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| Sasketchawan | 26e  | 3e  | Discours sur l’éducation | 2009. | Ken Patrick Krawetz | Ministre de l’éducation | Liberal |

**Sasketchawan: Education Speech, Third session of the twenty-sixth legislature, 2009**.

I spoke many times as a Finance critic in this House, and I also spent time as Post-Secondary Education critic. I can remember asking the Post-Secondary Education minister at the time, Mr. Thomson, why tuition rates in Saskatchewan rose 217 per cent from 1991 to 2005. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it?s not a misprint. I?m not misspeaking — 217 per cent increase. And it was outlined in the University of Saskatchewan USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students? Union] annual report. It was one of those reasons why the NDP drove the youth out of Saskatchewan for 16 straight years, Mr. Speaker.

Compare that to our $12 million graduate retention program. This program will give back up to $20,000 in tuition rebates for post-secondary graduates of Saskatchewan, and it will provide $125 million over four years to post-secondary institutions in our province. Record setting, Mr. Speaker. Record setting contributions. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is hardly an NDP budget.

Now speaking of education — and I know the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow will be very interested in what I have to say — no more is there a striking difference between the NDP of old and the new Saskatchewan Party government.

I can remember being in this House day after day presenting petitions asking the NDP government to address the infrastructure deficit in K to 12 education. The need for capital dollars was very evident. Schools were crumbling around the province, roofs were leaking, walls were falling down, and the NDP would throw very little money, very little money and even less support. They would provide very few dollars for much needed repairs and hardly any new construction.

Areas like Arbor Creek in my constituency had received no, no support from the NDP government. We had one of the only places that under that NDP government was actually growing in the province. People were moving into Saskatoon. They?re paying the highest property taxes in the country, and you know what the NDP did? They not only ignored the citizens like the Arbor Creek initiative group. No, they did much more than that. They did much more than just ignore them.

When the Saskatoon public school board made Arbor Creek school their number one priority, the Department of Learning, on the direction of the previous minister, through her deputy, what did she do? She sent an intimidating letter to the school board demanding that they change their policies. Of course the school board did change their polices, and the schools were never built in Arbor Creek. And that?s why, Mr. Speaker, the NDP enjoyed less than 20 per cent support in Arbor Creek in the last election. And I intend to make sure that it stays that way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it?s a sad situation under that NDP government. But fast-forward, fast-forward to a new Saskatchewan Party government that we have in this province — a new Finance minister, the member from Melfort of course, and a new Minister of Education, the member from Canora-Pelly. And what do we see? A record setting — well members opposite I think would like me to fast-forward through the whole speech, but that?s not going to happen because I know they don?t want to hear what I have to finish up with here — a record setting $164 million for K to 12 school projects and capital initiatives, a record amount of money.

What does this mean for Saskatoon Silver Springs? What does this mean for rural Saskatchewan, for urban Saskatchewan, for places like Willowgrove in Saskatoon? It means no more pleading with the government. It means that moms and dads can do things with their kids in the evenings, instead of going to meetings to try to lobby a government that wasn?t listening like the NDP government. They didn?t need all the meetings. They just needed a Minister of Education that understood what it means in Saskatchewan to support infrastructure in K to 12 education.

Yes, barely four or five months into this new government the government is delivering for parents. It?s delivering for students. It?s delivering for rural Saskatchewan. And yes, it?s delivering for urban Saskatchewan. It?s delivering for growing places like Willowgrove and Saskatoon Silver Springs. And as a result of the budget, school boards and the residents of Willowgrove can now plan for their school. Their neighbourhood will have a community centre, and their neighbourhood will have a cohesiveness that needs to be built around a school.

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Now, Mr. Speaker, as I?m getting to the end of my speech, I want to talk about a very important lesson that we learned in the last election. Now who can forget our Premier?s impassioned speech on election night? Now, Mr. Speaker, I?ll be honest with you. I heard from people . . . That was live on television across the country because they knew that something very, very significant had happened in Saskatchewan. I heard from people from Ontario, people from Prince Edward Island, people from British Columbia. Never before had they heard such an impassioned speech from a new Premier coming into Saskatchewan.

Members opposite, some of them may not have listened. They were busy at the time trying to recount some numbers, but the theme of that was hope beats fear. Yes, Mr. Speaker, hope beats fear.

The NDP . . . You know, the fear has worked in the past for them, and nowhere has it been more pronounced than with Saskatchewan?s Crown corporations. We all heard on the doorsteps when we door knocking how the NDP would incite fear to the employees in Crown corporations, how they told Crown corporation secretaries that had not a political bone in their body that they may not have a job after the Saskatchewan Party gets in. The stories of how the NDP tried to incite fear are quite disturbing, Mr. Speaker.

Here in contrast, here?s what we promised as the Saskatchewan Party government. This is a document that I?m sure many, many people are familiar with. The Saskatchewan Party will ensure Crown corporations continue to provide Saskatchewan people with the highest quality utilities at the lowest cost while directing Crown dividends to priorities like health care, highways, and education. Mr. Speaker, that?s what we promised. That?s what we promised the people of Saskatchewan, and that?s what we delivered on March 19.

[16:30]

The Crown corporations were an important part of that — $200 million dividend from the CIC to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]; $365 million special dividend, 215 million of that for debt reduction, Mr. Speaker, keeping our promise of $250 million in total; $140 million for highway infrastructure; and $40 million, $40 million to be used for green initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

And I know members opposite will be interested in this next point: $1.4 billion clean coal project. It came up in question period today. And it?s just very interesting: where does the NDP stand on clean coal? Where do they stand? There was some concern about members opposite. But after question period, I just had a chance to come across some things that were said by the member for Regina Lakeview.

And this was April 19, 2007, on CBC news, and you know it was something. He said people would pay more for power to help the environment. And I quote, “Saskatchewan people are saying they?re prepared to pay higher power rates if that?s the cost of fighting climate change, Environment Minister [and I?m quoting] John Nilson said.”

So there it is, Mr. Speaker. I don?t know what?s happened. That?s not even a year ago — April 19, 2007 — and they?re trying to change. It is a flip-flop, Mr. Speaker. I could go on and on about it.

But Mr. Speaker, what are the Crown corporations doing under this government? We?re working with the private sector. We?re working on hydroelectricity, wind generation, and heat recovery. We are improving our transmission system. We are working on a cross-Canada grid. The Premier has talked to the Prime Minister and has made it a priority. And yes, Mr. Speaker, we are not afraid to talk about nuclear power generation in Saskatchewan. That?s something that the NDP has kind of talked about, but really nothing, nothing, nothing has been done.

We?re providing high-speed Internet service and cellular coverage to more Saskatchewan residents than ever before, investing in digital technology. We?re bidding on the wireless spectrum auction. We?re making strategic infrastructure investments in gas distribution, transmission, and storage services. We are protecting our environment by partnering with the private sector in flare gas capture, extending benefits of natural gas to more residents, helping customers use less energy, updating SGI?s [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] aging and complex computer system, enabling Saskatchewan residents to do their own online searches for vehicles at SGI. We?re offering quality water and waste water services infrastructure and development to communities. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on.

What sums it up though, Mr. Speaker, is an email I received from one of the people that work in the Crown corporations. And they said, and I quote:

I didn?t know what to expect from the Sask Party. All we ever heard [in the Crowns] is about the NDP.

Now in your first four months, I can see that you intend on running the Crowns like a Business.

No goofy investments.

No political agenda.

Just provide service at the lowest possible cost.

Mr. Speaker that?s exactly what our commitment was to the people of Saskatchewan and that?s exactly what we were intending to do.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it was one of the many, many thousands of people that are coming to learn more about the Saskatchewan Party government and their comfort level is . . . And I know it upsets, it upsets members opposite when they hear things like that, Mr. Speaker.

That?s what we are delivering. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents like it. Saskatchewan taxpayers like it. And yes, even to the consternation of members opposite, Crown corporation employees like it.

Mr. Speaker, it?s another reason why hope beats fear. It?s another reason, Mr. Speaker, why members on this side of the

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House will continue to stay here for a long, long time. And, Mr. Speaker, it?s a reason why members over on the other side, even though their numbers are dwindling, will stay there for a long, long time.

With that I would like to take my seat and indicate that I will be voting to defeat the amendment and to support the budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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hypocrisy of the NDP, and in particular the hypocrisy of the critic of Social Services. He stands in his seat, reads petition after petition of how appalling it is that CBOs have fallen behind in being able to pay high wages, and we agreed. But why did they fall behind, Mr. Speaker? Who was it that neglected them year over year over year over year? And he should stand in his place and say that it was him. While he sat at the cabinet table, he did not address this issue.

In the last four years the NDP were government, added together — not just the last year but the four years added together — the increase that CBOs received was 8 per cent. In 16 short months, this government increased CBO funding 12.3 per cent — 16 months, 12.3 per cent. The NDP in four years only increased it 8 per cent. Who allowed the wages to go behind other sectors? It was the NDP, and they should stand in their place and admit to it.

Let?s talk about the seniors? income plan for a minute, Mr. Speaker. We have the seniors that had absolutely no increase for 16 years. They were ignored. And what did the Saskatchewan Party government did ? Well we increased the seniors? income plan by 110 per cent. Now we have the member opposite who said, but you didn?t index it. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we would have done the calculation with indexing of each of the 16 years that they absolutely ignored seniors, they would have received a 40 per cent increase. We decided that was not enough and we increased the income plan for seniors by 110 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I would love to know, of any of those programs that I just listed, which ones would the Finance critic like cut? If we?re spending too much, which would he like cut? Student housing perhaps? Student housing has been absolutely ignored over all the entire time of the NDP government, and we committed $15 million for student housing alone. It was absolutely ignored.

So the critic for Social Services is saying that?s not true. So, well how many student housing units did his government build? And I will love to have the answer to that. How many student housing units at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] did the NDP build while they were in government? He has a lot to say from his chair, and I?d love to hear his answers.

You know, Mr. Speaker, what I do want to point out is all of the initiatives that we have in this particular budget that have to do with caring for children. Brynn Boback-Lane, the president and CEO of the Children?s Health & Hospital Foundation, said it very, very well. She said, and I quote:

Really today is about and dedicated to the children that have been challenged and lost and the children that are challenged and winning their fight with illness and injury. This day is for them.

Now she of course is talking about the children?s hospital, again something the NDP would like to take credit for. But words and announcements are meaningless if you?re not going to put action behind them. And this government decided to put action and dollars to make this dream a reality — something sadly neglected in our province.

But the initiatives that we have for the children within our province go beyond the children?s hospital, as important as it is. Within education, we are seeing the largest capital spending for the schools within this province that this province has ever seen. Finally, we?re going to have schools built. Finally, we?re going to have schools repaired. And we?re going to have leaks fixed. And we?re going to have a lot of work done for the schools across our province for our children. What else is in education for our children?

[11:15]

Well, Mr. Speaker, a 27.7 per cent increase for early learning and child care. You know what that increase includes, Mr. Speaker? Well, it includes increases for early childhood development; it includes increases for early childhood education; includes increases for KidsFirst programs; and, Mr. Speaker, it includes increases for child care spaces by a thousand.

So you know, when the NDP were in government, we were sitting at 990 spaces. Let?s compare that for a minute of how sadly they neglected that file. Manitoba has 28,000 spaces. Alberta has 78,000 spaces. Where was Saskatchewan under the NDP? Well we?re at 990.

It?s as unacceptable as the waiting list for disabilities. Have we been able to increase it to those levels in one year? No we haven?t, Mr. Speaker, but we?re working very hard. So at the end of this budget, we?ll have 11,400 spaces thanks to the Education minister.

Mr. Speaker, child and family services division falls within my ministry. And I am very proud to say, from taking government, we have increased the funding for child and family services within our province by 40 per cent — 40 per cent for the children in our province. We have committed to an electronic case-management system for the children in our province, something that was promised time and time again. I have quotes from Ms. Crofford. I hope the members remember when she was the Social Services minister, where she said, we?re going to do it. It?s done. It?s done. But they never kept the promise.

This is the only province in all of Canada that is managing the children in our province — the most vulnerable, the most important source in our province — in a paper system. I can?t even imagine the frustration of trying to deal with paper files when we?re dealing with our children.

This year we have a number of initiatives to again increase our child welfare system. We have 9.2 million in new capital funding for capacity spaces. We?re going to dedicate 15.7 million to support child welfare programs. We?re going to give a 3 per cent increase in child rates provided to foster families and extended family caregivers. And we also have an array of recruitment and retention initiatives to provide better and safer capacity for the kids within our province.

So with that and with the time considered, Mr. Speaker, I would just have this one question. The NDP have said numerous times that we?re spending way too much money — fair enough. What do they want cut? Should we cut all of those programs that we have expanded for low-income families? Should we cut what

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we?ve done for seniors, a sector in our society totally ignored under the NDP? How about the individuals with disabilities, Mr. Speaker? Should we cut that? Should we just let the waiting list go on and on and on, and never bother to give them the support or the dignity that they deserve in our province?

Better yet, student housing. Let?s just cut the student housing. I mean really, they want something cut. Is that what they want to cut? Mr. Speaker, what about the children? All of the programs for children that we?ve expanded — 40 per cent increase since the NDP were in government — do they want that cut? I would love for them to answer that question. Because I have no doubt they will stand in this House and they will vote against a budget because we?re spending too much money, according to their amendment.

I want them to tell us all today: what do you want cut? Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting