

December 15, 1986

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gainers Proposed Bacon Processing Plant at North Battleford

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: -- Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation, and it deals with the arrangements between Sedco and the Alberta millionaire, Peter Pocklington, and his companies.

Can the minister tell Saskatchewan taxpayers just how much money has been spent to date on the Gainers bacon processing plant at North Battleford? The press reports quote Mr. Pocklington as saying that the plant has cost \$6 million. How much of that was his money, or Gainers, and how much of it came from Saskatchewan taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: -- Mr. Speaker, in regard to that, so that I wouldn't be giving any information that wouldn't be absolutely correct, I will take notice of the question and bring back the required information to the member.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: -- Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister also take notice of a question dealing with whether or not the land and buildings for the project at North Battleford were contributed by Sedco, or whether they were purchased with loans provided or guaranteed by Sedco? And can you indicate whether or not the government has signed any documents with Gainers or Pocklington, and whether or not you propose to table those documents in the legislature?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: -- I will report back to the member as much information as I can find regarding this. As I said previously, I want to be exactly on the money on these figures, and I'll report back to you at my earliest convenience.

Mr. Anguish: -- Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. Certainly the people of The Battlefords are anxious to see the bacon plant open. There have been a number of delays in the start-up time, and there have been great speeches in this Assembly from the government members about the plant which has yet to turn out one pound or one slab of bacon. And I was wondering if the minister could tell us today, Mr. Speaker, when can we expect exactly for the North Battleford bacon plant to begin operation?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: -- I think that would be better directed to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and he would be prepared to reply to your question.

Hon. Mr. Andrew: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding with regards to the Gainers project in North Battleford is that there was some delay primarily driven by an inability to purchase and have the equipment installed in the North Battleford plant. The most recent update I have had is that they are soon to begin the hiring process for the people in the North Battleford area, and it's expected that the plant would be in production early 1987.

Mr. Anguish: -- Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister alluded to some of the problems in the plant opening, and I was wondering if you'd expand a bit on that and give us a summary and kind of an outline for the reasons the plant is not, as of this date, open.

There are a number of rumours going around. One is that there are not enough pork bellies available to feed the plant. It requires 50,000 pork bellies a week to operate at full capacity. The companies that manufacture the equipment are not willing to give them on credit to Gainers to put into the plant. Therefore there's a bit of a cash flow problem there.

We also hear that they are waiting so that they can decide whether or not replacement workers from the Edmonton operation will come over to take jobs in the plant in North Battleford. So I was wondering if the minister, Mr. Speaker, could just sort of summarize and outline the reasons as to why that plant hasn't opened to date.

Hon. Mr. Andrew: -- Well I indicated to you in my previous answer that there was some problem having the equipment installed and being able to get the equipment in time to put it there. I think it's dangerous for us in this Assembly to try to respond or speculate on every rumour that might happen to exist in North Battleford.

Provincial Economic Statement

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I direct a question to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, since your March 26th budget it's become very clear that the estimate of the revenues were deliberately and greatly exaggerated and that the estimate of expenditures were equally underestimated.

Mr. Minister, in view of this, and in view of the fact that you and your government have added tens of millions of additional dollars to the expenditures of the government, will you be providing Saskatchewan taxpayers and potential investors in Saskatchewan with an economic statement to update the March budget, and will you be providing that statement in the next few days?

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Well I will be supplying to the people of Saskatchewan an economic statement, and also some proposals as to responses by the Government of Saskatchewan. It will not be in the next few days. I expect it sometime early in the new year.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Minister, I thank you for that information. I think it's important that it be provided as soon as possible, this financial update, because in your budget you indicated that the deficit would be \$389 million for 1986 and 1987. Mr. Minister, that assumed oil prices at \$20 a barrel U.S. Can you tell this House and the public of Saskatchewan what your new projected deficit for 1986-87 is going to be?

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- We will be . . . in the economic statement be able to give a more definite statement at the third quarter of the year, which is basically December 31st, and one major reason for leaving a financial statement and economic statement until some time in January. However, let me assure you that any financial statement will not have the disparity between actuality and projections as the one made by the hon. member when he was provincial treasurer, where he predicted an average growth rate of revenues in the province of Saskatchewan of 15.5 per cent per year from 1980 until 1990.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. And the minister should be reminded that even in his white paper, tabled in July, it showed a surplus of \$139 million in the last year that this party was a government on the other side of the benches.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Minister, you and your Premier have been able to find \$20 million for the Peter Pocklington operation. In the throne speech it is indicated that the resource companies are going to get tax breaks again. In light of that, Mr. Minister, can you now rule out tax increases in the next year's budget, and have you rejected increases in either the flat tax or the sales tax in your forthcoming budget.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Well, obviously, budget planning will start some time in January or February, as it is often done. We have not begun the budget planning for the next fiscal year at this time, but let me indicate to the hon. member that the historical practice in this province has been that the Minister of Finance, at the chosen date, announces the budget and announces any tax increases or tax decreases. That's not to say that that obviously is fixed in stone, but that that has been the tradition.

I don't think the hon. member would ask me, in his capacity as a former Finance minister, to break budget confidentiality, and if that's what he's asking, I'm a little bit surprised. And I don't think the leadership campaign is off to a very good start if that's the request.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Speaker, it is worthy to note that the minister has refused to deny a tax increase. Now, Mr. Minister, by way of final supplementary, your infamous tax grab, the flat tax, expires at the end of December of 1986 by law. Its reimposition would result in a double income tax, once again, for 1987. Can you, Mr. Minister, assure members of this House and the Saskatchewan taxpayers that you will not reimpose the flat tax by ministerial order in the new year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Well the member is partially correct when he indicates that it expires December 31 of this year. However, to indicate a tax grab we, and obviously the people of Saskatchewan, because you attempted to make a political issue . . . As a matter of fact, if I recall, the New Democratic Party said it was going to be one of the main issues in the last provincial election. The public obviously made a decision. And we have indicated to the public that we believe that the flat tax is a major step towards reforming the tax system in Canada; that we believe that a simplified and fair tax system is a fair directive of tax reform. And yes, we will be continuing the flat tax.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: -- Supplementary, Mr. Minister. You have indicated that to have two income taxes for Saskatchewan rather than one is to simplify the system. Would the minister explain how a regular income tax and a flat tax is a simpler system than having one regular income tax?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Well as we've made it abundantly clear, we believe that a flat tax system is a far more simplified and far more effective form of personal income tax form. We expect that as the tax reform debate continues in Canada that we will move to a much simplified and probably a flat tax system perhaps with one, two, or three different rates. I might advise the hon. member – I'm sure though I'm giving him information that he already knows – that the province of Manitoba is also considering a flat tax.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: -- Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister has spoken of a past practice. He will know that the past practice has indicated that an economic review would be published in December. Do you propose to publish the economic review in accordance with past practice?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- With the risk of being repetitive, knowing the rules, Mr. Speaker, I will have to give the hon. member the same answer that I gave the critic – the finance critic – and that is that we would expect it sometime early in the new year.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: -- Supplementary, Mr. Minister. Does the minister not acknowledge that his last economic review was published in December and can he offer any reason why this economic review should not be published in December except that you do not want to file it when this House is in session?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- No, that's not the least bit correct. The fact is that the hon. members opposite know you'll have ample opportunity to debate the financial situation of the province at any future session. You had an ample go at it last year; the public made their decision. I suggest to you that it is not good enough in the economic circumstances – and

I freely acknowledge that oil prices have dropped, potash prices have dropped – and that not only will the public want to know that information which is obvious to the vast majority of the public, but I think they will want to see some concrete responses from the government of what to do about it. And we will be putting those proposals forward.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: -- Mr. Speaker, the Minister has spoken of past practice. He will know that past practice has been to table *Public Accounts* in December. Will he make the *Public Accounts* available to the people of Saskatchewan before the end of this month, or will he hide that information from the public in Saskatchewan because it reflects unfavourably on his stewardship of the finances of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Well it's my understanding that the *Public Accounts* are not yet ready. But I am not aware, I'm not aware at any time in the province's history when *Public Accounts* have been tabled that the opposition has failed to use the *Public Accounts* to get their particular message across, whether it be within the session, whether the legislature is sitting, or whether the legislature is not sitting.

So to argue that because the *Public Accounts* may not be available when the House is in session and, as such, that the public will not have access to them, I think is not correct. And I believe the hon. member knows that, that there is ample time for public scrutiny when the *Public Accounts* are tabled.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will you give an undertaking that you will file the *Public Accounts*, make them public in December or January, and not withhold them from the public as you did on one previous occasion, you or your colleague, into March, almost one year after you closed your books?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- My recollection of the time when *Public Accounts* were submitted referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, that the opposition of the day was able to call *Public Accounts* to the public's attention; were able to make their criticisms of government expenditure in their rightful role; that they were able to ensure or have press scrutiny of the *Public Accounts*; that the public was fully informed as to the *Public Accounts*, no matter when they were tabled.

If that is not the case, then obviously at the time the opposition wasn't doing its job.

Canadian Wheat Board Payments

Mr. Goodale: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Premier in his capacity as Minister of Agriculture. The Premier will know that a delegation of farmers is today travelling to Ottawa to raise in the national capital certain concerns having to do with the

lack of Canadian Wheat Board final payments for the last crop year and the issue of cross-subsidization between different pools for different grades.

I wonder if the farmers, in making this particular journey for this particular reason, have the Premier's support, and would he join in an all-party resolution of this House to indicate that?

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of the wheat growers' trip to Ottawa. I have here -- I won't read it unless the hon. member wants me to -- a letter to the Hon. Charlie Mayer with respect to my request to have that payment made on the pool with respect to the top grades.

I certainly support the wheat producers. I met with the members of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool not that long ago and said that I would argue hard and lobby to receive the funds so that we could make sure that the pools get paid out. At the same time I reminded them that it might mean some changes with respect to the operation of the Canadian Wheat Board and we should look at that very carefully and understand it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm on record in the ministers' office in Ottawa supporting the farmers in their concern. And I certainly would be supporting it here in the legislature, or any place else for that matter.

Mr. Goodale: -- Mr. Speaker, supplementary. The Premier made reference to possible amendments in legislation to deal with this situation, specifically the Canadian Wheat Board Act. I wonder if the Premier sees it desirable to deal with this situation on a one-year basis, the particular problem that exists with respect to the last crop year, or would he be in favour of pursuing permanent amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board Act to prevent this kind of cross-subsidization problem from occurring again in future?

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a question I believe that the farmers of western Canada are going to have to address, that is, how the board operates and how it markets and how it pays for the commodities that it has to deal with.

Increasingly, I believe farmers want to be paid for what they grow. But at the same time we've had a system for years which would allow the pooling and the cross-subsidization, if you will, and one grade would subsidize another. We separated out the durum payments from the spring wheat payments and had separate pools, and farmers liked that.

Today we're asking them to grow high quality grain, and at the same time, as a result of what happened last year, they didn't get paid for it. So they're saying, where are the incentives for us to grow the kinds of grades and the quality that the world customers want?

So while I support this payment to producers because of the inequities of last year, I would be in favour of looking at changing the system in the future if it meets with the general approval of farmers, and I have a great deal of respect for their view, to at least

move towards more payment for the actual commodity that you grow so that you can have a direct link with what the world market wants.

And if it wants number one, you should be paid for number one, or at least move towards that. And if farmers could see that system operate within the Canadian Wheat Board system, I'd be glad to support them.

Senior Management of Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Sask Forest Products Corporation, and it has to do with a member of the senior management of this public company, a Mr. Ernie Lawrence.

When the Weyerhaeuser corporation took over ownership of the Big River sawmill in September, did Mr. Lawrence remain as manager of the sawmill or did he move to another position with SFPC? And if so, what is his current position with this public corporation?

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd be going somewhat by memory, but my belief is that Mr. Lawrence did not remain as manager of the Bodmin sawmill at Big River. I'm not sure where Mr. Lawrence is working now or if he's still within the Sask Forest Products, but I would take notice of the question to give a more detailed answer for the member.

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. If Mr. Lawrence has left SFPC, can the minister also explain why he is still receiving his full salary today? And can he also explain this cheque I have, dated November 13th of this year, by which SFPC paid more than \$3,600 on Mr. Lawrence's behalf to ship used machinery from his former home in Terrace, B.C. to his current home in Canwood, Saskatchewan. Can you answer that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- I'm not sure what the status of Mr. Lawrence is but, as I said, Mr. Speaker, I will take notice of the question and I'll come back with a more detailed answer in terms of the current status of Mr. Lawrence as it relates to Sask Forest Products.

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. When our party first exposed the extravagant spending habits of SPFC management last year, such as the decision that SFPC should pay for monthly grocery bills, cable TV bills of the \$120,000-a-year general manager, the members opposite promised to clean up their act.

Mr. Minister, what steps did you take to clamp down on such extravagant expenses, and why wouldn't you catch a \$3,600 bill for shipment of personal machinery from Terrace, B.C. to Canwood, Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I will take notice of the members' question. But I also would add that I will not be responding to statements of supposed fact by the member. We'll take notice of the question. I said I would give the status of Mr. Lawrence as it relates to his employment with Sask Forest Products at the earliest convenience.

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I have the documents here. They're not supposed documents; they're here. And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask also that the hon. member from across answer to the reason that we have before us here an invoice for \$00 shelled out to an Ontario firm for two parkas for management people in SFPC (Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation). Also, I would like . . . I have here an invoice for the purchase for a set of seat covers, and I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, were they mink lined?

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that first of all, the Sask Forest Products Corporation has been operating very well in recent months. There's no question about that. There's no question it's been operating very well recently. One of the major installations of it is now out into the private sector and operating well, as well.

I would say to the member, as I have done, that I'll take notice of the question. I obviously, as minister responsible, don't get involved in the purchase of -- I believe he talked about parkas and seat covers and whatever. I don't get involved in that, but if the members of the New Democratic Party opposition want that to be the substance of questions in question period, I'll take notice of the question and get the details on those questions.

Water Rights Related to Grasslands National Park

Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. In 1981, Mr. Speaker, an agreement was signed between the province and the federal government towards the formation of a grasslands national park. Since then things have moved very slowly and it seems the latest hitch in the progress is a dispute between the Saskatchewan government and the federal government over water rights on the Frenchman River.

Can the minister please explain why Saskatchewan has taken the unprecedented position that it must continue to control the water rights along the Frenchman River, even after the creation of a grasslands national park? And will the minister soon see that this dispute is settled so the park can go ahead?

Hon. Mr. Swan :-- I'd like to thank the hon. member for that question. Yes, it has been a prolonged negotiation. But I think if the hon. member realizes that the water rights and the right to the land that the water flows through is extremely important to our province . . . and I don't think that any corporation should get involved with the negotiation that would give away those rights.

So we are still looking at it. The department has worked long and hard, and I think soon we will reach a conclusion. But until that conclusion is to the benefit of our province, I hope and I trust that we will continue to wait and work so that when it is signed, it will be our benefit, not the benefit of others.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 6 – An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Martineau.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Speaker, may I once again congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the Assembly, and may I also congratulate all the new members that have taken their seats in this Legislative Assembly.

Before I begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker, on the throne speech, I want to thank the people of Saskatoon Nutana for the faith that they have placed in me to be their representative in this legislature of Saskatchewan.

I want to approach my duties, Mr. Speaker, with as much principle and honour as possible. And if the members opposite deal with the challenges of governing our province in a manner that is fair and reasonable, then, Mr. Speaker, I'll be an ally to the members opposite. However, if they don't, if the rights of any individual or group is threatened, then, Mr. Speaker, I'll be a critic. I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is the kind of representation that people in my constituency want, and this is the kind of representative I hope to be.

I also, Mr. Speaker, want to thank the hundreds of workers who helped me get my feet in this Legislative Assembly. Without their support and countless hours of volunteer work I would not have been able to have taken my seat.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana is not unlike many other older neighbourhoods in urban centres across Saskatchewan. Many younger families have moved into the area because housing has been affordable. The area is one of the more beautiful areas of Saskatoon. I think it's fair to say that Nutana is undergoing a transition from an older retired population to a nice mixture of senior citizens and younger families. People in Nutana, Mr. Speaker, come from all walks of life. There are blue-collar workers, teachers, nurses, senior citizens, labourers, small-business people, students, and, of course, the unemployed. We also have our fair share of retired farmers.

Nutana is also fortunate to have a very fine business district on Broadway Avenue. It's an exciting area with businesses owned by local people who daily make a contribution towards the well-being of our community. We have a repertory theatre that is locally owned and known to show some of the world's finest films. The Broadway Theatre is also known the province over as the home of the nationally-acclaimed Saskatoon Soaps.

We have, Mr. Speaker, young business people who have decided to venture out on their own to establish restaurants, book stores, adult and children's clothing stores, speciality food shops, furniture and electronic shops and the like. I look forward to working with the Broadway merchants as they move ahead to revitalize the Broadway business district. Once the redevelopment process is complete, Broadway will be an even more exciting part of our community.

What a contrast, Mr. Speaker, between the small merchants on Broadway who have made a real contribution to the city of Saskatoon, owner/operators who volunteer their time and money to community endeavours such as Big Sisters and the Crisis Nursery, and the absentee landlord-owning chain supermarkets and malls, who, with callous disregard for community standards routinely break city by-laws so that they may maximize their profits at the expense of their own employees and our own local merchants.

Of course, as in all ridings, Nutana has its fair share of churches. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there are 25, to be exact. St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Broadway has long been a beacon for many residents on the east side of the river. There is also St. James Anglican Church, Second Street United Church, Augustana Lutheran Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and for those of Ukrainian backgrounds, St. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church located on 10th Street and Munroe. We also have Saskatoon's only synagogue, the Jewish Community Centre on McKinnon Avenue. The centre provides an important place for Jewish people to come together to practise their traditions and beliefs.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't mention the work of the Seventh-Day Adventists who operate the only nursing home in Saskatoon Nutana. There the very fine staff carry out the day-to-day tasks of caring for the sick and the elderly in our community.

I could go on at great length about the many important activities of the residents of Saskatoon Nutana, but time won't permit. It is, however, in the context of this background of the people that elected me that I must come to grips with this throne

speech and what it ultimately means for the people of my community. And I say “my community,” Mr. Speaker, because I have lived in that community – Saskatoon Nutana – for more than 12 years.

As I mentioned earlier, I want to be an ally to the government. And when they do the right thing, I want to commend them. And so therefore I must commend the government’s recent steps to establish a drug rehabilitation centre for young people and their families. The lack of a facility in Saskatchewan has long been a personal concern of mine, and I will watch with interest as the Minister of health proceeds to implement this program.

I urge the minister to proceed with a great deal of caution, however, because in order to have an effective program, the philosophy and objectives must be clear. There must be adequate numbers of staff and the staff must be properly trained. The program must have the support of the various interest groups.

Particularly when I think of interest groups, I think of the work of PRIDE (Parent Resources Institute for Drug Education Inc.). The people at PRIDE were instrumental in raising substance abuse as a public issue. They’ve had real-life, family experiences with drug-addicted young people and they have a number of recommendations that might ensure an effective strategy to deal with this important public issue.

I might also add, Mr. Speaker, that the government would do much to enhance its credibility in this area if they would move quickly to move alcohol advertising from the print and electronic media.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of hospital funding in this province is also a serious public issue. The extent of this problem is reflected in the fact that hospitals, particularly in Saskatoon and Regina, have recently formed hospital foundations – foundations whose sole purpose it is to provide funding for both capital and operating expenditures.

Saskatchewan hospitals, Mr. Speaker, have gotten themselves into the lottery business. Hospitals can no longer afford to survive on government funding alone. We now have hospitals in this province which regularly send out requests for donations to former patients. And we even have hospitals that are considering implementing a preferred service idea – preferred service meaning that those that are rich get extras.

What we are looking at, Mr. Speaker, is the possibility of a two-tiered health care system, one for the rich and one for the not so rich. This possibility, Mr. Speaker, is immoral. It goes against the grain and fibre of Saskatchewan people – the same people that fought for and struggled for to pioneer the first universally accessible health care system in North America.

Mr. Speaker, I think it’s time for the PC government, who steadfastly proclaimed since 1982, however, that they support a publicly funded health care system, to publicly fund it.

As I mentioned earlier, there are a large number of senior citizens living in Nutana. And as I went door-to-door in the election campaign, it became increasingly evident to me that those senior citizens were beginning to think that the health care system was failing them. Mr. Speaker, people in my riding are waiting for up to a year for hip replacements and cataract operations. This wait is frustrating and, in many cases, very painful.

The throne speech last week referred to the need to devote appropriate resources to improve the quality of life for senior citizens and support their desire for independence. Mr. Speaker, there are a large number of people waiting for this quality of life and this independence that was referred to, but they need a government that will put its money where its mouth is. I would urge the members opposite to act now to reduce the huge hospital waiting lists. Why not put more staff and resources into Saskatchewan hospitals? Let's reduce those waiting lists. Let's create job opportunities for health care workers and reduce stress in the health care work place. Let's put the care back in health care, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: -- That's what the people want, Mr. Speaker, and that's what they told us in the election campaign.

On a similar note, I was extremely disappointed by the lack of commitment in the throne speech to improve home care services. Not only do we have the largest hospital waiting lists in Saskatchewan history, but we now have waiting lists for home care. Mr. Speaker, if this government was truly interested in supporting the elderly's desire for independence, they would have announced a substantial increase in funding for this vital service. A lot of rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, a lot of talk about support for senior citizen independence, but no action.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn to a number of other important issues, issues that were raised in the election campaign, issues that the members opposite must have heard about in the election campaign, but issues that the throne speech failed to address. Mr. Speaker, two of the most pressing problems that the people of this province face are the repercussions of unemployment and the crisis in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I, like a number of other people across the province, listened carefully to hear how the PC government propose to tackle unemployment. I know that the members opposite like to trot out the statistics that indicate that Saskatchewan has the lowest rates of unemployment in the country. And those figures may make the members feel warm and good inside, but it does little for the men and women who are facing unemployment; it does little for the men and women who are presently on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the unemployed in this province waited with anticipation, they waited for this government to outline its job strategy proposal. Instead of announcing a job strategy proposal, we heard veiled references to cut-backs and lay-offs in the public services.

What we heard, Mr. Speaker, was no hope for the unemployed and new fears for those with jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the public is not adverse to creating jobs with their tax dollars. They would rather have people working than sitting on social assistance. They want young people to look forward to decent jobs, meaningful jobs, and jobs that benefit all. If there was one message I heard in the election campaign from young people, it was that they wanted a future. They did not want to sit on social assistance. They wanted the government opposite to take their concerns seriously. Unfortunately, this throne speech didn't do that.

The other thing that I heard in the election campaign which the throne speech didn't deal with is the plight of the older unemployed worker. And, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency there are a lot of them. They are those people who are not yet ready to retire, but they're finding it very difficult to find employment. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the throne speech didn't come to grips with their plight. I think, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say that the people in Saskatoon Nutana don't like give-aways to Peter Pocklington; they don't like the give-aways to Weyerhaeuser. They do want action and, unfortunately, the members opposite chose not to do that.

Mr. Speaker, as I went door-to-door in the election, I met a large number of people who are victims of low wages and unequal opportunities. The people I'm thinking of in particular are women. Women in this province are waiting for action by your government. It's time that equal pay for work of equal value was introduced.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: -- I would urge the members opposite to move quickly in consultation with the public sector to implement this pay concept. The women of this province have waited for too long; it's time for action.

Another issue that I heard referred to over and over again in the election campaign was the minimum wage, and the fact that it has not been increased often in the last five years. In fact, I believe it's only been increased once. And although the Saskatchewan inflation rate has risen 30 per cent in those last five years, the members opposite saw fit to only increase it by 6 per cent. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, minimum wage earners have seen their purchasing power decreased significantly.

Most minimum wage earners are women, and many minimum wage earners are single parents – single parents that, although they have full-time jobs, rely on day care subsidies for their children, live in subsidized housing, and receive wage top-ups from Social Services. I realize, Mr. Speaker, that an increase in minimum wage must parallel market conditions, but surely, surely we could afford to bring minimum wage up to the poverty line.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Speaker, the most disappointing aspect of the throne speech was the lack of will on the part of your government to address the issue of poverty. I think it's an absolute disgrace and outrage that in the so-called bread basket of the world there are people going hungry. I think it's sad that food banks have become the order of the day. And, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is go into the Saskatoon food bank at 9 o'clock in the morning, and you'll see children and women lined up to get some food because they don't have enough to eat.

Mr. Speaker, probably the most distressing action that the members opposite have taken in the last term of office was their so-called welfare reform. Mr. Speaker, what this government did in the name of reform was to create a category of people, and they're called "single, unemployed employables."

Single people, many of whom are young people, have seen their welfare decrease by over 40 per cent. The maximum amount of money you can receive as a single, unemployed employable is \$345. Well I want the members opposite to tell me how anybody lives on \$345 in an urban centre in Saskatchewan. How do you feed and shelter and clothe yourself?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you -- you don't do it. No wonder we have food banks and higher crime rates. No wonder we have no hope. I know this, Mr. Speaker, because I've talked to unemployed people, and I've taught young people who are living on social assistance of not \$345 a month, Mr. Speaker, but \$235.

(1445)

What kind of a society do we have when the government we elect is unwilling to represent this portion of the population and treats them with such disdain? It's time, Mr. Speaker, that the PC government opposite stop blaming the victims of their economic policies as being unskilled, lazy, cheaters, and all those other stigmas attached to being poor. It's time that the members opposite started treating those among us who suffer the consequences of their policies with more dignity. I would urge you to get rid of the unemployed employable category and take into consideration the real cost of feeding a family and putting a roof over your head when setting levels of social assistance. I think it's time you did the right thing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: -- I think it's time, Mr. Speaker, to attack the real problem, not the victims. It's time to put forward a job strategy to enable people to get back to work. We can do that by creating staff positions in hospitals. We can do that by creating more staff positions in home care. It's time to adequately fund day cares. It's time to give real support for family-owned small business.

Now let me turn to another crisis, Mr. Speaker, and the crisis I'm referring to is that facing farm families. Mr. Speaker, members of my family have farmed in this province

for the past 80 years. My parents and brother and his families farm in the Springwater community, and my sister and her family farm in the community of Smuts.

Food production in Saskatchewan is a vitally important issue and part of our economy. If we believe in the maintenance of a strong rural community in our province, then farm families must continue to be the producers of our food. But that arrangement is clearly threatened by present circumstances and by the lack of an adequate response from the Tories in Ottawa and the Tories here in Saskatchewan.

Each year, Mr. Speaker, approximately 1,000 farm families leave the land and are not replaced. Part of this is accounted for by farmers retiring and neighbouring farms getting bigger. And that process is bad enough. But increasingly, farm families are being forced off the land by bankruptcies and foreclosures.

And what has the Tory response been? Well, federally the PCs have stretched their creativity to the limit and produced a rural transition program which pays a pittance to financially hard-pressed farmers to get off the land. The rural transition program pays \$1,500 to cover a farm family for the first month so that they can move into interim accommodations. There is also some job counselling and personnel counselling and subsidy payable to an employer who will hire the farmer for 26 weeks. This is a real genuine Tory response to farm families being forced off the land. The federal PCs are jumping in to hasten up the process to aid the depopulation of rural Canada. This, Mr. Speaker, I find deplorable.

And the response to the problems hasn't been much different here in Saskatchewan. The members opposite had announced in the throne speech the extension of The Farm Land Security Act and the counselling and assistance program as if that will be the total solution to the problems farm families are facing.

I want to, Mr. Speaker, speak for a moment about The Farm land Security Act. As of November 30, 1986, the Farm Land Security Board had received 840 notices of a lender's intention to foreclose. The foreclosure involved 713 farmers. Of that 713, 497 cases have been completed; 218 were resolved by negotiations between the farmer and the lender, leaving 279 cases. And of those 279 cases the board expressed no opinion or made no representation in 92 cases. In 132 cases the Farm Land Security Board wrote a report to the court favourable to the banks, and in only 55 cases did the board report to the court in favour of the farmer.

That's quite a record of achievement isn't it, Mr. Speaker. In 55 cases out of 840, the Farm Land Security Board helped the farmer fend off foreclosure, and the rest was either no help at all or actually assisted the banks grab the land.

And when you add to that abysmal record the fact that The Farm Land Security Act does not protect from foreclosure things like farm machinery, livestock, stored grain, bank accounts, or crop insurance cheques, no wonder we really have to be sceptical about the legislation.

The statistics associated with the counselling and assistance program are even more depressing, Mr. Speaker. You will remember that program. That's the one where panels of farmers come to the home of a financially hard-pressed farmer and grill the farmer for details concerning personal financial matters. Then the panel often denies its support for a loan guarantee. And even in the rare case that a guarantee is recommended by the panel, the lending institutions are under no obligation whatsoever to arrange a loan. This is another genuine Conservative farm program, Mr. Speaker. If you're well enough off, the finances are there, but if your farming operation is just about to go under, the Devine-designated programs will not be of any help at all.

I, and a good many others who are concerned about the debt and viability problems of average and smaller farmers, had hoped the throne speech would contain something in reference to at least halt the disappearances of family farms. Unfortunately, this was one area where we were much disappointed.

Mr. Speaker, I wish that the members opposite had chosen to implement something like debt readjustment board where farmers who are experiencing difficulty in paying their loans and interest payments could have gone to the board and had their debt readjusted. Unfortunately the members opposite chose not to do this.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, my family, Roy and Betty Atkinson, and in particular my parents from Springwater, Saskatchewan, have given me a number of different values. One of the most important values that they've given to me, Mr. Speaker, is the value of service, not to serve myself in particular, or a few special-interest groups, but to serve other people.

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech does not serve the interests of the average person here in Saskatchewan, and therefore I won't be supporting the throne speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Saxinger: -- Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne presented to the legislature by the Lieutenant Governor spells out clearly that the Progressive Conservative government believes that Saskatchewan people must have opportunities to achieve their goals and hopes for the future. The Speech from the Throne states the direction the government will take in building Saskatchewan over the next four years.

I'm proud to speak in favour of the motion for the support of the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, last week when I rose for the first time to speak on a motion on the human rights, I neglected to say my appreciation for your election. At this time, Mr. Speaker, may I join with others who have said to you how pleased we are that you have been selected as our Speaker of this legislature. You have our confidence and our respect, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say thank you to all the people of Kinistino who worked so hard to get me elected. The Kinistino constituency is a pie-shape in size. The beautiful South Saskatchewan River is the north-west boundary from Aberdeen, St. Laurent, Batoche, St. Louis, and all the way up to Fort à la Corne, which is north of Kinistino.

Our industries are small business and, of course, farming. The farm purchase program provided low interest rates for farmers. The protection of the loan program provided 6 per cent loans to help farmers plant their 1986 crop. The Progressive Conservative government brought in The Farm land Security Act to protect farmers from losing their land.

This government also introduced the natural gas program which helped save up to 60 per cent on heating costs. I personally had hooked up a grain dryer to natural gas and my expense of drying grain went down to about 35 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Saxinger: -- The farmers of Kinistino really appreciate the deficiency payment announced by the Premier. They also appreciate the Premier's hard work for obtaining the deficiency payment. With programs like this the people of Kinistino constituency are proud of our Premier as a Minister of Agriculture.

As MLA I am proud to serve the people of Kinistino constituency which is rich in historic sites and events. Louis Riel, as president of a provisional government at St. Laurent, headed up a short but important rebellion. It ended with the fall of Batoche and the capture of Riel. By this time a very important impression had been made on Canadian people. The Canadian government recognized the claims of the Métis and gave them title to their land. The rebellion showed the increasing importance of the Northwest Territories, and were given representation in the government. Most important, it stimulated a national feeling of Canadian unity. Today, the site of the battle of Batoche receives thousands of visitors every year, including school children and tourists from all over Canada and the world.

As MLA for Kinistino constituency, I believe I was elected to this legislature because the people of my constituency wanted a Progressive Conservative government on October 29th. I wish to extend to the Premier and the ministers of the government my personal congratulations on receiving a second mandate from the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the main objective of the Speech from the Throne is to set the course of building Saskatchewan, building the economy, building our agriculture sector, building tourism, building small business, building our education system, building our province in every way possible.

Mr. Speaker, creating new jobs, opportunity for all people, is important to this government. More people at work means a greater confidence in our future. That means more investment, Mr. Speaker, the PC government's commitment of job creation is

spelled out clearly in the Speech from the Throne. It says that through the Saskatchewan Builds program we can expect this government to create new jobs in agriculture, small business, and tourism.

Mr. Speaker, the Buy Saskatchewan program created extra employment in the Kinistino constituency. Commercial Industrial Manufacturing (CIM) in Humboldt employs from 20 to 40 people. Over 20 per cent of their work is building pole standards for Sask Power which, prior to 1984, were manufactured outside the province. Hoffman Manufacturing in Middle Lake is a supplier of laminated glass arms for Sask Power. It employs eight people. This firm was established in 1985.

Sorenson Manufacturing from Birch Hills. A couple of young fellows who had a little welding shop, they built a machine to galvanize ground rods. They supplied 20,000 ground rods to Sask Power and SaskTel this fall. They hope to have a contract for 40,000 to Alberta in the near future. Prior to 1986, ground rods were manufactured in Ontario and Manitoba only. They also have a contract with Sask Power for 500 transformer hangers which up to now were imported from Tennessee, U.S.A. They are also working on 120,000 feet of galvanized conduit which is going to be used on the heavy oil upgrader.

Those above items came to be from the promotion of small business by the PC government.

In tourism alone there will be a five-year, \$50 million program to develop the tourism and hospitality industry. May I quote what the Premier had said about this program.

This is not the time for standing still. This is a time to believe in ourselves, to believe in strengthening our province.

I agree with the Premier. The tourism and hospitality industry will be a very important facility for this province to provide essential training for our people and to fill new jobs in the tourism industry.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Builds program will encourage new jobs in the new business communities. Six thousand new jobs are anticipated. Mr. Speaker, we are now on the way to build a very strong, stable and growing economy in this province.

I support the government's commitment of strengthening our education system. Just a few weeks ago I performed my first official duty at the opening of the newly renovated and extended school in Birch Hills. The cost of this project was a quarter of a million dollars. And it's a fine facility for a small town like Birch Hills.

The education of young people and training people for the work-force is important. I believe that buildings such as the Northern Institute of Technology in Prince Albert will be an asset to the people. It will enhance the opportunities for young men and women of

this province. Education builds for the future. It is a sound investment of tax dollars and we are keeping up with an every-changing world.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to put on the record my views about the health care system in Saskatchewan. We in Saskatchewan have the best health care system in North America, and I'm sure every member of this legislature will agree that we in Saskatchewan are proud of our health care system.

In 1983 I was fortunate to take part in forming the Lions Eye Bank of Saskatchewan Inc. The Department of Health was very co-operative with grants to establish a lab and for removing corneas. Prior to 1982 most transplant patients had to go out of the province to receive a cornea transplant.

Our chapter president, Cliff Warden, was going blind and had to receive a cornea transplant and had to go to New York, and the cost was \$9,000. The same transplant in Saskatchewan is less than 2,000. Mr. Speaker, since 1983, 1240 people have received the gift of sight through cornea transplants in Saskatchewan.

On behalf of the Lions Eye Banks of Saskatchewan, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government and the former minister of Health for the help and co-operation that he gave.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Saxinger: -- And I am sure the Lions Eye Bank of Saskatchewan will continue to get the support and co-operation from the new Minister of Health, the hon. member from Meadow Lake.

The Speech from the Throne says that this government will work at new and meaningful ways to build our health care system. Mr. Speaker, it was a PC government that put an end to extra-billing. It was the PC government that established a major five-year program for health care facility construction and renovation.

At the all-candidates debate a week before the election, the NDP candidate for Kinistino constituency was questioned about the six-year moratorium on the nursing home program, and he stated that it was just a rumour, just a rumour they had the moratorium on the nursing homes. Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a letter from the minister of Social Services, and it's dated July 11, 1977, and it's addressed to the administrator of the Cudworth Nursing Home, and it states:

Thank you for a letter on June 21, 1977 requesting approval of a 12-bed extension to your home. I feel I must draw to your attention first the fact that our government has placed a moratorium on approval and/or construction of any additional special care home beds in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this was signed by Herman H. Rolfes. Oh I am sorry, it's the hon. member from Saskatoon South.

Mr. Speaker, it was a PC government which started building nursing homes again. In Kinistino constituency since 1982, very much needed new nursing homes were built in Birch Hills and Middle Lake. Also extensions to nursing homes in Kinistino and Wakaw. A 27-unit enriched housing project in Middle Lake, connected to the nursing home, is ready for occupancy very shortly. Mr. Speaker, the next four years in our health care system will receive the same priority, and I support that.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency I listen carefully to what people tell me. The people are always concerned about where the tax dollars go when it comes to government administration. The message they give me is that they want the government to take a look at organization of departments and government agencies, as well as Crown corporations. That is why I'm sure my constituents will welcome the announcements from the Speech from the Throne that there will be a reorganization of Saskatchewan government. The new department of human resources, labour and employment is an example of building an effective government. Mr. Speaker, big government does not necessarily mean good government.

Mr. Speaker, I have every reason to believe that the election on October 20th was a turning point in Saskatchewan history. I have every reason to believe that the people of Saskatchewan wanted Premier Devine's government to have another term. Mr. Speaker, as a Progressive Conservative MLA I have every confidence the next four years will be even better years for Saskatchewan.

The Speech from the Throne gave me every reason to believe that it says it will continue building in agriculture. It says it will continue building the economy. Most importantly, it offers all Saskatchewan people the same kind of excellent programs that they have come to expect from a PC government. Mr. Speaker, you and all other members of this Legislative Assembly can appreciate the honour and pride any MLA has in being called upon by their constituents to serve them in the legislature. I, too, have that same sense of honour and pride in being elected to this legislature. I look forward to building a better Saskatchewan, as part of the government caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I came to Saskatchewan 32 years ago, and I am honoured and proud to call Saskatchewan my home. Last summer I spent some time in Europe. Unemployment has increased up to 300 per cent in some areas. Grain and what prices are at an all-time low. Yes, they are suffering from the world-wide recession. We, in Saskatchewan, have been hit by this world-wide recession, but because of good economic policies from this government we are doing much better.

I want to work with our Premier to build a better Saskatchewan, to make Saskatchewan a good province to live in. That is what I believe my job as MLA for Kinistino is – to make a better province.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the motion in the support of the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Mr. Speaker, we have guests in the Legislative Assembly here, guests of the MLA from Cumberland. They have come to us from Southend Reindeer. There are 11 adult students, along with their instructor, William Dumais, who are taking the upgrading class. They have come to take a tour of the Assembly and will be meeting the MLA from Prince Albert-duck Lake. And I would ask that the members join me in welcoming them to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: -- Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Martineau.

Mr. Goodale: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you will know it to be very true, Mr. Speaker, when I tell you that I'm very pleased to be here. It's been a long time -- 11 years -- since a duly-elected Liberal MLA won a place in this Assembly. I'm honoured to be fulfilling that role and I trust, Mr. Speaker, that I will be able to make a useful contribution.

I want to congratulate you, sir, and your deputy, upon your election to your high offices in this House. You are the custodians of the democratic traditions of this place, and I know all members will want to wish you well.

May I also take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the cabinet upon their various appointments, and all members upon their successful elections. This is going to be an interesting and, I hope, a productive legislature for the people of Saskatchewan.

I have the honour, sir, to represent the rural constituency of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, a constituency with a very proud and colourful heritage. It is one of those special few constituencies that the so-called political pundits like to watch because it is always exciting and the results there can often be a forerunner of things to come.

The people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg take their politics very seriously. We are blessed in that constituency with vigorous campaigns and with high voter turn-outs. And may I pause here for a moment to pay tribute to my two opponents in the last campaign, Mr. Engel and Mr. Fancourt. I have been through a number of elections. I know what it is to win, and I know what it is to lose. And the latter is not very pleasant. I want to congratulate both Mr. Fancourt and Mr. Engel for their efforts – I have the greatest of respect for both of them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goodale: -- Our contest was a hot and furious one, Mr. Speaker, as is usually the case in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. But it was also clean and honourable, which I'm proud to report is also the usual case in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg.

I want to thank the people of my constituency for the confidence which they have placed in me. With every ounce of energy that I can muster, Mr. Speaker, I commit myself to pursuing the goals and objectives of the people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg – what they believe to be important. Having been associated with that great part of Saskatchewan in a very personal way for nearly 20 years now, I have a pretty good feeling for what those aspirations are. They include a much stronger and more healthy agricultural sector as our economic life-blood. They include prosperous, attractive local communities offering an appealing quality of life in rural Saskatchewan. They include thriving small businesses and new economic development opportunities, in addition to agriculture, that will provide some decent measure of diversification and new meaningful local jobs, especially for young people.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, the much maligned power plant expansion at Coronach is of such great importance. It offers, or it could offer, hope and opportunity in an area that desperately needs it. I will have some questions for the Premier on this subject in due course; suffice it here to say the Coronach area has been bitterly disappointed by government decisions not to proceed with further development of the SPC project at Coronach. They had every right to expect that development, and yet they saw it snatched away from them, and they are left to suffer the painful, empty consequences without even the courtesy of a fair and decent hearing.

And the vote results on the 20th of October, Mr. Speaker, reflect the depth of feeling on this subject in the Coronach district. When you isolate those polls directly affected, both rural and urban, you will find clear evidence of profound disenchantment with this Conservative government. Between 1982 and 1986 the Liberal vote in the Coronach district increased by a full 59 per cent, the NDP vote declined marginally by 11 per cent, but the Tory vote virtually collapsed – 50 per cent of those who voted PC in that district in 1982 did not vote PC again in 1986 – a full 50 per cent. Now that is a powerful message which I hope the Premier will choose not to ignore.

The aspirations of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg also include the pursuit of a better standards of public services, like nursing homes, services to seniors, hospitals, schools, highways, and so forth.

On highways, for example, much of the provincial network in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg is in deplorable condition. It is worse than just uncomfortable or inconvenient, Mr. Speaker; it's downright dangerous. It's a matter of public safety, and I'll be pursuing that subject with the Minister of Highways, the member from Melfort.

With respect to hospitals and nursing homes, I'm going to do something the Premier says opposition members never do, so maybe I'm about to make history, but I do want to thank the government for the commitments made this fall to both Gravelbourg and Lafleche for the construction of new, improved hospital and nursing home facilities. These are urgently required in these communities.

I would hope the government might just be able to do a little bit better than putting them on the sixth year of a five-year construction program, and I will be examining that with the new Minister of Health. But for now I simple want the minister and his predecessor and the government to know their announcements so far for Lafleche and Gravelbourg are appreciated, and we do say thank you; both communities are looking forward to these new projects with great anticipation.

My comments on this subject, Mr. Speaker, are some indication of a very real difference between the two parties represented on this side of the House. For my part, I do not intend to adopt an approach in this legislature that is incessantly negative. As an opposition member I have a duty to scrutinize and to criticize what the government is doing, and I will do that job with vigour, but always with a larger and constructive objective in mind.

I will bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that no party is always right and o party is always wrong. No party has the market cornered on virtue. Sitting in this legislature, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of that truth. I listen to government members praising themselves in the purplest of prose for their wonderful achievements as they define them. I would think, Mr. Speaker, that every chiropractor and physiotherapist in Saskatchewan could be pressed into service putting all their joints back into position after all of their self-congratulatory back-patting.

(1515)

To listen to the PC members, there is doubt about it; they're perfect, and how could anybody be so stupid as to disagree? But then, Mr. Speaker, I think of 40,000 Saskatchewan people unemployed. I think of food banks. I think of those who live in poverty this Christmas with little hope for 1987. I think of those on lengthy waiting lists trying to get into hospitals and nursing homes. I think of the deprivation that is a daily fact of life in northern Saskatchewan. I think of farmers in the 1980s, facing the prospect, perhaps, of losing the land that their fathers or grandfathers somehow managed to hang

on to through the 1930s. I think of young people losing hope for the kind of education and job opportunities they thought Saskatchewan could offer to them. The reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, shows this government is, in fact, far less than perfect.

And then I listen to members of the NDP opposition. They lost the election, but they claim their own version of perfection none the less. They make the argument that they are the sole spokesmen in Saskatchewan for all human and kindly virtues. They are the exclusive custodians of righteousness, according to them.

But then I think of the chronic shortage of long-term care beds in nursing homes for Saskatchewan senior citizens, and it began when the NDP were in government. I think of cut-backs and underfunding in our universities; that, too, began when the NDP were in government. I think of deteriorating hospital services, understaffing, and long waiting lists. It all began when the NDP were in government. I think of the crunch on the family farm; that, too, began when the NDP were in government.

No, Mr. Speaker, this Progressive Conservative government opposite has not solved these problems, but those in the NDP who now wax sanctimonious should recall the origin of these issues, and a little more humility just might be in order.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the throne speech as a blueprint for this legislature's program. I must say to you that I am disappointed in the document. While it does include some measures that are worthy of support, on balance it conveys more of a sense of drift than a sense of clear purpose and direction. After you get past all of the historical references and the self-serving back-patting, what are you left with? The answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is: not much.

Before I wade into some discussion of what's missing and why I cannot endorse the throne speech, I would want to note and acknowledge those points that I welcome and approve. They include the new emphasis on preventative health care; the initiatives with respect to alcohol and drug abuse; the references to tourism, including a tourism and hospitality institute; some new focus on research and possible research institutes associated with the grains, biotechnology, potash, and uranium industries; and a Saskatchewan entrepreneurial institute.

But beyond these specific measures which are themselves still highly theoretical, where's the substance in the throne speech? Whenever the document got close to dealing with something of concrete importance, it either threw up its hands in the face of international circumstances or it promised some vague process of ongoing consultations. And that's just not good enough.

Let's take agriculture, an industry and a way of life that is fundamental to Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, as an example. There were lots of words in the throne speech about agriculture, but precious little action.

A couple of expected housekeeping measures to extend existing programs were re-announced but, beyond that, the only concrete item was the encouragement of Saskatchewan manufacturing of farm chemicals and fertilizers to reduce farm input costs. And last week we learned that the one specific proposal on the table in this regard, the ammonia plant connected with the Co-op upgrader in Regina, was not in fact going to proceed. That is a pretty bad start on a program which is in itself pretty thin and vague.

There was no commitment to pursue a new, workable international grains agreement with some decent minimum world price guarantee. There was no support for tax changes that might convert some of the farmers' current tax deductions into more beneficial tax credits. There was no plan to make generic farm chemicals more available in Saskatchewan. There was no announcement of any public inquiry or investigation into chemical costs. Nor was there any mention of a Saskatchewan farm chemical corporation such as Liberals proposed during the election – a joint venture between government and farmers to establish a farmer-owned and farmer-controlled new enterprise in Saskatchewan that would assemble the market clout of farmers and break the stranglehold of large chemical corporations.

There was no action on farm land taxation; nothing to alleviate the burden of farm debt; no bold new steps to ensure stable, affordable, long-term farm credit. All of these things, Mr. Speaker, were missing from the government's agricultural program.

The second area in the throne speech that is a cause for disappointment is the government's continuing weak-kneed approach in federal-provincial relations. They have given no indication in this document of any courage or any backbone when it comes to dealing with Ottawa.

In November we saw how deeply it cuts when the Premier of Saskatchewan contents himself with being a cheer-leader or a mouthpiece for Ottawa. I'm referring to the CF-18 affair, the federal contract for servicing Canada's new jet aircraft. A decision from Ottawa was supposed to be forthcoming last April. But for some mysterious reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was delayed, delayed for seven months while the Mulroney government admittedly interfered to skew the bidding process – they admitted it. They intervened on purely political bases to cause a western bidder from Manitoba to lose so the contract could go to central Canada.

Here in the West, Mr. Speaker, we do not have very many established industrial enterprises that could even sit down at the bidding table and be in the game when big tenders of this kind are being decided. But in the case of the CF-18, we not only had a western firm that could competitively enter the race, that firm was the best in the country. It bid and it won, only to have the contract snatched away by the politics of Brian Mulroney. And to add insult to injury, our Premier in Saskatchewan gratuitously entered the debate to side with Ottawa and to betray western Canada.

In the November 3rd edition of the *Globe and Mail* he attacked Manitoba and he supported this blatant federal discrimination against western Canada. And I quote, Mr. Speaker:

In a taped statement, Mr. Devine said Ottawa has done enough for the West under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Manitoba should not complain.

And look at what he cited in that article, Mr. Speaker, as evidence to support his incredible proposition. The Premier mentioned drought relief, flood payments, farm fuel taxes, and deficiency payments. And let's examine each one of those in turn.

On drought relief: the 1985 payments to grain producers were delayed for many, many months, and then when they finally came they amounted to only a minuscule amount per acre. And the payments intended for livestock producers never in fact were received at all. Instead the money was intercepted and absorbed by the provincial treasury.

On flood payments: for 18 months the federal PC government increased the level of taxation on farm fuels, then made a big show of removing some of that taxation only after they had already extracted their pound of flesh. And farm groups have calculated that indirect taxes on energy and farming still amount to some \$10,000 per year for the average Saskatchewan farmer.

On deficiency payments: the Premier knows that the major impetus which brought forward some announcement by Ottawa on this subject was purely and simply the fact that an election campaign was under way in the province of Saskatchewan this fall. Without that campaign, no federal announcement would have seen the light of day. It was obviously tossed together in a state of political panic. The details released last week show the federal commitment to deficiency payments has been substantially watered down – watered down geographically, spreading the total figure across the entire country; and watered down in terms of timing, spreading the money through two governmental fiscal years, thus delaying the benefits coming into the hands of farmers.

Mr. Speaker, all those things considered, the Premier might want to think twice before he signs the praises of Brian Mulroney in Saskatchewan. He might think twice before he attempts to defend the indefensible. He might also remember that his same Mulroney government is in the process of slashing the budget for the federal Department of Agriculture by as much as half a billion dollars. They've cut their funding for farm credit by another three to \$400 million. They've increased a number of federal taxes and fees charged to farmers, and they've placed most of their emphasis on a program designed to encourage farmers to quit.

That seems to be to be hardly the kind of evidence that the Premier would want to use to defend the federal government's iniquitous CF-18 decision. It would have been more appropriate in this throne speech for the Government of Saskatchewan to signal a more aggressive and more determined line in future in dealing with the Government of Canada. But of course, it wasn't there.

Also missing from the document was any clear strategy for Saskatchewan's economic diversification. Oh yes, there was a good deal of talk about the need for diversification. There was even an admission on the part of the government that they had not been successful in achieving that objective. But other than the continued plundering of the provincial treasury, there was no game plan for how to alter this sad historical Saskatchewan deficiency.

In the Liberal Party we have offered some useful suggestions which the government might want to take up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it didn't. To use just one example, I would refer to our ideas for the creation of Saskatchewan capital investment bonds. This would be the creation of a new financial instrument in this province to generate new revenue from new sources for new economic development purposes, something more creative than just raising taxes or running a deficit. I won't belabour the details of that ideas at this point. I've discussed the ideas at length on many other occasions. I simply mention the idea today as one example of an imaginative new approach that might be taken to tackle the challenges of diversification in Saskatchewan. But imagination and creativity are not apparent characteristics of this particular throne speech.

Also missing from this document, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was any substantial mention of issues of particular concern to Saskatchewan women. Since the Premier is just freshly back from the recent first ministers' conference in Vancouver where these issues figured rather prominently in the discussions, I'd have thought that this throne speech might at least refer to some agenda in this regard, but it didn't. No reference to child care, no reference to affirmative action, no reference to employment equity; nothing meaningful at all. Not even a statement of principle, and that is another case of blatant omission.

Before I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I want to touch briefly on two themes that figured prominently in the election campaign because of the type of campaign conducted by Saskatchewan Liberals. One of those themes is the need for fiscal responsibility in this legislature, the crying need to put the financial house of Saskatchewan back into some semblance of proper order. And the other theme is political integrity, cleaning up the processes by which government works in our province. I won't belabour these points today, but they are of vital importance, and we know a large percentage of Saskatchewan people agreed with the Liberal campaign on these two central concerns. You can see that in the doubling of our popular vote and by the fact that we now have an elected voice in this House.

(1530)

Furthermore, the opinion polls taken during the election showed a full 75 per cent of Saskatchewan people were cheering us on during the campaign and wanted us to do well. Our issues of fiscal responsibility and political integrity moved way up in the public's ranking of important concerns. We must have had considerable impact when you consider that this throne speech indicates the PC government is acknowledging now, for the first time in four and one-half years, that these issues have to receive some attention.

What kind of attention remains to be seen, but at least the issues are now on the table. At least there is some reference to higher ethical standards in public life. At least there is some expression of concern about this government's \$2 billion deficit and the fact that Saskatchewan's credit rating has been devalued on three consecutive occasions in the past 18 months. That sorry state of affairs cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan \$300 per minute in interest charges alone, and the international bond rating agencies have forecast that debt services charges against Saskatchewan could increase by 97 per cent in the next two years. That, Mr. Speaker, is very serious. It indicates that our province is in a very precarious financial position. The government blames all of this difficulty on international circumstances beyond its control. That convenient rationalization is only partly correct. It is not by any means a total explanation. For example, it does not account for this government's blatant penchant for outrageous mismanagement or its misplaced priorities or its wasteful extravagance upon its own self-indulgence.

Mr. Speaker, as this legislature unfolds, I will continue to highlight these concerns and I will present some ideas for how they ought to be addressed. If we fail to come to grips with this set of issues, we will burden our province with four critical costs: a higher tax burden right now; deferred future taxes for our children to pay; rising dead-loss interest charges, and perhaps more important, a severe cost in terms of lost opportunities. We should remember that every dollar that we allow to be frittered away through bad management, or mistaken priorities, or sheer waste is a dollar that won't be available for the things that really matter in Saskatchewan life.

With respect to political integrity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I've already indicated in this House in question period, I will be pressing the government to move in three areas beyond the vague but welcome comments, so far as they go, contained in the throne speech.

I will call upon the government to curtail the tool of patronage. A start can be made in this direction by rendering important government appointments subject to a public review process to put patronage under a microscope and expose it to the light of day.

I will call for a properly defined and properly pursued tendering process for the distribution of all government contracts – a process that would be open and competitive and accountable and fair. And I will call for a drastic reduction in the blatant abuse of taxpayers' money for political advertising at public expense.

In this legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should dedicate ourselves to the principle that low standards do not have to be accepted as inevitable in Saskatchewan. The abusive practices of government can be cleaned up. The steps which I have mentioned would move us in that direction. They would not only make government in this province more honourable and more respectable, they would also save many millions of precious tax dollars every year.

Mr. Speaker, I come to this legislature as a new member determined to try to make a positive contribution. As I begin this new job I recall with pride those former MLAs from my area who have previously represented the Liberal Party in this Assembly in the recent past: from the Gravelbourg district I think of the Hon. Mr. Culliton and of Lionel Coderre; from Assiniboia-Bengough, as it used to be called, I think of Sam Asbell and Alex Mitchell; from Notukeu-Willowbunch I think of Karl Klein and Jim Hooker, and from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg I think of Mr. Roy Nelson. I will endeavour to maintain their high standards.

I will also endeavour, Mr. Speaker, to maintain the tradition and the heritage of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party. Our party was the first political movement to be organized in Saskatchewan. Indeed, our founding convention was held in 1905, just a short time before Saskatchewan itself became a province. This makes the Liberal Party Saskatchewan's most senior political institution.

Throughout the years, Mr. Speaker, our party has in fact won more elections, elected more members, and formed the Government of Saskatchewan more often and for longer than any of our competition. We have played a vital role in building our province, and we are grateful for the opportunity to take a hand in shaping Saskatchewan's future.

As I resume my seat, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by thanking all members of the Assembly for the warm way in which they have received me into this House. I also want to thank some of the so-called old-timers around this place who have been helpful and courteous in helping me to get started in my new responsibilities on behalf of the people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- It gives me great pleasure to join in the throne speech debate today on behalf of my constituents in Saskatoon Mayfair. Before I begin, I would like to congratulate the new Speaker through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the fact that you have been selected to hold this office. Although each brought his own style and personality to this office, the fairness and impartiality of the position has remained constant, and I am confident that you and the Speaker will continue this tradition, making our legislature a place that all members can respect.

I also wish to congratulate my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview and Pelly for the excellent jobs that they did in moving and seconding the Speech from the Throne.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate all new members of the legislature on both sides of the House.

It is indeed a special honour to address this Assembly for the first time, and I want to thank the electorate of Saskatoon Mayfair for providing me with the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I would like at this time to share a bit of information with you about my constituency. Saskatoon Mayfair is the largest riding in the province, with approximately 22,000 voters. Small business, manufacturing, and agriculture play significant roles in the economy of the area. As a result of our government's initiatives within the small-business sector, tremendous growth has occurred during the past five years. The employment opportunities provided have benefitted not only my constituency but all of Saskatoon and, indeed, the province of Saskatchewan.

Since over 60 per cent of the total manufacturing for Saskatchewan takes place in Saskatoon, and much in Saskatoon Mayfair, it is obvious that my area contributes significantly to the overall provincial economy.

Last week's announcement with regard to the deficiency payment is good news to the farmers living in my area. During the campaign many farmers expressed to me their concerns about declining farm income and indicated their appreciation for the positive steps taken by this government to protect the family farm.

The same feeling was also expressed to me by the business people in Saskatoon Mayfair. They understand that for every dollar the Saskatchewan farmer receives, it translates into three for the Saskatchewan business community. On behalf of my constituency, I am proud to say that this announcement re-confirms our Premier's ongoing commitment to agriculture and the priority it holds with this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituency has more small businesses, over 1,300 in total, than any other riding in the province. Small business has been the major generator of employment over the last decade. Our government recognized this important role by creating a small business interest reduction program. This program protects the livelihood of over 380 businesses in my constituency alone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a large number of seniors living in Saskatoon Mayfair, some of the pioneers who helped develop this great province of ours. Many times they have told me how happy they are with the initiatives taken by this government on their behalf to ensure that they can live in comfort. They list the heritage program, the increase in income supplement, seniors' information bureau, chiropody program, home care programs, seniors' home repair program, just to mention a few. Our government applauds these individuals of courage and conviction and promises to always stand by them and continue the tradition of making Saskatchewan a place to be proud of.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has contributed to those at the other end of the spectrum, our children and youth. It's a well-known fact that education is one of the corner-stones of this government. In Saskatoon Mayfair, construction of several new schools has taken place: St. Peter's Catholic School, Sister O'Brien Catholic School, Brownell Public, Silverwood Public, Marion Graham Collegiate, and Bishop Mahoney High School. New schools are also under construction in Dundonald and Silverwood. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is certainly in keeping with our commitment to education.

At this time I would like to recognize the contribution of the previous member for Saskatoon Mayfair. His commitment and dedication to the betterment of the constituency made many of these projects possible.

The residents of Saskatoon Mayfair have been well represented in the past and have received many benefits from this government. To these same people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say thank you. It is my intention to communicate with them and to listen to their concerns and suggestions and work hard on their behalf.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now want to spend a few minutes talking about Saskatoon, one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, and list some of the many benefits it has received during our government's first term in office. To start with, funding for the new multi-purpose arena, a project that's creating over 200 new jobs and a centre for cultural and recreational excellence; over \$200 million on hospital construction for St. Paul's and University hospitals; construction of a new City Hospital to begin in 1987-88; our five-year special care home program is setting new records of construction with 433 new beds in Saskatoon alone. The Parkridge Centre, a 240-bed complex, is the largest in Saskatchewan history and will be opening in the spring of 1987. A new \$78 million, world-class college of Agriculture building at the University of Saskatchewan, total value around \$12 million; a new science research unit at the college of Medicine; refurbishment of the Western Development Museum; support to the expansion of Intercontinental Packers, Saskatoon's largest private employer; \$42 million worth of school construction and renovations; over 10,000 Saskatoon families were protected by the mortgage interest reduction program; 1,500 increased day-care spaces since 1982, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Over 1,200 new jobs have been created through the employment development program of Social Services.

What did the previous administration ever do in 11 years to get people off welfare? From November '81 to November '86, there are 15,000 more people working in Saskatoon. To date, over 18,000 Saskatoon residents have been able to renovate their homes as a result of the Saskatchewan home program – a boon to the building supply industry and to the trades and jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker – many, many jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatoon is an exciting and vibrant city which enjoys strong economic growth. In an across-Canada survey last year, Saskatoon's economic rating rose from 16th to eighth. Saskatoon has also been noted as one of Canada's most picturesque cities. The Meewasin Valley Authority has contributed significantly to its beautification. The Meewasin Valley trail and park are only two of the projects completed to date in the restoration of the river banks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has made a major commitment to the citizens of Saskatoon and all Saskatchewan residents. My commitment is to continue this tradition of co-operation to ensure that Saskatonians receive maximum benefit from government programs, whether they be to assist with the development of new services, creation of jobs, or further protection for families.

And now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to take some time to bring the legislature up to date on the progress and the future direction of the Department of Science and Technology, for which I am responsible.

In the overall strategy presented in the throne speech, Science and Technology forms only one segment, but a crucial one, as new technologies will open the door to the future. The member for Saskatoon Centre may not agree with me. She says we don't need the high-tech industry; it's a waste of money. But I don't agree, Mr. Speaker. There's a growing need today as never before, and I'm sure that the majority of the people in Saskatoon Centre would agree with me as well.

In mid-1983 a long-term science and technology strategy was announced by our Premier. It recognized that the formation, foundation of economic and industrial development in Saskatchewan would depend on how well the province could develop, transfer, and utilize technology.

(1545)

On January 1, 1984, the Department of Science and Technology was established, and it began working to maximize the benefits of advanced technology for the people of Saskatchewan; because this strategy continues to generate social and economic benefits, our government will continue to back its commitment.

The Leader of the Opposition made mention of cutbacks or closures in the high-tech industry – says we need to spend more money in manufacturing. He neglected to say anything about the industry's growth in number of businesses, revenue, or employment. I'm sure that the hon. member opposite understands the nature of this industry, the fact that there are many risks involved in the innovation of new technology. Both domestic and international markets and the life span of a product are uncertain.

And with regard to spending more money in manufacturing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the high-tech field, from November '84 to November '86, 71 firms have received commitments of assistance from my department totalling nearly \$5 million. Now this may be insignificant in itself, but if one considers the amount of federal research and development moneys that are triggered by this support, it is fairly significant.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition also says that there hasn't been any expansion in manufacturing since 1982 – fewer jobs. Well let me say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that since 1982 the number of advanced technology firms has quadrupled in this province, and the number employed has doubled. And if present trends continue, another 50 firms will be established in Saskatchewan during the year 1986 –87.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- As a result, Saskatchewan is currently ranked in the top three provinces in Canada in advanced technology sales and is in a position to attain national

leadership in biotechnology, agricultural, value-added products, and communication. The opening of international borders, improved transportation and communication have all signalled a rapidly changing market-place.

This new world economy based on information and knowledge suggests we must improve our competitiveness in order to provide future opportunities for our people. This is going to mean changing the way in which we educate our youth. We'll have to upgrade the training of our work-force in universities and technical institutes. That is another reason why our government has placed a high priority on education.

As the international market-place rushes toward the 21st century, Saskatchewan is ready. A new era of technology is already established, led by new tech companies with head offices in Saskatoon, encouraged by the establishment of facilities such as the Saskatchewan Advanced Technology Training Centre at Kelsey Institute. On the university campus SED Systems is participating in a new manufacturing research and development complex at Innovation Place which represents the single largest and most diversified technical research centre in western Canada. Now I might add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that facility will be opening officially in the latter part of February or early March with something in the neighbourhood of 325 to 350 employees being housed in that one building.

The Saskatchewan Research Council's Innovation technology transfer program has met with great success. Many smaller manufacturers operating in rural and urban locations, as a result of this program, have been able to develop new products for farm implements.

We've also seen accomplishments in the area of advanced instrumentation, remote sensing, and robotics. Our province has come a long way since 1982, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have significantly expanded Saskatchewan's economic base through the Saskatchewan Builds program. And now the Saskatchewan builds program will provide the means to do even more.

During the election campaign the Premier announced intentions to spend an additional \$50 million on programs to help small business equip themselves with new technology. This is a further example of our government's foresight and ingenuity in understanding the relationship between new technologies and the business sector. This initiative will have long-term results for the people of Saskatchewan. Areas needing government support have been and are being identified and programs developed. And these programs will reflect the needs and expectations of Saskatchewan manufacturers, the research community, and the business support sectors. We feel that these initiatives build on the solid record of achievement in our advanced technology sector and our government commitment to build for the future by diversifying the economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we are a government with leadership founded on the principles of individual initiative and moral responsibility, I believe it is time we exploded some of the myths the members opposite espouse. They like to proclaim to

anyone who will listen that they are the party of the little guy. They constantly argue that only they can protect people. They think they have a monopoly when it comes to caring.

Well in truth it is the Progressive Conservative government that is the party of the individual in Saskatchewan. It was our government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which removed the tax on gasoline. It was our government which fought to save the farms of thousands of Saskatchewan farmers. It was our government that introduced the farm purchase program which resulted in over 5,000 young farmers starting up or expanding their operations. And it's been our Premier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who has led the charge to get additional federal support for our farmers in time of need. Last week's announcement is just another example of that.

These are only a few ways in which our leadership and policies have helped Saskatchewan people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1982 the people of this province, in their infinite wisdom, saw fit to elect a PC government, a government which is a builder and not a buyer. On October 20th the Saskatchewan people renewed this mandate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased with the throne speech. Opposition members claim the throne speech only talks about the past. Well I say to them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our government is proud of its past achievements and even prouder of what it will accomplish in the future.

If the members opposite would have read the throne speech with an open mind they would have noticed initiatives such as legislation to organize urban development corporations to mobilize local initiative and capital; \$50 million to assist small business to equip itself with new technology; a tourism and hospitality institute; expanding tourism opportunities; venture capital program for labour unions; equal access to credit for women and small business; enhanced Indian economic development programs; a new department of human resources, labour and employment to ensure the interests and needs of people are foremost; the establishment of Saskatchewan entrepreneurial institute and the expansion of the youth entrepreneurial program, giving young people the opportunity to obtain the expertise and business experience.

Changes to the elementary and high school curriculum with special emphasis on reading, communication, mathematical skills and computer technology.

Extension of The Farm Land Security Act. Payment to the production loan program will be extended for one year. A review of the tax structure for the oil and gas, potash and uranium industries. Removal of unnecessary regulations affecting small business and the public. And legislation to guarantee nine and three-quarter per cent mortgages for the people of Saskatchewan.

Under the leadership of our Premier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people have developed a sense of pride and optimism in our province. This sense of pride and optimism was expressed all across Saskatchewan during Heritage Year, and all across Canada and the world at Expo '86. We know that people from one end of Saskatchewan to the other believe that

we can be first class and hold our own with the rest of the world. Until 1982 Saskatchewan was the world's best kept secret. This was unfortunate because we have so much we can be proud of in this province.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that I'm confident that the measures introduced in this throne speech will strengthen our faith in the leadership of our Premier and this government – a leadership based on pride and optimism; a leadership of which we can all be proud because it recognizes the importance of individual people throughout all parts of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the motion to adopt the throne speech. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to deliver my first speech to this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, please convey my personal congratulations to the Speaker and to yourself for being elected to this position. Your position is a role that must be performed in a patient, fair, and above all, firm manner. Mr. Speaker, please accept my best wishes in the fulfilment of your duties to the legislature of Saskatchewan.

I congratulate each and every member here, most especially the members newly elected and sworn in to serve as legislators of this Assembly. I know all members of this legislature will agree that it is an honour to be given the responsibility to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

For my family and friends, for my constituents in Prince Albert, and for me, this is a special occasion. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the people of Prince Albert constituency who have placed their confidence in me.

Through the exercise of their democratic right they have appointed me to serve in this legislature on their behalf, and I am proud to be here today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- In this my first speech, I want to introduce you to the constituency I represent. The constituency of Prince Albert is located wholly within the city limits of Prince Albert. More specifically it is that portion of Prince Albert east of Central Avenue and bounded on the east and the south by the city limits and on the north by the Saskatchewan River.

Our population is made up of young people, people with growing families, and an increasing number of senior citizens. We have people of varied ethnic backgrounds. Ours is a growing constituency, Mr. Speaker. In the past four years, over 500 people from 18 countries have immigrated to the Prince Albert area, and many of them reside in the constituency of Prince Albert. Many people have moved into our city from the surrounding rural areas and from the North.

Our citizens, through their elected local officials, have had to plan carefully to meet the needs of a growing population and to meet the new demands placed on our schools and public services. We have had to build a new water treatment plant in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. It cost \$6 million -- \$4 million of which had to be borrowed. The city was expecting assistance from the provincial government to do this. The city deserves assistance from the provincial government for this much needed facility. When the city made application for assistance they were refused. They were refused, even though the city of Regina received assistance for its filtration plant.

Mr. Speaker, our residents believe in fair and equitable government. They believe the Government of Saskatchewan should have a universal strategy to deal fairly with all urban centres when it comes to supplying basic needs like good water and sanitary sewage treatment. We look to the correction of that type of haphazard management during this term of office, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Your government through its last term of office reduced the emphasis on revenue sharing with urban municipalities. This was not the request of our city. In fact, our city needs an increase in revenue sharing. Since 1982 the provincial government grant to the city of Prince Albert has had an increase of less than 2 per cent per year. Yet at the same time the mill rate has increased by seven mills, an increase of 12 per cent. If this government had practised sounder fiscal policies, Mr. Speaker, the people of Prince Albert and the administration would not be faced with such massive mill rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency of Prince Albert, and indeed in other urban ridings, by far the most devastating problem continues to be the plague of unemployment. During the last term of office of your government, the unemployment nearly doubled. It was disappointing, therefore, Mr. Speaker, to hear that in the throne speech it made no commitment to those many unemployed. This government is refusing to take responsibility for correcting this malaise of our economic system. If there was any single thing, Mr. Speaker, that the government and the people of this province wanted this government to do, it was to provide the willing and the skilled workers of this province the opportunity for good steady jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1600)

Mr. Kowalsky: -- In the '60s and '70s the unemployment was of a temporary nature. We are now into a new type of unemployment. The permanent shut-down of industrial and labour-intensive jobs has resulted in permanent job losses. In our province, the operation of existing primary and secondary industries requires now fewer and fewer jobs. As a result, we were seeing unemployed people using up all of their available unemployment insurance benefits with no success in finding jobs. We are seeing people forced to apply for social assistance just to feed their families and survive. They see no dignity in being forced on social assistance, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are people who have found themselves in a cycle – from work to unemployment insurance to social assistance to a minimum wage job long enough to qualify for unemployment insurance again and then back onto social assistance. That is ample testimony, Mr. Speaker, that your government's patchwork substitute for real jobs has failed miserably to meet the needs of workers in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing in Saskatchewan a growing number of young people who cannot find a first job. We are seeing young people pushed through job training programs. They complete them successfully and yet are unable to get into the job market because there are no jobs there. Mr. Speaker, this government should acknowledge the unemployment problem and they should be taking active steps to improve it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address the changing needs in our health care system in Prince Albert. Prince Albert is considered one of the seven regional health centres of our province. We have two hospitals in our city which provide secondary health care but there is a growing need for tertiary treatment. Mr. Speaker, when an elderly constituent of mine who has had a thorough diagnosis and is in constant pain has been told that she must wait for over four months to have surgery performed on her hip, I think that is too long. I think that's too long to wait; that's too long to wait in pain, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when your government conducts its review of the changing requirements of health services, as you are committed to do in the throne speech, I request the expansion of specialized hospital care such as orthopaedics be included in your plan for Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, the hospital centres in Saskatoon and Regina are overloaded. We have an increasing number of seniors who need hospital care now and in the immediate future. Every year the list grows longer and longer. Without a commitment from this government to diversify health treatment facilities in this province so some of the specialized procedures can be done in regional centres like Prince Albert, the waiting list will continue.

Mr. Speaker, the Pineland Home Care Centre was incorporated in Prince Albert in 1981. Every year since then this organization has faced a demand for ever increasing service. The growth rate for services delivered in the budget last year was 21 per cent. Your government's financial assistance has not met that need. As a result the levels of service had to be reduced. I would sooner, Mr. Speaker, that you would reduce the cost of your

bloated Executive Council to save money than to reduce the level of home care available to my constituents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- We are all aware of the need for a comprehensive health care system which includes hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, home care, dental services and the like, all with trained professional and support personnel. Of particular interest to me, Mr. Speaker, is the co-operative health clinic in Prince Albert and its satellite clinic in Canwood. It is of interest to me because I feel it could well serve as a model of health care delivery. When you compare the total per-patient medical costs provincially with those at the clinic, the clinic comes out ahead. This co-operative health clinic saves our province \$200 per patient per year, while providing excellent health care.

That \$200 annual per-patient saving is worth a close look by the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. It is accomplished by providing more facilities in the clinic and thus sending fewer patients into hospitals. It is a type of health care delivery that is efficient and cost effective. But more important, Mr. Speaker, it is responsive and caring.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Prince Albert, like others throughout the province, are proud of the school system they have developed. Year after year, school boards, administrators, and teachers, have learned how to meet the needs of more and more children.

One of the greatest challenges is to provide meaningful experiences for children from homes living at below the poverty level. With the commitment of the school board and the government in 1980, the community school program was launched. We have four designated community schools in Prince Albert. There are six in Saskatoon and eight in Regina. I consider the community school program to be a major breakthrough in the education of the last decade. These schools have helped elementary students stay in school and succeed, where the traditional system was unable to. School staffs and parents are enthusiastic about our community schools.

I believe there is a need to extend the concept of this program in Saskatchewan, yet I am told that the government has cut the position of a community school advocate at the provincial level and has not increased the funding for community schools. I believe that to be a mistake, Mr. Speaker, and I bring it to the attention of the hon. minister in hopes that he will take action.

The second big success story in education of the past decade has been the expansion of our community college program. For people in my constituency – the Prince Albert community – the Prince Albert community college has provided a variety of services including community interest classes, adult upgrading. It is serving as a delivery agent of university classes. It is a very flexible system, responding remarkably well to community needs, and we are proud of that system.

It is through the community college that residents of Prince Albert are now able to take up to two years of university classes. Our city and surrounding district would welcome a commitment from your government to establish a permanent university centre in Prince Albert. We are a city of 34,000 people, and the nearest degree-granting university is at Saskatoon.

But, Mr. Speaker, because of the underfunding of our universities by this government, university tuition has become prohibitive. To add to the costs of tuition and books, students from Prince Albert and other small centres must consider board and room if they move to Saskatoon and Regina. These additional costs make it impossible for many potential students to enrol at one of the campuses.

So if this government would commit itself to opening a permanent university centre in Prince Albert, many more students could afford post-secondary education.

This fall the Northern Institute of Technology was opened in Prince Albert. Work started on the institute in 1981 when the architectural consortium of Moore Tomporowski and Taylor were hired to draw up the plans. There are over 500 students enrolled in the institute today. The people of Prince Albert are pleased that the plans for the Northern Institute of Technology were honoured and expanded and were not ravaged the way the development of communities in northern Saskatchewan were when you came to office in 1982.

Mr. Speaker, a financing squeeze is facing the rural school districts in this province. A few years ago the Conservative government decided to cancel the home owners' grant. Well, Mr. Speaker, that grant was an incentive for many rural taxpayers to pay their taxes early. Now, because the home owners' grant is gone, and because the Department of Education does not make early pay-outs to rural school districts, these districts are forced to carry extended lines of credit in their banks. The interest charges on those lines of credit could otherwise be spent on better educational services for our children, Mr. Speaker.

You have been petitioned by rural school districts to advance school funding earlier. You have been petitioned by the home owners of Saskatchewan to reintroduce the home owner grant. The fact that you have done neither shows that this government is not responsive to rural Saskatchewan education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Mr. Speaker, in 1980 the Government of Saskatchewan committed itself to a major review on the directions of education in Saskatchewan schools. Extensive series of consultations were arranged province wide. Thousands of hours were spent in compiling community views regarding the direction our educational system should go.

When your government took over in 1982, the process was midstream. The then minister of Education, showing foresight, committed her department to continue the job. A *Directions* report was produced. It contained a goal statement and an implementation plan – a blueprint for education of our children in Saskatchewan, a blueprint which resulted from six years of consultations with parents, students, and educators.

I mention this, Mr. Speaker, because the throne speech makes no reference to carrying out this innovative plan. In fact, what the throne speech does say is the curriculum will be reviewed, that the K to 12 curriculum will concentrate on the acquisition of basic reading, communication, and mathematical skills. This statement in the throne speech concerns me, Mr. Speaker.

It concerns me because it refers only to one small aspect of this very comprehensive report. It concerns me that the government may have decided to abandon the thrust of the *Directions* report. We do not need to regress to the 16th century to rediscover the three R's. The three R's have been discovered, affirmed, and rediscovered over and over again.

This blueprint *Directions* recognizes their importance and builds extensively upon it. This *Directions* report deals with the education of our children for the year 2000. In order for our children to survive and lead productive lives in the 21st century we must be forward thinking, Mr. Speaker. I strongly urge the Minister of Education to follow through on the *Directions* blueprint and the processes that it has initiated.

I conclude my remarks then, Mr. Speaker, today by wishing you, wishing the members of this Assembly, and the people of Saskatchewan, a happy Christmas and a joyous New Year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly very much my pleasure today to enter into the debate on the first session of the 21st Legislature. And firstly, Mr. Speaker, allow me to join with my other colleagues in congratulating you on your election to Speaker and, as well, to the Deputy Speaker on your election. It is with a great deal of respect and a great deal of regard that I do offer you my support, and I want to wish you both very, very well in your new duties and your new responsibilities.

I would also at this time like to congratulate all members of the legislature on their election or re-election, whichever the case may be, and I'm certain for the new members that they will find their time in the legislature here most rewarding. I would further like to extend my congratulations to the member from Saskatoon Eastview and as well the member from Pelly on their very good reply on the address to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, to the constituents of Melfort, I want to express my deepest appreciation for the support, the confidence, and the trust that they have placed in me in re-electing me for the second term as the MLA for the Melfort constituency.

My re-election, of course, brings with it a great deal of responsibility and a responsibility not only to the people of my constituency but, I believe, a responsibility to the entire populace of this great province of ours. And very humbly, Mr. Speaker, I accept those responsibilities, and I pledge a continuation of service to the people of this province . . . a continuation of service to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, by serving the people in a manner which you listen to them, you act on their concerns and make yourself available to these people who have needs from our government, we will do very, very well, Mr. Speaker. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, the Melfort constituents, like the constituents throughout Saskatchewan, understood that it is this government that has, over time, kept very, very close to the people . It is this government, Mr. Speaker, that understands the plight of the Saskatchewan farmer, and it is this government, Mr. Speaker, that has come through with programs to assist our agricultural industry. Mr. Speaker, our government recognized the need for lower interest rates for our home owners. We listened and we responded and quire frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is why we were re-elected.

(1615)

My first term as MLA for the Melfort constituency was a very rewarding one, and I have been rewarded, Mr. Speaker, many times by constituents for simply doing my job. A solitary farmer who comes up and says thank you, thank you for the help that has been given to farmers, whether it's through drought assistance, whether it's through a deficiency payment, whether it's through a low-interest loan. Those types of thank you's, Mr. Speaker, make my job most satisfying.

I feel a great deal of satisfaction when I know that our Premier has effectively responded to farm issues with other innovative approaches. And I speak of the \$200 million agricultural development fund. I speak of The Farm land Security Act which provides relief to farmers who are facing foreclosure; the drought assistance program; the production loan program; the deficiency payment; and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, I could talk at great length. I could talk at great length about the programs and the policies that this government has enacted over the last four or five years, but I don't think it's necessary, Mr. Speaker. I think that the representation in this Legislative Assembly really speaks for itself. I believe that the farmers of Saskatchewan have accepted our programs and our policies with a great deal of respect, Mr. Speaker. And once again I feel that the representations that we have here in the legislature from virtually every rural constituency in this province, with the exception of two, really speak for themselves.

This legislature, Mr. Speaker, will be reintroducing The Farm Land Security Act and The Farmers' Counselling and Assistance Act, and a few other pieces of legislation that are really needed today, Mr. Speaker. And it's with a great deal of pride that I sit here and watch those legislative proceedings go through first reading, second reading, and on

down the line, Mr. Speaker. And I know that these programs will be accepted, not only by the people in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but all the people in this great province of ours.

I am reminded, Mr. Speaker, every time I drive to Regina and I pass the junction right at Dafoe, Saskatchewan that leads down to the town of Wynyard – and there at that junction is a great big bulletin board. And I see that every time I go to Regina and every time I come back from Regina. And that bulletin board has a big slogan on it, and it says – and it's by one of those chemical companies – its says, Farming Feeds Us All.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is just positive reinforcement for the programs and the policies and the thoughts and the wishes and the desires of this government. When I read that sign and I stop and think, what does it really mean? Well, Mr. Speaker, it means exactly what it says. Farming does feed us all in this province, and I believe that the people in urban centres realize that. I know that every dollar that a farmer gets is taken and it's spent. It's not spent on the farm – he's got no place to go on the farm to spend his money – he comes to town, and there is what we call in economics a multiplier effect. And when a farmer has a dollar, I think in the vast majority of cases he spends virtually all of it and sometimes a little more. So, Mr. Speaker, the programs and policies that we have had with respect to agriculture have impacted not only on rural Saskatchewan but on urban Saskatchewan as well. I think the people of the province have accepted those programs and policies and are very pleased with what we have done.

I'd like to update you a little bit, Mr. Speaker, on some of the goals and some of the objectives we have as a government as it respects agriculture. I think any person who has conducted any amount of business in his life knows that you have to have certain goals and you have to have certain objectives. One specific one that I would like to touch on a little bit, that I think is of significance to all people in Saskatchewan, is the goal for the production of farm chemicals.

The Premier has stated on a number of occasions – it's been stated by members of this government – that by, I believe 1991 or thereabouts, our goal is to have approximately 50 per cent of the farm chemicals that are used in Saskatchewan actually produced right here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, here is a prime example, a prime example of our government's policy to build Saskatchewan, to diversify Saskatchewan, to provide jobs, to provide opportunities for people right here in our province. For too long, Mr. Speaker, that diversification has taken place in eastern Canada. We've paid the freight on products both ways, and the jobs have been primarily in eastern Canada. Here, when we reach this goal of producing half of the farms chemicals in our province —has such profound impact on the whole economy – Mr, Speaker, it's really quite a thing when you stop and think about the impact that it has. And here, Mr. Speaker, is where we are attempting to tie the great strength that we have in agriculture with the opportunities and jobs that may present themselves to the people in the cities. And, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the people in both urban and rural Saskatchewan, I think, believe in what we are trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the initiatives that have been started by our government, and I know in the long run they are going to pay off very, very handsomely.

Mr. Speaker, as far as business goes, I have chatted with a large number of business people during the election campaign, of course, and prior to that, and certainly following the election, and I can say, Mr. Speaker, unequivocally, that the business people in Saskatchewan are pleased with the record of our government.

Mr. Speaker, I have a great . . . a great feeling for the people in small business. They are indeed one of the backbones of our province. I believe that they provide the gas and the oil that fuels this economy of ours. Small-business people have benefitted under our government's direction from low interest loans; from industrial incentive plans; from venture capital programs. And these types of programs are encouraging businesses to go out and expand and encourage investment. And when you have businesses expanding, when you have businesses investing, you're going to create jobs and you're going to create opportunities.

One of the main planks in the campaign, one of the main issues in the election of October 1986, was jobs, and it was opportunities. Well, Mr. Speaker, our programs with respect to small business have been doing exactly that. We have been trying to provide jobs and provide opportunities for people in this province, and I believe that the endorsement . . . the endorsement that we have had by the small-business community of this province is proof positive that those programs are working.

Too many times, Mr. Speaker, we hear the opposition talk about the PCs and their affiliation with big business. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think you could go around this province of ours and you could talk to virtually every small-business man in the province. I wouldn't want to guess what the percentage would be that would be happy and very pleased with our programs, but I would suspect it would be very, very high, Mr. Speaker. I would suspect that the support that the NPD has for small business would be very, very minimal.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about a leadership role that our government has taken, and it is the program that we call Buy Saskatchewan. I would like to cite a very specific example and an example that I am very, very proud of – an example that this government is very, very proud of – that is a prime example of how we are providing more opportunities and more jobs, not for big businesses but for the small businesses throughout this province. The example is – and it's one of many. It's one of many. The example is the Saskatchewan Power Corporation and its record of purchases from small businesses in this province.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that prior to 1981 – and I would remind the members opposite that that was when the New Democratic Party was in power – prior to 1981 less than 50 per cent of the goods and services that were bought by Sask Power were bought outside

the province, in eastern Canada or in Manitoba, or I'm not sure, maybe even in the United States – but less than half.

Mr. Speaker, since this government has come to power, today the Saskatchewan Power Corporation buys in excess of 75 per cent of its goods and services from Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, this is the program we call Buy Saskatchewan. I find it very, very strange when just the other day members of the NDP party attacked my colleague, the minister in charge of SaskTel, for some small, relatively insignificant purchase that had to be made, that had to be made for good reason outside of the province. So, Mr. Speaker, this is a prime example.

This is a prime example, Mr. Speaker, and I want the public of Saskatchewan to know. I want them to realize exactly how the members opposite take things out of context. They twist them, they take a small example from a single point in time and they don't tell the public of the overall programs. They don't tell the whole picture. They cited a specific small example of some \$50,000 worth of telephone equipment that, by no fault of ours, had to be bought outside the province. But they failed to talk about the overall policy of buy Saskatchewan that we have. They failed to point out that prior, in their term of office, half of the goods were bought outside the province. In our term of office more than 75 per cent are bought from Saskatchewan people, providing jobs and opportunities for people right within Saskatchewan.

I'd like to turn to the Department of Highways. And I can quote more examples. I'm extremely proud of the record that we have in the Department of Highways with respect to the Buy Saskatchewan program. I can tell you that since 1984 more than \$1.5 million worth of maintenance equipment that was previously bought outside of the province, \$1.5 million worth of maintenance equipment that was bought in Manitoba, or in Ontario, or in Quebec, is now being purchased right there in Saskatchewan. We are actively pursuing the manufacture of other products that we are using in the department.

I can tell you that some examples are rotary grass mowers and hydro drums that are used for both summer and winter maintenance are items that we are attempting to have manufactured in Saskatchewan. I can give you a list of quite a few that we are manufacturing in Saskatchewan right now today that, prior to our term of government, were being purchased outside the province.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, you may have had the opportunity to read the *Leader-Post* just a few weeks ago. There was a very nice story in there, Mr. Speaker, and I think a lot of people probably read the news article, but it's a firm right here in Regina – right here in Regina. It is a subsidiary of Degelman Industries Ltd., a place called Hylar Precision Machine. And that manufacturing plant, Mr. Speaker, has already sold, I believe it's 10 or more highway speed snow-ploughs.

They manufactured them right in here in Saskatchewan, provided jobs for people in Saskatchewan. Prior to our government, Mr. Speaker, we were buying those snow-ploughs outside the province. And that is just a single example.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the members of the opposition, and I can tell the people of Saskatchewan that today, in my department, the Department of Highways and Transportation, we are purchasing goods and services, manufactured items in places . . . They are being manufactured in places like Archerwill, Saskatchewan, in the good north-east; places like Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Regina, and Yorkton.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that this Buy Saskatchewan policy is helping those companies produce for our department things like snow-ploughs, sweeper brooms, truck boxes, chemical spreaders, equipment trailers, road compactors, and the list could go on and on. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of this government's initiatives to Buy Saskatchewan.

The members opposite can say, oh, if we were in power, if we were in power we'd be buying this and we'd be buying that. And I remember, one of the new members just the other day, Mr. Speaker, was in here and he was listening to one of the members of the NDP talk about some particular subject. This was a new member. He had not even probably been in the legislature more than a day or two. And he heard members of the NDP saying, well, if we were there we'd be doing this or we'd be doing that. He very innocently asked me – he said, well that's so strange; those people had 11 years in a row to do those types of things, and why didn't they?

There's so many of those examples, Mr. Speaker, where the NDP stand up and say: well, if we were there, we would do this; or, if we were there, we would do that.

Mr. Speaker, it is that hypocritical, sanctimonious attitude, taken by many members on the opposite side, that has caused them to lose their credibility – caused them to lose their credibility, Mr. Speaker, because they had their turn; they had their day.

And, Mr. Speaker, they were not concerned about buying in Saskatchewan. They did not have the record of buying in Saskatchewan that this government has, and it is one that I am very, very proud of. It fits in so well with our theme of build Saskatchewan, diversify Saskatchewan, and provide jobs and provide opportunities for the people in this province. And it's a program, Mr. Speaker, that we have met with great success in, and I am certainly very, very proud of our Buy Saskatchewan policies, and especially with those two departments, being the departments of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation and the Department of Highways and Transportation.

I could give you a dissertation on the other departments, the other Crown corporations that are buying Saskatchewan, but I think those two examples – I think these two examples – should serve as proof positive that our program, Buy Saskatchewan, is genuine, it's working, and it is providing jobs, and it is providing opportunities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, there are many, many other examples of economic activity that are taking place in our province that I think at least bear mention. And they

all fit in with our program to build and diversify Saskatchewan. We could talk about the Weyerhaeuser purchase of the Prince Albert pulp mill. And I want to make it perfectly clear . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes, I would be very happy to talk about that particular project.

(1630)

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll quickly just run through a few, and then we'll have some comments that the hon. members on the other side may be particularly interested in. And I will talk about the diversification and the building of this province as it respects the Weyerhaeuser corporation and the new paper plant there that's going to create more than 250 jobs. I will talk about the Gainers plant in North Battleford, an expansion there that's going to create more than 200 jobs. I will talk about the Phillips Cable plant in Moose Jaw that's going to create some \$7 million in investment, create 40 new jobs. I will talk about the expansion of Intercontinental Packers in Saskatoon that's going to create at least 70 jobs, and I'll talk about a large number of other projects.

And, Mr. Speaker, the point that I want to make – the point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, from the snickers opposite, from the comments opposite, that there is no question, there is no doubt that the members of the New Democratic Party are absolutely in total against these projects. And let me make that perfectly clear.

Here is the distinction, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the New Democratic Party are against the Weyerhaeuser corporation's investment in the paper plant. They are against expansions in the meat processing industry. They are against the manufacturing of cable right here in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. They are against the manufacture of snow-ploughs and hydro drums and maintenance equipment. They are against virtually everything that stands for creation of economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know why. I don't know why, Mr. Speaker, when the number one issue, the number one issue in the election of October 1986, was jobs.

And I talked to many, many constituents and they agreed – yes, you know we would like to have more jobs in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, in just a matter of moments after I chatted with these people and listed some of these things that we were doing, they say, you know, you're on the money. You know, Mr. Speaker, those constituents said, yes sir, we want Weyerhaeuser corporation and we want Intercontinental Packers and investments in Phillips Cable, and on and on down the line.

I will say little more about that, Mr. Speaker, other than to re-emphasize the point. And I want the public of Saskatchewan to know and I think they really should know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a big difference between the New Democratic Party, what they stand for, and what the Progressive Conservative government stands for. You men and women on the opposite side of the House are against these projects. You are in turn, and when you are – and let me remind you – when you are against Weyerhaeuser and all

these other projects, you are against jobs and opportunities. And for the life of me, Mr. Speaker, I can't understand why. I can't understand why.

Mr. Speaker, I 'd like to talk a little bit about another program, another program that the NDP are against, and it is the mortgage rate interest reduction program and the home improvement program that have been initiated by our government. Mr. Speaker, those programs are working so well that we are literally flooded with thousands of applications. And in turn, with the thousands of applications for home renovations, goes thousands and thousands of jobs. And, Mr. Speaker, that program was well accepted by the people of Saskatchewan. It was well accepted.

I had the opportunity on the weekend to be visiting some of my constituents. Some of them are in the plumbing business. Some of them are in lumber. Some of them are in the electrical contracting business. And, Mr. Speaker, I heard stories of people who said, you know, I had to add two people to my staff. And these are small businesses, Mr. Speaker. I had to add two or I had to add three people to my staff. Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent program.

The NDP opposition will stand up and say, well you took the home owners grant away. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to compare those two programs. I'd like to compare it. There was the program, the home owner's, that you sent in your application and you got \$200 back. But, Mr. Speaker, there was no direction for that money. That money could have been spent on frivolous items. I don't think that money actually created any jobs.

Here is a program where not 230 or \$300, but a program of \$1,500 that is going directly into the expansion of jobs for Saskatchewan people. And who would argue with that, Mr. Speaker? I don't think there are very many others than the members of the New Democratic Party.

The New Democratic Party, they had an announced program of, I think it was \$7,000 or something, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, you're right. I don't know how that program actually was to have taken effect. But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that it was not accepted by the people of Saskatchewan on October 20th.

The people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, saw through that program. A program that's saying, here's \$7,000 free. We didn't know who qualified – whether only 7 per cent of the people would qualify or if you had to live beside a 7 Eleven Store to maybe get it, or just what the details were. It wasn't announced by the members of the New Democratic Party. And I ask, why wasn't it announced, Mr. Speaker? It wasn't announced because they were afraid to reveal the details of it. The people on October 20th saw through that program, Mr. Speaker, and they elected a government that had given to the people a responsible program.

Mr. Speaker, it's nice to say, here \$7,000 free. But I ask you, what is more responsible – giving someone \$7,000 free or perhaps giving someone \$1,500 providing it is matched?

And the leader of the Liberal Party is one who has paid a lot of lip service to being fiscally responsible. Mr. Speaker, I think that program is very fiscally responsible. Not just free. Here's \$7,000 if you happen to qualify in this narrow range. But here's \$1,500 as long as you put up another \$1,500. It's a program, Mr. Speaker. That has been well accepted and I am proud, Mr. Speaker, to stand on the government side of the House that has programs such as that.

Another program that's very similar in vein is, of course, the mortgage interest rate reduction program, that for the next 10 years young families throughout this whole province will never had to go to bed at night worrying about the excessive interest rates that were there in the years 1979 and 1980. For 10 years, Mr. Speaker . . . and I want the public of Saskatchewan to hear this as well as the members of the New Democratic Party, because it is a point that bears re-emphasizing. For the next 10 years, Mr. Speaker, no family in the province of Saskatchewan will have to go to bed at night wondering if the interest rates will jump up to 17 or 18 or 19 per cent because they will be protected to 9.75 per cent for 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP, the New Democratic Party in the months prior to the election came out with a program saying, and I forget . . . it was 7 per cent or something, for seven years, for 7 per cent of the people. Mr. Speaker, the general public of the province of Saskatchewan saw through that. And do you know why they saw through it, Mr. Speaker? Because in the years 1979, 1980, when interest rates were 17, 18 and 19 per cent, was there any help there, Mr. Speaker? Was there a bit? No, there wasn't. There was not one iota of help for those families in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, the general public in Saskatchewan on October 20th saw through the members of the New Democratic Party who said, okay, we'll jump on the band wagon now and we'll give you 7 per cent interest. But they never said who they'd give it to. The people had confidence in the Progressive Conservative members, Mr. Speaker. The people's confidence showed up in the re-election of this government and it is a government that I am very, very proud to be associated with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about senior citizens -- senior citizens, Mr. Speaker -- and I have a good number of them in my constituency. We have a good number of level 1, level 2, level 3 and level 4 homes. Mr. Speaker, I take a great delight in chatting with those pioneers.

As a matter of fact last night, Mr. Speaker, I rode in here from Melfort on the bus and I had a constituent of mine who is 83 years of age -- 83 years of age. And we had a delightful visit on that . . . It was a four-hour bus ride. It was a little longer than I wanted but we had a delightful visit -- a man who is 83 years of age; very, very independent yet; and just a model senior citizen.

Mr. Speaker, I asked that senior citizen . . . He was not an overly political person at all. As a matter of fact I don't even know how the man voted. But I said to him – his name is Jim – I said, Jim, what do you really think, what do you really think of the last four years? Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you one thing. That senior citizen who was on a limited income appreciated very much the \$500 senior citizens' heritage grant program.

Mr. Speaker, I met many seniors throughout the campaign. I remember meeting an elderly lady on the street.

An Hon. Member: -- What was her name?

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Her name was Elsie Gustafson. And as a matter of fact, as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I went up to shake her hand. She didn't know who I was, Mr. Speaker. She says, I don't know which party you're with, but if you are with the party that provided the heritage grant program, she says, and Grant Devine, she says, I am with you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, those pioneers, those senior citizens went through some very, very difficult times. But, Mr. Speaker, the point to remember, they never gave up. I don't think they whined and they cried as some across the floor continually do. But, Mr. Speaker, they never gave up. They had that moral fibre, Mr. Speaker, that is so essential. And, Mr. Speaker, their expressions of hope and determination are very, very evident when they tell me about stories about their grandsons or granddaughters who are attending university because they can get a low-interest loan from the Government of Saskatchewan at 6 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, here again in the days when interest rates were 18, 19, and 20 per cent, was there any help for students at low interest rates? No, there wasn't, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I again want to emphasize that there is a real difference. There really is, Mr. Speaker. Our government has paid attention to the protection of the real families; the protection of senior citizens with a heritage program; the protection of students who want to attend university and have a low-interest loan; the protection of the farmers who want a . . . who were given a 6 per cent operating loan, and close to a billion dollars was handed out, Mr. Speaker, that's an awful lot of money. Close to a billion dollars handed out to farmers at 6 per cent interest.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think when I . . . I'd like to just revert back a little bit to the farm program, and I'd like to talk about the billion dollar deficiency program. And, Mr. Speaker, I remember being in a debate in the middle of the election, and I talked about the billion dollars that would be coming to Canadian farmers, and there was a large number of NDP in the audience, I'll admit. And, Mr. Speaker, there was some scepticism. There was members of the New Democratic Party that said, oh, you'll never get that money. And that rumour filtered throughout in an awful lot of places.

But, Mr. Speaker, did the farmers believe it? They believed Premier Grant Devine. They had confidence in Premier Grant Devine and they had confidence in the Progressive Conservative Party to get the job done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think anybody ever said that it was enough money. I know that the farmers of Saskatchewan could use more. But there is one fundamental question that we ask, and this question has to be addressed. If it was not for Premier Grant Devine, would that billion dollars have come? If Allan Blakeney, or any of the other leadership contenders now, if any of the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I realize that we are not to use individual's names. I will certainly apologize for that. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. If the member from Elphinstone or if the member from Saskatoon Riversdale or if the member from Regina North East were leaders of this province, Mr. Speaker – if they were premier, could they have gotten a billion dollars?

Mr. Speaker, I want to get very serious about this. Because, Mr. Speaker, I think the general public knows that not a single nickel would have come had it not been for Grant Devine.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd like turn now to a little bit of information in my own department, some very, very serious information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, I would firstly like to compliment the people that work with me in the Department of Highways. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that the people in the Department of Highways – any success that I have had as minister – any success that I have, I want to share that success with the people, the very, very professional people in the Department of Highways, and they do deserve an awful lot of credit.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to list a few of the accomplishments . . . and there's one thing, Mr. Speaker, that this government has been genuinely concerned about, and that is the safety of the travelling public. And it's a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the programs and some of the policies implemented by this government, and we look at the Lights On For Life program; the school bus – safety arm on school buses; numerous small scale improvements. And there's literally hundreds of small scale improvement that we have made: putting up a flashing light here; putting up an extra stop sign there; putting in a better guard-rail along a bridge or along a curve, and there's hundreds of those types of examples.

(1645)

But, Mr. Speaker, the real proof is in what were the results. I would like to quote to you, Mr. Speaker, how these programs and policies have been working to save lives and to reduce injuries here in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there has been a significant decline of major accident categories in the past four years, and this is even though the number of drivers, the numbers of vehicles, and the distance travelled has increased significantly. For example, Mr. Speaker, the number of deaths have declined from 262 in 1981 to 214 in 1985, which is an 18 per cent decrease. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that there's nothing more important about my job than safety.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not about to say that the members of the New Democratic Party are not for safety; I'm sure they are. They are just as good a citizen that way as we are. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize once again a reduction in deaths of about 18 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, other accomplishments have of course been in the regulatory reform that we have had in the Department of Highways with respect to the trucking industry. I have come to the office of Minister of Highways and Transportation at probably one of the most exciting times in the history of our province when it comes to regulatory reform.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that presently before the federal parliament are reforms that are lessening the regulation, lessening the burden on the small businesses, especially as they relate to trucking and air and other transportation sectors. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that these regulatory reforms that we in the province of Saskatchewan have made are going to decrease the costs for shippers. And in turn, Mr. Speaker, there will be more competition. And it is something . . . Competition, Mr. Speaker, is something that a Progressive Conservative government believes in.

I don't know what the position of the members of the New Democratic party is when it comes to competition, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our government is for competition. Competition is good, Mr. Speaker, and with these regulatory reforms we will reduce the costs to shippers, and this will have significant impacts on especially the agricultural sector. Mr. Speaker, I have in my office an awful lot of correspondence from shippers throughout the province, and especially those in the agricultural implement business who are very, very pleased with the reforms that this government has taken as it respects regulatory reform in the trucking industry.

Mr. Speaker, there are other accomplishments in the Department of Highways with which I would like to touch upon. I can tell you that tourism in general is something that our government has been very, very strongly supporting and encouraging. I would like to announce to you that a major tourist route which is called the Can-Am route – it runs from the Mexican border all the way up to Lac La Ronge – has been put in place. And I am very proud of a fellow from my home town, Mr. Speaker – his name is Mr. Bob Twanow and he is the Can-Am route's very first president. And, Mr. Speaker, I would

like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Twanow on his election to the Can-Am International Highway Association.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, here is another step that is encouraging tourism. And it is something that they tell us . . . The experts say that by the year 2000 or so it may well be the number one industry in North America. Well, Mr. Speaker, our government has been actively engaged in promoting tourism. And we look at the throne speech and the announcement of a tourism institute. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be more on the money. Nothing could be more in step with today's needs, wishes and desires than that. Mr. Speaker, I know that when the year 2000 comes that Saskatchewan will be in the forefront as it respects tourism. Mr. Speaker, it will be in large part due to the efforts of this administration.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a great sense of pride when I know that this government's efforts have reached the people in my own constituency. And I know, Mr. Speaker, as any politician who is worth his salt does, that it is the people of your own constituency that you have to keep close to. Those are the people who elect you; those are the people who put the bread and butter on the politician's plate.

Mr. Speaker, I'll speak of some of the programs that have affected directly the people in my constituency. One I am particularly pleased about is the new Saskatchewan Pension Plan. Mr. Speaker, here is a program that impacts on farmers, on small-business employers and employees, on the home-makers. These are a large number of people. Mr. Speaker, never before in the history of this province had there been a pension plan for those groups in society. And the question bears asking: why not? The question bears asking: were members of the New Democratic Party during their terms, their number of terms, were they really concerned about the real families? Were they really concerned about protection of these individuals? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think not. I think not.

I can remember, Mr. Speaker, sitting in front of the television set and seeing reams and rolls of films and footage that had the family of Crown corporations. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly proud of the Crown corporations that we have. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm an awful lot more proud of the real families in Saskatchewan. I'm an awful lot more inclined, Mr. Speaker, to protect the real families in Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Pension Plan is a program that does exactly that. No longer, Mr. Speaker, will there be any need for any person to retire below the poverty line. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the results of the October 20th election are proof positive again that the public in this province of ours were pleased, were happy with a government that cared, a truly compassionate government that cared and provided pensions for all. And, Mr. Speaker, once again I'm very pleased to be part of that government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, my Melfort constituents have gone through some hard times just like the rest of Saskatchewan, the rest of Canada, and the rest of the world. But, Mr. Speaker, it has been this government that has responded to their

concerns. Mr. Speaker, that is why we are here. Mr. Speaker, that is why I stand before you and the public of Saskatchewan today in this forum.

Mr. Speaker, we are not here to buy farm land; we are not here to build empires; we are not here to build bureaucracies, and we are not here to set up state controls. We are here, Mr. Speaker, for a second term because as a government I believe that we understand the concerns and, indeed, the very nature of our people. The fact that this government has had the compassion to listen to the everyday individual, if you like, and respond to their concerns is a situation that again makes me extremely proud.

The people of Saskatchewan on October 20th voted for more of the same. Mr. Speaker, they gave us another mandate and they said, keep up the good work, Mr. Speaker. I realize, Mr. Speaker, that we may have had our trials and our tribulations in the first few months and perhaps the first few years of office but, Mr. Speaker, being in government is much similar to an individual starting out in the work place, and there is no substitute for experience, Mr. Speaker. Experience as long as you learn from mistakes, as long as you can judge the situations as they come up and respond to the needs of the people as they want. Mr. Speaker, I believe that our government has done exactly that. I believe that our government in their second term, Mr. Speaker, will gain even more of the confidence and gain even more, the trust of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk for just a few minutes about our Premier. Mr. Speaker, we talk about a man with vision. Mr. Speaker, I sometimes get influenced fairly easily. But, Mr. Speaker, there is no person that I know who has had a more profound impression upon me or made a bigger impact on me than our Premier.

Our Premier is truly a man of vision. Mr. Speaker, he has led the Progressive Conservative Party to a second term in office. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that he has done an exceptional job of leading the Progressive Conservative team to power and to victory in not easy times.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would tend to think in the good old days, as some people call them, of the 1970s, and there were some good some years there, but I would tend to think, Mr. Speaker, that those times were relatively easy times for politicians. And I say, Mr. Speaker, when we have a man like our Premier who can lead us through these difficult times, Mr. Speaker, he bears the backing of an awful lot of people.

I sat here with a great deal of pride, Mr. Speaker, and listened to the Premier give his reply to the Speech from the Throne just the other day. It was a tremendous speech, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, it was so good I'm going to have a video tape take of it, a recording taken of it, and I know that the seniors in my constituency who do not have cable television, I know that they will want to listen to that speech because it was a good one, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that if every person in the province of Saskatchewan could have heard that speech alone, it would have reinforced and reaffirmed their position during the 1986 election, and they would have known beyond a question of a doubt that they made a good decision.

Mr. Speaker. This government truly cares about the family farm. This government truly cares about the family business and the families throughout this province. And, Mr. Speaker, the general public in Saskatchewan, with the co-operation of their government, I believe are finding a better way to live. Mr. Speaker, this latest Speech from the Throne once again demonstrates that this government will continue to emphasize the importance of listening to, responding to, and protecting the people who elected them.

It is with that thought in mind, Mr. Speaker, that I fully endorse the attitudes and initiatives outlined in this government's throne speech. And I want to say that I, myself, have a renewed confidence and faith in Premier Grant Devine and our government.

Without question, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne. And without doubt, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment.

And, Mr. Speaker, being very near to 5 o'clock, I would beg leave to adjourn the debate.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.