

***Premier's Dinner Speech  
Saskatoon, April 18, 2008***

I have learned quickly just how amazingly diverse this job is.

In the last two months I have:

Pounded in a Grey Cup championship sign at the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border with Premier Doer.

(By the way, in light of the fact that there was this talk before the election about how the Riders have never won, ect., and then they won only days after our government was sworn in, I have people actually asking me if we are going to talk about this in the next election)

I have had the honour of representing Saskatchewan at the Council of the Federation meeting at 24 Sussex Drive.

I rode in the first ever Premier's Snowmobile Rally in Hudson Bay.

And on Saturday, I was at the Saskatchewan Amateur Body Builders Association (competing or bringing greetings, I'll let you decide...though I did announce that I would be entering next year in the Good Intentions category)

It's an amazing job.

So, I've been the Leader of the Opposition, and been Premier.

And here's my thoughtful analysis of the difference between the two jobs.

Being Premier is better.

There's an old saying in politics,...

“When all is said and done,... there's a lot more said than done.”

When you're in Opposition, this is particularly true,... and it's frustrating.

Through those years, I knew we had good people,... and we had good ideas,...

But all we really could do was talk about them.

Well, on November 7, that all changed.

And I want to begin tonight by saying thank-you to the people in this room.

Because a lot of you came year after year to listen to those speeches when it was just a lot of talk.

You believed in our ideas,... you believed in our candidates,...

And you helped to give us this tremendous opportunity.

Abraham Lincoln said :

***“I am a success today because I had a friend who believed in me....and I didn’t have the heart to let him down.”***

I do not claim success yet, by no means.

But if I am in future, it’s because I do not want to let you down.

So what is the real difference between being Leader of the Opposition and being Premier?

- Elvis: less conversation, lot ***more action.***

Tonight,... I want to provide you with a report on our actions...what we have accomplished in the five months since the election.

Our efforts have been guided by two fundamental principles:

- Keeping our promises

- Answering the question that was on the minds of so many voters in the last election—who is best able to sustain current economic momentum in our province.

How do we keep it going.

Folks, there's a lot of momentum to sustain.

Percentage increase in population in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2007---number one in Canada (3,345 people)

Retail sales growth, January 2008—number one in Canada.

Wholesale trade growth—number one in Canada.

Percentage growth in average weekly earnings—number one in Canada.

Average of the real GDP growth forecasts for Saskatchewan in 2008—number one in Canada.

Football—number one in Canada.

Percentage increase in export sales for January of 2008—number one in Canada (29.8 percent increase)

Growth in residential building permits for 2007—number one in Canada (45%)

Urban housing starts in 2007—Number one in Canada.

New vehicle sales growth for 2007—number two in Canada.

Predicted percentage increase for 2008 in new capital investment—number two in Canada.

And now, the \$3 billion expansion announced by Mosaic Potash.

- Oil Alberta. \$1.2 billion

Saskatchewan has become an economic powerhouse,... and I want you to know that people across Canada and even beyond our borders are taking notice.

- Calgary—Royalties
- T.O. Talk about us B.N.N.

This spring, we traveled to Washington and New York to tell the Saskatchewan story.

It's a story that not many people were aware of.

We talked about how Saskatchewan alone provides more oil to the United States than the country of **Kuwait**.

We spoke of Saskatchewan's dominance in world potash.

When we talked about the potential of our oil sands resource, people were amazed.

- Our vision for energy

And there was downright shock when I mentioned we are the Saudi Arabia of **uranium**.

Six per cent of the electricity generated in the United States comes from Saskatchewan uranium.

By the way, we aggressively brought forward our message that Canada ought not be on the list of jurisdictions denied access to technology needed to enrich and refine that uranium.

We took our message to the media.

We spoke to reporters from The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Time and Fortune Magazine.

I appeared on Fox Business News (right after John Tesch), Bloomberg television—there was even a “spread” in MacLeans.

People are starting to hear about, see and feel a different kind of Saskatchewan.

Still humble, but growing in confidence.

And sometimes, our province even gets a compliment from an unusual source.

Not long ago, you would probably use Saskatchewan if you wanted to talk about a place where people were leaving.

Well the other day, the NDP Leader in Ontario, Howard Hampton, was talking about the Ontario budget.

He was criticizing the government for failing to create enough training spaces for the 200,000 people who are out of work in Ontario.

Here's what he said:

***“Training for 20,000 when over 200,000 have lost their jobs is pretty thin gruel. What happens to the other 180,000? Do they catch the next flight to Fort McMurray or Saskatoon?”***

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Imagine that – the Ontario NDP Leader using Saskatoon as an example of a place where Ontario people are going to find work.

And by the way, to Howard Hampton – the answer to your question is “yes.”

Catch the next flight to Saskatoon.

We have plenty of jobs and opportunities,... and it's a great place to live.

So today in Saskatchewan,... it's different, isn't it?

From what people are telling me, there is excitement about this new Saskatchewan.

They are proud of our heritage, but there is no nostalgia for the past.

There's no nostalgia for the old leadership that was satisfied with mediocrity.

There's no nostalgia for leadership that did not believe (and said so publicly) that we could long be a “have” province.

There's no nostalgia for leaders that said it's statistically impossible for the population of our province to grow at a rate **above** the national average.

In the new Saskatchewan, there is no nostalgia for a time when nine wins and nine losses with a road play off game was not just a success, but a goal.

We've now seen better.

We've now done better.

And we like it. (for all the right reasons)

There is a contagious optimism sweeping our province.

So as our new government started getting ready for our new budget,...

We asked ourselves – how do we keep our promises?

Is Saskatchewan ready for growth?

We did a quick inventory of our provincial infrastructure,... and the answer was pretty clear.

Saskatchewan is ready for growth,... our infrastructure is not.

That's why on budget day, Finance Minister Rod Gantfoer announced the Ready for Growth Initiative,... the largest investment in infrastructure capital in Saskatchewan history.

One billion dollars for school and universities,... highways and hospitals,...parks.

To ensure Saskatchewan IS ready for growth.

A big chunk of the Ready for Growth initiative – over 400 million dollars – is going to go toward fixing Saskatchewan roads and highways.

We are going to be repairing over 1,400 kilometers of Saskatchewan highways this summer.

In addition to our Ready for Growth initiative,...

The 2008 budget delivers the funding to fulfill 40 of our campaign promises.

And that's in addition to nearly 20 promises we had kept BEFORE the budget.

- Platform story
- Set elections

Promises like a smaller cabinet,... funding for Avastin

And rebalancing labour legislation in this province.

You know, when you stop and think about it, Bills 5 and 6 should not have been controversial.

One bill increases democracy in the workplace by calling for free votes to certify and decertify a union.

The other puts forward what should be an uncontroversial notion: prior to a strike, employees and employers should work together on coming up with an essential services plan that protects public safety.

It's exactly what nurses have done before every strike they have ever held.

It's a notion so common place that every other Canadian province—even forever NDP Manitoba—has essential services legislation or has tabled essential services legislation.

Yet to hear some people talk, this is the end of civilization as we know it.

Tonight, I would like to single out for a special citation of merit, one of your own.

Rob Norris has been a voice of reason, a voice of calm a voice of assurance through-out this entire debate.

He's shown patience and resolute politeness in the face of relentless criticism and questioning.

He showed cool and courage by attending a union convention where he was showered with abuse.

So Rob, in front of your friends tonight, I would like to say this in a very public way: Thank you.

- Nurses

I think it was Henry Ford who said – “Those who say it can’t be done should get out of the way of those who are doing it.”

I thought of that quote the other day when we were discussing the issue of recruiting new nurses to Saskatchewan.

In the last election, the Saskatchewan Party set a target of 800 new nurses over the next four years.

The previous administration said that can’t be done.

In fact, the NDP Health Minister at the time said he didn’t even want to set a target for nurse recruitment, because they had no hope of reaching it.

He said, and I quote:

“Even if we put a number on it, there’s no guarantee that we will be able to meet that number in any case.”

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, Don McMorris signed a groundbreaking partnership agreement with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses.

It commits government and SUN to work together on finding solutions to Saskatchewan's shortage of nurses.

It is the first agreement of its kind in Canada.

And the work didn't stop there.

Laura Ross, in her capacity as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health for Nurse Recruitment and Retention, teamed up with Sask. Health and various health districts.

They went to The Philippines and came back with contracts for 300 nurses.

So have we accomplished our goal of 800 new nurses?

No. But 300 new nurses in just four months – that's a pretty good start.

Even with all of the things I have outlined tonight,... I want you to know,...

We're just getting started.

There's much left to be done.

Our province relies more on property taxes to fund education than any other jurisdiction in the country.

It's an antiquated system, where the amount I pay to educate my children depends on whether or not I renovate my basement.

This has to change.

We have a labour shortage-we need skilled workers to keep economic momentum going.

Yet with this labour shortage, we also see under-employment amongst our First Nations and Metis.

This has to change.

Our record at attracting new immigrants, while improving, still lags far behind other provinces.

And we are a province built on the sweat and toil of immigrants from around the world.

This has to change.

There is much more to be done,... but I think we're off to a pretty good start.

So, it really has been a little less conversation,... and a lot more action.

Now, not everyone agrees with that.

You may have heard that the other day,... Mr. Calvert gave me a report card.

It was the first time I could ever remember getting a report card from someone who was sent to the detention hall for the next four years,...

But still,... Mr. Calvert decided to give me a report card,... and he gave me an overall mark of “D.”

He said there was not much substance to our government,...

It was just a bunch of photo ops.

Well, here’s our record in just five months since the election.

We’ve kept nearly 60 of our election promises.

We’ve introduced stronger balanced budget legislation.

We’ve kept our promise to eliminated the used car tax, and to increase property tax rebates.

We’re paying down debt.

We’ve got the rate of government spending under control.

We're investing in infrastructure and making sure Saskatchewan is ready for growth.

We're fixing the highways.

We're rebalancing our labour legislation and protecting essential services in our province.

We've created Enterprise Saskatchewan.

We're improved Crop Insurance coverage.

We're providing an extra half a million dollars annually for inner city school hunger programs.

\$5 million for food banks----

- Station 20.

Five hundred more child care spaces.

We're funding more training seats for health professionals – for doctors and nurses,...

And also training seats for trades-people.

We're fixing up our parks,... we creating more campsites,... and we got rid of the dreaded "wiener roast" tax.

We are working with First Nations people to ensure they become full partners in our growing economy,...

Including organizing an historic roundtable in May on the duty to consult and accommodate.

We are providing new funding to cover more prescription drugs,... more funding for cancer care,... and new funding for addictions treatment.

We're putting more police officers on the streets and targeting new resources to fight gang activity and predators who prey on children over the internet.

We're helping vulnerable women by increasing support for transition houses and sexual assault centres.

We're providing tax breaks to help families with the high cost of children's activities,...

And we're doubling the Caregiver Tax Credit to help families take care of a disabled loved one in their home.

So that's our government's record, in just five months in office...and,...

**WE'RE – JUST – GETTING – STARTED.**

So, I guess that's what I mean when I say it's better to be the Premier.

That's what I mean by a little less conversation and a lot more action.

But in the meantime, Mr. Calvert is right about one thing.

I do kinda like photo ops.

- Photo op—Avastin
- New family

Three years ago in a Leader's Dinner speech, I asked you to think of those parents that would be driving back from Calgary on the week-end after visiting the kids.

Well, now they just have to drive over to Silver Springs because the kids have moved back.

In the years ahead,... there will be a lot more talk and a lot more action from our government.

- Mistakes

Some will measure the performance of our government through the lens of economic growth,...

Through the lens of accountability,...

Through the lens of whether we kept our word.

Those are all good measures, to be sure.

But I think the real measure of our government may be through the lens of the cameras of real Saskatchewan people,...

Building their lives and their families,... their futures and their dreams in Saskatchewan.

And along the way,... taking the pictures that wind up on the door of their fridge.

I hope when all is said and done, I have lead a government whose words and whose actions,..

Helped to create a lot more photo ops just like that.