

April 16/91

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: -- According to order, I have reviewed the petitions presented yesterday by various hon. members. All such petitions were found to be irregular in form, pursuant to rule 11(6) and (7), and therefore they are not permitted to be read and received.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Deputy Clerk: -- Mr. Van Mulligen, as chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the fifth report of the committee which is hereby filed as sessional paper 147.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Speaker, moved by myself, seconded by Mr. Lyons:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be taken into consideration before orders of the day.

And I would ask leave for that.

Leave granted.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Thompson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Thursday next move that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

For the period June 19, 1990, to the date this return was ordered: (1) the total number of out-of-province trips made by each minister of the government; (2) in each case the destination and purpose of the trip; (3) in each case the names and positions of those who accompanied the minister at government expense; (4) in each case the amount charged on behalf of each person travelling at government expense; and (5) in each case the total cost of the trip separated according to cost incurred for: (a) air fares, (b) hotels, (c) meals, (d) entertainment.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday I will move an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

For the period June 19, 1990 to the date this return was ordered, the full amounts paid by the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation in rental

and any other associated fees for all of the province's trade office properties in Hong Kong, London, New York, Ottawa, Geneva, and Minneapolis.

Mr. Koenker: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday next I shall move an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

The provincial government's expenditure for the 1990-91 annual operational budget for all of the province's trade offices in Hong Kong, London, New York, Ottawa, Geneva, and Minneapolis.

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday next move that an order of the Assembly do issue a return showing:

With respect to Strategic Direct Marketing, the total amount paid to them from May 2, 1990 to the date this return was ordered, by all departments, Crown corporations, and agencies of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Anguish: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday I move that an order of the Assembly do issue a return showing:

For the period June 19, 1990 to the date that this return was ordered, a detailed list of the aircrafts chartered by each department, agency, or Crown corporation of the Government of Saskatchewan, including in each instance: (1) the purpose of the charter and and the minister who authorized it; (2) the name of the individual or company who provided the charter service; (3) the total cost of the charter and the name of the department, agency, or Crown corporation to which it was charged; (4) the date of the flight; (5) all destinations of the flight; (6) the names of each MLA or government employee on the flight; and (7) the number of family members of MLAs on each flight.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Gleim: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Assembly, 23 grade 12 students from the high school of Eastend, Saskatchewan. Accompanying them today is Brad Hauber, one of the teachers, and Shelley Morvik, along with the bus driver Randy Morris.

I hope they enjoyed their trip up here, and I hope they enjoy their visit in the Assembly and see the productive way and efficient way we run this Assembly. And after this is over with, question period, I'll be meeting them for drinks and pictures and to talk about some of the things they want to know about the Assembly.

Thank you very much. Please welcome these . . .

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Mr. Speaker, I too want to welcome the students from

Eastend, Saskatchewan. But it is my singular pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, to welcome 22 students from Wilfred Hunt School in Regina, grade 5 students. They are accompanied by one teacher, Mr. Speaker, and two chaperons. JoAnn Friesen is the teacher, and Nancy Kramer and Joan Kramer are the chaperons. Mr. Speaker, they are in your gallery. I'll have an opportunity to speak with them and share a drink of some kind with them in a little while, and I'll also have my picture taken with them. I hope you students pay attention to what happens here in the next little while until we have a chance to talk about it, and we'll talk about what happens a little bit later on. Enjoy yourselves.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you I'd like to introduce to members of the Assembly two guests in your gallery, sir. They are Ken and Carol Kluz of Wishart, Saskatchewan. Ken and Carol operate a family farm in that district of the province. I would also point out that Ken, notwithstanding his young age, was the reeve for a number of years of his rural municipality. He has served his community well. We hope that he will continue to serve not only his community but Saskatchewan well as the next New Democratic Party member of the legislature for Kelvington-Wadena, and I would ask you to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and to the members of the legislature a mayor from a community in my constituency. It's the very energetic community of Sturgis. And it is a real pleasure to introduce the mayor, His Worship Bud Morken. Bud not only is the mayor of the town of Sturgis, but he's also the chairman of the Preeceville hospital board and as well a former vice-president of the United Grain Growers.

Mr. Morken is in the city on business and it's a real pleasure to have him here as my guest. Mr. Morken.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour to have been born and raised in the community of Sturgis, and nobody mentions it more often in this House than I do. And I have known Bud Morken all my life, so I'd like to join the member from Canora in welcoming Bud here, and I hope he enjoys his day.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Privatization of SaskEnergy

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my

questions today pertain to the Provincial Auditor's report which is a searing indictment of this government's spending practices.

At page 121 of the report, a copy of which I have in front of me, the auditor concludes that the establishment of SaskEnergy and its acquisition of the natural gas business from SaskPower was unlawful. As I remind you, Mr. Speaker, we on this side warned that it would be at the time unlawful because it was done behind closed doors by cabinet order.

Mr. Premier, in view of the Provincial Auditor's position -- and this is my question to the Premier: in view of this auditor's report and this position taken by the Provincial Auditor, how can you justify keeping these major transactions involving SaskEnergy and SaskPower in the back rooms, hidden from the public, and under a cloud of illegality?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, as has been explained to the Provincial Auditor by SaskPower in discussions between the Provincial Auditor and legal counsel to the Provincial Auditor with legal counsel to SaskPower, SaskPower has two separate legal opinions, had them at the time of the transaction and they continue to be the legal opinions that have been offered to SaskPower, that the transaction was according to the statutes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, subsequent to that, the Provincial Auditor received and I might add, subsequent to a case regarding an SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) case about a year later, the Bury judgement, the Provincial Auditor received a legal opinion which led him to make the statement that he makes in the Provincial Auditor's report.

SaskPower has said to the . . . and the government, basically the government in general here has said to the Provincial Auditor that if this is not resolved between the two divergent legal opinions, the government will undertake to present legislation to the House to rectify the circumstance. We have said that. We undertake that; we have undertaken that in a public way before. We'll undertake it here in the House today.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, one final point. The issue of SaskEnergy and SaskPower, two competing forms of energy being separate from one another is not the issue here. The issue has been widely accepted by the public that the two competing forms of energy can be separated, and they are and so . . . But I once again reiterate, Mr. Speaker, it would be our intention to bring legislation forward to rectify the circumstance that the auditor outlines.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Premier. And may I say parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, that I do hope that before this session adjourns or prorogues or something happens that the Premier will at least have the courage to answer one of the questions that we ask.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- None the less, Mr. Speaker, my question, new question is to the Deputy Premier because obviously he's going to be answering this.

The issue, there are many issues in this, but the issue that I'm addressing right now is the issue about the political . . . the decision by the Provincial Auditor that says that this process of yours is unlawful. That's the issue I'm addressing now.

And, Mr. Speaker, I note the minister's attempt to explain this on the basis of somehow lawyers have differences of opinions. And I don't know whether the Deputy Premier is basing that on the lawyers who advised him that he had a strong case on electoral boundaries but lost, or whether he's basing it on the legal opinion which said that he had a strong case for privatizing SGI and lost. If they are I'll tell you they're in a lot of trouble and so are we.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier is this: if this really is a dispute amongst lawyers as you purport to say that it is, then I ask you to table your government's legal opinion now, showing us the legal basis for the position that you take that you can do it legally. Will you table that legal opinion today?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, who is a lawyer, rises in this House and says, that what the Provincial Auditor has said is that it was unlawful -- that's what he said. That's not what the Provincial Auditor said. The Provincial Auditor did not say that. Now that hon. member is a lawyer. I have never pretended to be a lawyer. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have been thankful many times that I'm not a lawyer.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, on page 121, that page to which the Hon. Leader of the Opposition referred, under .04 the Provincial Auditor says, and I quote: "We questioned SaskPower's authority to sell its natural gas business." He said, "we questioned."

And then at .05:

In the opinion of our lawyer . . . (says the Provincial Auditor, speaking about the legal opinion that he as Provincial Auditor had received)

In the opinion of our lawyer, the scheme and object of The Power Corporation Act is to establish a corporation with the exclusive mandate . . . (and etc., etc.).

He did not say at any time that it was unlawful. What I have said in explanation is that two legal opinions from prestigious law firms were advanced to SaskPower that we were well within our rights to do what we did. The Provincial Auditor, far subsequent to that, a long time after

that, based on a case concerning SGI almost a year later, received a legal opinion based on that subsequent case which said that he would question it again and which said that he thought we should have acted otherwise. That was far subsequent to the actual case.

Mr. Speaker, the issue here is the explanation has been given . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order!

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Before we move to the next question, I would just like to bring to the attention of the hon. members that question period is not a forum for a debate, and please try to conduct yourselves accordingly.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the Deputy Premier. And I think you will agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that the questions are as succinct as they can be, given the complex nature of the issue.

The question I asked was whether the government would table its legal opinion, to which there was not a word said by the Deputy Premier. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, very bluntly, that on page 122 of the Provincial Auditor's report, the Provincial Auditor says:

. . . we are unable to conclude that SaskPower had adequate legislative authority respecting the sale of its natural gas business to SaskEnergy.

And on .10 says, we therefore say that there should be legislative authority, allowing me to conclude that he concludes that it's unlawful.

Now my question to the Deputy Premier is very simple. That's what the auditor's report says. And you have a choice, Mr. Deputy Premier, you have a choice either to live up to your government's commitments, in fact the Premier's commitment that the Provincial Auditor would be backed, or you don't live up to that commitment. Now which is it? Are you backing the auditor or not?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, absolutely we're backing the auditor, absolutely. The auditor has the right to raise his concerns and he has raised them. In the context of those concerns . . . and let me just quote, Mr. Speaker, from the auditor's report, subsection .08, .09, and .10 on page 122.

.08 SaskPower has opinions from two lawyers regarding its authority to sell the natural gas business.

That's what I said to the hon. member a few moments ago. The Provincial Auditor reiterates that here.

.09 This is a complex legal issue. However, by reason of the legal opinion provided to us by our lawyer, we are unable to conclude . . .

And so on, says the Provincial Auditor. A complex legal issue, I have said that it is. The hon. member, I think, will agree that it is a complex legal issue. The Provincial Auditor has said so. Therefore, under the last clause here:

.10 Therefore, if SaskEnergy is going to operate the natural gas business we recommend the Act be changed or legislation passed to clarify SaskPower's authority to sell the business.

The Provincial Auditor says that's what he recommends. I have said in an earlier answer here in the House -- I have said in public -- that it would be our intention, if this is not clarified through the legal channels, it would be our intention to introduce legislation to do just as the Provincial Auditor has asked. What more does the hon. member in his muck-raking want to raise? What we have said here is that we would clarify it. Mr. Speaker, we will clarify it.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Deputy Premier. Why is the Provincial Auditor recommending that there be legislation introduced except that what the government has done up to now is unlawful, and that's why the legislation's got to be renewed?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- And moreover, Mr. Speaker, who in the world is going to resolve this dispute amongst lawyers? That's a prescription for no decision.

Now I ask the Deputy Premier very bluntly: why doesn't your government screw up its courage and admit that your actions were unlawful? Either shelve your plans to privatize SaskEnergy or in the alternative, place all of your privatization plans, the secret ones and the ones which are not so secret, place all of your privatization plans squarely, fairly, and openly before the electorate for the people to decide. Or are you afraid of what the people's answer will be on your privatization?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, nowhere does the Provincial Auditor say that the actions taken by SaskPower were unlawful.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor does not say . . . the Provincial Auditor points out, as is his responsibility to do, a question that he has. He points out concerns that he has. Based on, and I have said before in my other answer, in terms of . . . SaskPower acted according to the legal opinions that we had received from two law firms -- two law firms. We acted according to those. The Provincial Auditor reiterates that and says that SaskPower has those opinions from two firms. He's seen those legal opinions.

Mr. Speaker, I have said we have not acted unlawfully. If this is not solved between . . . the divergent opinions of the two law firms are not solved, we will act as the Provincial Auditor has recommended and bring legislation forward in due course.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question and I have a final question on this topic, Mr. Speaker. Again, I indicate that the journalist, "SaskPower sale illegal, auditor says" Globe and Mail story "Needed more than order-in-council authority," on and on it goes.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have a question to you. I have a question. And before I make the question, Mr. Speaker, it's clear, given the sensitivity of the Minister of Justice, given his extreme sensitivity and given also the minister's inability to answer this question, it's clear to me that this discredited government opposite is still pushing privatization of SaskPower, but it's pushing it through the back door -- privatization in private.

Now I have here in front of me a memorandum by the chief executive officer and the president of SaskEnergy, Mr. Baker . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order, order, order. Order! Order! Allow the Leader of the Opposition to put his question. Order, order. Order!

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for bringing that rowdy bunch to order. I have a question . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I was saying before I was interrupted by them, what they're doing is privatizing in private. I have here a memorandum dated April 12, 1991 from Bill Baker, the president of SaskEnergy, April 12, 1991, where Mr. Baker says in part, and I quote: "Just for the record, I'm still strongly in favour of proceeding with a share offering."

This question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, isn't it true that you've told Mr. Baker to go full steam ahead, to proceed full steam ahead with the privatization of SaskEnergy, contrary to your earlier public statements that you would not proceed with it until the public supports it? I accuse you, sir, of breaking your word and secretly working to privatize SaskEnergy before the next election. Isn't that why you're ignoring the Provincial Auditor's report?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, the issue in the lead-up to this series of questions today, the issue was the Provincial Auditor's report as it relates to the separation of SaskEnergy from SaskPower. In other words, two competing forms of energy -- electricity and natural gas.

Now we have said that we would hear what the Provincial Auditor has said,

and had our discussion with the Provincial Auditor and have given the assurance that we would clarify by legislation if necessary, and I've answered that prior to this in the House.

The hon. member raises the questions of what Mr. Baker, the president of SaskEnergy, has said. He says he's done it in some secret way. What could be less secret than an opinion of the president of SaskEnergy on the third page of one of the newspapers? He said Baker, the president of SaskEnergy, and the government in some secret circumstances . . . There's nothing secret about what Mr. Baker is expressing as his view -- his view, being the president of SaskEnergy. And that's what his view is. That's what he said.

Obviously the hon. member knows there would need to be legislation if this separation was to turn into a privatization. What we are discussing here is a separation of two competing forms of energy. No one in the province is arguing with the reasonableness of that separation. That separation is well regarded, the deregulation of natural gas industry.

All of that, Mr. Speaker, which fits into a plan for this province, something that that member doesn't know the meaning of -- a plan. There's actually a plan for the gas industry, a plan for rural Saskatchewan, a plan for all of that. There's a member who stands, the opposition leader, who stands in the House and questions one thing after the other as it relates to questions being raised by the Provincial Auditor, but at no time does he lay out his plan for anything.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Speaker, I have in front of me here an article in the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix dated December 21, 1990. The headline says, "SaskEnergy head wants pipeline privatized." The quotation says -- this is speaking to Mr. Bill Baker:

"I want an answer. I want a yes or no as soon as possible," he said in an interview Thursday.

This is December 21, 1990.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Deputy Premier is: what have you told Mr. Baker? What have you told him? Give us the answer. Isn't it true that you told him you're going to privatize it?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Order, order, order. Order, order. Order. The Deputy Premier has been asked to -- has risen anyway to respond -- not the Minister of Justice. I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, what I know about Mr. Baker's mandate is, as the president of SaskEnergy -- that separate company which operates in that competing form of energy with electricity, natural gas -- is to do

this: to fit the plan. And the plan is to continue with the tremendous increase in the natural gas industry in this province, to continue with SaskEnergy's mandate of moving that natural gas to markets both domestic and international, to move that natural gas . . .

An Hon. Member: -- And we're doing it.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- And we're doing that. Tremendous reserves of natural gas all across the western side of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the president of SaskEnergy has a very strong view that there is a need -- and more than just a view, a knowledge -- as of most people in the business community and in the oil and gas patch that there is a definite need for \$200 million to increase the pipeline capacity to move that very natural gas that has been explored for in this province in recent years because of our policies. That member will not agree with it.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Now before the next series of questions, I'm going to just have to bring to the attention of hon. members that, you know, we get into this area of debate and I'm just going to have to intervene and shorten things up on both sides of the House . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, not every time.

Mr. Lyons: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, and it's to the Premier for a reason because we appear to have contradictory statements between two of his ministers, because one day prior to Mr. Baker's announcement on December 20, the Minister of Justice is quoted in the same Star-Phoenix as saying this:

We are very much looking at equity positions in the gas pipeline division . . . (of SaskEnergy)

"We are analysing whether we would need legislation for an equity issue," said Lane, adding a decision on it is expected by the end of January.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this: is it your intention to go ahead with the privatization plans of Trans Gas? We say that that's what you're going to do. Why don't you stand up and defend your government's record? Tell us yes or no. Admit it to the people of Saskatchewan, sir.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, it's very easy for me and any minister in this government to defend the record on natural gas. When I think that there were seven wells drilled in 1982 and 700 last year, Mr. Speaker, I think it indicates the record is very, very clear that the New Democratic Party was opposed to natural gas development, opposed to natural gas exploration, and wanted to buy the natural gas in Alberta. That's not a course of action that we chose.

We also indicated quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, that the Trans Gas, because of the great expansion of the natural gas industry in Saskatchewan, that Trans Gas is going to have to expand and expand dramatically its pipeline capacity.

I indicated that the best way to do that would be equity. We did indicate, Mr. Speaker, that for this year the immediate expansion's being done by further government borrowings.

Finally, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They interrupted me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lyons: -- Mr. Speaker, I have another question to the Premier -- to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. We have seen a series of ministers get up and try to give answers, answers which did not answer the questions which are posed. And that question very simply is this, Mr. Speaker: Mr.

DPremier, are you planning to go ahead with the privatization of Trans Gas and SaskEnergy?

That is an important question because the answer to it has certain implications to the people of this province. For example, Mr. Premier, if the separation of SaskEnergy from SaskPower is illegal, then it quite well be that the collection of bills by SaskEnergy is also illegal. So why don't you come clean with the people of this province and give us an answer on what you intend to do with SaskPower, SaskEnergy, and Trans Gas, Mr. Premier? You stand up and give us your answer.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, one of the difficulties of debating the gas industry in Saskatchewan is that, Mr. Speaker, when they were government, gas was a health problem.

Mr. Speaker, we see the development of natural gas as an industry, Mr. Speaker, that's created hundreds of jobs in the province, brought, for example, to most farms, Mr. Speaker, rural natural gas, reduced input costs to farmers, Mr. Speaker. We have now created significant new industries as a result of the development of gas, natural gas. We have a fertilizer facility being built, Mr. Speaker.

We indicated earlier that to comply with the Provincial Auditor we're going to bring in legislation to separate the utilities at the appropriate time. And secondly, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who answered the question before indicated that any dealing of privatization with SaskEnergy would be done in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've listened very carefully, Mr. Speaker, to the answers from the Minister of Justice, and I want the people of Saskatchewan to realize that it was totally non-committal and it was qualified with if, if, if. We're not here to deal with if's, Mr. Premier; we're here to deal with the facts that belong to the people. What . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order, order, order, order. Order, order.

Mr. Lyons: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very, very simply this, Mr. Premier, very simply this: we don't want to hear if; we want to know what. What do you as Premier of this province intend to do with SaskPower, SaskEnergy, and Trans Gas? We say you're going to privatize it. You stand up in your seat and you tell us yes or no. Do you have the courage to do it?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, I do find it somewhat humorous that the hon. member is concerned about what if's, when they have now had nearly five years to come up with a plan to deal with the natural gas industry. And on the one hand the member from Regina North West says that the industry is all right; the member from Saskatoon says we're going to tax the oil and gas industry -- we're going to drive it back. The Leader of the Opposition is on either side of the derrick, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have now said three times this afternoon the position of the government. I find it disappointing that the hon. member chooses not to listen to it.

We did indicate, Mr. Speaker, that there would be legislation to effect the separation and that's been discussed. And secondly, Mr. Speaker, anything to do with privatization of SaskEnergy would be done in this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: -- I guess, Mr. Speaker, I will try one more time to the Premier. I wonder if the Premier would answer this question. Mr. Premier, we've heard your Minister of Justice and we've heard your minister in charge of SaskPower say that should it be effected and if we need to do this, then it will be done.

The question the people of Saskatchewan want to know, and they want to know it before an election, Mr. Premier, is this: do you intend to go ahead with the privatization of SaskPower, of SaskEnergy, of Trans Gas prior to a provincial election? And if you do, I want to say this to you, sir, that the people of Saskatchewan will rebuke that course. And I challenge you to put it to the people of Saskatchewan in a general election, if that's your intention. Why don't you tell us what you really intend to do instead of playing back-door politics?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Again this debate, Mr. Speaker, is one that I'm sure even the press gallery . . . has picked up the terrible inconsistencies of the New Democratic position. I've now indicated three different times what the government's position is. The hon. member makes a threat if the government does x, y or z, what he's going to do about it.

But isn't it very interesting that at the same time the party opposite has had five years to tell the public what its policies on agriculture, on gas development, on industrial development, on economic diversification . . . I could go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker. The New Democratic Party, the NDP stands for no darn policy, Mr. Speaker. That's what the public sees out there; they want answers from you.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Order, order, order. Order, order. I once more ask the hon. members to come order. The member from Moose Jaw North, member from Moose Jaw North and all other members, I'd ask you to come to order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 69 -- An Act respecting Referendums and Plebiscites

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill respecting Referendums and Plebiscites.

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

ROYAL ASSENT

At 2:41 p.m. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bill:

Bill No. 52 -- An Act to provide for the Division of Saskatchewan into Constituencies for the Election of Members of the Legislative Assembly

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:43 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS WITHDRAWN

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- I thank my members for cheering me for making this very, very significant announcement, Mr. Speaker, that before orders of the day, I rise to drop item no. 11, resolution 18, now standing in my name on the order paper.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Dropped.

Mr. Mitchell: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I rise to drop item no. 5, resolution no. 12, presently standing in my name.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Dropped.

(1445)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's moved by myself and seconded by the member for Cut Knife-Lloydminster:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be now concurred in.

What I meant to say, Mr. Speaker, that at the conclusion of my remarks I will be moving a motion to this effect. If I might, Mr. Speaker, by way of preamble to the report, state that in our system of parliament it's an accepted principle that any expenditures by government must be controlled by the legislative arm, in this case by the Legislative Assembly. It's accepted that the government cannot spend money in the future without the prior approval of the Legislative Assembly. That is why budgets are approved by the Legislative Assembly.

Equally, it's accepted that any spending which has been done by the government must also be reported back to the Legislative Assembly. That is why the Legislative Assembly appoints a Provincial Auditor to make sure that money has been duly accounted for, that money has been spent in accordance with the manner specified by the Legislative Assembly.

That is why the government prepares a Public Accounts to show the Legislative Assembly and the public the details of all of its expenditures for previous fiscal years. Both the auditor's report and the Public Accounts are referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for review, and my remarks pertain to a report of the Public Accounts Committee to the Legislative Assembly regarding a Report of the Provincial Auditor for the fiscal year 1988-89 and the Public Accounts for that same fiscal year.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge and thank the role of the committee Clerk, Mr. Bob Vaive, in the proceedings of the committee. I also want to recognize and thank the staff from the Clerk's office, Hansard, and generally the Legislative Assembly for their assistance in helping the committee to do its work.

I also want to thank the Provincial Auditor -- first, the acting Provincial Auditor at the time, Mr. Fred Wendel, then the new auditor, Mr. Wayne Strelloff, and their staff for their attendance at the committee meetings and for their assistance to the committee. Also the Provincial Comptroller, Mr. Gerry Kraus, for his attendance at the committee meetings and for his advice to the committee.

I also want to thank the many deputy ministers and agency heads, with one

exception which I'll note later, for their attendance before the committee and for their co-operation at the committee meetings.

Finally, I want to thank all the members of the committee for their hard work and their contribution to the work of the committee and to preparing this report that is before members of the Legislative Assembly today.

Now in saying that, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss, I would be remiss if I did not say a word about what appeared to be a new spirit of co-operation on the part of government members of that committee. This new spirit of co-operation was particularly evident during last November's sitting of the committee, even if it was somewhat less apparent last spring during our sittings.

Now perhaps this was related to the Premier's announcement just prior to our November sitting, an announcement entitled, new realities and the public process. This was a series of initiatives designed apparently to promote accountability. Now I'm not sure what these new realities were that led the Premier and the members of his caucus to embrace accountability, but it reminds me of the quote by Samuel Johnson, sir, who said, and I quote:

Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.

And so on the eve of an election, at the 11th hour, at the last minute, we have a Premier, his caucus, and members of the committee concentrating their minds wonderfully on public accountability.

My own assessment of this is, better late than never. I would never look a gift horse in the mouth, and neither would, I think, would the people of Saskatchewan. We all appreciate this new spirit of co-operation. After some eight years, nine years, of what would appear to be new lows in accountability and reporting to the public, we now appreciate this new spirit of co-operation. The recommendations in the report, sir, reflect I think, good co-operation on the part of the members. And again, I'm thankful for the help of all of the members of the committee in making the report possible.

Having noted, sir, the significant agreement that existed in framing the recommendations before you, I would also be remiss if I did not note some significant differences of opinion that existed during the course of the committee meetings.

First to the issue of corporation accountability -- the public of Saskatchewan, and you, sir, may be interested to know that some \$7.5 billion of public money is administered through various corporate entities of the provincial government. Now some of these corporate entities report to the Legislative Assembly and to the public through the Crown Corporations Committee of the Assembly, and/or through the Public Accounts Committee -- corporate entities such as Saskatchewan Power Corporation, Saskatchewan Telecommunications, and the like.

Other corporate entities do not in fact report to the Legislative Assembly in that fashion. These are corporations in which the public ownership is somewhat less than the 100 per cent, which is the case with SaskPower, at least it is today.

Members of the committee were frustrated that they were not able to bring to account various corporate entities in which the public has a significant stake. In particular, we debated at some length a corporation known as the WESTBRIDGE Computer Corporation. You will know, the public will know that in the year under review, WESTBRIDGE Computer Corporation was created as a result of significant financial input, significant shareholdings by the people of Saskatchewan through some corporate entities owned in total by the people of Saskatchewan, i.e. SaskTel and the Saskatchewan computer corporation.

We felt that it would be in the best interests of the public to ask some questions about the privatization that occurred, and whether or not the people of Saskatchewan's interests were served by the financial transactions that took place on their behalf. We were denied the opportunity to ask those questions. The people of Saskatchewan were denied the answers to questions that they had about how some of their taxpayers' dollars were spent.

We suggested at that time, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps the answer is for the Legislative Assembly through the Provincial Auditor to ask for a special audit of all privatizations that had occurred. This was not accepted by the committee. We suggested in many ways that the doors should be open, that the books should be open for these corporations, but we were denied that opportunity. And again I wanted to point that out to you because that is not clear in the report that is before the Legislative Assembly.

I also want to point out a reservation of opinion by the auditor. For some years the auditor has been saying that loans to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation cannot be recorded as assets, but should be written off as expenditures by the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation. This would result in an accumulated deficit being somewhat higher than it is now. Reportedly, the accumulated deficit of the province of Saskatchewan is approximately \$4.5 billion. If the auditor's suggestions were to be followed, the accumulated deficit would increase by some \$555 million, or more than half a billion dollars.

Now the auditor is saying something akin to that if you, Mr. Speaker, or any member here were to give a member of their family, were to give them a loan of \$2,000 and then gave them the money to pay you back, you could not go to the bank . . . in disclosing your assets and liabilities, you would not count that \$2,000 as an asset. In fact, it's money that you've spent.

Now the Provincial Auditor is saying that is money that has been spent and money that should be recorded as such. The provincial government in its own peculiar and unique way is saying no, that's an asset. Contrary to the Public Sector and Auditing Committee of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, the government clings to some unique and peculiar auditing principles, understood by no one, accepted by no one, least of all the

auditor. I would be remiss, sir, if this was not pointed out to you, and the people of Saskatchewan, that we have this very significant difference in accounting for money that has been spent and that in fact the deficit is some half a billion dollars higher than it should be or as reported by the provincial government.

That is one of the reasons, sir, that members of this side of the House have been saying for months that it's time to open the books of the government.

I also want to point out to you a difference of opinion with respect to something called supplementary information. The Public Accounts are a book, a report which list the details of every expenditure by the government. Where the expenditures are above \$20,000 per employee for wages and salaries, above \$10,000 for payments to suppliers, and above \$2,000 per person for travel, these details of expenditures are listed by department. This is done so that the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan will know in some detail how it is that their dollars have been spent.

Until 1984 this detail of expenditure was also indicated where the aggregate of those sums was exceeded by people -- individuals or companies -- where they . . . throughout various government departments. That is to say that if a person was paid \$10,000 by one department and \$11,000 by another department, the details of that would also be recorded.

In 1984 the government stopped providing that level of detail in accounting to the people of Saskatchewan. They have refused consistently to provide any clear explanation, any clear answer to repeated requests by the members of the opposition why this was stopped. They have not been forthcoming in their answers. We say that they are hiding information from the public. They are hiding information from the Legislative Assembly. We say they deserve to be condemned for what they have done.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to report to you . . . and I'll say that earlier I mentioned that the committee had received good co-operation from deputy ministers and heads of agencies in their answers to the committee.

I want to make note now of one notable exception, and this is the Saskatchewan Property Management committee. During the course of our meetings, the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation was asked a certain question. They said that they would undertake to provide the answer. They do so knowing that privileges are extended to them in appearing before the Committee that they have a very clear obligation in terms of these privileges to provide the answers.

(1500)

After this report was prepared, we find out from the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation that they are in fact unable or unwilling to answer a question that they said that they would answer, the question that was put to them by the committee. Whether or not the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation has breached, has breached the privileges of the

House -- and these are privileges of the House that are extended to them when they appear as witnesses before the Committee -- is something that the Committee will have to discuss in due course and report back to you on if necessary in the near future.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I note again that certain troublesome lack of disclosures and certain troublesome ways of operating by the government seem to persist year in and year out, notwithstanding statements on their part and actions of late that they now embrace accountability. The proof would seem to be in the pudding and it states that this government still has some way to go in terms of practising accountability to the public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to congratulate you once again on your new elected position as Speaker of the Assembly. I'd like to wish you all the best in the future.

And at the outset in beginning my remarks, I'd just like to say that it's always a privilege to be able to second a motion in regarding the reporting of a committee's report here in the Legislative Assembly, and the types of meetings that go on, probably in some essence behind the scenes, where it takes many hours of debate and questioning of various different departments.

I would like to say it's always that pleasure for me to, as vice-chairman of the committee of Public Accounts, to be able to second the motion and to say that a portion of that Provincial Auditor's report is now out of the way and the people have had the chance to duly exercise their rights in finding out and being able to question the Provincial Auditor on the report that he sets before the people, through the Legislative Assembly.

I'd like to make some remarks where I agree and disagree with the member opposite as he was making some of his remarks in regards to the Provincial Auditor's report, and I guess, if you will, freedom of information to the public of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to begin my remarks by saying where I disagree with the member opposite. The member opposite, as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, had indicated that under the previous . . . or the now administration, the Government of Saskatchewan, that it had been taken to the new lows of accountability as far as the public accountability . . . the government accountability is concerned, to the public of the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that by all means, if the member of the opposition would like to reflect back into the days when the NDP (New Democratic Party) were the government in the province of Saskatchewan, that it was their administration that would not allow public hearings to take place in Public Accounts Committee or that of Crown Corporations Committee.

It was in 1982, where our government had said that public accountability will be just that -- public accountability -- in that the public would be more than welcome, the public would be more than welcome to come in and attend these meetings in Public Accounts and in Crown Corporations. As well, we even expanded upon that, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, that we have also brought cameras onto the floor of the legislature here so when these particular topics are discussed, that the public have the right to view them and the freedom to view the procedures of this Assembly.

I'd like to say that I disagree also with the member of the opposition that when he said it was . . . that this government had taken this accessibility to its lowest, is that he should not be allowed to make those particular types of statements without backing it up.

As I have indicated earlier, we now, as any ordinary citizen out there, are welcome to sit in on these Public Accounts Committee meetings. Or any ordinary citizen out in . . . across the province are allowed to come in and sit in the Crown Corporation meetings and they're allowed to join us in our galleries here in the Legislature.

They are allowed to have any information through any one of their members, be it in opposition or be it in government, that sit on these committees. And that reflection should be just that -- a freedom of that information, a flow through those members that sit on those committees back to those individuals that are interested in the procedures and what goes on through the different types of the reportings of this particular accountability.

I'd like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that when we had headlines such as, millions of dollars improperly accounted for, says the new Saskatchewan auditor, I guess probably if we wanted to take a look at the auditing standards in the province of Saskatchewan, indeed right across this country, there are at times changes to those auditing practices. And as we have, from time to time, have had to correct different government department offices with those particular standards and procedures, and I think over the years we have found that that has been exactly what has been taking place.

I would think that, Mr. Speaker, when we said that millions of dollars have been improperly accounted for, it's not that the dollars have gone anywhere astray, they have been properly spent. If you ask the Provincial Auditor whether each one of those dollars could be properly accounted for, the answer that the Provincial Auditor would give you, yes, he can account for where the dollars are, he can account to where the dollars are, but because of the particular categories of the accounting procedures, they might not have been in what he perceived to be the right column.

So those are the indifferences that have to be discussed out and they will be discussed out through the Public Accounts Committee meetings. And the public are welcome to that particular type of information.

The open the books policy that the NDP portray, to say that they are going to open the books if they ever become government in the province of Saskatchewan, is about the most ridiculous statement I have ever heard in

years coming from the Leader of the Opposition and all members of the opposition.

I'd like to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that the books are open to the Provincial Auditor; the Provincial Auditor does have the right to report to the people of Saskatchewan through this Legislative Assembly, and he does that as an independent auditor. He does not work for the Government of Saskatchewan, or he does not work for the opposition. He works for the Legislative Assembly. He is an officer of the Legislative Assembly, not of the Government of Saskatchewan or the NDP opposition.

The NDP have been out there . . . as the Leader of the Opposition said to the people of Saskatchewan, well if we form government, I will have an independent audit of the books; we'll open the books and I will have an independent audit.

Well that independent audit has been taking place from year to year to year to year through our Provincial Auditor. How more independent can he get? I ask the Leader of the Opposition or any member of the opposition to indicate how more independent can they get. What is meant by the NDP when they say they will have an independent audit? Is that meaning they're going to have an independent audit even of the auditor's office? Does that mean that there is going to be another arm of administration that is over already what we call an independent office? No, I believe not.

I believe it's misleading the public of the province of Saskatchewan by saying that the departments are not being properly audited right to this day. We have in this province, we have an auditor's report here, Mr. Speaker, that is done up by the Provincial Auditor and private auditors. The Provincial Auditor does not, and I repeat, does not have to even accept the private auditor's report if he does not feel that it is properly audited. And therefore they can either ask that private auditor to go back and get some more information for him before he accepts this report or the Provincial Auditor has the right to ask for any additional information that he deems is necessary.

So for members of the opposition to believe that this administration in any way, shape, or form can stymie the operation of the Provincial Auditor or the private auditing in this province or indeed in any province or in this country, is misleading the public of Saskatchewan. And it is not correct.

I say that as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, and on the government side as a government member, I too want to make sure that I do not have to face any embarrassment in the public when it comes to public expenditure and through some department of government running amok with the taxpayers' dollars and I know nothing about it. If I find out that is happening by some bureaucrat doing this particular thing, I want to correct that particular situation myself, Mr. Speaker, not to have the opposition out there ranting and raving and making a political issue out of it. Making a political issue is fine, but getting the particular situation corrected is another thing. And that's what I, as a member of that Public Accounts Committee, would do, as I'm sure if the hon. members were serving that committee properly would do themselves.

As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, and I am not going to speak too much longer in regards to this, but it's to the point of allowing the people in the province of Saskatchewan here an opportunity to understand the Provincial Auditor's office and what he's doing. We in the public are becoming more and more demanding of information and how the system runs and how it works and what's happening with some various statements that can show up in an auditor's report, you know, that have some bad reflection towards the administration and some various different departments. Well, rightfully it should be. But it's not to be taken out of context. The opposition does that for political reasons. The Provincial Auditor does it for proper accountability. That's all he's interested in. He's interested in accountability.

And when the members opposite have indicated that they would like to see more and more departments brought under the guide-lines of the Provincial Auditor, maybe it's time. Maybe it's time we really reflect and take a good look at everything, Mr. Speaker.

And as I've indicated on several occasions, it's maybe we ought to take a look at all public funding across this province, and maybe it's time that we take a look and see if we want to be auditing hospitals and education facilities and all these particular types of government-funded . . . well I guess probably government-funded organizations that are fairly well arm lengths away from the central administration here in Regina.

So I would tend to think that, you know, like with the Provincial Auditor and the demand that's put upon him today for information, is that we've had a major and significant start from this administration, from this government, by allowing the public to attend these meetings, by allowing TV, radio, and news media to come into these meetings, and by allowing this type of information to flow through the media and ourselves and everyone else to those people that seem to be interested enough to ask the question.

But I honestly believe too that maybe it's up to the Provincial Auditor and up to us as to allow him some funding to go out there and educate the public through himself, not through us, through politicians, but allow him to travel the province and explain in the high schools and explain in the public through the medium and through other means and ways of talking to the public, and explaining exactly what his office is all about and what his responsibilities are.

(1515)

People do not know what the Provincial Auditor is. Some people honestly believe that the Provincial Auditor is the tax man. And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is the most . . . I think what we have to do, we have to start right from the basics and allow the people an understanding of exactly what it's about.

The Provincial Auditor . . . and I think it's time that members on both sides of the House start to really take a serious look at it. I think we ought to look at easing up the Provincial Auditor's, I guess, mandate, and

not maybe . . . maybe what we got to do is look at some resources, extra resources for him to be able to do just these kinds of things because of the increasing concerns about taxation and expenditures and servicing the debt and providing public services and all these kinds of things.

I honestly believe, Mr. Speaker, that the public are demanding it. The public are demanding more and more answers from government today. And I think there's that kind of, I guess a reform that's taking off across this country, and our province. And I believe that we have started, back in 1982. We're doing it again through amendments to the Provincial Auditor's report, through the freedom of information Bill, and the Provincial Auditor's report here in the Assembly during this session. And it's going to be ongoing and ongoing and ongoing.

And I think these are the things that we have to do to improve our system and accountability as private members of this Legislative Assembly. And we ought not to try and take advantage of a non-partisan report and make some politics out of it, some political games out of it. But I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I think probably as long as I'm here and as long as members of the opposition are here that that will never come to be because people seem to like to take . . . some people, and usually members in the opposition, love to take the negatives out of here and make some political games out of it.

But I believe those negatives are not negatives, and as I had indicated earlier, are not negatives, Mr. Speaker, to chastise a government or to chastise any administration, but to point out to the public of Saskatchewan what the Provincial Auditor suggests, where we could stiff up on our accounting procedures in each department and bring true, true accountability to the accounting system. And that's what it is.

And I ask the media and I ask members of the opposition, they both should go to the Provincial Auditor, they both should go to the Provincial Auditor and talk about those two things and ask about those two things, not mislead the people of the province of Saskatchewan and say that the funds are not there. The funds are there. The procedure, the accounting sheets, and the columns that . . . the accounting sheets that . . . and the procedure of the accounting procedure has maybe got to be spiffed up in these different departments and I know they're going to be.

But I would like to also, before I do take my seat here in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, would also like to, I guess maybe in a lot of way, thank the Provincial Auditor for putting up with a committee that has maybe become more or less than professional and has become more of a bear pit for politicians to take a slap at each other and not really do what is meant as a mandate of the Public Accounts Committee.

I honestly believe that instead of going into these Public Accounts Committee meetings and name calling and calling down bureaucrats as some members of the opposition have done . . . is to ask the proper questions and it's to ask proper questions of the bureaucrats as they come in. Ask the Provincial Auditor at that meeting: is what we're hearing from the departments, is that true? Is there still disagreement? If there is still

disagreement, how can we clear up these disagreements?

And as a Public Accounts Committee, then write a report back to this Assembly suggesting how we can clear up some of these particular errors and clean up on the accountable side of the report.

And really it would do me nothing better as a member of the Public Accounts Committee to see that each department could come in from one year to the next and all we would have to look at is a half a dozen pages or so as to saying -- from the Provincial Auditor saying that, my gosh it's a job, finally well done by all departments in their accountability.

Now I would like to say that I think, I think that won't be either, because what it is, is from the changes of accounting practices from time to time and through the adding, through that particular type of ongoing, that we're going to always have some concerns somewhere, as we do in private business or as anyone has if they're having to deal with accountants or auditors.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to encourage all members of this Assembly to work together in regards to educating the public and bringing them . . . in allowing them more of an understanding of the procedures that take place through this legislature, through the floor of the legislature, in their committees.

Allow the Provincial Auditor to go out there and educate the public about what his job is and what he feels maybe he should be doing more, and allowing the people then to have that understanding so that they can come back to us as elected members with suggestions as how they feel we should go and direct this Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Auditors, and what strengths we should put upon the Provincial Auditor, and allow that to happen without us holding the Provincial Auditor back, as members of this Assembly.

There is also that one more thing that I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, and that is members of the opposition have led the public to believe that there has been interference by government, by cabinet administration, and by the Premier of this province, that there has been some interference. And it's a belief out there, made by the NDP, that the public should not, should not put up with this government interfering with the Provincial Auditor's report or reporting.

That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Auditor will tell the public themselves that there is no way that a cabinet minister or a Premier or any member in this legislature can interfere with his reporting. He is independent. He cannot be muscled one way or another. He is not an employee of government again. And I would tell you and I will tell members of the opposition that if they are going out and telling the public of Saskatchewan that, that that is the most misleading words that can flow from any one of those committee member's mouths.

And I challenge any member of . . . I challenge any member of the opposition and the media and any person out in the public to get hold of

the Provincial Auditor and find out and ask him personally. Don't take my word for it, but ask him personally about his accountability procedures, about the information flow, and about everything else surrounding his office.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you this. It won't be near as damaging to a government as when you see that these kinds of headlines come out in the media. And I would read this as a private citizen and I would maybe accept it as its context and I would say no, I would say, that's bad. But that's not the way it reads. The interpretation is misleading. And I will tell you, sir, that these are some of the reasons why it is necessary for the Provincial Auditor to have that freedom to go out and talk to the public and explain to them what he's all about and what the accounting procedures are about in the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to listen to the few words I had to say regarding this, and encourage all members that if they have anything to add, to stand in their place and speak. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Speaker, my understanding was that there was an agreement that only a few people were going to speak, but the member has invited all the members to speak to this. I will only take a few minutes, and just a few minutes to say to the member opposite from Cut Knife-Lloydminster that I want to read from a quote of the provincial auditor, the past provincial auditor, where he says the following -- he says the following: "I have been interfered with in the execution of my duties."

That can only mean one thing -- that the Executive Council on the opposite side, Mr. Speaker, interfered with the execution of the duties of the provincial auditor. That's what it means. And when the member opposite from Cut Knife-Lloydminster says that we the members opposite are the ones making the attack, this is a quote from the provincial auditor. It's not our quote.

And I remember well last year in this House when the former member from Kindersley, Bob Andrew who was the Justice minister at that time, made a personal attack on the provincial auditor. He stood up in this House as the Justice minister and selectively quoted from a letter written by the provincial auditor and made absolutely certain, Mr. Speaker, that that interpretation of that letter was such that it did not portray the meaning of what the provincial auditor meant; and the provincial auditor, Mr. Speaker, had to write a letter in defence of that letter.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, last year and the year before, they blamed Willard Lutz that he was the one that was attacking and he wasn't objective. This year, Mr. Speaker, we have a new Provincial Auditor, and the Provincial Auditor's report is even thicker -- thicker with accusations that tell us that this government is not responsible on public spending. It doesn't have authority on millions of dollars of expenditures that it should be taking before the Legislative Assembly.

The Executive Council, Mr. Speaker, is subject to, not above, the Legislative Assembly. The Executive Council, which is the executive, has no authority other than that which it receives from this Assembly.

(1530)

And time and time again, in the last number of years in the auditor's report we have the expenditures of funds which have no authorization in legislation. That's what the previous provincial auditor has said, and that is what the present Provincial Auditor is saying again -- that the executive disregards the legislation that exists and creates a government unto itself. And, Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable, and that is not being responsible to the people of this province.

And I say to the members opposite, until they come to recognize that the Legislative Assembly is the supreme Assembly, and not the Executive Council, this report of the Provincial Auditor is going to be getting thicker and thicker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: -- And there are going to be, Mr. Speaker, numerous examples of money that is unaccounted for, and that has no, that has no authority in legislation for that expenditure.

Now my colleague said before that there are a number of things that this government has done which are simply unacceptable. Let me, for example . . . the member opposite says that the public has access to information. All you have to do is turn to this report and to last year's report, and I find in Appendix III, 18 agencies or departments that have not completed their statement for the end of 1990 -- 18.

There are another 23, Mr. Speaker, 23 lists of financial statements and/or annual reports not tabled in the Legislative Assembly -- 23. And the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster says that they are open to the people of Saskatchewan. What utter nonsense. What utter nonsense. The Provincial Auditor, not just this one, the previous provincial auditor, says that he was unable to do his work because the private auditors that were hired in the Crown corporations did not supply him with sufficient information for him to do his work. Time and time again the Crown corporations refused.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, in last year's report there was a memorandum issued by the Executive Council which said to the top administrators in the Crown corporations not to co-operate with the Provincial Auditor -- not, Mr. Speaker, not to co-operate with the Provincial Auditor. And yet they were trying to tell us that they are open. They are a democratic, responsible government. What absolute nonsense. What absolute nonsense.

Now when they are on their deathbed, in the last few months of their government, they're trying to bring back . . . they're trying to bring in this House some legislative reform, some democratic reform. They are saying, well, forgive us in the last nine years or eight and a half years,

but we are now repenting. Have faith. Have trust. Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of this province are not that nai pāve, they know what the hidden agenda is. And I'll tell you that the Provincial Auditor, this present Provincial Auditor, like the previous ones, have no choice.

I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, the other day, when this report came out, to talk to a reporter who was here in the '70s when the Allan Blakeney administration was in effect. And he said to me, you know isn't it surprising, the reports of the Provincial Auditor used to be about that thick, compared to this one, compared to this one. And they're getting thicker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes, and half the dimensions.

And they were very, very thin because we had a government that was responsive to the people. We had a government that was democratic and open.

An Hon. Member: -- And accountable.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Yes, and a government that was accountable to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would have a lot more that I would like to say on this particular topic, but the agreement was that we would not go very long. But I couldn't refuse the invitation from the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster to say a few words on this topic. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my chair. Thank you very kindly.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: -- Mr. Speaker, for all three items I wish to convert them to notices for motions for return (debatable).

The Speaker: -- Converted.

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Commendation of Government of Saskatchewan

Mrs. Duncan: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your unanimous election as Speaker, and I'm sure that you will continue to serve us well.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mrs. Duncan: -- Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I'll be moving a motion seconded by my colleague, the member from Shaunavon, that states:

Resolved that this Assembly commend the Government of Saskatchewan for

preparing and implementing a comprehensive plan to stabilize Saskatchewan communities, protect the provincial economy, diversify the province, and reform the institutions and practice of government in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in our talks with people across the province, my colleagues and I have heard time and time again how concerned people are about the stability of their communities. And this, Mr. Speaker, is most evident in rural areas like the constituency of Maple Creek where many towns are heavily dependent on the agricultural economy.

Saskatchewan's agriculture industry has been hit hard in recent years with drought, low grain prices, and of course the international subsidy wars. And these problems have threatened the very existence of many of our small towns and villages, and even to some extent the cities.

The Saskatchewan way of life is in danger of becoming a way of the past, Mr. Speaker. Our government, under our Premier, is committed to the people of Saskatchewan and we are committed to the entire province. The people sitting around me on this side of the House are determined to stop the erosion of the Saskatchewan way of life.

The crisis in agriculture has affected all of us and has made it very clear that this province cannot live by wheat alone. The dramatic effect that downturn in the agriculture sector has had on the provincial economy has shown us all how very dangerous it is to leave all our eggs in one basket.

Saskatchewan needs a plan, Mr. Speaker, a plan not unlike that of what the government has put in place today. Our government does have a long-term plan for Saskatchewan, a plan for growth and development, a plan for diversification and stability. I would put this question, Mr. Speaker, to the lawyer from Riversdale: where is your plan, Mr. Leader of the Opposition? It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that he along with the folks across the floor do not have a plan, have never had a plan, and I believe members on this side have proof of that.

This lack of policy becomes more and more obvious as they make their trips across the province. When asked about his policy or his plans for the future of Saskatchewan, all the Leader of the Opposition can answer is, I won't give you my position. I have quotes from the Leader-Post, Mr. Speaker, direct quotes from the member himself, where, on November 16, 1990 he stated he won't divulge any of the NDP platform. And on January 4, 1989 he told the people of Saskatchewan that dictating his policy would be counter to the point of view that he has.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how long do the people of Saskatchewan have to wait? How long will he play with the lives of the people of this province before he outlines his plan? The time has come, Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition to come clean and admit in fact he has no plan; he has no ideas for the future of our province. Mr. Speaker, he is absolutely and utterly stuck in the past. He is stuck in the 1970s, and those policies of buy up everything, have government own everything, and those type of policies, Mr. Speaker, in today's world will not work.

The people of Saskatchewan won't fall for his line, Mr. Speaker. They won't fall for that wait and see attitude. They won't play his game of hide-and-seek with something as important as their very way of life.

In meeting with people across the province, in their homes, in coffee shops, in community centres they have told us their concerns and we have listened. We have listened, Mr. Speaker, to the concerns of the people of Saskatchewan, both urban and rural, and we have acted upon their ideas and suggestions, and we have dealt with their needs. When they ask for help to deal with the high interest rates, this government introduced the mortgage protection plan, and the mortgage interest reduction plan, which has saved more than a hundred thousand home owners in Saskatchewan \$138.6 million in interest payments. And that, Mr. Speaker, is money in the pockets of Saskatchewan home owners.

We listened when they asked us to help them to build and diversify their communities, and we started the community bond program. Community bonds provide Saskatchewan people with the tools to help themselves. Personal savings can be accessed and used to attract businesses to many towns and villages across the province. To date, 42 community bond corporations have been created, Mr. Speaker, and many more are in the works.

The overwhelming response to this innovative program proves that Saskatchewan people want to be involved in their future. They want to say: I've helped make a difference; I've invested in the future of my community for myself and my children. And there are other very important initiatives of diversification.

Our government's record on economic development and diversification, Mr. Speaker, is a record unsurpassed by any other government in the history of our province. When we took power in 1982, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan was the least diversified province of all the provinces in Canada. From 1983 to 1989, Mr. Speaker, there was a \$600 million, or 600 per cent increase in investment in manufacturing and processing. And when the members opposite were in government, Mr. Speaker, they refused to diversify, choosing instead to nationalize, to buy up everything in sight from potash mines and paper mills to agricultural land.

Our government, on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, has invigorated Saskatchewan's economy with programs to help small business, trade and investment and energy and agriculture.

I would like to talk for a few minutes about our programs we have brought in to open up the energy sector to our economy. This particular policy, Mr. Speaker, has meant a great deal to my constituency, the constituency of Maple Creek.

The policies of this government concerning Saskatchewan's oil industry has led to tremendous growth in this sector of our economy. These policies are part of a long-term strategy designed to encourage development and maximize benefits.

What we did, Mr. Speaker, was look at the strengths of each different area

of the province and build on those strengths and those resources. Obviously northern Saskatchewan has resource development, uranium, gold, the forestry industry on the renewable side; strengthen that for the benefit of the people of northern Saskatchewan. In my area we are blessed with unlimited amounts of gas and oil to some extent. So along with the agriculture that goes on in my area, the growth in the gas industry has had a tremendous effect on our towns and villages. And as I said, these policies are long-term policies and long-term strategies to stabilize the economy.

And I should say, as a direct result of these initiatives, there have been in Saskatchewan since 1982, an additional 7,940 oil wells drilled. And I should remind the people of Saskatchewan that had the policies of the previous government been kept in place, we would have fewer than 5,000 producing oil wells in Saskatchewan instead of today's staggering total of more than 12,000 producing wells.

In the oil industry alone, Mr. Speaker, more than \$2 billion has been added to the total investment in the oil field. We are now pumping out more than 600 million barrels of oil, and that's an increase of more than 269 million barrels.

An additional 48,000 person-years of employment have been created, bringing the total number to more than 91,000 person-years of employment. And those are jobs for Saskatchewan people I might add. On top of all these benefits, provincial revenues have increased by more than 967 million, bringing the total to more than \$3 billion.

(1545)

So, Mr. Speaker, people on this side of the House look at the oil industry as a vital, vital component of the provincial economy. And by opening up the industry we have allowed increased exploration and development of one of the world's more needed resources. The members opposite greatly opposed these changes to the royalty structure, changes which obviously has worked for the better.

Now it seems, Mr. Speaker, that once again the members opposite do not have a plan for building and strengthening our resource sector. And it is a classic case of the left hand not knowing what the other left hand is doing. I don't think those people have a right hand.

But I would like to comment, Mr. Speaker, on an article that appeared in the Leader-Post April 11, 1991 where three NDP members state categorically that they would increase taxes on the resource sector, that this industry would become, and I quote here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a "cash cow" under an NDP administration.

And who were these members that look at the energy sector as being a cash cow to be milked at will? The member from Saskatoon Nutana, the member from Regina North East, and the member from Regina Centre. And yet in the same article, Mr. Speaker, the article of April 11, 1991, two other NDP members state that an NDP government would co-operate with resource-based

companies. Well I don't really think that they know what the word co-operation means.

But who are the members that say they would co-operate with the resource sectors? Well it's the Leader of the Opposition and the business whiz, the member from Regina North West. So I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, which one of these five members are telling the truth. Which one of the five members are actually stating the policy of the NDP with regard to the energy sector? So again I would say, Mr. Speaker, where is the vision? Where are the ideas?

Another area of resource development that was greatly expanded under this government is natural gas. Before 1982 the NDP government did not encourage the exploration and development of natural gas in Saskatchewan. They entered into a long-term agreement with Alberta to buy natural gas from Alberta, leaving Alberta with all those jobs which we could have here.

In 1987 our government deregulated the natural gas industry, creating a new market for natural gas in Saskatchewan. Now Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces in the country that export natural gas. Decreasing government involvement in natural gas markets and prices have resulted in record levels of activity in the production of this valuable resource, and substantial cost savings have been passed on to consumers.

For the first time in the history of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, consumers now have a choice as to where they buy their natural gas. They don't have to buy it from SaskEnergy. And I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that the number of wells drilled in Saskatchewan rose from 9 in 1982 to 960 in 1989. Government revenues on gas royalties have gone from less than 1 million in 1982 to approximately 36.2 million in 1989. Investment in Saskatchewan's natural gas industry rose from 2 million in 1982 to more than 165 million in 1989. This tremendous growth in the natural gas industry means jobs and stability for the people of Saskatchewan.

And this is just another example, Mr. Speaker, of what we have done for this province in the last nine years. It's a scary, scary thought to many of my constituents, even the thought of an NDP government getting back.

My people elected people, government, that they said they would help. And they elected a government that stood behind its word. We listened to the people when they needed help with 22 per cent interest rates. We introduced the production loan program, Mr. Speaker, and last year with the spring seeding program we put money into the hands of farmers to put their crop in the ground. And we will continue to stand behind our agricultural sector.

But at the same time, as I said previously, we look at the strength of the different areas of the province, whether it's in energy, in forestry, in mining, in dry land farming, food processing, and that.

So I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that this government stands up for the people. We listen to the people and we have listened to the people. And this government will be returned after the next election.

We will continue, Mr. Speaker, to bring in innovative programs to continue to develop . . .

The Speaker: -- Order. The member's time has elapsed. Order, order. The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I'd ask the member to rise and move the motion.

Mrs. Duncan: -- Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Shaunavon:

That this Assembly commend the government for preparing and implementing a comprehensive plan to stabilize Saskatchewan communities, protect the provincial economy, diversify the province, and reform the institutions and practice of government in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Gleim: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks today, Mr. Speaker, I will be seconding the resolution brought before this House by my colleague,

Dthe member for Maple Creek. I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address the House, for me to address this House and speak to this very important resolution.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, because it represents a plan. And when I say a plan, Mr. Speaker, it's like my colleague said, the people across the way don't have a plan. Any time you talk about a plan to stabilize Saskatchewan you talk about a plan that is long term, a plan that is workable, a plan that is economically feasible. But most of all, Mr. Speaker, you talk about a plan that puts the ideas of the public to work.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we went to the people and asked them what they felt had to be done. The answer they gave us, Mr. Speaker, was not surprising. They told us that we have to have some kind of safety net system so the farmers can be assured of, you might say, a decent living. They told us we have to work towards diversifying our economic base to reduce our dependence on agriculture. They told us that we have to devise some kind of system that would encourage local investment in our local communities. And, Mr. Speaker, they told us we have to reform the practices of this government to make them more open and accessible, and to follow greater input and decisions of great importance.

To address all these concerns, Mr. Speaker, with one plan seemed almost too much to ask. But, Mr. Speaker, we listened. We have accomplished a great deal, Mr. Speaker. The bad times that have fallen on the farming industry in this decade have had a devastating effect on the Saskatchewan economy.

As my colleague had said, with the low grain prices, the drought, and the international grain wars, it's been tough, Mr. Speaker. Yet somehow

through these very difficult times, we have managed to increase manufacturing investment in this province by more than 700 per cent and to keep the population at higher levels than it has under any previous administration before. We felt that we didn't have to play second fiddle to anyone, Mr. Speaker. We set out to prove to the rest of the world that Saskatchewan, it is a very resourceful province.

An Hon. Member: -- What's your plan? You've been fiddling while Saskatchewan burns.

Mr. Gleim: -- And I hear the members talk about a plan. They should be ashamed of themselves because they haven't had a plan, Mr. Speaker. They go around talking about they're going to revise it during election time. Why not come clean, bring up your plan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Gleim: -- Why else would Saskatchewan, the province with more farmers than anywhere else, import fertilizers from Alberta, Manitoba, when we could have manufactured our own right here with our own natural gas. I know the people across the way are against it. The one from Moose Jaw says, we're for it. The one from Regina says, we're against it. But it just depends on where they're at.

Just imagine, Mr. Speaker, one of the largest livestock producing areas of the world not processing its own meat products. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, a province that has wealth and a forest products not producing its own paper products. Imagine a province that is blessed with heavy oil reserves, not upgrading it. And imagine, Mr. Speaker, a province that depends on its supplies of water but doing nothing about it.

Saskatchewan was missing out on all the things that could be done for itself, and it was falling behind the rest of the country and the world. And I just have to take one example, the province, my neighbouring province, the province of Alberta. And when I said something about water, they did something about their water in the good times, Mr. Speaker, and it's showing up right now. We didn't do anything in the good times about our water, Mr. Speaker. We just let it flow. That's all we did. They knew they couldn't buy the water so they didn't buy it.

So we set out to change that, Mr. Speaker. We now have built a mill in Prince Albert producing its own paper, a fertilizer plant being built at Belle Plaine. And we have, you might say, in North Battleford, a bacon plant processing pork. Not only do we have Canada's first heavy oil upgrader in Regina, but another one being built in Lloydminster.

And when I mentioned about water, about the Rafferty and Alameda dams which everybody across the way was against . . . You don't build it. You can save the water, but you can't save it without building something first, Mr. Speaker. And they know nothing about building.

We have opened the doors to the new products development, like Impact Packaging in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, who produce environmentally

friendly food packaging. We have brought programs that have strengthened the competitiveness of the tourism industry, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud of this, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency alone, over \$585,000 have been allocated promoting tourism in the south-west, Mr. Speaker.

The deregulation, as my colleague had said about the gas industry, is very important in the south-west, Mr. Speaker. The number of wells that were drilled, as she mentioned, were nine in 1982. Now there's well over 900 wells being drilled. We are self-sufficient in the gas industry, Mr. Speaker. I would like to invite some of those people down to the south-west and see what's happening down in the south-west in the last nine years. It has changed much just in the oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker.

The direction this government has been taking is the main reason behind the tremendous growth in the entrepreneurial spirit that is strengthening this province. And, Mr. Speaker, it could not have been done by a government that did not have a plan. It could not have been done by a party that continues to refuse to give its position, Mr. Speaker, and I guess you might say flip-flopping through the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is being done by this government. We have had to deal with some difficult questions. Although we have seen a lot of success in diversification, the fact remains that we still depend on farming a great deal. We still depend on rural Saskatchewan a great deal. We have had to implement a plan to stabilize the economy in those areas, otherwise we would not have a provincial economy at all.

Since 1982 this government has secured more than \$7 billion to aid in farmers and have saved farmers more than \$388 million in interest payments alone. We have done more for Saskatchewan farmers than any other administration in the history of this province.

When I say that, Mr. Speaker, about rural Saskatchewan, I am talking about individual line service, underground power, and natural gas. It helped keep rural Saskatchewan the way it should be.

(1600)

Yet farmers are still having difficult times, Mr. Speaker. And when you talk about drought and continuing low prices, we needed a plan that would stabilize the farm income, Mr. Speaker. We went to the people with representatives to come up with a plan that would accomplish that, Mr. Speaker.

Now for the first time, Mr. Speaker, we have a long-term safety net program that protects farmers from both low yields and low prices. We have a program that allows farmers to invest in their own future similar to, you might say, an RRSP (registered retirement savings plan), called NISA (net income stabilization account).

Along with a third line of defence, Mr. Speaker . . . when I say third line of defence, Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure they know what a third line of defence is over there. It might be the top line of defence or the bottom

line of defence. I'm not sure which it is, Mr. Speaker.

We have a program that gives farmers the opportunity to forecast a minimum income with numbers that they can take to the bank, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure they know anything about that either. We've also looked at communities around the province that are struggling for their lives. We looked at them and saw we needed something to stabilize their economy, something that could give the people the confidence to do what it takes to build and grow.

We implemented a program that would do just that, Mr. Speaker, a program that would inject local money into local projects, a program that each citizen could take part in and say that he or she helped keep this community stay on the map.

Community bonds, as my colleague mentioned -- I won't go into that -- they have helped rural Saskatchewan take initiative and develop new business industry through their community. All we did, Mr. Speaker, when I mention that, was help them help themselves.

We are continuing our plan to strengthen the rural economy by giving communities all over the province a chance to have a government office in their town. Fair Share Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is met with more enthusiasm and optimism than anyone ever imagined. I know there are a lot of communities in my constituency that are sending in their profiles and wanting their chance to share something that has, in effect, been theirs all along. To do that, Mr. Speaker, is just to do it to make good sense, Mr. Speaker, and that's what it does, makes good sense.

A plan, Mr. Speaker -- that is a term I am sure the members, like I say, from Riversdale which is responsible for that side of the House over there, is not familiar with, because a plan, Mr. Speaker, is a blueprint that you share with people because it is their lives that you are affecting. And we have heard that member from Riversdale mention on numerous occasions that he is not willing to give up his position, like I said before . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: -- Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to get into this debate.

I want to begin my remarks, first of all, Mr. Speaker, by pointing out that any plan or any strategy, the true test of that is what the results are. And today I want to outline briefly in the few moments that I have the results of the so-called plans that this government opposite and two members opposite have talked about.

I want to first of all address the comment made by the member for Maple Creek. The member for Maple Creek talked about how good things have been in her area of the province because of the government's plan. Well I want to ask the member for Maple Creek to ask herself and ask her constituents

whether the plan that the government had to shut down the ski facility in Cypress Hills was a good plan. And I ask that member, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where was she and where was the member from Shaunavon when they shut down that ski hill?

And what did the minister from Canora use as an argument? The minister from Canora used as an argument that the people should go over to the Alberta side to use that facility, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now that is a plan to stabilize the Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker, I ask? Of course it's not. Of course. That's the plan that we're talking about. That's the result I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Maple Creek also said that the government had done such wonderful things with the mortgage protection plan. One year ago they said it was going to be ten and a half per cent. Without any forewarning, in a press release budget the minister announced just a few weeks ago, it's going up to thirteen and a half per cent.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a plan that is not the kind of plan we need to stabilize our economy. What's the result of all that? The result is that in 1990 we have had the lowest housing starts in Saskatchewan since this province began to make a recording of the number of housing starts. The average starts under the NDP administration was 7,954 a year. The average starts under this administration has been 4,694 a year, and in 1990 it was 1,417. That is the result of that plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Of course the member also talked about -- both of them -- what wonderful things have happened to Saskatchewan because of their policy on oil royalties and the oil industry. I won't get into that except to say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What has been the benefit to the citizens of Saskatchewan? Did it prevent the government from having to bring in a provincial GST of 7 per cent? Did it bring down the deficit or reduce the debt of the province, Mr. Speaker? Did it bring in balanced budgets, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Of course not. That is the plan they're talking about, and it should be judged, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the results. And these are the results.

This motion itself, and the things that both members have been talking about, is symbolic of how barren this government is of ideas and a plan for the future. The fact that they started this legislative session without a throne speech is an example of the fact that they don't have a plan. Because what is a throne speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker? A throne speech is an outline of the government's agenda for the forthcoming fiscal year.

The fact that this government was not capable of having a throne speech shows that indeed there is no plan that this government has, other than trying to pull a rabbit out of the hat in order that it may hold an election sometime down the road, because it knows that without a rabbit out of the hat, their future as a government in this province is doomed. Because the people know and the people have caught up with the fact that they don't have a plan on how to deal with the problems that the people and the families of Saskatchewan face -- the high taxes that they pay, the lack of jobs that are forcing young people to leave Saskatchewan and go to other

parts of the country.

Well they've had announcements before. And I want to read to you, Mr. Speaker, a notable journalist in Saskatchewan and what he said in the Leader-Post. Mr. Dale Eisler said the following:

In other words, the industrial strategy was typical Devine-ism. There were no details, no specifics, just clever theatrics.

That's what's wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This has been the thing that the government has done in the place of an economic strategy. Mr. Eisler, although he could have been talking about today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was talking about when the government in 1982 launched the open-for-business economic strategy. Words. Just words.

Well since then I want to read you all of the announced economic strategies to stabilize Saskatchewan that the government has had. We've had the establishment of the Saskatchewan development committee in 1982, the Partnership for Progress in 1985 which targeted job creation as one of the four pillars of building the province. Then we had the Free Trade Agreement of 1988 which was to have been the saviour of rural Saskatchewan. Remember that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

And then the PCs' (Progressive Conservatives) privatization initiatives which were to revitalize our economy. And then of course came along the immigrant investment funds and the community bonds of 1990. They had some promise, but they couldn't even do that right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were going to rebuild the rural economy. Then there was Consensus Saskatchewan in 1990 which was to set out long-term goals for the province. And then there was the report of the economic diversification council in 1991 which set out a multiyear plan for economic recovery. Well none of them were ever intended to do anything.

When an election then approached, they announced yet another one and they called it diversification, or decentralization, I should say -- the D-word. They hardly ever mention it any more. A cynical political announcement without any forethought or any analysis or any planning, announced on the eve of an election in the hope that somehow it might help the government restore some political credibility.

The fact that neither of the members opposite spent any time on it at all tells you that they now realize, as has been said by many others, that it is seen as a political announcement and nothing more.

Here is an editorial from the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix:

One thing that has been lacking in his discussion is a full analysis of the cost and benefits of the plan and what impact it will have on rural Saskatchewan.

I'm sorry, that was Yorkton This Week, printed this week.

Then there's the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix:

What rural Saskatchewan needs most is income generating industry (Mr. Deputy Speaker). If rural Saskatchewan is to survive it needs a better strategy than shuffling the present deck which is basically all a transferring of government departments would be.

And then it goes on to say that:

Disease is not the dwindling population in rural Saskatchewan, that is the symptom. The disease is Canada's agricultural policy which still clings to outdated notions.

And then it goes on to say, it's a band-aid.

These are not plans, Mr. Speaker. Every year the government has announced some new strategy but never has followed through in implementing that strategy. And that's why we have students leaving our province and that's why you have people moving somewhere else. That's why our unemployment level is the highest it's been for a decade.

Now, Mr. Speaker, most cynical of all, the government does have some plans. It has some plans for certain select people, which was recently disclosed when it was revealed by a memorandum from the Premier's office that the Premier . . . and I read now from a headline in the Leader-Post, "Devine's office tracking student job applicants."

DThey can't even be fair and honest, this government, with students who are looking to upgrade their education and looking for summer jobs. They have to screen them in the Premier's office; the Premier screens them to determine whether they're going to get a job, depending on whether their parents made a contribution to the PC Party.

And it doesn't end there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because after last summer every one of those students received a letter from the PC Party asking them to take out a PC membership. And those students, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who did not take one out, this year are not being hired.

That is the PC plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the PC plan, and that's why we face the situation that we face today.

Where were they if they were interested in stabilizing rural Saskatchewan and rural communities? Where were they when the two-price wheat system was being eliminated? Silent. Where were they when the farm fuel tax rebate of the federal government was being eliminated? Silent. Where were they when rural post offices were closed and are being closed? Silent. Where were they when the school-based children's dental plan, eliminating 276 jobs in 77 rural communities, was eliminated by this government? They said it was a good idea.

That is the kind of plan we don't need, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I want to move this amendment to the motion that the member opposite moved just a few moments ago. Because this amendment better reflects what this government has been up to in the last nine years. And I move it, seconded

by my colleague the member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake:

That all the words after the word "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

condemns the government for failing to provide a positive, stable overall business climate and for imposing an immense tax burden which has resulted in an unprecedented number of business bankruptcies; and furthermore that the government has endangered many of the established democratic institutions and traditions of the province of Saskatchewan.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Thank you, thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the few short moments that I have to speak in support of the amendment to this motion, I want to deal with this government's supposed comprehensive plan to stabilize communities in Saskatchewan. And I want to speak specifically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my community.

I want to go back a couple of weeks ago. I opened a paper on a Thursday afternoon, and to my surprise the column indicates that there are going to be 30 jobs lost at MacDonalds Consolidated. Is that part of this comprehensive plan, I ask myself?

I turn the page over and in the same day it's indicated that 20 rural post offices are going to be closed in Saskatchewan.

And I say to myself, clearly this looks like the government's plan from 1982 until 1991 because it's been an ongoing scenario, Mr. Speaker, where businesses have been closing, where out-migration has been unparalleled, where the deficit has been mounting. And I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that clearly that is the comprehensive plan of this government. And if it isn't, I would ask any of the members on that side to stand up and refute those facts, because I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what's happened.

A couple of days later I opened the paper -- as a matter of fact, I believe it was yesterday in the Star-Phoenix -- 616 business bankruptcies in this province in the year of 1990. And I say to you, is that part of this comprehensive plan?

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, my colleague indicated, the mover of this amendment indicated, that you have gone through announcement after announcement of plan after plan, but what's been happening? The deficit has been increasing. People

have been leaving this province to find employment in other jurisdictions. Taxes have increased. You're screening summer employment for students through the Premier's office. Mr. Speaker, that's not the vision of a province that the people of this province were looking for in 1982 when this government was elected.

I note today in my clippings a headline from the Star-Phoenix . . . or Leader-Post, I'm sorry, talking about rural school closures. And I want to quote from this: "Losing a rural school spells the end of a community. We know of 24 schools closing -- that's 24 communities and one big blow."

And that's this year, Mr. Speaker, and that is a quote from a member of this province, a citizen of this province, who can clearly tell that the closure of these schools is going to mean a negative impact on 24 rural communities.

And where has this government been, Mr. Speaker? Cutting back on revenue sharing to school boards throughout this province. And that's the result. That's the result of school boards having to deal with a lack of funds. That's the result of school boards having to deal with the new federal goods and services tax that your federal counterparts introduced, and the increased costs because of those. That's the result of the introduction of a provincial goods and services tax which the Minister of Finance so ceremoniously announced outside of the legislature a few weeks ago.

I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of this province understand what the comprehensive plan of this government is. The comprehensive plan appears to be, sir, one of a scorched-earth policy.

I indicated that I wanted to talk about this comprehensive plan that the member from Maple Creek spoke of to stabilize communities and to protect the provincial economy.

Well let me tell you about what's happened and some of the protection that's happened in my own community where a number of your constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, support when they're shopping in our community. We've lost . . . and I just want to go through a list of the wholesalers and this comprehensive plan of stabilizing our economy in Prince Albert. We've lost MacDonald's Consolidated; we've lost Scott National; we've lost Western Grocers; we've lost Fayerman Brothers; we've lost Grosser & Glass; we've lost Buckwold's. That's six.

And I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, Grosser & Glass was a business that operated in our community, not for 10 years or 15 years, but for decades. Even through the Liberal years they survived. But they couldn't survive the scorched
_earth policy of this Tory regime. They closed their doors and they left.

And I want to say to you, the outfitters who are depending on the wholesalers to supply them during the summer months out of Prince Albert are going to find increased costs. And I would suggest you know that as well as I do. And where has this government been?

The workers who are involved in the closure of MacDonald's went to see the Minister of Labour, and he says to them, well he's going to have a look at it. He doesn't talk their language. I mean they're working folks. He understands the big business angle and he's going to sit down with MacDonald's Consolidated and talk to them; he understands big business. I tell you what he understands -- he understands Cargill and he understands Weyerhaeuser and he understands Peter Pocklington, but he doesn't understand the working people of this province.

And I challenge this government to bring those issues before an electorate. Call an election so that we can determine who's going to lead this province in the 1990s.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, this comprehensive plan has meant unemployment has doubled since 1981 in this province. Even with the out-migration, the number of people who are actively seeking employment in this province has doubled. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine, if the people who left this province had stayed in this province and looked for employment, what the figure would be?

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that this government hasn't had a plan or they would have been able to deal with that. They should have had a plan. They should have had a comprehensive plan to keep the social assistance roles from sky-rocketing and from expanding the way they have, over doubled from 1982.

But where have they been? They've been dealing with the Cargills, putting at risk the almost \$400 million of Saskatchewan taxpayers' money. Have they been working with the Saskatchewan business community? I say to you that they haven't. I say to you that they've totally ignored the Saskatchewan business community who would, who could, and who will, with a new regime, develop job opportunities for the people of this province. And we won't be hinged to the coat-tails of Cargill and of Weyerhaeuser and of Peter Pocklington. I can assure you that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to indicate to you as well another little example of how this comprehensive plan of yours has failed. Last month in my community in Prince Albert, not one single housing start; not one two by four; not one lot developed; not one new house built. And at the same time the contractors in that community and in others throughout this province are looking for opportunities to get back to work and to be looking after their families.

But what have you offered? What has this government offered? They've offered a plan that they call decentralization that by the Manitoba experience is clearly not economically viable. That's what they've offered.

I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government was concerned about

rural communities, you'd do something about post office closures and you'd do something about schools closing in those small communities. And you'd do something. You would have said something instead of sitting idly by as they rip the dental workers out of those communities, good paying jobs; and when they gave away the Highways equipment to their friends and put those people out of work who used to live in those communities.

And I want to talk to you about your own community of Shellbrook, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you are aware, there was about a half a dozen workers for the Department of Highways that were gainfully employed with that department, spending their payroll in the town of Shellbrook. And where are they now, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Where were they and what did their MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) say? I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those jobs were gone. Those payrolls were gone and their MLA said nothing.

I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, shame, shame on this government. That kind of a delivery of decentralization Tory style is clear throughout this province. You've taken a thousand well paying jobs out of rural Saskatchewan in the last few years and all you've replaced it with, sir, is higher taxes to those school boards, a lower tax base for the businesses because there are so many of them that have closed. That's what you've done for rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you drive through the small towns in Saskatchewan and you have a look at the small grocery stores that have closed; you look at new post office buildings that have had their windows boarded up with plywood, fresh plywood; you look at those jobs being lost and those opportunities for Saskatchewan's rural people being lost. And this government says nothing. I say to you . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order. The member's time is up.

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was in Prince Albert last week and giving them some money for the sports that they're going to have there next summer. And I was talking with . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order. All members will have an opportunity to speak. I'd ask you to allow this member to speak.

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Mr. Speaker, my department of sport, culture, and recreation had a commitment to the Prince Albert Summer Games Committee to give them a certain amount of money to organize and run their games. And so while I was there in Prince Albert, I had an opportunity to talk to a number of people about what they thought about government agencies or portions of government departments moving into Prince Albert.

While, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many . . . certainly I was talking to a crowd of a dozen people or so. They thought . . . And it's interesting that one of the members from Prince Albert . . . and I see the other one would speak about how bad the decentralization is.

I suggest to him, Mr. Speaker, that he go back to Prince Albert and he walk

up and down the street in Prince Albert and talk to the mayor and talk to the councillors and talk to the people who operate the stores in Prince Albert, and ask them how they feel about the possibility of many, many people coming into that community at government wages and all the benefits that government employees have. I suggest to him, Mr. Speaker, that he is not paying attention to the people of Prince Albert.

Two weeks ago I was in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, and I was talking to the mayor and some of the councillors in North Battleford and also Battleford about the possibility . . . what they felt about decentralization, about people leaving Regina and going into North Battleford and Battleford. He thought it was a great idea and as do everybody else that I spoke to in North Battleford and Battleford as well.

Mr. Speaker, the people outside the city of Regina think that decentralization is a wonderful idea. Now let's talk about the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the city . . . what it means to the city of Regina. Well there's a possibility that people from Regina will be going out to rural Saskatchewan.

Let's talk about what it means to Regina if rural Saskatchewan ceases to exist. What happens if towns like Carlyle and towns like Pangman and towns like Ogema and towns like Milestone or Weyburn or Estevan, or all these other communities out here in southern Saskatchewan, what does it mean to the people of Regina if those communities cease to exist, Mr. Speaker, if they no longer need services from the city of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, there are 47 . . . there is something in the neighbourhood of 87,000 jobs in this city, something like 87,000 jobs of everybody in the city working. Fifty per cent of those jobs are directly related to servicing southern Saskatchewan. So you sit across on the opposite side and you say decentralization is bad. I say to you, you go talk to the truck drivers that belong to all those transport companies around the city. You ask them what they think about not driving the truck out to Carlyle or not driving the truck out to Pangman or down to Weyburn or down to Estevan. You talk to them.

Let me give you some facts. Let's look at some of the facts, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over 300 million of Regina's total 1990 retail sales comes directly from rural Saskatchewan. That's nearly 17 per cent of Regina's total retail income comes from rural Saskatchewan. Many of the employees that I talked about who represent and service southern Saskatchewan are in the agricultural business. Agriculture Canada, for instance, has 136 employees; Agriculture and Food, that's a provincial department, has 180 employees; Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has 550 employees; Dairy Producers Co-operative Ltd. has 193 employees, Mr. Chairman; Credit Union Central has 371 employees.

Now let's just take something like the Federated Co-operatives of Regina. And just a point, Mr. Speaker, before I fail to mention it. In the yellow pages in the Regina telephone book there are 10 pages of transport companies. Now those transport companies service southern Saskatchewan. They don't service northern Saskatchewan, they service southern

Saskatchewan -- 10 pages of transport companies. I think it's time that the people who drive those trucks, the people who work on the docks and distribute that food out to . . . and the clothes and all the other materials that go out to southern Saskatchewan, I think it's time they took a look at what these people are talking about here, Mr. Speaker. They don't want those jobs to go out into southern Saskatchewan. They don't want communities in southern Saskatchewan to be strong, to be positive.

So, Mr. Speaker, you've got Federated Co-operatives, Regina, head office, incorporated in Saskatoon. The Regina region services 101 retail outlets -- 101 retail outlets in south central Saskatchewan. There are 340 co-ops in western Canada, Mr. Speaker. Based on a figure of 4.5 full-time jobs for a million dollars in sales in 1989, the Co-op employed the equivalent of 1,800 full-time employees in the Regina region.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it may be time for those 1,800 full-time employees with the Federated Co-operatives in Regina to start listening to what this side is talking about rather than what that side is talking about, Mr. Speaker.

If they have their way there will be no decentralization; they will allow southern Saskatchewan to die -- Weyburn, Ogema, Pangman, Milestone, all those towns in southern Saskatchewan, these people serviced, Mr. Speaker. They won't need any warehouse jobs if there are no trucks, if we don't need the trucks to deliver them. There'll be no truck drivers driving trucks into southern Saskatchewan.

If you want to have an impact of what Regina is as a distribution centre in southern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, you stand on the outskirts of this city on a Monday morning. Go down on south Albert, go out on east Victoria, go out anywhere in this city, and you watch all those trucks driving out of this city. Where are they going, Mr. Speaker? They're going to rural Saskatchewan. They're going to small town Saskatchewan. They're going to co-op stores, they're going to hardware stores, they're going to clothing stores, they're going to restaurants -- all of those in southern Saskatchewan.

If we do not strengthen southern Saskatchewan, we don't need 50 per cent of the people that are now working in Regina. And it's time that the city of Regina, the city council, started waking up to that fact instead of condemning the things that this government's trying to do, instead of condemning all the things and not supporting what this party, what this government has done for this city in the last nine years, they should start thinking about what it would mean to this city if we did not diversify or if we did not have trucks going out to rural Saskatchewan.

(1630)

Let me just talk about what has happened in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, in the last few years. It's very obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the upgrader . . . I mean I don't even have to mention the upgrader. Unfortunately, the city of Regina city council did not support the upgrader, Mr. Speaker. They did not support the upgrader because the

majority of people sitting in the Regina city council support the NDP. And why do they support . . . And so therefore they're not going to support anything this government does.

I mean that's how near-sighted these people are, Mr. Speaker. That's how near-sighted they are. They're more concerned about supporting the people on the other side who oppose everything, have no plan whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, than they are in supporting their own town.

The worst thing that's wrong with Regina is the attitude, Mr. Speaker. If we had a positive attitude in this city like some other centres in western Canada have, we could do wonderful things in this city, far more than has already been done.

Which isn't to say, Mr. Speaker, that a great deal hasn't already been done. One talks about the upgrader. One talks about Saskoil. You talk about WESTBRIDGE, Mr. Speaker. You talk about the money that's been spent on the rail line relocation, construction of 1,232 housing units in Regina, creating almost 1,100 jobs in this community, Mr. Speaker. And it just goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

One of the problems we have, Mr. Speaker, as I said, is that this government . . . or the members of the opposition are so busy being negative they don't have time to develop a plan. Let me quote from an in-house piece that came from the NDP.

This is from Owen Sebastian in the Young NDP newspaper called The Communique pé:

You would think we would have learned from the 1986 campaign. We obviously have not. All we did was say how bad and evil the Tories were. Instead of offering a real alternative, all we did was say we would restore the dental plan at a time when rural Saskatchewan is being decimated by low grain prices. People, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, have no reason to vote for us.

And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the people in the city of Regina have no reason to vote for the members who they have supported in the past representing the NDP government, because they do not support things that have been good for this city.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you want to drive down Highway No. 1 west a few miles, you'll come to something called Saferco. That's a fertilizer plant, Mr. Speaker. It's a fertilizer plant, and it's owned by Cargill. Now the members of the opposition . . . and a really interesting twist, Mr. Speaker, was when they supported, the NDP supported the Americans in the American fertilizer industry in opposition to the project that this government has put out there at Saferco.

There will be very shortly something in the neighbourhood of 1,500 people working out at Saferco in building that plant, Mr. Speaker. Those people live in Moose Jaw; those people live in Regina.

I remember very clearly the member from Moose Jaw saying, first of all, no way he was going to support . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. Time has elapsed.

Ms. Smart: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I remind people that the motion that we're debating this afternoon, it's been brought in from the member from Maple Creek, and it says:

That this Assembly commend the government for preparing and implementing a comprehensive plan to stabilize Saskatchewan communities, protect the provincial economy, diversify the province, and reform the institutions and practice of government in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the government members opposite that the only phrase to use for a motion like this, coming from the government opposite, is that it's appalling and unmitigated gall. Absolute gall to think that you can say that you have saved Saskatchewan communities. And I say this on behalf of the people across the province that I've spoken to in the many communities that I visited as a critic for senior's issues and I say it on behalf of the people that I represent in the city of Saskatoon, in Saskatoon Centre.

This government's plan to stabilize Saskatchewan communities, Mr. Speaker, does not appear to include the cities of Regina and Saskatoon as part of the Saskatchewan community, because those two cities will be devastated by the . . . have been -- Saskatoon's been devastated already. You walk down 2nd Avenue and the streets and the shops that have gone into receivership and the businesses that have closed as a result of the policies of this government. And the city of Regina that will be devastated if they move the government programs the way that they're proposing to do.

Regina and Saskatoon are part of the Saskatchewan communities, Mr. Speaker, and they deserve to be protected as well.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- It's also interesting to note that the people who have spoken from the government side have talked a lot about the things that they've done in the past. And it's the past that has created the chaos that we have now, the past nine years of this PC government in Saskatchewan, have created absolute chaos, and we don't in any way see any moves to create anything that would stabilize the communities in this province, from this government.

That's why I'm pleased to be speaking in support of the amendment that's been brought in by those of us in the opposition, Mr. Speaker:

That all the words after the word "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

We condemn the government for failing to provide a positive, stable, overall business climate and for imposing an immense tax burden which has

resulted in an unprecedented number of business bankruptcies and, furthermore, that the government has endangered many of the established democratic institutions and traditions of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support that amendment. I want to focus my attention on part of this motion that no one on the government side has addressed, and that's the statement that says that the government has endangered many of the established democratic institutions and traditions of the province of Saskatchewan in our amendment. The government is saying they've reformed the institutions and practice of government in Saskatchewan.

I think it's really important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we look at this word "reform" because the government opposite has been twisting the English language, among many other things it has been doing, as it presents ideas to the people of Saskatchewan. There is no way that we can say what the government has been doing reforms the institutions and practice of government in Saskatchewan.

The word "reform" means to restore to a former good state, to bring from bad to good, to amend or improve by change of form or by removal of faults or abuses, to bring an end to evil by enforcing or introducing a better method or a course of action or behaviour.

Now the government has been trying to say it's going to bring in democratic reforms -- and it needs to do that -- but this government certainly will not.

We just have a number of examples of government behaviour recently that in no way demonstrates reform, if you take the meaning of the word "reform" to be the conventional meaning of the word in the English language. But this government opposite, as the supporters of the Reform Party, take the word "reform" and turn it into something quite the opposite to what it's always meant to us in the English language.

And the member from Melville certainly began that when he reformed Social Services and made it a much more hateful system for so many people who are on very low incomes and needing help in this province. This is not reform, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is not reform at all.

First of all, the government, if it was going to reform, would have released recently, as it's been asked to do by the city of Regina, the plans for their decentralization proposal to show why it's a good thing. These plans are still kept secret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and secrecy is not reform of government. Secrecy is a backward step. Being secret in government is the tool of people who are afraid to speak and to tell us what they're up to, and it's a tool of repression. It is not reform.

Get those plans, get those proposals, that analysis of the benefits of your decentralization out to the people of Saskatchewan. Tell the city of Regina what you found out about decentralization. Why are you hiding it?

You're hiding it; you won't let them know. And that is part of your secrecy.

The other thing the government . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance is again yelling from his seat as he always does. Mr. Speaker, I think . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. I call the member from Moose Jaw North to order and allow the member to continue with her speech. Member from Moose Jaw North, allow the member from Saskatoon to continue her speech.

Ms. Smart: -- Well I would like to call the member from Weyburn to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I would like to say that the reason why he's probably making so much noise is because I'm about to mention what he has done as the Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- He has brought in this 7 per cent provincial tax which is opposed by people all across the province. And if you are going to reform the government in Saskatchewan, you would listen to the people of Saskatchewan who are telling you that that's a rotten tax. It's one they don't want. It's hurting businesses all across all the communities in Saskatchewan.

We presented petitions to indicate that people in the restaurant business in all the small towns are terribly worried about this, that people running the library systems all across the province are terribly worried about this tax. The small businesses are going to be very badly hurt and the Minister of Finance is responsible for this and has the gall to support a government motion that calls this stabilizing our communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This minister opposite, this Minister of Finance, has also made an appalling move in bringing in special warrants to spend money before the legislature was sitting and could debate it in an interim supply Bill. That's another example, not of reform of government institutions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but of a failure to respect government institutions and wanting to go behind the back of the legislature and bring in decisions that are being made outside of the legislature.

Another very serious move by this government throughout the years that we've been here in the House on the opposite side and watched them work -- secrecy, bringing things in behind the backs of the legislature, failing to debate. We had an example just today when a Bill was brought in by press release, a Bill relating to referendums and plebiscite, brought in with an embargo on it. We have not . . . we could not see the legislation and they call that respect of this institution, Mr. Speaker.

And the Minister for Finance is saying that the goods and services tax will have to be collected even though it's illegal at this point, until the legislation is passed, and he's not going to protect the small businesses that are so badly hurt by this.

Mr. Speaker, this government just tabled Public Accounts after 14 months of holding them back, and they call that reform. That's just a recent action from a government that has been, over the years, as I've said, doing things that really have destroyed our political institutions.

We also have noticed just lately that the Principal case is still going on in the courts, dragging on and on, and the government is refusing to help the people who lost their money in Principal Trust. In fact, this government has destroyed the Department of Consumer and Commercial Affairs, which was a department that consumers could focus on and a department that the Principal Trust people were working with, and now that's gone. Gone again. Another change.

And all these changes that I've mentioned have just been brought in recently, but it goes back a long time. It goes back a long time. One of the changes that this government brought in, in 1986 when I was first elected in this House, was when it brought in the executive government reorganization Act, Bill 5. That Bill was an unprecedented transfer of power from the legislature to the provincial cabinet.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order. I have to ask the hon. members to please allow the member from Saskatoon Centre the opportunity to speak.

Ms. Smart: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's part of the lack of respect for this legislature that when it is the government members opposite who are causing the disruption, that they are not named in speaking to them. The lack of respect for the legislative procedures in this House from the government opposite is really appalling. And we are seeing examples of it every minute as we're working here today. And we have seen examples of it in the last few days here, as well as over the last years. The government . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1645)

Mr. Muller: -- I am pleased today to address the Assembly and certainly support the motion. I won't be supporting the amendment brought in by the member for Regina North East, but I certainly will be supporting the motion.

The motion provides us with ground rules for the basis of our future, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a look at the motion.

It starts to talk about implementing a comprehensive plan, a comprehensive plan, Mr. Speaker, for all the people of Saskatchewan, from a farmer to a business man, teacher, to mothers at home, labourers to business owners, and rural and urban.

Mr. Speaker, it talks about stabilizing our communities through initiatives such as Fair Share Saskatchewan, which I'll speak further on in a moment; stabilizing and ensuring that the quality of life we enjoy in this province

is protected -- indeed, Mr. Speaker, enhanced; stabilizing through additional programs for our youth, our families, our elderly, and for all of us, Mr. Speaker.

The plan is about protecting the provincial economy.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. I'll have to call the member for Regina North West to order and ask him to allow the member to continue his speech -- and the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Muller: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Protecting our agricultural sector through the long-term guaranteed income and insurance programs, GRIP and NISA; providing long-term security never before experienced on the farm.

And this is typical, Mr. Speaker, of the opposition. As soon as the government has something good to talk about, they try and interrupt. And as soon as I try and talk about the GRIP and NISA programs, they're certainly over there trying to interrupt me. And they certainly don't understand it, know anything about it and that's why . . . They're against everything. Certainly they even made comments about me not wearing my glasses in my pictures, but I see some of the members over there on the other side of the House that even take their glasses off when they're speaking. So I mean . . . So anyway I guess some of them are ashamed of how they look with glasses on. But they seem to want . . . They don't seem to want to hear my words of wisdom; they want to interrupt. So I guess they . . . I don't know what they had in their glasses this afternoon but . . .

Mr. Speaker, GRIP and NISA provide long-term security never before experienced on our farms. And, Mr. Speaker, protecting through additional talks at the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) table, continuing to fight for our agricultural economy -- all of which is important.

The plan also talks about diversifying the province, Mr. Speaker, through important programs, whether community bonds or the Saferco fertilizer plant or other steps that have already been taken by this government. I'm proud today to be able to boast of a 700 per cent increase in manufacturing -- 700 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Now that's diversification, Mr. Speaker. That's growth, growth when we were facing . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The members opposite say that . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. Order. I believe the House has reached the point that it might be more appropriate to call it 5 o'clock. The members have been speaking. Please allow the member to speak.

Mr. Muller: -- Growth, Mr. Speaker, when we're facing the most difficult economic times we've seen since the dirty thirties. Growth, Mr. Speaker, that didn't happen by accident. Growth that has happened as the result of a plan. And part of this plan, Mr. Speaker, includes government reform -- reform through such measures as plebiscites and referendums which will give the people of Saskatchewan direct access to the government and a voice in

their own future.

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, it's ironic that members opposite me like to keep talking about opening the books. It's ironic because prior to our taking over in 1982, the government of the day maintained the practice of holding Public Accounts meetings in private.

Well, I've been on the Public Accounts Committee off and on for the last eight or nine years and we've always had the press involved in the Public Accounts. Prior to 1982 I didn't even know that they weren't public. I didn't know that when I first came here, but now I understand that they held their Public Accounts meetings in private and never let the press in. So I mean how could anybody be critical of what they were doing? They never told anybody anything.

We opened these proceedings to the public. Yes, we opened these proceedings to the media. They have their chairs right in the Public Accounts meetings. They can come in and sit through the meetings, listen to what's done in there, and it's all on verbatim. They can read it. I mean we have it open to the public and the press. The public can come in and listen to the Public Accounts meetings.

We reformed. They talked. They say we haven't done any reform measures. We started back in 1982. We've done it in a slow and methodical way, that we know we're going in the right direction. But they don't see that.

And we've reformed in other ways too, Mr. Speaker, like Fair Share Saskatchewan, bringing the government closer to the people. We reformed through community bonds. Saskatchewan communities now have the chance to decide what economic development projects they can work on and be a part of their own towns and villages.

And you, Mr. Speaker, are a further example of the reforms undertaken by this government by coming the first elected Speaker of the House. Now I know that your filling in for the Speaker now, but certainly he is, he is the first elected Speaker in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. And now he takes time off to go to tea. At any rate, it is a step forward to have an elected Speaker in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Muller: -- All of these reforms are important, Mr. Speaker, and have been taking place for many years through various initiatives brought about by this government since 1982, from bringing natural gas and individual telephone line service to rural areas of Saskatchewan to the election of the Speaker. Those are the kinds of things that the real people want.

I remember back in 1981 when we didn't have enough gas in this province to bring natural gas to anybody. But now of course, we've been drilling gas wells; we've got an infrastructure that is delivering gas to a lot of rural communities.

I also know that . . . funny, one of my communities, I think its the

community of Candle Lake, is one of the first resort areas that are going to be getting natural gas this summer, and they're already over-subscribed. They were going to do it in three years and now they've bumped it up and going to do it in two years because everybody out there at the lake wants to have natural gas to their cabins and use it winter and summer. And if that isn't important to tourism in this part of the country, I wonder what is.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Muller: -- Take one example of reform from the plan today, Mr. Speaker, Fair Share Saskatchewan. I've been talking to people all around the constituency of Shellbrook-Torch River, and I can assure you people are working hard in towns like Smeaton, Shellbrook, Canwood, Choiceland, Meath Park to ensure we get a fair share of the government offices in my part of the world, in their part of the world.

Fair Share Saskatchewan is a vital part of the plan, Mr. Speaker. Vital because . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. Member's time has elapsed.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:55 p.m.