, and we're falling very, very short on that.

I met with a contractor in Prince Albert who has travelled the world over, spent years in the United States and in Germany learning on the best on geothermal and wind generation and solar panels. Mr. Speaker, he has a solar panel on the roof of his house so sensitive that at 30 below on a bright moonlit night — he happened to be up for some reason — and midnight or 1 o'clock it was, the solar panels cut in and were collecting energy from the moonlight.

So he had solar panels, he had geothermal, and he's got a wind generator. Well, Mr. Speaker, guess what? SaskPower took offence, and he now had to take the blades off his wind generator. They were afraid that he was generating too much and would be pushing power back into the grid system. And their excuse was that he could electrocute a lineman that was further up the line if they shut off, and his system was pushing into the line.

And he says the system that they have is so sophisticated it's like one-tenth of a millisecond or some fantastic number like that where his system would cut out. He has installed complete, self-sufficient, geothermal, solar, wind systems up north in La Ronge, that the only thing they need from the government is a telephone line hooked on — totally self-sufficient, totally independent. And he can't spread the systems out. He is so upset that, Mr. Speaker, he says he's going to pack his bags and move to BC [British Columbia].

We talk about green, but where is the green? We've got coal-fired power, which is the dirtiest, the dirtiest electricity there is, and we're denying these people who could cut our consumption with geothermal and solar. The technology is there. The government has to have the desire to go there.

I heard a member over there saying geothermal uses electricity. Yes, geothermal does use electricity, but look at the whole benefits. I happen to know of a store on the edge of P.A. [Prince Albert] that is 20, 30,000 square feet, and it is entirely heated by geothermal. The whole system before the price of natural gas jumped up would have been paid for in 10 years. Now with the high price of natural gas, their whole system will be paid for in five years. Totally self-sufficient. They do not have any outside heat at all. They've even got extra water to run their showers and all the other systems in this unit. It's entirely geothermally done. And if you want a tour, I'll take you there.

If you really want a tour of sophisticated geothermal, travel with me to the edge of my constituency into the member from Humboldt's constituency, to the town of Aberdeen, and you'll see one of the most sophisticated geothermal units in this country. The geothermal system not only makes the ice for their NHL [National Hockey League] size rink, it makes the ice for the curling rink. And the spinoff is all the extra heat. They're heating their library. They're heating their bowling alley. They're heating their offices. And once they can afford it, they're going to add a swimming pool, and it'll be heating that. Mr. Speaker, there are alternatives, and it's time to look at them.

Mr. Speaker, I am the forestry critic for the Saskatchewan Party, and I'd like to mention a few things on forestry. I hear there's a possible sale of the Meadow Lake mill, and we sure welcome this, and we'd like more information on it to know what's happening there. We'd also like to hear if anything's happening with the P.A. mill because there's a lot of talk about taking FMAs [forest management agreement] away and things like that. And we'd like to know where the members on the other side stand on this.

We'd also like to know what's going to happen at Big River. There's a very modern, up-to-date saw mill, completely computerized, and we'd like to know. The task force came out with a big report. And at the presentation not much was said when a logger from up north got up and spoke out against it. He said, this report, nice report, but it is a repeat of the Romanow report, he says. There's nothing different. And he says there was no substance. And most people that were there agreed with him.

And now we hear that there's a minister's task force report that was released on the day of the budget. I believe it's 28 ideas on that one. What happened to that one? When the first report was released, the first task force, there was a big wine and cheese party. There was all kinds of speakers. There was a big celebration. And now all of a sudden the minister's task force report comes out, and nothing — not a word. And this report, the second report, has . . . the majority of the input is by industry, by people who are out there in the forest. And their report has been muffled. I understand there's 28 ideas on good things to do in the Saskatchewan forest. And the Saskatchewan forest has so much to offer. It's time that we get at it and get something seriously done.

We are very glad to see the sale of the Carrot River saw mill and the Hudson Bay plywood mill. From what we can learn so far — and we don't have all the facts yet — C&C Wood Products does value-added wood products and they look like

they'll be a very good fit for the area. And we wish them well and we wish the people of Carrot River and Hudson Bay. They've signed a letter of intent but I understand that they have to have government approval on the FMA being transferred into a joint FMA with C&C Wood Products and Weyerhaeuser.

So we're looking forward to this. We're hoping good things can happen and wishing all of them the best in the future. And we're looking forward to something in Meadow Lake and P.A..

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to get very, very serious for a few moments. There is an issue in the Throne Speech that bothers me. That is the balanced budget statement. According to the auditor's report, three of the last five budgets were not balanced, or seven of the last sixteen. Yet this government keeps on repeating and repeating this balanced budget statement as if repeating it would make it so. Mr. Speaker, let me repeat. If the auditor says it is not balanced, it is not balanced; and all the hot air in the world will not balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, this is an injustice to every taxpayer in Saskatchewan. Is this how we treat the people of this province? Mr. Speaker, the government should tell them the truth. I think the people of Saskatchewan can handle the truth. Mr. Speaker, maybe the reputation of politicians can move a little higher up the moral ladder with issues like this.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] speak of their new campaign called Imagine. What I see when I imagine is imagine what we could have done with 38 million from SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]. Imagine the cellphone coverage we'd have had in Middle Lake if we'd have spent the 75 million that's been spent on Navigata. Imagine the roads if we'd spent 100 per cent of the money allotted for highways instead of 57 per cent. Imagine highway 368 with its booming economy.

Imagine the uranium industry, what it would be like if we'd have started a long time ago and we'd take our proper share. I understand that the Alberta economy sells 1 per cent of the world's oil and gets very, very rich on it. Saskatchewan sells 3 per cent of the world's uranium and we don't hear anything about it.

Imagine the oil patch and what would happen if that map, that oil map that we love to show, was coloured the correct way. Imagine Humboldt with a hospital and imagine this government with the Sask Party in control.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I cannot support this Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Southeast has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. Member for Saskatoon Southeast.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is Andrea Smotra, a Regina resident who is the constituency assistant for Tom Lukiwski, the MP [Member of Parliament] for Regina Lumsden. I had the privilege of working with Ms. Smotra during the last provincial election. She was the campaign manager for the candidate from Saskatoon Sutherland. We shared campaign offices and found it to be a pleasant and good working relationship. Since that time we've had the pleasure of working with her in Regina and want to wish her well and welcome her to her legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley on his feet? For debate?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Yes.

The Speaker: — Qu'Appelle Valley.

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.]

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to be able to join in with colleagues in the legislature in the Throne Speech debate. I want to say from the onset that I will be speaking in favour of the motion. I think it's a very, very, good, commendable Throne Speech, and I'll say more on that in a minute.

But I also want to join colleagues in congratulating the newest member to the legislature, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy on his win, and wishing him all the best in whatever time he spends here in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I also recognize that none of us would be here were it not for many supports of family and the people that work around us, and I would like to acknowledge some of those people who are key in my life that enable me to do the work here that I love doing.

First of all, I know that my parents are watching this evening from up in Saskatoon, and I want to thank them for many years of inspiration and guidance and certainly support in my political career, as well as their very able criticism of the work that I'm doing. Throughout all of my life they have been there, supportive, encouraging, and challenging as I've explored various facets of opportunity that have been provided for me.

I also want to thank my wife, Gail, for her tremendous support through the years; my children, Alaina, who is now in China

teaching English as a second language, and my son, Daniel, who is studying international studies at the University of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, around us also are people who work in our offices who provide tremendous support and I want to thank particularly my constituency assistant, Donna From, who has been my constituency assistant since I was first elected in '99. Donna does tremendous work. She cares for the people of the constituency in times when I'm not able to be there for them. She continues to learn and to grow in her work and I'm very, very thankful for all that she contributes to the constituency and to enabling me to do my work.

[19:30]

In the office here, in the ministerial office, just a tremendous staff — second to none — who are committed, who are dedicated, and who, Mr. Speaker, are compassionate. And given some of the very difficult times that there have been in agriculture they have faced many very challenging phone calls, people who are deeply hurt, who are in danger and some of them losing their farming operations. And I believe that my staff has always been thoughtful and compassionate with them and I do appreciate so much the work that they do. The work of the Department of Agriculture and Food has also been very enabling, and I'm thankful for all of their support and hard work and commitment to helping build a strong agriculture industry in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that said, I have to say that today in Saskatchewan our future looks brighter than it has looked for a very, very long time. Mr. Speaker, we have seen so much progress and development over these last years. In each of the last two years Saskatchewan's real GDP [gross domestic product] per capita increased the most of any of the provinces in Canada. That, Mr. Speaker, is significant. We are setting records in private sector investment, in retail sales, in construction, and in employment. Mr. Speaker, we're doing this because this government has set the right stage. We have actually shifted the economy of this province and provided the strength and the opportunity to enable these industries to go ahead.

This past September saw the largest number of people at work in our province than at any time in the recorded past, and in October again almost 8,100 more young people working in Saskatchewan than there were in October 2005. Mr. Speaker, this province is hot and it's moving.

The New Democratic Party government is supporting technological advances that are being made in petroleum industry, greenhouse gas research, biofuels, infectious diseases, and research in agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Major investments are being made in oil, in gas, in diamonds, in uranium, in potash, and yes, Mr. Speaker, in value-added agriculture. This evening earlier on we had opportunity to meet with Canadian canola growers, Saskatchewan canola growers and with people in the industry, and we know that in that part of the industry there's been tremendous expansion. We are seeing the expansion in crush in this province, Mr. Speaker, all of the major players here.

Now we're seeing new developments in terms of the research

that is being done to help improve this Saskatchewan crop, Mr. Speaker — Saskatchewan gold. The canola industry is providing tremendous, tremendous opportunity for farmers of Saskatchewan and for the residents of many of our communities where the crush operations and other research and development operations are taking place.

Mr. Speaker, in five short years we have become a have province with the fifth largest economy in Canada, Mr. Speaker. What an incredible turnaround. Fifteen years ago, when this government came to power, Saskatchewan was not doing well at all. The Grant Devine government had basically gutted the economy of Saskatchewan. Our debt was horrible, Mr. Speaker. The deficit was creating chaos.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look back we can see the debt-to-GDP ratio was at about 70 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Unbelievable that so much of our economy would have been locked up in debt created by those Conservatives who were in power here in this province prior to this government coming in in '91, Mr. Speaker.

But we have built upon the successes of that government that came here in '91, who balance the budget, who turned things around. And, Mr. Speaker, in the last five years, as I said, we have become a have province under the leadership of our current Premier.

The previous member, the previous administration of which the member from Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition, and many of his colleagues were a part, had racked up huge debt and nearly driven this province into bankruptcy. Mr. Speaker, the people of this province need to remember that. The young people of this province need to know the history of this province so that mistake of electing those people will never, never happen again, Mr. Speaker.

Our first task beginning in 1991 was to fundamentally change the province so that we would never end up in that kind of situation. To fundamentally change the economic fortunes of Saskatchewan. To make the changes that would allow this province to move forward successfully and in sustainable ways.

Knowing that social progress cannot come without economic progress, we set a course to balance the books and to restore fiscal health to our province and to our people. And we have had, Mr. Speaker, as evidence of that work, we have had 14 straight credit upgrades, Mr. Speaker — 14 straight credit upgrades to build and sustain this province.

The Saskatchewan New Democrat government has a vision of a strong and a prosperous Saskatchewan. A province where we could use the many advantages to help build a better future for Saskatchewan families, for Saskatchewan young people. A bright future where our young people could live and work and raise their families and have hope and continue to gain the best education possible, Mr. Speaker. That's the work that we've engaged in. That's the work that we have successfully been doing as we have built and strengthened this economy.

But, Mr. Speaker, like a family wanting to build a new house on the site of an old one that's fallen in, Mr. Speaker, we had to remove the debris before we could build this new house, Mr.

Speaker. Those folks who were elected in 1991 worked hard removing that debris so that today we can build a successful new house that will provide for a strong and wonderful future for the people of Saskatchewan. That, Mr. Speaker, we are doing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — We paid down that staggering debt that was 70 per cent of the province's total economic output. We grew the economy so that the ratio was changed. And today our total Crown government debt ratio has moved to around 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is economic success. That is a major turnaround.

And, Mr. Speaker, it would not have happened without the leadership that this Premier and this government has been able to provide. Mr. Speaker, it would not have happened, would not have happened, without the leadership of this Premier and this government. We set the conditions for the economic success that we are now experiencing today and that we will continue to experience as we move forward.

What have we done, Mr. Speaker? As we've balanced the budget, as we've moved forward, investing in our province, investing in the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, what did we do? We invested in tax cuts, in infrastructure, in research, and in that most important of our resources, Mr. Speaker — we have invested in the people of Saskatchewan. And we are enabling people to continue to seize the Saskatchewan advantage.

We did that by first simplifying the tax system and then by cutting personal income taxes — the largest cuts in a generation, Mr. Speaker. We introduced the single largest capital tax cut in history to encourage businesses to make investments, the investments that they need in order to be strong partners in this province. And that's how we see them, Mr. Speaker. As partners in developing this province.

We cut royalties, Mr. Speaker, to stimulate growth and development in our resource sector so that it would continue to contribute to our economy. And do you know what cutting those royalties did, Mr. Speaker? It encouraged those companies to invest more and more, and we are prospering. Because of those investments the people of Saskatchewan are prospering, Mr. Speaker.

We invested in research and development to maintain our technological and competitive advantages. Mr. Speaker, we are competitive and we have advanced technologically in this province in ways that other provinces envy deeply. We have invested, Mr. Speaker, in our future and the future of our children. We have fundamentally changed — fundamentally, positively, and progressively changed — the Saskatchewan economy.

There's more to do, Mr. Speaker. A lot more. But today we have an economy that again can fuel social progress — the social progress that we desire for ourselves, that others desire, that the people of Saskatchewan want and need.

Mr. Speaker, our strategy is working. Saskatchewan is working

because of the investments that we are making. We are building a better future here for young people — our Saskatchewan young people, for ordinary working families right here at home. And we are opening the door, Mr. Speaker, for young people from across Canada and from around the world because this is the right place to be to build a strong and prosperous future.

We have the vision and the energy to build a strong and a prosperous province. We are committed to working with people in achieving that success and prosperity together for the good of our children, our grandchildren, and for the children and grandchildren of those people who will come here and will help to build and strengthen this province.

Mr. Speaker, the key elements to further success in the province are outlined in this year's Throne Speech. It is the most positive and hopeful Throne Speech that we have seen in some time and it's based on the concept of people working together, sharing and benefiting from each other's experience and expertise together, and reaping the rewards, Mr. Speaker.

The four cornerstones are essential to building a strong and positive future. We will expand the literacy program. Why? Because we know that the young people and the people of this province need opportunity to learn to read. And, Mr. Speaker, we will do that despite what the political cousins of the members across the way have done, the federal Conservatives, when they gutted the program, when they cut the money from the literacy program. Mr. Speaker, we will make sure that program goes forward because we know that literacy is essential to building a good, strong province.

And imagine, imagine, imagine, Mr. Speaker . . . I see there are some clouded imaginations on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, but I know when I look at this side and I say, imagine, imagine, one-third of the \$800 million that the federal Conservatives have promised to us going to bring relief to property tax holders. Mr. Speaker, one-third. What does that mean? \$240 million relief in property tax, if their cousins will keep their promise and provide the equalization formula that they said they would provide, Mr. Speaker. That's what it's about.

Our commitment, our commitment to university students to enable them, Mr. Speaker, freezing the university tuition, enabling students to go to university because of what they know, not because of what they own or how much money they have, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to expand training and we will strengthen . . . Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. I get choked up; there's so many good things happening. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It's hard to know. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . My parents are right with me. They haven't changed the channels at all, friends.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to expand training and strengthen our regional training in order to bring education closer to the students. Mr. Speaker, we know that in our rural and our remote areas bringing education to these students is essential to helping build and maintain rural Saskatchewan, remote Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and we're being innovative in the ways that we do that.

We'll be hosting a youth summit, Mr. Speaker, to work with our youth. Not to tell them what we're going to do, but to work with them to help build a strong future with them and for them and for their children.

We will expand partnerships with the First Nations and Métis to enhance education and skills training. We'll receive and act on a comprehensive review of access to post-secondary again, Mr. Speaker, because we want the people of this province to have access based on their desire on what they know and not on what they own or how much they have.

We will invest in language training. We will foster strong communities for a goal of 5,000 immigrants by 2008, Mr. Speaker. We are building a strong and prosperous economy for ordinary families, for youth, Mr. Speaker. We have a tremendous future here and this inspired and bold government is moving that future forward.

[19:45]

We will work with health care providers, Mr. Speaker, to further improve access to services and to reduce wait times. We will expand the Aboriginal workforce by working with First Nations and Métis peoples. We will enhance efforts to recruit health providers, using new relocation incentives in return for service commitments among other initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

We'll increase opportunities for internationally educated professionals so that they can come here, work here, and find a home here. We will help people understand how important it is not just to invite them here but to bring them into our lives, our homes, to welcome them as a part of this community. And, Mr. Speaker, with that kind of a welcome and invitation we will see successful immigration that will grow, that will help this province to strengthen and prosper.

There's so many good things, Mr. Speaker, but I must move through and talk a little bit about agriculture.

I do want to talk about some of the other work though. I want to talk about the further steps that we will be taking to achieve our long-term goal of one third of our energy needs that will come from renewable resources. Mr. Speaker, we know that we have tremendous renewable resources in this province, and we will see one third of our energy coming from renewable sources.

We will see research and development of the first Saskatchewan designed utility-scale, clean-coal generating facility. We will carry out a comprehensive plan in biofuels; lead in carbon sequestration and wind power; implement a plan related . . . we have already implemented, pardon me, a plan related to the mandated use of ethanol.

We'll ensure safe water. We'll expand our vision of agroforestry. We'll expand production and processing and marketing of locally grown organic foods.

Mr. Speaker, most of all, we'll make sure that families enjoy the benefits of this very strong and prosperous economy. And to help them enjoy those benefits, our Throne Speech tells us we're introducing a new statutory holiday — a Family Day — beginning in February 2007. And, Mr. Speaker, I have to say I

have heard from constituents and people around this province how pleased they are that this holiday, this Family Day has been implemented.

We will respond, Mr. Speaker, to many, many opportunities here, and we will continue to build a strong and prosperous province. And we hope that our federal government comes on board and keeps its promises — promises that will enable us to build a strong economy if they keep their promise on the equalization formula.

We want to see, Mr. Speaker, a commitment of the federal government to public infrastructure renewal. We need, Mr. Speaker, to see the federal government put in the same proportion of investment into our infrastructure in this province that we put in. I mean the trivial 10 per cent of what they take out of this province in fuel tax, put back in less than 10 per cent is almost meaningless, Mr. Speaker. It's time that they came up to the plate, time that they invested significantly in helping us rebuild this infrastructure, much of which was broken down because of federal government decisions which have changed the shift of our transportation industry in this province and put much more heavy haul on roads that were never designed to handle it.

Mr. Speaker, it is their obligation to come to the table and to put more money on that table so that we can build infrastructure — roads, heavy-haul roads, social development, improvement in our infrastructure around the province, Mr. Speaker. Our federal government can help, should they choose to keep their promise on equalization, should they choose to work with us, work with our cities and our municipalities to build infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we will look for strong, safe communities as well. We are introducing legislation which gives police new means to combat violence. Mr. Speaker, no one wants violent communities. We want communities where our children can grow up safe and happy, where they can go for a walk and play out in the parks and do so without fear. And, Mr. Speaker, this government is making changes that will enable that to happen.

We will continue to develop an anti-racism strategy because, Mr. Speaker, this province really benefits from the variety of the racial mix that there is here. And we want to see that grow, Mr. Speaker, over the years.

Investments in the North will continue to strengthen those investments to build a strong northern Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've heard members opposite talk about agriculture and talk about the farm. I want to say that the family farm in Saskatchewan is absolutely a cornerstone of building a strong province. And we have committed, Mr. Speaker, every year to fully fund CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] and have done so, Mr. Speaker, and this year well ahead of our budget. In the Throne Speech we have said again, we will fully fund the CAIS program. Mr. Speaker, we will do that, and we will help to strengthen the programs in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, when I go to the federal-provincial meetings on agriculture, I work for a better program, Mr. Speaker — a program that will provide better support for Saskatchewan farmers, a program that will provide a better opportunity for the

people of Saskatchewan because the federal government should be picking up a greater portion.

Mr. Speaker, this province pays more per capita than any other province for agriculture support. Mr. Speaker, it pays almost four times what the federal per capita average is support for agriculture. Mr. Speaker, we have shown our commitment. We will continue to show our commitment as we build strong agriculture programs for this province. And, Mr. Speaker, we will contribute to the fabric of building strong programs for the nation.

Mr. Speaker, as my time is winding down, I just want to remind people of some of the things that we've done. I know the members opposite want to hear more, Mr. Speaker. But I do just want to remind them that we have committed significantly to pushing for a better deal, calling for \$575 million last spring. Mr. Speaker, where were they when we went to Ottawa calling for that? Nowhere to be seen.

Why, Mr. Speaker, why didn't they come? Because they don't like me. Why don't they like me, Mr. Speaker? Well there's probably lots of reasons, but the main one, Mr. Speaker, is because I think I just hit a little too close to home. But, Mr. Speaker, I go and work with the farmers, I work with the ranchers to help build a strong system for the people of this province. And you can tell by their howls, Mr. Speaker, that they resent the fact that we have built some very good, strong relationships.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to engage a little bit later in discussions around the Canadian Wheat Board which provides significant benefit to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And so for that, Mr. Speaker, we'll leave it to another day. I just want to say this is a fine Throne Speech. This clearly indicates that this government is progressive and moving forward to build a better, stronger province for Saskatchewan young people, for Saskatchewan families. And I'm thankful to be a part of it, and will vote in favour of this Throne Speech. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you. I welcome this opportunity to address this Assembly and offer my comments on the Speech from the Throne. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our newest MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Chisholm: — I look forward to working together with the member to pursue together the vision that this young man has for this province. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency for their support in the past and their continuing support. I would also like to thank our constituency assistants,

in particular Cheryl and Becky from my constituency, but indeed for all the constituency assistants working throughout the province. Their role is crucial in providing the conduit through which the concerns of our constituents can be directed to the appropriate arms of government as well as keeping us, the elected representatives, aware of the concerns of our constituents.

I would like also to thank my wife, Heather, for her support and my sons for their encouragement, and to my friends, Bob Prodahl and Randy Rutley for spending their holiday time at Chisholm Farms to allow our farm to continue to operate. To my mom, if you're watching, I think *Dancing with the Stars* is on. You may want to switch.

The economy of our constituency is dependent on agriculture, grain, and mixed farming, and oil and gas, and the businesses that support these industries. As my constituency borders the fourth meridian, the pull from the red hot economy to the west is very evident. Unfortunately what I have seen in the past number of years are many of the support service companies starting up locally in our constituency but as they grow, firstly setting up a branch in Alberta, then moving the main office to Alberta, and then moving their families to Alberta.

This NDP government has dragged its heels on addressing this situation and the results are all too obvious. Some recent initiatives by this government may help to address this situation, perhaps even slow down the out-migration of our young people and young families that has been occurring at an alarming rate.

Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate reality of this is that had some of these changes that we on this side of the House had been calling for, had these changes been initiated some years ago, this reality may have been very much different.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity over the past number of months to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee and to become more familiar with the role of the Office of the Provincial Auditor. It has become very clear to me that should this NDP government have heeded the revelations and warnings of the Provincial Auditor in the past, a number of unfortunate situations could have been avoided, for which this government must now take full responsibility. These situations involve fraud and theft and most recently, the failure of this government to protect the most vulnerable — our youth at risk.

In the Speech from the Throne on page 1, this NDP government states that the province has incurred 13 consecutive balanced budgets and significant reduction of public debt. This is what this government is telling the people of Saskatchewan. On the surface these statements by this government should provide a relatively high degree of optimism and security for the people of our province and for those people and businesses who might be considering Saskatchewan as a place to live, to work, to locate, or to invest.

However, Mr. Speaker, on closer scrutiny we find that these claims are not only misleading; they are in fact refuted by the very office that is charged with the responsibility of reporting the results of the government's financial activities and the government's financial position.

So what does the Provincial Auditor's report have to say about the government's annual surplus or deficit? Remember, this government in this Throne Speech has indicated 13 consecutive balanced budgets. In the *Report of the Provincial Auditor to the Legislative Assembly, Understanding the Finances of the Government, 2006* report volume 2 dated August 28 of this year, the report states, and I quote:

The annual surplus or deficit shows the extent to which a government spends less or more than it raises . . . in one fiscal year. In simple terms, it shows whether a government is living within its means. An annual surplus means the government is living within its means.

Mr. Speaker, the accompanying graph no. 1 on page 7 of this report indicates the government's annual surplus or deficit from 1991 to date. The report goes on to say, and I quote:

Graph 1 shows that since 1991 the Government has lived within its means for nine of the last sixteen years (that is . . . raised more revenues than it spent in each of these years).

This government claims that in the past 13 years it has experienced 13 consecutive balanced budgets. The Provincial Auditor report indicates in fact that three of the most recent five years up to 2006, the present time, were in fact deficits. Who then are we to believe? And how can the apparent discrepancy be explained?

Coming to this Assembly with a background in accounting, I have no difficulty in deciding who I believe. However what I believe to be the truth in this matter is not what really matters. What do the people of this province believe? And what do other readers of these reports believe?

These statements by this government are at the least misleading and void of the principles of accountability and transparency. The trick in this apparent discrepancy, as to what is real and what is not, has to do with the government's recording of a fund — really a non-funded fund — called the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Since the inception of this fund, which is devoid of any money, this government has toyed with the very basic definition of balanced. In simple terms, this government uses this fund to balance the General Revenue Fund, but there is no money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

[20:00]

As my colleagues on this side of the House have pointed out in the past, this fund is akin to a credit card. At the end of the year, if this government has spent more than it has raised, it takes a cash advance on its credit card, transfers this cash advance to the General Revenue Fund, determines that this transfer is in fact revenue for the General Revenue Fund, and voila, there it is, another balanced budget.

However, Mr. Speaker, we still have this pesky little cash advance to deal with. Oh well, we'll address that issue in the next fiscal year or the next fiscal year. Or perhaps we'll leave that to the next government of the day.

We've seen a number of examples in the corporate world where

corporations have been taken to task for misreporting their revenues. Companies like Nortel, Enron, Bre-X come to mind. In some of these cases, individuals responsible of unsavoury accounting practices proven to mislead their shareholders have found themselves doing time in a government facility — a facility much unlike this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech also indicates a significant reduction of public debt. Once again referring to the auditor's report, if we look at the total liabilities of this government from the period 1991 to the present — including borrowings, unfunded pension liabilities, and liabilities of government business enterprises — the total liabilities of this government have increased from \$17.6 billion to \$21 billion.

In fairness, Mr. Speaker, as the auditor points out, net debt is a more meaningful indicator in that it takes into consideration the changes also in the assets of the province. The net debt in 1991 was \$7.9 billion dollars. It is presently at \$7.8 billion dollars. Mr. Speaker, over the past 16 years, the net debt has decreased by less than the unbudgeted, unforeseen windfall that this government has collected in resource royalties alone in the last recent months.

The accounting practices referred to earlier put the Provincial Auditor's office in what I would describe as an embarrassing position. At the outset of their reports they're required to explain to the readers of the financial statements that, unless examined very carefully, they may be misleading and in fact do not comply with generally accepted principles.

In my constituency the concerns that are most often relayed to my office include the sorry state of our highways and roads, the expensive but inefficient delivery of health care, the continuing exodus of our young people, and the increasing rate of crime.

This Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, does not adequately address these concerns, and this government has proven to not adequately address these concerns. I will not be supporting the motion to adopt the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure and an honour to rise in this Hon. Assembly to reply to the Speech from the Throne read on October 26 by Saskatchewan's new Lieutenant Governor, His Honour Dr. Gordon Barnhart.

To begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate His Honour on his recent appointment to this important and prestigious role and to express my confidence that he will be a great Lieutenant Governor for the province. I also predict, Mr. Speaker, that this first Speech from the Throne will also be the last one delivered by this tired, old NDP government for a long time . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I also wish to welcome our new colleague on this side of the floor from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

That member won a decisive victory, Mr. Speaker, there in the recent by-election, so decisive that he, under the Saskatchewan Party banner, reduced the once powerful NDP to a third place finish in a seat that once was the home to their hero, Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Speaker when that tired, old Premier across the way, or whoever replaces him, finally screws up the courage to call a general election, there will be many more decisive wins for the Saskatchewan Party and many more second and third place finishes for the NDP, or whatever they're calling themselves by then.

Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely proud to represent the hard-working, productive, independent people of Thunder Creek. My constituents don't complain much about the problems that this socialist government causes for them directly. Although when I talk about agriculture and the economy and infrastructure later on in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, you will see that they certainly have plenty to complain about wherever this weary, old government conflicts with their lives.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, when my constituents talk of the political situation in this province, they usually talk about the big picture. They ask why our young people and retirees leave the province and resource boom and they wonder why agriculture is such a low priority with this government. And they question the closing and downsizing and downgrading of our rural health care facilities and schools. They can't understand, Mr. Speaker, why our transportation infrastructure is allowed to crumble while government coffers are full to overflowing because they understand that if we are able to develop the economy of this province, most of that development will come from agriculture and oil and gas and forestry and mining. All of which will be conducted solely in rural Saskatchewan.

They understand that it is a spinoff from these industries that will make our cities more prosperous, and they know that these industries can't grow without solid transportation, health care, and education infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan.

They shake their heads, Mr. Speaker, at a government that allows rural infrastructure to deteriorate at the same time as that government enjoys an embarrassment of wealth from our rural areas, mostly from the resource sector. And the most common question that I get from them is, when can we have an election so we can get rid of these clowns once and for all. My people are selfless, big-picture people, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to represent them in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we are nearing Remembrance Day, the time that we take to remember our war dead and our surviving veterans. And this year once again, Canada is at war, and our long, sad list of wartime casualties is growing again. Mr. Speaker, I remember as a Cub Scout and later a Boy Scout, marching from the town hall in Pense to the cenotaph, sometimes in short pants in November 11th, with the veterans in their legion uniforms and how proud . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Lloydminster is trying to get that image out of his head. How proud I was to march with those veterans, Mr. Speaker. I saw them differently on that day, those men and women that I grew up around and those men who fought for us and then came

back and continued to build this country.

I remember my Scout leaders, Gordon Hagerty and Frank Stafford, both veterans, Mr. Speaker. I remember Jack Harlton and Charlie Maupin and Ken Gilchrist and Jack Lovell and George Swain and Jack Good and my uncles Jack Munroe and Murdock Bev Norma — all gone now. I think of Grant Ogilvie, Norman Morrison, and my friend and mentor John Wood who are still with us. These are just a few of the veterans that had a influence and an effect on me in my formative years. I consider myself fortunate, Mr. Speaker, to have known them and to have them along with my dad for role models.

Now we're at war again, and our young people are doing us proud, and I am very proud of the work that they are doing in Afghanistan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, in the areas that Canadian soldiers have made safe in Afghanistan, children are now going back to school — something that hasn't happened in some of those areas for a very long time. And some of those areas made safe by our soldiers are being resettled again, if we can imagine that in this country — resettled again, some of the most war-torn areas in that besieged country, Mr. Speaker. Our young people, our soldiers, are involved in some very deadly fighting, the kind of fighting that the soldiers of Canada have not really been involved in for about 55 years. They are serving us with great distinction, Mr. Speaker, and that is borne out by the comments of our allies who serve in that theatre with them. But none of this comes without a terrible price, Mr. Speaker, and God be with them.

On the economic front, Mr. Speaker, the only thing new in this Speech from the Throne is the 2 per cent cut to the PST [provincial sales tax]. Now nobody on this side of the house is criticizing the NDP for lowering the PST or any tax for that matter. But we have seen this government previously cut taxes before an election, only to raise them right after. Former Premier Roy Romanow did it. And more recently we have seen this Premier raise the PST in the first budget after the 2003 election, and now just before the next election, we see him lower it again. I wonder what would be in store for us if the NDP were to win that election. Thankfully that's not likely to happen because the people of this province are wise to the ways of this Premier and this NDP Party.

Coincidentally I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, this Premier is staring down the barrel of a leadership review at his party's convention this fall, and a few points on the public opinion polls wouldn't hurt his chances. Well good luck, Mr. Premier. And for what it's worth, I don't think the \$325 million cost of the PST cut is too big a price to pay to save your floundering leadership.

On the economic front, Mr. Speaker, what this Speech from the Throne is noticeably lacking is any kind of a plan for youth retention or any plan to solve the labour shortage that is now one of our most serious economic problems in this province. But fortunately a few days after the Speech from the Throne, the Leader of the Opposition did just that, and I recommend it as bedtime reading for NDP cabinet ministers as there are many points contained in the document that that party may want to

steal, as is their custom. Really, Mr. Speaker, we would rather they just plagiarized it word for word because if they reword it to make it sound less like our idea, we're so afraid that they may misunderstand some of the more complex passages, and public policy would suffer as a result.

The institute of chartered accountants recently released their annual financial checkup document that offers a look at how the province rates as a place to invest, among other things. And they say some interesting things including, and I quote, "One troubling statistic is the low rate of job creation here over the last five years — the lowest rate among jurisdictions studied." They also state, and I quote:

The ratio of research and development expenditures to gross domestic product . . . is the lowest amongst the jurisdictions surveyed. Such, it seems, is the price of having so few corporate head offices.

They go on to say that, and I quote:

The comparatively low appreciation in the value of housing means Saskatchewan entrepreneurs willing to use their homes as collateral for loans can amass relatively little capital via that route [Mr. Speaker].

A recently commissioned Ipsos Reid poll of 400 senior executives found that only about 25 per cent have a favourable view of Saskatchewan's economy despite low unemployment levels, a booming resource sector, and gross domestic product growth. This clearly shows that Saskatchewan under this NDP government has a branding problem, that there are serious trust issues in the investment community. How can a jurisdiction ever reach its potential when only 25 per cent of senior executives — those who direct investment — have a favourable view of it? Incredibly, the Deputy Premier blamed the whole thing on the executives' perception of our agricultural industry.

Mr. Speaker, that Deputy Premier, that member from Yorkton, was Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture for a very long time — or at least it seemed like a very long time to farmers. In all that time, why didn't he do anything to solve the problems in agriculture and improve the perception of that industry if it's such a problem?

While we're on the topic of agriculture, Mr. Speaker, the NDP say in their Throne Speech that they will improve crop insurance. Well, Mr. Speaker, they have a lot of improving to do to make up for the damage they have done to crop insurance since they started tearing it down in 2001. Every year since then, this government has raised premiums and reduced coverage until that program is nothing more than a shell of the program that it once was. These days, the only reason that most producers bother with it at all is because bankers require them to as security for their operating loans.

[20:15]

They have gutted the program, Mr. Speaker. And I don't believe them when they say that, now in their eleventh hour, they intend to turn around and fix it. Otherwise on the Ag file, Mr. Speaker, they chose to politicize, provincially politicize the wheat board issue, a federal issue, Mr. Speaker, and an issue in

which 47 per cent of producers favour a dual marketing system; 7 per cent favour a straight open market system; and only 45 per cent favour a board monopoly with all the compulsion that goes along with it. And those are the wheat board's own figures, Mr. Speaker.

On the infrastructure issue, Mr. Speaker, they say that they will implement a multi-year road and rail strategy. That's a good idea, Mr. Speaker, and one that we have been suggesting for some time. This tired, muddled, boring, old government is been in power for 15 years. Do they really expect anyone to believe that now with a huge electoral defeat looming that they are suddenly going to focus on infrastructure? I sure don't believe it, Mr. Speaker. And I don't think that many will.

Mr. Speaker, this government is old and tired and devoid of new ideas or any sign of life for that matter, and they are boring.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, when the opening of the legislature was one of the great provincial social events of the year. Excitement surrounded the opening, and invitations to it were much sought after. Contrast that to the dull, boring affair that we recently witnessed here — no enthusiasm, the galleries not much more than half full. My constituency assistant, Bonnie Donison, who I thank very much in passing for the great work that she does, spent a lot of time, spent a lot of time on the phone trying to get some constituents to attend. But they just couldn't be bothered coming to Regina to hear anything that this sorry, old excuse of a government had to say in their Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not much of a dancer. In fact I've been known to go to extraordinary lengths to avoid dancing. But I remember, Mr. Speaker — and you will as well — when there was a ball associated with the opening of the legislature. Previous Conservative governments always had a ball. The NDP government before them would have a ball. The Liberal government of Ross Thatcher and the NDP and CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] governments before them would have a ball associated with the opening. But this government has never had any balls, Mr. Speaker.

So I doubt, so I doubt they will call an election any time soon. And we, in the official opposition, will have to continue to feed them the only ideas that they will get. And our constituents will continue to ask when we can get rid of them and start to move the province forward, and agriculture will continue to suffer, and our infrastructure will continue to deteriorate, and investors will continue to have serious trust issues with them. And schools and hospitals will continue to disappear, and our young people will continue to leave.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the reasons that I will be voting against the motion. And I move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Thunder Creek 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: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as tempting as it is to break into some kind of a jig or something — I'm not sure — but I will move this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried, and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 20:19.]

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