

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT,
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

**Special Committee on Rules and Procedures of the
Legislative Assembly**

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will at the conclusion of my comments move a motion that the third report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly be concurred in.

First I want to preface the motion with just a few comments. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is with some pride that we do this. This is the first substantive change to the rules, I think, since 1980. I think that's accurate.

The rules of this committee, I think everyone agrees, badly need overhauling. Nothing remains unchanged for that length of time, and anything which doesn't change with the changing times soon begins to create some real difficulties. So I think among the members of the committee there was agreement that rule changes were needed. And I think among the members of the public, that's also agreed upon. We need to modernize and change this.

I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, that for my part -- and I think I speak for some other members of the committee -- this is part of an ongoing process in rule changes. We spoke, Mr. Speaker, although it was, I shall characterize it as a spirited meeting last night, there did seem to be an agreement at the end, at least that we needed to meet again at an early date, and begin to discuss what further rule changes might enhance the effectiveness of this legislative institution.

Mr. Speaker, the rule changes which will be debated and voted on, were concurred in by at least the official opposition and government members at least twice. It is more difficult to speak for the third party in these matters, but they were at least concurred in by the official opposition and the government members twice.

Initially, Mr. Speaker, all of these rule changes were formulated in the committee, beginning actually in 1992. They were passed, were implemented for a interim period, and I think by and large most members of the legislature, they may speak for themselves, I think most members of the legislature felt these rules worked pretty well.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they were tried on an interim basis and were a casualty of a quite separate but quite bitter argument in here over changes to GRIP(gross revenue insurance program). I think it's fair to say that those rule changes were a victim of that.

But, I think it's also fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that no member of the committee . . . few members of the committee, few members of the House, disagreed with the substance of the rules themselves. While there is some concern by some members about one here or there, I think I can say, Mr. Speaker, that generally there's no quarrel with the substance of the rules.

Mr. Speaker, we again began to meet in this session to deal with these rules. And the rules were approved by the members of the committee yet another time. Here I speak only for government members, but it was certainly our understanding that these rules would be brought into the Assembly on an interim basis and we would continue to discuss other matters which had not got the same degree of consideration as these. These have been considered over two years.

Mr. Speaker, we discussed the rules which we're moving, we agreed upon them, and we asked that a draft report be prepared. Now if there's any other without . . . with what appeared to be the general agreement of everybody on the committee; certainly no objection was taken to preparing a draft report for the consideration of the members of the committee. Now if there's any other interpretation to be placed upon the preparing of a draft report but that you're going to implement them right away, I'm not sure what that interpretation might be.

So these rules were agreed upon twice. No objection has been taken in substance in either time, and it is the view of the members of the . . . the government members of the committee that the time has now come to make some changes. We cannot postpone this process indefinitely while we attempt to resolve every other problem that may exist between government and opposition.

The overhaul of the rules is away overdue. I think most members of the public concur in that and the government members have come to a reluctant determination that we should proceed with these rule changes. Certainly I think it is preferable, wherever possible, the rules changes be made unanimously. This is not a . . . unilateral rule changes are something I think that any fair-minded member or person in this Assembly would approach with real trepidation.

I say though, with respect to these rules, while there is some indication . . . and I hope I'm wrong; I hope the third party is able to support these. And we shall be interested to see what the position of the third party is. And we hope after the debate is at a conclusion, the opposition members will also be able to support these.

We say with respect to these rule changes, while this vote may or may not be unanimous, these rule changes have been agreed upon by the official opposition and the government on at least two separate occasions, and no objection has been taken in substance.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will point out that these rule changes enhance the effectiveness of this Assembly, and they enhance the accountability of the members of the Assembly to the public. And I think they enhance the ability of the public to participate in this Assembly, to understand what's going on, and to benefit from it.

Mr. Speaker, I won't go into the detail, but let me say in summary, we are recommending that the motion would change the sittings of the Assembly in a way which we think would really better accommodate the public and also perhaps better accommodate some opposite members.

I want to say that that motion, a number of these changes were almost solely emanating from the opposition. Now we concur in them. I'm not saying that we object to these. I want to say that the origin of this one was the opposition. We have retained it because we're taking these forward as a package, not only what we wanted, but what the opposition want as well. The whole package which was agreed upon is going forward.

There are changes, Mr. Speaker, to the public holidays we have traditionally observed: holidays like Easter, and on the rare occasions when we've been sitting at this time of the year, Canada Day, what used to be called Dominion Day. We will now place these in legislation.

We are amending the guidelines for television, Mr. Speaker, so that members of the public might better understand how this Assembly operates, what the issues in this Assembly are, and might better follow our deliberations. We are reinstating a practice which we think worked well with respect to statements by members. A bit more to and fro between members and we think, Mr. Speaker, it enhances the role of the private member, something that the public has asked for. The public I think wants an enhancement of the role of the private member and so this rule accommodates that.

We are, as part of an ongoing process of democratic reform in ensuring accountability, we are providing realistic deadlines for written questions and for answering an order for return. Those, Mr. Speaker, are enhancements which we think will be useful and which the opposition members wanted.

Mr. Speaker, we are also instituting some changes to the order of private members' business. This again is in keeping with an expression of the comment put forward at one point in time by opposition members but with which I think the government members agree. And that is the public want the role of the private member, the non-cabinet minister, they want the role of that person enhanced, and these changes will enhance the role of the private member.

Mr. Speaker, there are some rules as well which will clarify how we deal with emergency debates -- something that doesn't occur a lot, but they're almost

always on very important issues.

Mr. Speaker, there are other changes as well, of perhaps more routine if not less important, that I won't go into.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that members of the Assembly will be able to now vote and concur in this. We earnestly seek their support in this, as we will be seeking their support in the days ahead when we continue the process of reforming the rules. This is simply one step in what I think all members of the committee see as a fairly long road in bringing this institution into the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that this Assembly has benefited from less reform in the last 15 years than virtually any in Canada. I think that's an accurate statement. These changes are way overdue. We would acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that there's a huge job left to be done. We would also ask all members of the Assembly to acknowledge that this is an important contribution to completing that job ahead.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That the third report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly be concurred in.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hesitated in rising because I thought the member from Carlton might want to speak as to the reasons why he was supporting a motion like this from the hon. member that has just spoken. And I'm certainly beginning to wonder if I attended the same meetings that that gentleman was at.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try to summarize my fundamental premiss as succinctly as possible here. And I think what we have seen over these last couple of days is the NDP (New Democratic Party) Party putting on their railroad caps once more, Mr. Speaker. And the chief engineer tooting his horn, as he does from time to time, that the train has left the station. And then, oblivious to any democratic tradition, oblivious to any reality that might be existing, simply steamrolling ahead and rending asunder whatever opposition to their desires that there might happen to be. Because they are fundamentally convinced that might makes right.

And that therein, Mr. Speaker, I believe is one of the fundamental problems that we are having in trying to wrestle with the complicated issues of changing and adapting, on an ongoing basis, the rules and procedures of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this unilateral abridging of the rules and procedures of this Assembly is only but the latest in a long litany of procedures that this government could be accused of, as it runs roughshod over the people of this province.

I could remind members of one of the first acts of this

government when they indeed did break contracts with the civil servants. I could remind people of the second basic premiss that this government undertook and that was to break contracts of 60,000 farmers in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker -- and retroactively, I might add. And I also might add, Mr. Speaker, that there was taken away the opportunity of any legal recourse that these citizens might want to pursue.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore there is a litany of threats and intimidation by which the members opposite are operating and governing this province.

We know that one of the biggest threats was on the Federated Co-operatives, Mr. Speaker, and the upgrader issue where they had to fight for their very existence and for their very life.

On the individual level, we know what the now minister from North Battleford said to his chamber of commerce: you guys better agree with me because some day I will become a minister and you will be sorry. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is sad to say that yes he did become a minister, and yes the people are sorry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the general rules within this Assembly have changed. And that's perhaps where my status as House Leader I am most concerned. Because on an ongoing basis there have been changes made in this House, not necessarily by the parties involved in this House, the political parties, but on an ongoing basis the ability of the opposition to fulfil its commitments to be Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition have been undermined. They have been removed almost piece by piece so that quite literally now, Mr. Speaker, the opposition, the third party and the official opposition, are finding it more and more increasingly difficult to perform the functions that have been bestowed upon us.

So, Mr. Speaker, this stifling of all opposition at all costs by members opposite, I think has just been highlighted once more by the delivering of this interim report from the Rules and Procedures meeting to the Assembly here today.

And no, Mr. Minister, I don't think that there will be unanimous support, certainly not from the official opposition. We do not **per se** oppose any of the rules that are included in this package.

And that's what I'm saying -- that the rules are a package. And what we're seeing here, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon is only part of the package that was agreed on. And every opportunity at every meeting that I have attended in the Rules and Procedures meeting, I have made it abundantly clear that yes, while we may in some cases reluctantly agree with some of these rules and some of these changes that have occurred, it is always being done under the premiss that we must look at the package as a whole. And, Mr. Speaker, that is not the way that it has occurred. We find now that we have a dictatorial government handing down its ultimatum, and it's either our way or highway.

This will not work, Mr. Speaker, because the tradition of this House has always been that we are working on a consensus basis. That is the way this House can only function properly, Mr. Speaker. If there is that fundamental agreement to disagree on policy issues, that's what we're here for.

But certainly the House must be able to function with some degree of comfort, both in terms of the government members and the opposition, that the rules are there for all of us and that they are going to be adequate.

Now for the life of the members on this side, we cannot understand what is so sacrosanct about March 1. That was what the folks opposite said. March 1, we've got to have it; that's the deadline. Now it's been reluctantly agreed that maybe March 7 or whatever is the time when these changes must be instituted.

And I'm glad that the minister . . . or the member from Prince Albert is getting ready to stand up after I have finished because I would like to hear from him about the comment that he made in the meeting yesterday when he let the cat out of the bag. Oh, but we have public pressure; we have public pressure; we must show the public that we are instituting reform. And this is a rather shallow attempt, in my opinion, of the government members opposite to regain the reform agenda. And so you're saying now: we are reformists at heart and, folks, look; here are 12 rule changes. The opposition doesn't agree with them and that doesn't matter. We will show you that we are reform minded.

And what I'm saying to you and I'm saying to you members opposite, it cannot work. It won't work that way. And that, in our estimation, is the reason why you are pushing this. You want to get the public pressure off your back. You want to be able to say to your back-benchers, boy, look what we did for you; we got private members' statements and all the rest of the stuff back in again. And the public will allow the thing to pass by, but they are not going to be fooled. We are certainly not fooled on this issue.

So if you want to start taking a look at some of the rules that have . . . and we can just quickly go through them, as the hon. minister did as well. The sitting hours -- I didn't think that that was a rule that was suggested but it doesn't matter; we're changing the rules.

Now there's a fundamental test that I want the people who are listening and the general public to apply to the reform package of the government. The reform package of the government, Mr. Minister -- ask yourself the question: is this what the public wants? Is this the priority of the public? Does this pass the test of what the public is asking of us, as administrators of this province? Sitting hours -- is that a priority, Mr. Speaker, of the public, whether we sit on Tuesday night or whether we sit on Thursday night or don't sit on Thursday night?

What about public holidays? That's the second; that's the second initiative of these government members. It says that public holidays . . . well so that we can

legitimately have the public holidays like everyone else. And I have a little bit of sympathy with the Government House Leader because it makes life easier for him; he doesn't have to get up in front of every holiday and say, I move that we accept this next Friday as a national holiday and we don't want to work either.

But I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is that a priority with the people? Do I hear people in Prince Albert right now clapping their hands and saying, goody, boy, those guys are right on track, right on track.

Statements by members could be, Mr. Speaker, could be, and I would suggest to all members that this is probably the highlight of the package in a positive sense. It could be positive if it was used for the purpose for which it was intended, which is the ability of individual members to have their day here and be able to get up and say something positive, I would suggest, about their constituency, happenings in their constituency, awards being won by constituents. But I challenge anyone to go back in the verbatims and see how this statement by members during the trial period was used and abused, and we question the objective of the members in including the statement by members once more.

We have deadlines for questions from 48 to 5 sitting days. The intent here, Mr. Speaker, was by the government to say well, really you know, we don't have enough time to answer those questions that you submit in 48 hours; give us five days to answer them and then we'll answer them. Yet if you check the records, Mr. Speaker, of the 200-and-some questions that we asked last session, I don't know, I would suggest that there would be a very small percentage -- I didn't check to see exactly how many were answered -- extremely small example.

And we can go on. A deadline for 180 calendar days for orders for returns, I think that's good. I have basically nothing more to say on that. I think that's good.

Private members' motions:

All notices not taken up on the following Tuesday shall be withdrawn from the Order Paper and adjourned items (will) remain on the Order Paper . . .

And I can just hear the public saying, right on. They don't know what we're talking about. Is this the priority of reform in this legislature? I think not. I think you're missing the mark, folks. That's not what reform is all about.

Private members' motions, no problem. Priority of debate, makes the life of Mr. Speaker easier and so on. We have no problem with that one. But again it's the smaller things about the machinations that go in within the House. And I ask again, is that what the priority of the people of this province are when we talk reform? I think you're off track. I think you're missing the boat.

Legislative internship programs, basically it's not worth talking about.

Smoking in the Chamber, no smoking in the Chamber. Well I would agree with that. We have no problem with that. But I don't think that's a priority of the people. I think it's a priority of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health under the current situations. And I have commended both of them for the stand that they are taking in those issues and I fully support them on that.

Use of laptop computers in the Chamber. Is this what the people want? Do they want us to spend government tax dollars buying computers and using them in the Chamber here? I'm computer illiterate, I must confess, so it's not a big deal with me. But I question, Mr. Speaker, is this what the public wants us to talk about when we talk about rule changes?

And I say that although that is a package that we could live with, as the minister opposite has said and we concur with that, I don't think that that is really what the essence of reform is all about. So then what we have done is come up with ideas and suggestions on the committee.

Now this is what the committee has decided. This is what that interim report is about, and we feel it's missing the mark; it's leaving too many things out.

Our recommendations that we came forward with have been rejected, Mr. Speaker. Our recommendations . . . and we say in addition to this package, to make it a complete package, to make it a meaningful package, we should have amended the rules for private members' Bills and motions to be brought forward on a regular basis so that they can be debated but, more importantly, resolved. Bring them to a vote; bring them to a head. Let private members -- government members perhaps as well as opposition members -- to come forward with Bills and be able to have them brought to some form of resolution. Denied, Mr. Speaker. Meaningful reform denied.

We have asked that the chairman of the Crown Corporations for accountability be an opposition member, just as when we were in government we allowed that to happen in the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker. Meaningful change, dramatic change -- denied.

We're asking, Mr. Speaker, for free votes in the Assembly. We were told simply, there's no chance. Don't even talk about it; we're not going to even look at free votes in the public. And there are two ways of approaching that, Mr. Speaker. We can do that by incorporating it within the rules and procedures or through legislation, as we will be doing.

We have other reform initiatives like the legislative utilities review commission -- an excellent idea, in my opinion, where we can put our members, our back-benchers, to work. While they're already getting

paid for sitting here, they could also be expanding their horizons and acting as a watchdog in some of our Crown corporations and our utilities.

An Hon. Member: -- And the public is interested in that. The public's very interested.

Mr. Neudorf: -- And as my member says here, the public is interested. We believe that's what the public agenda is all about.

We're also going to be advocating a reduction of cabinet ministers, reduction of cabinet ministers on a scale, on a scale as opposed to the numbers of members that we have. We are saying that there has to be a mechanism to review public appointments. I know that there's no patronage in members opposite, but it would be nice if we had an all-party legislative committee to review public appointments.

These are the kinds of things that we're looking for, Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of things that we wanted to have on the agenda to be incorporated within these rules and then become part of the rules of this Assembly.

Now we're not the only ones, Mr. Speaker, that had an added list. The government members have some more. They have their priorities straight. And these are some of the extra things that they want to include in future discussions and change in the rules. And one of them is adjournment motions. We should not allow adjournment motions during debate as a mechanism, to again withdraw and restrict the ability of the opposition to perform its functions.

What else? The other issue on their agenda is to limit the length of speeches. They want to limit the length of speeches. I'm not quite sure that 30 minutes, is it an hour, or whatever. That's on their agenda and I don't think it's on the public agenda.

Another one is that the House leaders will be able to use cell phones in their desks. Now that's a top priority as far as reform with your public is concerned.

And then also another one of significance here is that non-alcoholic beverages be allowed in the Chamber at all times. This is the kind of reform that you folks are talking about. And what I'm trying to tell you is that you are not on the people's agenda. This is not true reform. In a sense what we're looking at is the glitter and the tinsel, to be able to say to the public, this is what we have done. And for you to say unilaterally and use the might of your majority to say that this is what is going to be good for the Assembly, you are missing the mark. You are missing the mark and we cannot have a meaningful dialogue in this Chamber as long as the might-makes-right philosophy is going to prevail.

And so, I would seriously . . . in fact I could make an amendment to that and I gave that some consideration, but I'm going to give you the opportunity, as a couple more of my members want to speak, to reconsider what you're doing here, have the

courage to say, well maybe we were a little bit hasty in this and withdraw this report, let's go back to the drawing board, let's go into that committee meetings again, and have some meaningful dialogue where we can come out united.

And if there is that resolve, we can do it. And we can come up with a package here that's going to make this Chamber proud in the eyes of the public. Because we will be on the public's agenda, and not just a glitter and tinsel show to show the people that yes, we may be doing something that's useful.

So I would encourage you, Mr. Member, to consider my suggestion here, withdraw, and we'll get back to the drawing board and come back with a unanimous decision on the larger package.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a member of this Committee of Rules and Procedures, I very much would like to respond to what has transpired today. I couldn't agree more that reform of rules has been long overdue in the province of Saskatchewan. And what I want to do is just walk through my very short history of being on the Rules and Procedures Committee since I entered this arena.

When we first met there was considerable goodwill on this committee, a committee that you chair, Mr. Speaker. In fact, there was enough goodwill that people made a decision to bring forward a range of possibilities for changes in this legislature that would be done on a trial basis for 50 days.

That indeed took place and I think that there were some things that we considered worked well, other things that we felt were perhaps sometimes misused and abused; for example, the statements by members. But overall I think that people were very pleased that we seemed to making some progress.

One of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, we felt that we were making progress was because what had transpired had been reached by consensus. That all changed, Mr. Speaker, when certain things arose in this House, and after a meeting was called of the Rules and Procedures Committee that the government members decided for the first time to no longer vote as an entire group with members of the official opposition and the third party through consensus, but rather to use their majority rule. That resulted in a lack of goodwill, Mr. Speaker. A lack of goodwill to the point where in spite of the House Leader yesterday in the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures stating that we had agreed to and implied that we had been meeting over all of this time since the fall of 1991, that what he neglected to say is that, Mr. Speaker, we had not met in over a year.

The rush, the need for a rush was somewhat perplexing. The need to do this by March 1 was very perplexing to both the members of the official opposition and myself. Because one of the things we felt needed to be done was to return to a time of

goodwill, to be able to look as though the government members were willing yet again to work by consensus. And what we've discovered is that that is indeed not the case. And I find that very tragic when we're dealing with something that could be of great importance to the people of Saskatchewan.

I happen to think that reform is something that has a life of its own. It's dynamic in nature and in fact it is something which should be and indeed will be ongoing. But it has to be done with a vision in mind and a real view to where it is we want to be going. It isn't something that we simply tinker with the engine. We should have some idea as to where we want to go and why it is we want to be doing this.

The view of the committee members, as I understood them some time ago, was that we wanted to do this in the best interests of the public. We wanted to do this to ensure that the members of this Assembly would be able to be most responsive to the people that they represent. And I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that the things that are now going to be claimed by this government as being reform oriented and substantive as far as a reform package is concerned, is really going to be the things that the people of Saskatchewan are concerned about at all.

If we're truly concerned about the empowerment of back-benchers, if we are truly concerned about ensuring that the people of Saskatchewan have a sense that this is their place where their concerns are raised, where their concerns are addressed in full and meaningful ways so that people in this Assembly actually have the right to stand up and speak on behalf of their constituents on an ongoing basis and vote in a manner in which their constituents want, we would be dealing with the kinds of reforms that have real meaning to real people. Most of the changes that we see here are superficial. In fact I called them window-dressing last night and I quite meant it. All the substantive changes are yet to be addressed.

And I find it most interesting that there really was an attempt by the official opposition and the third party to address everything that was transpiring in the Rules and Procedures Committee with goodwill. And if I may, I'll take the liberty of making some comments.

First of all, it has been quite clear from all the deliberations that we had had with the Rules and Procedures Committee of the past that the official opposition did not want, nor were they interested in having, laptops in this particular Assembly. That was more than clear.

But what did the official opposition do? They stated we would be more than willing to concede on this item; since it means so much to the member from Churchill Downs that we will in fact agree to this particular item. But what we want in return is to have items that we are concerned about.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a concern that I brought forward to the committee that I think is very important to the people of Saskatchewan, in particular

important to the members in order to be able to do the best job possible on behalf of their constituents. And that's regarding sitting hours.

One of the things that I had suggested is that it would be in the best interests of the people of our province and their members in representing them to be able to meet with their constituents one day a week in their constituencies. All that would be required would be extending the time of the session to ensure that we are able to cover all of the dates and spend that one day per week.

Now if we look across the country, Mr. Speaker, that is happening in other places, where while the session is on MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) are able to be able to go to their constituents and be in contact. And I know that I can meet with individual constituents on a weekend, but it is unfair and impractical to think that there are groups of people, organizations that exist in one's constituency, who are going to be able to bring together all of their members and meet on a weekend.

That was something that I was able to say well, I'm willing if I have your word that we will address this in the future, that we can put aside for the moment because I think that this will be addressed at another time.

There were many things that were done on the part of the official opposition and the part of the third party in order to be able to show goodwill. And that, Mr. Speaker, was not done in return by government members.

In fact some of the things that happened were the package that we had agreed to previously, the things that were tried out for 50 days in this particular Assembly were decided by the member from Humboldt that we should no longer consider. For example, the seconders, that there would be no need for seconders. And I find it most interesting that that would be the case because the mother of all parliaments got rid of that particular rule in 1957 in Britain, Mr. Speaker.

For example, we had agreed to changes with broadcast services in the past and had tried that for 50 days. Who was it that made a decision that no we wouldn't be dealing with that at this moment, but the member from Humboldt.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's very surprising to me that we wouldn't take the time to do this in a way that is innovative and substantive. If we look to the House of Commons they have many things that are worthwhile looking at. The fact that they have many, many private members' Bills, that these things are addressed in Alberta. I passed around all of the changes to many of their rules and procedures in the Government of Alberta that show that private members' motions and Bills are brought to a vote on the floor.

I'm not suggesting that they have all of the answers, but I do believe that we should at least explore the

things that are going to allow the empowerment of people to do their jobs better here on behalf of their constituents.

I think as well that when we look across the country, we don't want the kind of chaos that has been implemented by the Government of Ontario; so we should indeed be looking at things in a thoughtful manner.

Similarly, there's something that I would very much want to see and that's better use of all-party standing committees. Things that would result in our being able to meet in the evenings, for example, where we really could welcome in the public because we are simply temporary tenants in this building and they are the landlords. We should be doing things that absolutely promote true access.

I too would like to be introducing legislation in this Assembly which would be able to be brought to a vote, whether it be anti-corruption legislation or otherwise.

I am very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, in the way that this has transpired. I not only believe in reform, I want to participate fully in reform, and I think it unfortunate that the government members last evening tried to paint this as something that would depict the official opposition and the third party as being disinterested in reform.

What concerns me even more is that the government is now going to go out and promote this somehow as if this is some wondrous reform package when in fact it is not near what the people of Saskatchewan deserve nor what they want.

I concur with the hon. member that what we should indeed do is to withdraw . . . to offer the government to withdraw this report at this time and to offer us an opportunity to work toward a consensus once again. Which is the only way in which changes to the rules and procedures are going to prove most successful for the people of our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was newly elected on October 21, 1991. I had never sat in this legislature before that point. And I, like a good number of members in this House, were elected on that very same date for the first time.

As I toured my constituency seeking to represent Souris-Cannington, people there told me they wanted change. They wanted real, meaningful change in this legislature that would allow their representatives to represent the people that had elected them.

They didn't want to elect someone to walk into this Assembly, into this Chamber, and simply represent the political party for which they ran. They wanted people to represent them as constituents, as the people of Saskatchewan. They wanted the members in this House to be able to do such things as bring

forward pieces of legislation which benefited them and the province as a whole.

We saw the member from Regina Rosemont last session bring forward a Bill, a private members' Bill from a government back-bencher, Mr. Minister. And what happened? The government members refused to allow that Bill to be debated. They refused to allow it. So, Mr. Speaker, it's not just opposition members who wish to have the ability to bring forward pieces of legislation, it's government back-benchers also.

The people who elected me, and the people who elected all the other new people into this Assembly in 1991, wanted us to be able to speak out on free votes to best represent our constituencies, our individual constituencies. They wanted us to speak on behalf of the whole province, but they also wanted us to speak on their behalf.

By forcing members to vote the party line, you are not necessarily allowing the members of this Assembly to vote for what is best for their particular constituency. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what real reform is all about, not what the government has presented in this report. That is not reform at all, Mr. Speaker, that's just tinkering.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform this Assembly that I will and am representing my constituents and the hundreds of thousands of other people across this province who continue to demand real change when I vote against the fluff which is this report and the sham reforms that the government opposite represents. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1445)

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had hoped that some of the other government members might want to add a word or two because the things I have to say won't take very long to throw into this debate. I think the question that my colleagues asked gets right to the heart and the core of this matter: is this what the public really wants?

That's the question we have to sit and ponder and ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, because every one of the new members who were elected in the last election from the other side must search their souls at this moment and ask themselves this question. Is this not what the public has asked you to do, to reform the process? This is what they sent you here for. This is what they're calling for. It doesn't matter which party they voted for. They're telling us all the same message: reform the parliamentary process in our province so that it is meaningful and so that it will accomplish something that the people want to have done.

And so what do we do here today, Mr. Speaker? We bring in the 12 tinsel decorations from the tinman's government, and he allows us now to drink Beep in the Assembly, and that is our offer of a revolution in reform. We're going to be able to drink Beep, while

things like amending the rules to allow the private members' Bills and motions to be brought forward in the Assembly on a regular basis so they can be given the deserved recognition, that's left out.

We have members of the public who sit in this Assembly week after week, day after day, lobbying to try to get their messages and their issues dealt with. And even when they make that point with the official opposition, that this is a proper and intelligent thing that needs to be done, do we listen to them? Do we provide an opportunity so that that issue can be brought before this House so that people can vote on it? No. We throw that out. We throw that out, and we bring in a program so that we can play computer games in this House when we get too bored with the speeches, instead of listening to the debate that a democracy was set up to do in this very House and every House like it. Instead of listening to the debate to find out what we've done wrong, we'll sit and we'll play computer games. And that we call reform.

I beg your pardon, but it doesn't work for me. That the chairman of the Crown Corporations would actually be a member of the opposition so that some real work can be done, instead of the political games that we play in that particular process, that we reject. No thank you, we won't have that. We'll drink Beep and we'll play computer games.

More free votes in the Assembly . . . and they don't even have the courage to allow their members a free vote on this very issue itself. Not one proclamation from anyone that you can vote your conscience and do what your people want you to do, the people that elected you.

And I point my finger to the back benches again and I challenge you to represent the people that elected you and bring in some true reform -- the kind of reform that they want to see and deserve to have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm only going to take a few minutes in reply to the interim report brought down by the government members.

Mr. Speaker, I was at that meeting last night and I can tell you that from attending Rules Committee meetings in the past that there was no consensus, there was no consensus at all, Mr. Speaker, in the development of this interim report.

Mr. Speaker, the taxpayer and the voter today in this province are demanding of the members of this Legislative Assembly, and every other one across Canada and the House of Commons, that politicians start to develop some type of consensus way of governing.

Mr. Speaker, they say to us as politicians and as political parties that you no longer have the

credibility, no longer have the credibility to speak on our behalf. And, Mr. Speaker, when we have over 50 per cent of the voters in a riding not bothering to vote, that reaffirms in my mind that the credibility that we all would like to have no longer exists for politicians and political parties either in this province or across Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, the trick in the job is to get it back again. And to do it in a way, as the Leader of the Liberal Party pointed out is being done in Alberta, a way that other jurisdictions are experimenting with, and that is to take the partisanship out of the process and develop, by consensus, rules that are meaningful for the 1990s.

And, Mr. Speaker, it rings totally hollow when the member from Churchill Downs tries to snow this Assembly and snow the people of this province that the process we are going through here today has anything to do with that.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this report today, and I challenge the members of the government to give us a taxpayer today, give us a taxpayer that would come into this Assembly and say that this is what I want; this is good work, ladies and gentlemen. Because you know what, Mr. Speaker? I don't believe they could find one. They might find a hack out there somewhere who would agree, but they won't find an honest-to-goodness taxpayer that would say, this is good work; you've earned your pay today.

Because, Mr. Speaker, all that this does, quite frankly, is make the life of the 66 members of the Assembly -- and particularly the government members -- easier to bear. Mr. Speaker, that's not what's on the public's mind today.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 1994 across this land, this agenda of change is on. And if members of this Assembly did nothing else in 1994 but to deliver to the people of this province at least a glimmer of hope that that change is taking place, then we would have accomplished something, Mr. Speaker, and there would have been no deadline of March 1 or March 7 or anything else. If it took this entire session, Mr. Speaker, to bring about fundamental change, then there has been good work done, and members of this Assembly, I believe, can say they have earned their pay.

There is nothing, Mr. Speaker, in this report today, nothing that will change public attitude one iota as to how this place works and how it functions and how it represents the views of people across this province.

I would love, Mr. Speaker, I would love the Premier of this province, the member from Riversdale, a man who has taken part in fundamental change in our country through the constitutional process 10 years ago, to stand in this Assembly and tell me how this particular document lines up with some of the fundamental changes that he helped institute in this country that fundamentally changed the way -- rightly or wrongly -- that we govern ourselves.

And I would challenge the Premier today to stand up and say how this is reform, how this is the leading edge for his government, and to bring me someone from the real world back into this Assembly who would put their stamp on this and say, well done, good and faithful servant; you've done good work today.

Mr. Speaker, there is no consensus. There is no good work today because the job is not finished. And I see no will from this government to finish the job in this session or any other because the maintenance of power by members of executive government is paramount. And the maintenance of power of individual members of this Assembly should be what is paramount, Mr. Speaker. It is not before us today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 2:55 p.m. until 3:05 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Romanow	Pringle
Van Mulligen	Lautermilch
Thompson	Calvert
Wiens	Renaud
Tchorzewski	Murray
Lingenfelter	Trew
Shillington	Draper
Koskie	Serby
Teichrob	Whitmore
Johnson	Sonntag
Goulet	Roy
Kowalsky	Scott
Carson	Crofford
Mitchell	Kujawa
MacKinnon	Stanger
Penner	Kluz
Cunningham	Knezacek
Upshall	Harper
Hagel	Keeping
Bradley	Jess
Koenker	Carlson
Lorje	Langford

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Nays

	Swenson
Britton	Muirhead
D'Autremont	Neudorf
Goohsen	Martens
Haverstock	Boyd
Bergman	Toth

-- 11

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you very much. Moving the second of these traditional motions, I move, seconded by the member from Lloydminster:

That the modifications and amendments to the practices and rules of the Assembly, as recommended in the third report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly, be implemented

effective March 7, 1994 and;

That the said practices and rules be incorporated into the **Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan** as soon as is practicable.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: -- Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Thursday next ask the government the following questions:

Regarding the Department of Justice: February 15, 1994, Garry Moran received salary increase from \$4,930 per month to \$5,585 per month: (a) why was Mr. Moran given the salary increase; (b) why was Mr. Moran's salary increase retroactive approximately one and . . . one and a half years to July 1, 1992; (c) what is the total amount of retroactive pay that Mr. Moran will receive; (d) where is Mr. Moran located and what is the title of the position; (e) what are Mr. Moran's qualifications for this position?

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Thursday next ask the government the following questions:

Regarding the Justice department: currently the liability insurance for hunter safety instructors is paid for by the province: (a) will this change after April 1, 1994? If so, please outline details of this adjustment; (b) will instructors of newly required FAC (firearms acquisition certificate) courses be provided liability insurance by the province?

I so request.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, a business person from Saskatoon, Abe Dyck, with Saskatoon Fresh Pack, who is with us here today in the Speaker's gallery. I'm sure all members will want to join with me in welcoming Abe to the Assembly. Saskatoon Fresh Pack, as you will know, processes vegetables, and in the city of Saskatoon employs about 50 people and do a wonderful job of exporting Saskatchewan products into the world market.

So I'm sure we all want to join with . . .

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Rural Emergency Health Care

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam

Minister, on Friday you accused me of misinforming the public when I brought forward concerns about emergency services in Langenburg. You said, and I quote from *Hansard*:

For the member opposite to suggest that there isn't medical services in Langenburg 24 hours a day, and there isn't any emergency medical services, is false, it's misinformation, it's wrong.

Madam Minister, shortly after question period I was phoned by an individual who works at what used to be the Langenburg hospital -- an individual who said that he couldn't believe you were telling people that they had emergency services in Langenburg when they don't.

Madam Minister, I'm not sure where you are getting your information from, but it is false, it's misinformation, and it's wrong. I'm wondering where you've been, Madam Minister. How many of the 52 rural hospitals have you visited since your cut-backs last year? It's a very simple question. How many have you bothered to visit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, the minister and I and many other members of this government have been in those and many other communities since that time, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to say that.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of Langenburg, the information that I have is that 24-hour emergency service is available in that community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the individual that I spoke of earlier provided me with a memo signed by the director of nursing in Langenburg. It is an update on the emergency services available in Langenburg. The memo states, and I have it here with me:

... there will be NO SCHEDULED position, nurse, lab or X-ray person designated On Call.

You people have accused me of spreading misinformation to the people ... for the people are bringing the same information forward before you this afternoon in the Assembly. Do you believe that this memo, written by the director of nursing in Langenburg, is false, misinformation, and wrong? Do you believe that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, if I heard the member correctly in the House this afternoon, he's talking about an issue of being on call. Now there is a difference here, Mr. Speaker, of having a registered nurse in a facility 24 hours a day than someone who is on call.

Mr. Speaker, I am told, in Langenburg in the special

care facility there will be on a 24-hour basis a nurse available in the long-term care facility which, Mr. Speaker, I would argue, and I'm sure the member would agree, is probably a better situation than on call.

(1515)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I don't know exactly what you consider emergency medical services. Do they include a doctor? Do they include a nurse or a lab tech or an X-ray technician? Or do you consider it to be an answering machine that tells the emergency patients to travel to Yorkton, Esterhazy, or Russell, Manitoba? Is that sufficient, Mr. Minister? What exactly do you consider to be emergency medical services?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, across the province, in the community of Langenburg, in the community of Esterhazy, in the communities of Melville, Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, to the far north to Uranium City, Saskatchewan people are concerned about the provision of emergency services.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the emergency services available to the people in our province today are, I would argue, Mr. Speaker, improving. We have, Mr. Speaker, in this province existing perhaps the best road ambulance system in the country. To that, Mr. Speaker, we want to improve.

We are building across this province a network of first responders. We are strengthening EMTs (emergency medical technician). We are finding in our communities means to provide 24-hour emergency response -- very often, nurse emergency response. We're working with doctors to provide group practice where teams of doctors can work together and link together.

We're building in our base facilities the best possible emergency system. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we've had testimony in this province through the healing of the young girl from Rouleau, a testimony to the emergency service in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, if you won't believe that individual, maybe you'll believe the health district president of that district, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister. He said, and I quote, on contacting him this morning: lab services in the Langenburg hospital are available from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. No weekends or evenings. No lab technician on call.

X-ray services 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. No weekends or evenings. No X-ray technician on call.

The Langenburg Health Centre closes at 4 p.m. and phones are forwarded to the Langenburg Centennial Special Care Home. If you will recall, Mr. Minister, that's where the long-term care patient answered the phone the other day. The Alzheimer's patient, Mr. Minister.

An RN (registered nurse) or psych nurse is available to answer phone calls from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends.

There is no doctor on call at either facility.

Mr. Minister, I believe that the people of Saskatchewan and the folks, the good folks of Langenburg, don't feel that they have 24-hour emergency services in their community. Would you agree with them, Mr. Minister, and will you provide that service, that very necessary service, to the people of Langenburg?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, the member rises in this House and says all sorts of things. A few weeks ago he rose in this House and accused both myself and the Minister of Health of not responding to a letter. Mr. Speaker, we explored this situation; the letter was never sent to us, Mr. Speaker.

Today he stands in the House and he tells us that the phone is answered by an Alzheimer patient. He talks about an Alzheimer patient. Well I wonder if that's the case, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday in the House he stands up and he says that everybody that's appointed to a health board in the province is an NDP partisan. Well now today he wants to quote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have been working with groups like the Rural Health Coalition. We have been working with our district boards. We have been with working communities across the province to build emergency services and the best possible health care system that we can provide to our people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SGI Monopoly Policy

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), and it deals with a problem that has been encountered by a Mr. Vern Klein, who runs an auto body shop in Biggar.

Recently Mr. Klein's wife, Merle, began selling Co-op insurance two days a week out of the auto body shop. Immediately SGI sent an adjuster to tell Mr. Klein that SGI would no longer be meeting claimants at his shop, as they had been doing for the past 20 years.

Mr. Klein says this change by SGI could well put him out of business. Mr. Minister, is this the policy of SGI, to bully the people you do business with like Mr.

Klein, simply because his wife is trying to work part time to earn a second income?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Thank you very much for the question. I'll check into the case, you know, as soon as question period is over.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, this was in the newspaper, in the Biggar town and the constituency. I'm surprised your member didn't bring this up to you.

Mr. Minister, this policy doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. There are numerous insurance agents throughout the province who sell both SGI and other types of insurance. Yet Vern Klein, who runs a body shop, is being penalized because his wife is selling Co-op insurance.

Mr. Minister, is it the policy of SGI to use its monopoly position with vehicle insurance to threaten and coerce the people of Saskatchewan for the benefit of SGI CANADA?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- I'll say, for the second time, I'll take notice on the question.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, as I mentioned earlier, this is an old problem. It's been over a month in the news, and Vern Klein has yet to receive a straight answer. SGI refuses to give Mr. Klein its policy in writing, and head office officials refuse to meet with him. Mr. Minister, Mr. Klein has had a 20-year relationship with SGI. During that time, he has provided SGI adjusters with a desk, a separate phone line, and a fax machine in his body shop at his own expense -- not SGI's -- Mr. Klein's own expense.

Mr. Minister, why won't SGI provide Mr. Klein with an answer in writing? Is this any way to treat a businessman who SGI has been dealing with for the past 20 years?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- To the member, I think I will be getting a letter in writing in regards to the response, and I'll be taking notice as well, in regards to the question.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your government's heavy-handed way of dealing with Saskatchewan business people raises some much bigger questions. A couple of these questions appeared in an editorial in the Biggar **Independent**. The editorial writer asks: by agreeing to provide a service of the government, does that mean the government agency has the sole claim on what can and cannot operate out of that very same building? And does that government have a right to dictate to a private individual?

Those are two very good questions, Mr. Minister, and I wonder if you would care to answer them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- The policy has not changed over

the years, to the member. We've had an outstanding relationship with the brokers and agents of this province. And I may say that in regards to that question of dictating, we've been operating with brokers throughout this province. In this specific instance I'll be looking into the case, as I said in the previous other three questions.

Health Care Equipment Purchases

Ms. Haverstock: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, the new frontier of health care depends upon new technology and state-of-the-art equipment, not bricks and mortar. And yesterday's **Star-Phoenix** article on laparoscopic surgery is just one example of the aggressive approach Saskatchewan health care specialists have taken as a means of minimizing expensive patient recovery time.

Madam Minister, can you explain what portion of capital budgets are dedicated to guarantee state-of-the-art equipment to our health care professionals, and what is your department's commitment to new equipment purchases?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to address the topic generally and I certainly invite the member to discuss that in full with the minister and I during the process of estimates, which I think is the appropriate point to discuss that kind of detailed question.

But let me say, Mr. Speaker, that with all health spending we are now attempting through needs assessment process to relate our spending very closely to need. And the member makes a good point, there are technologies that can improve the quality of health care and add to the total package. But again it needs to be shown that it's based on need, and again within the available resources.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Mr. Speaker, Mr. Associate Minister, hundreds of volunteer non-profit organizations raise money through bingos, through raffles, through lotteries, and Nevada ticket sales. The Lions, Kinsmen Telemiracle, Children's Miracle, Shriners, and countless others work very hard to raise money for local hospital funds. Mr. Minister, does your department have an inventory? In other words, do you know of the value of the equipment that has been donated through the generosity of Saskatchewan charitable organizations?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have that specific information here today. Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize that across this province volunteer groups and community associations have gone to great lengths and have contributed a great deal to the provision of health care and health care facilities in the province. Again, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the member that this kind of questioning, I believe, is more appropriately dealt with in estimates when all of the more detailed information can be here before us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Associate Minister, as you know, Saskatchewan people have a very long history of generosity. For years hospital foundations have donated life-saving equipment to the hospital systems in Regina and Saskatoon. Every year these foundations budget for funds raised through the sale of Nevada tickets in hotels and licensed lounges across the province.

In 1992-93, two Saskatoon hospitals shared \$85,000 per month -- that's per month, Mr. Minister -- from Nevada sales alone. Eighty per cent of that money was dedicated to equipping St. Paul's Hospital. In 1993-94, it is going to the City Hospital Foundation, and they were counting on a similar amount per month.

Now as the direct result of competition with VLTs (video lottery terminal), City Hospital's share is now just \$48,000 per month from Nevada sales profits. That's a loss of almost a half a million dollars a year, Mr. Minister. Can you detail the arrangements that you've made with your minister of Gaming to compensate these foundations directly for the loss of Nevada ticket income?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the member's question, I'd I guess like to speak to the fluctuation in terms of different forms of gaming. And the member may be aware, and if she's not she should be aware, that the figures are not consistent every year.

With respect to break-opens, she indicates that there is a decrease because of shifts and other forms, and I agree with her. But it's not inconsistent with what's happened in the past. The year '78 to '79, as an example, the decrease in break-opens was 29 per cent.

So I would suggest that the member should totally research before she comes into the House making charges with respect to competition on other forms of gaming.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you. You know, we're talking about charitable foundations here and that your government happens to be competing with them and hurting people in the province of Saskatchewan as a result.

Mr. Minister, hospital foundations in Saskatoon alone now have a shortfall of \$40,000 a month -- \$40,000 a month as a result of the gaming strategy of your government. Now what assurances can you give this Assembly that funds will be specifically earmarked from gaming revenues to cover this loss?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, let me answer the question of the member. Again, we see inconsistency. Last week she tells us that we shouldn't be doing gaming. The year before she's telling us

hurry up, hurry up, generate this revenue. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am wondering if she's maybe more concerned with her friends who own commercial bingo halls and benefit from wide-open expansion under the Tories at the expense of charities. And I'd like to know, Mr. Speaker, if that's the Liberal direction for gaming.

Mr. Speaker, from 1982 to 1991 hall owners in this province in bingos raked in 106.4 million. Charities raked in about 85.2. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we're turning that around because we're going to increase the amount of dollars that go from bingos to charities as opposed to the hall owners. So I ask the member, state your position: on which side of the issue are you?

(1530)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'd love to tell you my position on gaming. Before you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I guess perhaps they're not wanting to listen, which it does not surprise me.

Before you ever expand gaming there has to be a strategy, Mr. Speaker, that addresses all of the implications and not just a bigger bottom line for your provincial budget. And you don't have that strategy and I would suggest that you start getting to it immediately. That's my position.

Your government departments, your government departments, Mr. Premier, are working at cross purposes here. On the one hand, you're giving community responsibility for health care. On the other hand, your minister of Gaming is promoting policies that hurt local charities, Mr. Premier, unless you take over the fine work -- and if you want to take over the fine work of all the local charities, fine -- to pay for hospital equipment, but you're going to have to make a commitment. Will you make the commitment to protect their fund-raising capacity from government gaming competition?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear with the minister. Our commitment is to the Saskatchewan . . . Or to the member. Our commitment is to the Saskatchewan business community, to the aboriginal people who we'll be partnering with in the charities.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, if the member has another direction that she'd like to see gaming, I'd like to know if perhaps it may be, if it just may be because her constituency assistant and her campaign manager were long-time involved in the bingo industry at a time when, in fact, the owners of the bingo halls generated more in revenue than in fact the charities do.

Madam, I ask you if that's your position, and if that's the Liberal direction, I say to you that members of this House will have none of it. We are involved in

generating and in assisting generating money for charities and for the small-business community and for the aboriginal people. Mr. Speaker, we're concerned about jobs here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Welfare Numbers

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a series of questions I'd like to ask the Premier.

Mr. Premier, today we have seen another indication of your government's failed economic policies and the devastating effect it is having on Saskatchewan families. The new social services figures which we have just received, Mr. Premier, show that the number of people on welfare has reached a new and record high, 78,406 people. Mr. Premier, that's 21,000 more people on welfare than the day that you took office, and it's a jump Mr. Premier, of 1,600 in the last month. This in light of your solemn pledge to eliminate poverty in your first term. That's what you said.

Mr. Premier, with these kinds of numbers, how can you say that your economic and job creation policies have been a success? Mr. Premier, when are these numbers going to turn around and go the other way?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the member has forgotten that were it not for the federal PC (Progressive Conservative) UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) changes in April of '93 which put 5,000 new clients onto social services, and the treaty offloading of families in July of 1993 which put another 5,000 onto our case-loads, the case-load has been stabilized; it would have been stabilized. In fact in January of 1994 there was the lowest increase in five years in social assistance cases, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of initiatives in the budget, the 700 million capital projects, the Opportunities Corporation, the northern economic development plan, the business tax decreases. There's the additions to the economic plan that is working very well, Mr. Speaker. The chambers of commerce are optimistic.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would just say that the retail sales in Saskatchewan for December, at an increase of 6.7 over last year compared to a decrease in Newfoundland, the Liberal province, of minus 1.1, and the New Brunswick Liberal province of only 1.1. So we're well on the track, Mr. Speaker.

And I would ask that member to remember that his federal counterparts put 10,000 new clients onto assistance. The federal budget with . . .

The Speaker: -- Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, we drag out the blame thrower. Mr. Speaker, the minister in his own words says that the only addition was 8,000. Now we're talking about 21,000 people. We heard the government blame this on the federal government and the province for looking after off-reserve Indians, Mr. Speaker.

Well we've checked that claim. We checked that claim, Mr. Speaker, and they tell us that only 8,000 of the 21,000 people have joined the welfare rolls since your government took office -- 21,000 -- as a result of the change in the federal policy. The other 13,000 are a direct result of your failed economic policies.

Mr. Premier, the biggest issue of these people is they don't want a cheque from the federal government. They don't want a cheque from the provincial government. They want a cheque from an employer. That's what they want. That's what they want. Mr. Speaker, they can't get one because there's no jobs available.

Mr. Premier, or Mr. Minister, when are you going to start to see that some jobs are created in this province to offset the thousands of jobs that you have chased out of this province? When will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Speaker, it's good rhetoric but it doesn't deal with the facts.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in social assistance case-loads in Saskatchewan which have gone up 33 per cent in the last two years, related to their federal PC counterparts, have gone up 50 per cent in the rest of Canada, on average.

Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberal budget, the cuts to UIC changes are going to dump another, probably several hundred people onto our case-loads because they've restricted the eligibility and the benefits and the number of weeks you can receive assistance.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have no job creation plan in their federal budget. They didn't deal with agriculture. And, Mr. Speaker, we can't go it alone. We need some federal support in some of our initiatives. But we're doing the best we can and we would encourage the member and seat mates to the left there to be optimistic like the rest of Saskatchewan people are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 22 -- An Act to establish Crown Foundations for Saskatchewan Universities

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to establish Crown Foundations for Saskatchewan Universities be now introduced and read a first time.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introduction of Interim Table Officer

The Speaker: -- Before orders of the day, I would like to introduce to the hon. members of the Assembly, Mr. Charles Robert, a committee Clerk who is on secondment from the Senate of Canada. Charles will be assisting the Clerks at the Table for the remainder of the session.

Charles is no stranger to the people here. This is his third tour of duty in our Assembly. And I would want to ask all members to welcome Charles to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Priority of Legislative Reform Mechanisms

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to deal with a motion before the Assembly that says, and I will move it at the conclusion of my remarks:

That this Assembly urges the government to heed the wishes of the people of Saskatchewan and proceed, develop and adopt reform mechanisms within the Saskatchewan legislature rather than address items low on the public's agenda such as labour legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out today that we have witnessed some interesting debate earlier on, on changes to rules within this Assembly. And I'm going to ask some questions, Mr. Speaker, that relate to this discussion because it identifies what I believe are some very significant problems.

Mr. Speaker, there were in this package really very few reforms that dealt with anything that could assist or implement a positive impact within the framework of this Assembly for the private members of this Assembly. The majority of the time that it was taken in the discussion to emphasize that was sufficient. However, I want to point out that the people of this Assembly do not have any more rights, exclusive of the government and the cabinet, than they had yesterday.

There is no reform in that package for the public of Saskatchewan. There is no reform in this package for the public of Saskatchewan. What do they have better today than they had yesterday? Answer that question. That's the fundamental question about what reform is all about. That's the question. There's no reform for the voters of this province, Mr. Speaker. There's no reform for the voters.

And the member for Churchill Downs chirps from his

seat and wants to get in the debate. And I will ask him to deprogram his computer, his laptop computer, of all of the games that he's going to play on them. And I will ask him to deprogram all of the items in his law practice that he has on his computer as he sits in this Assembly and details those kinds of actions.

That's the kind of program reform that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan are financing. And that, Mr. Speaker, is disgusting. And if he wants to get into this Assembly and debate it on the basis that he is going to exclude that laptop from his desk because he is going to be doing that, then I would say he is an hon. member. Until then, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to question that.

The reform is only for the government and the cabinet ministers of this Assembly, and that is a fact, Mr. Speaker. The list of House reforms in this Assembly that we have today versus yesterday are so insignificant it doesn't even matter that they exist. As a matter of fact, the majority of the people in this Assembly didn't smoke in this Assembly from respect of it even though the rule was there that they could during Committee of the Whole. And that is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

And so today we want to say that we have massively changed the rules of this Assembly. We've massively changed the rules of this Assembly, and we're going to go on from here and have a continued debate about this. I challenge the members opposite to get some sand in their back and tell their cabinet that they have a right to speak in this Assembly just like I have a right to speak in this Assembly, and not to be curtailed by the executive branch of this government.

They're hungry for power. They're hungry for control. And what do the taxpayers of this province want? They want representation in this Assembly that clearly deals with some package of reform. We have provided some very fine options on that, I believe, Mr. Speaker. We have presented some options that I believe are fundamental to the people of the province of Saskatchewan and should be identified here.

We have asked this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, to provide an opportunity for the public to hear what back-benchers and opposition members would like to have put before this Assembly so that they can discuss them, debate them, vote for them, or vote against them. That's what we have suggested, Mr. Speaker. One of those things would be to present Bills in this Assembly for discussion.

What we have seen, Mr. Speaker, is a government hesitant to give anybody else control of the agenda and in that way forcing everybody, everybody in this Assembly to bow down to the House Leader of this Assembly in the government side and say yes, sir; yes, sir. We want to have an opportunity to debate the Bills that are brought forward by the people from my constituency -- Bills that impact in the constituency of Thunder Creek or from Indian Head-Wolseley, or wherever in this province. That's the kind of impact we need to have in this debate and this Assembly.

We have identified three, we have identified three issues already, Mr. Speaker, that deal with reform -- an opportunity to set the record straight in this Assembly so that individuals could have the freedom of conscience to vote the way they want to, freedom to vote on behalf of their constituents, freedom to do that.

(1545)

And, Mr. Speaker, I want . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The House Leader has asked me when he has allowed his members to do that and not to do that. Well I want to bring up a Bill, Mr. Speaker, where he did not allow the member from Nipawin to vote his conscience. Mr. Speaker, that member had to leave this Assembly because he couldn't vote his conscience. And that is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

That's what we have to have, is the freedom of individuals to vote for their conscience sake and to represent their constituency in this Assembly. That is freedom. That is reform. And it's time the people in this Assembly identified with that.

And that is important for the people here and for the people out in the country. That's important for the taxpayers. Why are they cynical, Mr. Speaker? Why are they cynical? It's because we in this Assembly for years and years had to vote along party lines. And that government is no different than anybody else has been in the past history.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's time to change. It's time to change. And I had an example of that pointed out to me. People will say to me, well you had the freedom to do some of those changes. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we did. And we did make some changes. We opened up the Public Accounts Committee, which was traditionally closed, to anybody being able to report what was going on. We made changes.

But this is a time, Mr. Speaker, for people to reform their attitude. And I want to point out some statements that were reported in the Saskatoon **Star-Phoenix**, a column written by Paul Martin, and identifying one of the members from the NDP who would like to speak out, speak out on behalf of her constituents:

Underlying Lorje's argument is a belief that "traditional" solutions -- whether espoused by the right or left -- no longer work.

It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, and so today what did we do? We identified tinsel, we identified tinsel that changes things in this Assembly. But what does it do to fundamentally change the rules and regulations of how we do things in this Assembly? How does the taxpayer get involved, and how does the voter get involved?

We've identified one of those things in our question period, Mr. Speaker, where we ask a question on behalf of our constituents so that they can have a voice in what's being said. And as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, those constituents are getting the replies

back in *Hansard* that these ministers are providing, and some of them are not very happy about it. I cannot even use some of the words that were said outside of this Assembly about what some of the ministers said and the conduct they had.

And that is what the voter says: I want to have that change; I want to have a fundamental change in how those things are done. And I believe that it is our responsibility to present to this Assembly alternatives to that.

And, Mr. Speaker, here's one. We need to have free votes in this Assembly. And when there is a confidence vote in this Assembly that is considered by the government to be important, they can state it.

But what do we have now? We have everything so locked up that if you don't mark time exactly as your House leader says or the whip tells you to be, that's going to be out of order. And we have had examples of that in the last session, and I pointed them out already.

We need to have, Mr. Speaker, a voice by the members of this Assembly who have been elected to this Assembly to represent the taxpayers in one of the most awesome positions that could be provided, Mr. Speaker. And that is 40 per cent of this Assembly's spending, the executive branch of government, 40 per cent of that spending, Mr. Speaker, is spent outside of the functions of this Assembly. We cannot debate. We cannot argue. We cannot check to see whether 40 per cent of the spending of this executive government is done legitimately and for the purposes that it was set out to do.

We can't do that, Mr. Speaker, and that would allow members of this Assembly, on a proportional basis to the representation by party, an opportunity to review the utilities in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that would enhance the role of members in this Assembly. It would make this Assembly for the first time have a reason to believe that they could impact on the Crown corporations in this province. For the first time, individuals in this Assembly could deal with that.

I challenge members on the government back bench to tell me what the budget looks like for SaskPower Corporation and I will bet you, Mr. Speaker, that there isn't a single one will be able to tell me what the dollar value of the budget for SaskPower is, nor for SaskTel, nor for SGI, nor for SaskEnergy.

Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, the front benches, the ministers responsible have absolute authority and control and dictate the control over those various agencies. And that, Mr. Speaker, is not right. The members of this Assembly have the responsibility to do that for their taxpayers and their voters.

Another item that we had brought forward, Mr. Speaker, is setting election days. Fix a day, and make it a day that is legitimate. We have suggested the second Monday of June, every four years. And, Mr. Speaker, the voters asked for that. They have been asking for

that for a couple of elections already, Mr. Speaker. And does anybody listen? Has anybody been hearing what they've been saying, or have been hearing and not doing anything about it?

Mr. Speaker, today we had an example of the fourth item that I believe is an example of how we need to handle the discussion in relation to reform in this Assembly. Legislate a reduction in the number of cabinet ministers, Mr. Speaker. Legislate it.

We had a minister responsible for SGI taking notice of questions today on issues. That is his only responsibility, Mr. Speaker. That is his only responsibility, and he couldn't even answer the questions, and they have been in the papers in the town of Biggar for months. Mr. Speaker, we need to have a legislated number of ministers in this Assembly as a proportion of the total representation. Give members of this Assembly some option on controlling the utility rates. Give the members of this Assembly some control in the budget valuations and the monies being brought in in the budgets of the Crown corporations. Give these people some access to that.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the fifth thing that we're suggesting is a committee to review government appointments. Mr. Speaker, political parties through their history have traditionally placed people who they know and who have worked for them in positions of responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, today, today the public doesn't want that any more. They don't want that any more. They don't want that, and they have said that over and over and over again. In the minister's office it's fine to have these people come in and be political appointments because those people . . . the minister has to have absolute total confidence in. But when it comes to dealing with an overall strategy for a Crown corporation, for a board or agency, a commission, it's time to change. The voter is saying, the taxpayer is saying, it's time for change.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why I brought forward this motion here today. That's why I am presenting this motion, seconded by the member from Moosomin:

That this Assembly urges the government to heed the wishes of the people of Saskatchewan and proceed, develop and adopt reform mechanisms within the Saskatchewan legislature rather than address items low on the public's agenda such as labour legislation.

And that, Mr. Speaker, I believe is what the public agenda is all about. Thank you for your time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to join in the debate and to second the motion brought forward by my colleague, the member from Morse.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, many members from all sides of this Assembly and all parties have

actually spoken up on different issues and concerns regarding the rules and how this Legislative Assembly should operate, and certainly members of the official opposition didn't come into this Assembly with any grandiose ideas of making major changes overnight.

But we certainly came in with some positive ideas of what we saw as -- for those of us who may have been here for a term or two terms, those who were elected for the first time -- came with some positive ideas of how we should look at seriously changing the way this House operates so that we indeed have the ability to represent our constituents in a format and in a manner that we would feel would be more appropriate and more becoming of us as members of the Assembly and representatives of the voting public across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we were prepared to work for the people of Saskatchewan in a cooperative manner, and I believe, as my colleague has indicated . . . and as I speak, Mr. Speaker, I'll bring out some of the areas that we've thrown out for consultation. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I could go over some of the arguments that were presented when I was a member of the government for the term from '86 to '91. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, at that time, there were some members who had been around a lot longer than I have been around who were still looking at this Assembly in the format of how it used to operate and suggesting that we must continue on that road versus looking at new methods.

Mr. Speaker, we devised a package of reforms and we've taken the time to even have legislation drafted on these matters so that we can present them to the Assembly and allow all members the opportunity to look at the legislation. And hopefully at the end of the day before the sun sets on this specific legislative session, we will indeed have that privilege of seeing those pieces of legislation come forward for debate, for real debate, to address some of the real ongoing concerns that the people of Saskatchewan have. We look forward to bringing our reforms, reforms supported by the Saskatchewan public, forward in this Assembly.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is a growing feeling that our legislation will not be debated in this Assembly. And some of the debate that's already taken place in the House regarding the change to the rules and procedures of this Assembly would lead us to believe that the format really isn't going to change that much. We've done some window-dressing but we may not be addressing the real issues.

However, Mr. Speaker, I trust that even though there has been a change or suggestions on new rule changes that the Rules Committee will indeed, and the government members themselves, will take the time and that, as Speaker of the Assembly, the chairman of the committee would take the time to even call the committee to order and go on . . . address some of the other ongoing issues and suggestions that have been brought forward.

We feel that our legislation will not be debated because rules which would allow private members' Bills to come forward from under all other private members' business were rejected by the Rules Committee and brought into this Assembly basically because of the majority that the government has on the committee.

Mr. Speaker, it is with an open mind that opposition members attended the meetings of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures and I think, as we've heard today, we didn't go with a lot of grandiose demands. We had a few demands and suggestions that we were ready to put forward.

We also indicated that we were willing to look at and consider all the suggestions that had been presented to us by the government members. And all we asked of the government was that they take the time to look at the change in rules in the overall picture rather than just changing immediately and demanding that certain rule changes come in but we'll maybe, maybe, down the road look at some of the other changes.

As it turns out, our caucus, it appears, had no opportunity to work cooperatively with government members. Instead the government reverted back to its heavy-handed tactics and rammed through changes to the rules of this Assembly without any regard for the suggestions put forward by the opposition. But as I indicated earlier, and I will say it again, I trust that government members will indeed sit back and even though there have been rule changes implemented, will sit back and take a serious look at some of the other suggestions that have been put forward by my colleagues on the Rules Committee and as well by the member of the Liberal Party or the members of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard over time and time again this government has continually talked about being open and having an honest government and an accountable government. And yet within the framework of these walls and of this building, Mr. Speaker, on many occasions we really haven't seen that openness and honesty and accountability that the government has talked about.

(1600)

They talk about being close to the people and brag about reforms they have brought to the legislature and the province. It would seem, Mr. Speaker, if this government were indeed close to the people it serves, if this government would listen to the people it serves, the reform packages and ideas brought forward by the members of the opposition, official and the third party, would indeed be debated in the legislature and would be enforced by law.

You may ask why, Mr. Speaker. Because our caucus has introduced a package of reforms into this Assembly that has found favour with the public of Saskatchewan. In fact many of the reforms have been brought forward by people in the public and in fact by even members on the government side of the House

and from members of all parties. The public do want a committee established to review utility rates.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few years when we look at the number of increases that we've seen in utility rates, one has to hardly wonder why the public are asking for a review mechanism. And the government and the Premier said yesterday, well we can't have a review mechanism because when you were in government you did have a review committee in place but you found out it became too costly and ineffective and therefore you disbanded it; so why would we appoint another costly committee to deal with utility rate increases?

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues and I have indicated, we are suggesting a committee made up of MLAs already elected, already being paid to represent their constituents and to speak out on their behalf. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, if this committee were to operate in the normal process, the government would continue to have the majority of members on the committee, so the government would have their say.

One of the . . . another reason I would argue we need this process, we need this utility review process, Mr. Speaker, is because of the fact that by the time the Crown corporations file their annual reports and come before the committee, and the committee meets, no matter how hard the government would work to get their reports in or the Crowns would work to put forward their reports, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that in most cases a year and a half to two years have elapsed since changes have taken place, since we were debating the issues.

And when rate increases have been taking place, Mr. Speaker, I believe people want to ask questions and they want to ask the questions now. And I would certainly welcome the comments made by the Premier yesterday about being able to debate the questions right now. And it seems to me the appropriate place, if we don't have a utilities review committee in place, would be to bring those debates right before the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan, just as we debate departmental spending, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the spending of government and the fact that 40 per cent of government spending takes place in the Crowns outside the walls of this Legislative Assembly, it would seem to me that would be most appropriate in the whole scheme of government spending and financing in the province of Saskatchewan, that the people of Saskatchewan, that we as MLAs, have that opportunity to address those issues, not tomorrow or not next year, but today when the issues are relevant and real and mean a lot to people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I believe as well the public want their MLA to stand up for their constituencies. They want their MLA to vote on behalf of their constituents and not just follow the government lines. And, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that I have heard that from my constituents.

In fact I had the fortune of . . . the opportunity of having some coffee with business people in the Moosomin constituency recently and one person said to me: it's too bad members of the government at the time you were in government didn't listen to some of the suggestions that you had been making. And I had been making a number of these suggestions over the past few years, of how we should reform this Assembly so that, indeed, it meets the real needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

And I believe the NDP have heard the same rhetoric; the NDP have heard the same concerns. In fact I look at a reform platform brought forward by the New Democratic Party prior to the election of October 1991, and from their democratic reform package they have a paragraph that says:

. . . all party select committees of the Assembly should be used frequently to inquire into . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The member's time has elapsed according to the rules.

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter this debate with respect to urging government to proceed with democratic reforms and I want to compliment the members opposite for putting such a motion in on private members' day because this gives us an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to go back just a bit and to identify all of those changes that this government has already brought in since we've been elected.

We identified way back in March 1990 and published at that time, a summary of reforms that we thought ought to be addressed by government. These were reforms that were very evident to the public. And it was because the government of the time was unable to see and deal with the reality, with the political aspirations of the people of Saskatchewan, that they turfed them out of office and as a result of that, we have now been able to implement some of these reforms.

And I'm very, very proud, Mr. Speaker, to be a member of a government which has instituted some 20 to 30 reforms to date -- to date. And there will be more to come, Mr. Speaker, as we continue to consult with the public; as we continue to be sensitive to the needs of society in the 90s; and as we just try to make this Assembly and this government more and more accountable to the people of Saskatchewan.

I will be dealing with these in just a moment, but I want to refer back to one of the things that was mentioned by the member from Morse in his comments -- which I've heard quite often from members and which I think bears a little listening to -- and that is his call for the concept of the free vote. And when the member from Morse makes his call or when I hear other people making this call for the free vote, it seems to be under an assumption that there is no such thing as a free vote.

Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. From the very beginning of the British parliamentary system the concept of a free vote has been enshrined into the traditions of the British parliamentary system and they so remain. And there is no place in any rule book that anybody can show me that there is no such thing as a free vote.

That is the bottom line in every legislature. And every once in a while it pops out. And a member uses his right, and his privilege, and he must not be denied that privilege or that right, the right of a free vote. There are times when that is done and there are times when that has brought down governments. When there are two or three or a handful or a dozen or more members decide to exercise their right with a free vote, they then can bring down the government. And that is the purpose of it.

Or alternatively, if a member feels that he is dealing on a matter . . . he or she is dealing with a matter of conscience, a matter which he is even not in tune with with his own colleagues and his own party, that member then also may exercise that free vote. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, the member can at any time exercise that free vote. Because that is the purpose of the parliament. And to say and to impugn that there is no such thing as a free vote is wrong, patently wrong, because there is such a thing as a free vote and it should remain.

Mr. Speaker, I want to relate back, before I get into the main comments of my 10 minutes that I have here, I want to think back of the time . . . just relate back to the time when I was still a youngster and in school and when I was thinking about who the heroes of society were. And in those days I don't know what it was that was different particularly, but there was a difference in the way most of the people talked about their leaders, their elected leaders and their politicians.

You know, I got so that I held people like the prime minister of the day, Louis St. Laurent, or Tommy Douglas, the premier of Saskatchewan, or Mr. Lloyd, premier Woodrow Lloyd, the premier of Saskatchewan, and even John Diefenbaker, the aspirant at the time for prime minister, I held them in respect. And the community held them in respect. Because politicians at that time were held in a great public respect. The teachers of the day tended to propagate that and so did the community.

And it wasn't till the 1980s when we had Tories in office in Saskatchewan, Tories in office in Ottawa, that somehow things began to change. And at the same time there were Tories or Conservatives or Republicans in office in the the U.S.A. (United States of America), and likewise in Great Britain.

Now I don't think those things are just coincidental. But what happened, there was a certain ruthlessness brought into the parliament at that time during those years, and there was a complete loss of respect for politicians. So now we're seeing a slow change and I'm very proud to be a part of that change when we're doing things to reform the way governments work

here. Reform the way the governments work so that once again we can restore public confidence in our institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just go through a brief listing of some of the things that this government -- the government that I am proud to be a part of -- have done with respect to reform. When we got into government everybody knew that the Tories had gone amok in their spending. That's one of the reasons they lost respect. There was no accountability. Our Premier promised to, and did, appoint a Saskatchewan Financial Review Commission known as the Gass Commission, did that for the purpose of having an independent body identify some of the difficulties and some of the reasons that we were in financial difficulty and also to propose some solutions.

The Gass Commission did exactly that. They suggested that we apply different guidelines. They suggested that we use the Public Sector Accounting and Auditing Committee guidelines, the same ones the chartered accountants, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, use. And they restated, using that technique, that the debt of the province at that time was 7.53 billion rather than 3.6 billion which was recorded in the **Public Accounts** up to that date.

We at that time also, Mr. Speaker, following that, we put in legislation that ensured by-elections were to be held within six months of a vacancy. We've had by-elections since then. We've proclaimed the freedom of information Act. We introduced an MLA conflict of interests Act. There were many other such things, Mr. Speaker, that I have that my colleagues will mention. But before I sit down I want to move an amendment to the original motion and I hereby move the amendment, seconded by the member from Cut Knife-Lloyd:

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

Affirms the progress made over the last two years by the legislature in implementing significant democratic reforms which have contributed to the accountability and accessibility of government, including the following:

- (1) The appointment of the Saskatchewan Financial Review Commission to open the books and provide an independent audit of the province's financial affairs;
- (2) The implementation of the recommendations of the Gass Commission, including the adoption of the accrual method of accounting, the tabling of financial statements in the legislature for the Crown Investments Corporation and its subsidiaries, and the release of the mid-year report on the province's financial situation;

(3) Legislation to ensure that both the legislature and the public is fully informed when Crown corporations are established;

(4) Amendments to The Financial Administration Act which require the release of the **Public Accounts** within seven months of the fiscal year end;

(5) Legislation to reduce the number of MLAs from 66 to 58, and to ensure that Saskatchewan residents are treated fairly by the electoral system; and . . .

(1615)

The Speaker: -- Order, order. Order, order. The member's time has expired. I will allow him to complete his amendment, however, but I do ask the Clerks to stop the clock so that he does not take the time of other members. The member may continue with his amendment.

Mr. Kowalsky: -- I thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker.

(6) A new MLA conflict of interest Act and code of ethical conduct to ensure that elected representatives carry out their public responsibilities openly and fairly;

(7) The adoption of strict new rules ensuring greater accountability of elected representatives with respect to their constituency offices;

(8) Changes to the operation of the Board of Internal Economy, ensuring public access to its meetings; and

(9) Amendments to legislation ensuring that by-elections are held within six months of a vacancy;

And further that this Assembly urges the legislature to continue to move forward with reforms which will enhance the openness and accountability of the institutions of parliamentary democracy, including the implementation of measures which enhance the role of private members and make the legislative process more relevant to the Saskatchewan people.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: -- The amendment has been moved by the member from Prince Albert Carlton, seconded by the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster. Will the members take the amendment as read?

Order. Traditionally, we do recognize the seconder to an amendment or motion, so I'll recognize the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster.

Ms. Stanger: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand up and second this motion. I have a few comments to make in regard to democratic reform. Let me be clear about my support for the parliamentary system. The system that we have to follow is among the most democratic in the world. That does not mean that reform is not needed from time to time. Societies do not remain stationary. Changes occur, and a democratic government must respond.

In the past we have had representation democracy. People elected a member, and that member represented his or her constituency to the best of their ability. If the voting public was dissatisfied, they voted against the member in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, today the people are asking for more participatory democracy. This means changes must be made on all sides. The public must be better informed on issues, and the politicians must provide more information, be more accountable, and take a more active part in the political process.

Mr. Speaker, by participatory democracy I do not mean direct democracy which has caused many problems in many American states, for instance initiatives on ballots which are often the result of well-heeled, well-organized lobby groups and little facts on complex problems, or frequent referenda which are expensive and often cannot be worded in a black and white fashion.

Mr. Speaker, our voters want to be consulted. They want input into legislation. We have embarked on extensive consultation in many areas, for example the current rounds of discussions with business groups, chambers, labour groups, and labour legislation. Another one of the areas where we believe the public has concern is the role of the private member in this Legislative Assembly. Through changes in the rules of this Assembly, we are trying to enhance the role of private members.

One rule change is private members' statements. This is very important to me as a private member. Private members' statements enable a member to bring to the legislature concerns, interests, developments, initiatives in the member's constituency. Changes to rule 16, timed debate, allows private members to question members which have spoken in debate in the legislature. This makes private members more accountable in the comments they make in debate.

Speeches should be more thoughtful and better researched because of this rule change. There is no reason why more rule changes cannot take place and won't take place over the next two years.

Members opposite may think these rule changes are inconsequential. But I can tell you, after two and a half years in this legislature, these rule changes are something that I am happy about.

Another area where voters demanded reform was in the way MLAs ran their offices

and the way the offices and expenses were financed. A great deal of concern. I received many, many petitions when I was first elected. We have moved quickly in this area. Here are the initiatives that we have undertaken.

We have eliminated the right of the MLA to keep office equipment and furniture if he or she is defeated in an election. Now all furniture and fixtures go to the next MLA. Wouldn't I have loved to have received that consideration when I was elected. MLAs are required to file an inventory of office equipment and furnishings that will be updated regularly. In this way an incoming MLA will know what is in the office.

All claims from the allowances must be supported by original invoices, with the exception of travel. Printing and advertising expenses must be documented with original invoices that describe the product received and the services rendered. And this was definitely a needed change.

Radio and broadcasting expenses must be documented with original invoices that indicate when the broadcast occurred.

MLAs must operate a constituency office to use their office and secretarial allowances. This may seem odd, but in the past there were MLAs that did not have an office but operated from their own homes. The public and constituents are entitled to accessibility and a decent office to their elected representatives.

Fee-for-service invoices for communication work must document the work performed. It is not sufficient to indicate only research or consulting.

Purchasing or renting of office space or staffing by family members or companies owned or operated by family is prohibited. And this is a very good change. We shouldn't have a conflict of interest like this. Hiring or contracting with MLA family members is prohibited.

If you call these kind of changes inconsequential in two years, I don't know what consequential would be. What is clear to me is the proof is always in the pudding. The Saskatchewan people will judge us not on what we say but on what we do.

Mr. Speaker, we have made many steps towards democratic reform. My colleagues and I will and have covered some of those reforms and there is more to be done. Reform is never complete; it is just an ongoing process that must continue. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to be speaking to the amendment to this motion on government reform. The people of Saskatchewan will only be satisfied with reform that has a significant impact on the productivity and accountability of government. In order for that to be accomplished, there must be a commitment on the part of members of this Assembly to want that to happen. And at this time I truly do not

believe that commitment fully exists.

What we have is a commitment to make it appear that government reform is taking place without really attaching any meaningful results to the process. A perfect example of this is what transpired since this sitting began. If we were an Assembly committed to focusing on the problems we are paid to solve, there would not be hundreds of hours spent by elected members from all parties taking partisan shots at one another.

If we were an Assembly intent on developing a vision for tomorrow, we would not be subjected to hours of rhetoric about Tommy Douglas and the good old days by people who had nothing to do with Tommy Douglas or the era in which he governed. That is what makes the public believe that the activities of this Assembly are a colossal waste of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in many cases that belief is reinforced by the actions of the very members in this Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am a proponent of tradition and protocol but only when it advances the cause of good governing. And let us examine today what it is that has caused people to lose respect for their own government. People feel shut out of the process. The solution? Open the process.

With 66 members paid to sit in this Assembly there should be all-party committees with whom people can meet to explain issues from various perspectives, rather than having people present their case three different times to three different parties or 66 times to 66 members of the Legislative Assembly.

What would be so wrong with having all-party committees receive presentations in this very Chamber from the public and the many organizations it comprises? This opening of the process should apply to the Board of Internal Economy, and it should extend to meetings of the Treasury Board for pre-budget consultations to ensure that budget decisions are made with the best interests of the people in mind, rather than re-election constituency pay-offs, or simply gutless avoidance.

When government spends public money, the public has a right to be informed about not just how it was spent, but why, and what is intended to be accomplished. Grants to caucus, which amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year, must be reformed to build in accountability for that money. It is completely inexcusable that thousands of dollars can end up anywhere from where they're supposed to be and no explanation is demanded on the floor of this Assembly.

Why is the public appalled by this situation, yet there has been no action taken by this Assembly to ensure that it never happens again? Well in answer to that question lies the obstacle preventing government reform. Political parties really do not want to be accountable to the public. They simply want to appear to be accountable while retaining their ability to control, to manipulate, and to play politics with the

taxpayers' money. And if political parties are so appalled by deficits and debt, where is the beef?

How can a government claim to be disgusted by the fiscal actions of its predecessors while it makes no move whatsoever to protect the taxpayers from future atrocities? If there were true commitment to reform, Mr. Speaker, that would be the first legislation presented, the first. A deficit reduction Act, a taxpayers' protection Act, and a form of balanced budget legislation or a new expenditures control Act. The fact that this government has not introduced it speaks to their unwillingness to be constricted by rules and regulations.

What else makes people cynical and distrustful? Well, broken promises, corrupt behaviour, patronage. The government is aware of this. The opposition knew it when they were in government and now spend time talking about the very things that they did when they had control. But why are there no changes?

What is the value of a code of ethical conduct which proposes no penalties for its breach? How can we restore public trust when the ministry of Justice allows investigations into allegations of corrupt behaviour to drag on for months and perhaps even years without resolve?

And what will be done with guilty parties? If politicians truly wanted to improve the system, there would be deterrents in place to discourage inappropriate behaviour and punishments legislated to deal with those guilty of abusing our very system. But that has not happened because the will is not there, Mr. Speaker.

A government with a majority so powerful that it can retroactively legislate changes to legal contracts is a government with enough power to change its own **modus operandi**. A majority government could implement set election dates and set budget dates just to bring stability to the lives of people, if it were truly committed to reform.

And one has to ask why this has not happened. It has not happened because control over election dates and budget dates and session dates and sitting hours is control -- control over the people, Mr. Speaker, and the opposition and the political organizations who might threaten the power and control of the government.

(1630)

And, fellow members, this is what government has come to mean in Saskatchewan, has come to mean to the real people. Those involved in politics are seen as those interested in power and control.

The true objective of government reform must be to share the power of the majority with the rest of the Assembly, to ensure that all elected representatives have equal value in this system, because this more accurately reflects the equal value of all electors to our democracy. And why should a constituent

represented by an opposition member have less credence paid to his ideas, her concerns or objectives than a constituent represented by a government member? But this is what happens, and the window-dressing reforms being addressed will not change that.

What is the point of investing valuable time and expensive resources to draft Bills from opposition members if they will not come to a vote? Should it not be incumbent upon members of the government side to not just indicate what ideas they support, but what ideas they reject, by forcing votes on all opposition Bills and motions? That, Mr. Speaker, is meaningful reform.

And we will be presenting a Bill to force votes on opposition Bills and motions in this Assembly, asking members to go on the record to give credit for good ideas and to make their stand known on opposition initiatives.

And there are other things that need to be addressed as part of government reform as well. We must take a serious look at the activities of government and the bureaucracy, be truly willing to examine every program and every department to ensure that mandates are still relevant, that activities are productive and cost-efficient. And this will require a new approach, a new way of thinking about government.

But this is what reform means, Mr. Speaker -- reforming, reforming our ideas and our approaches. And let us stop being afraid of what we might find if we examine government and its functions for efficiency and productivity by productivity efficiency audits. Governments must stop being driven by fear of the electorate, fear of the unknown. And when we begin to focus on why change must take place on the means as well as the end, then we can begin to lead the evolution of our system.

Presently the public is leading the politicians by demanding reforms that politicians are afraid to deliver for fear of losing control and losing power. And that must change, Mr. Speaker. It must change through reforms which politician-proof the system by taking some of the control out of the hands of the government.

Now the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan is not the only party to embrace the concept of reform, but we did put forward a reform platform in our 1991 election document. And what is important now that other parties have seen the public acceptance for and desire to have reform is that this Assembly develop a true commitment to incorporate meaningful reform into the way that government operates on behalf of Saskatchewan people.

I believe that we must begin by restoring trust to move quickly to strengthen the code of ethics, to institute anticorruption legislation, to open the process of setting salaries and benefits for elected members of this Assembly.

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

Ms. Lorje: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter the debate at this point. I would like to, in my remarks, address both the amendment and the original motion that has sparked the amendment. And I would also like to refer to some of the comments that members who've spoken before me have made.

I want to start out by quoting what I believe the member from Saskatoon Greystone said when she said, the people of Saskatchewan will only be satisfied with reform that has a significant impact. I agree with her about that, and quite frankly I have to question whether or not the proceedings in this Assembly over the last couple of hours really do have a significant impact on the daily lives and concerns of the people of Saskatchewan -- the people that all of us were elected to represent.

I've listened to members opposite having what can only be charitably described as childish temper tantrums about the fact that some few rule changes are being implemented in this Assembly to give a more meaningful opportunity for all members to be able to do their work that they were elected for.

And I listened to people standing up and talking all sorts of wonderful high-blown phrases about the need for reform and how this party or that party would do it better if only they were in government. Well quite frankly, they're not in government right now and there's a good reason why they're not in government.

One party did all it could to destroy the financial integrity and credibility of this province. The other party has been discredited for scores of years and continues to run around this province talking process and saying, I was first with the bright ideas; but when actually asked to give us good ideas, doesn't have any.

I would remind members of this Assembly that it was the Leader of the Third Party who challenged our Minister of Economic Development last year and said that she would bring in an economic development idea a week. One a week, she said. I will bring in ideas that will be real and meaningful for job creation.

And yet what have we seen? Not only does she not bring in any real and meaningful job creation ideas, she now has two other members in her caucus and they do the similar sort of silent nonsense of having no ideas.

Reform is taking place in this House, Mr. Speaker, and it will be real and meaningful reform. Because it won't only be reform dealing with the sterility of this place, it will be reform that deals with the needs and concerns of the people of Saskatchewan. Things that I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, are high on the public's agenda, not low on the public's agenda.

This legislature is not, such as the member from Saskatoon Greystone said, a colossal waste of time. Her kinds of statements -- calling this legislature a

colossal waste of time, insinuating to the people of Saskatchewan that there have been no democratic reform changes -- those kinds of statements simply fuel the cynicism that people have about governments right now.

And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we're at a crossroads in this country. We know that unless we can get our act together, unless we can figure out real and modern responses to the threats of globalization and continentalism, we won't have much of a province left. We'll become like the hole in a doughnut, Mr. Speaker, unless we can figure out ways to make the people of Saskatchewan able to enter the 21st century in a strong and productive capacity.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, we believe as a government that the best reforms happen at the level where real people live. Not simply meaningless reforms in the legislature where a few privileged people have been elected to come and debate out their particular topics. We believe that real reform means making the Saskatchewan labour force able to enter the 21st century in a proud and productive capacity.

We want to introduce a total reform package of labour law which is fair and balanced and up to date. That reform package will be the result of extensive consultation and it will be consistent with our province's economic development strategy. That, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is high on the public's agenda, not low on the public's agenda.

We want to protect and enrich the skilled and productive working people in this province because it is only if we have a highly trained, flexible workforce that is able to use skills and training and technology consistent with the needs of the coming century, the needs of the forces of globalization, that we will actually be able to compete in the global market. I believe that those kinds of reforms are the kinds of reforms that many, many people across this province want.

We know that we have scores of people affected by The Labour Standards Act. Indeed all working people in this province are affected, but in particular the 71,000 people who work in lower paid or minimum wage jobs are affected. We know that 32 per cent of the paid non-agricultural workforce in Saskatchewan is unionized. That means 91,000 people are looking to our reforms in The Trade Union Act. Those are real and meaningful reforms that real, meaningful people of Saskatchewan want to see.

It's not surprising that the Tories would dismiss as low on the public agenda things like labour legislation. It's not surprising that they don't have much use for things like occupational health changes, workers' compensation, or changes to The Labour Standards Act that will affect part-time workers. The Tories know, or they did know before the last federal election, who their friends are or were.

But you know it seems to me that it is somewhat

surprising that we would have a Leader of the Third Party who goes around espousing the kinds of things that she thinks people want to hear, saying that real reform doesn't include things like labour legislation. I am surprised that she stands up in this House and calls the kinds of reforms that we are introducing a colossal waste of time.

Probably it's because she has simply taken over with friends that the Tories used to have. Probably it's because there isn't too much difference between her and her approach to the real working people of Saskatchewan and the approach that the Conservatives had.

An Hon. Member: -- Black cats, white cats.

Ms. Lorje: -- A member opposite hollers out, black cats and white cats. He understands that very clearly. He's got his claws out.

I've been reviewing some of the speeches that some of the members have made in this House. And I want to right now comment on the speech that the member from Saskatoon Greystone made dealing with the throne speech debate, because I was quite surprised in that.

Early on in her speech, she attacked labour legislation, just like the member from Morse in his rule 16 motion seems to be attacking labour legislation. She attacks legislation that she hasn't even seen yet, and at the same time would have us believe that she wants reform, when she won't even wait to see legislation.

She talks about empowerment of the individual, and yet she doesn't want to see labour standards amendments. She talks about empowerment of the individual, and yet she seems to think that union membership is something that isn't voluntary and isn't something that many . . .

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

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to talk about government reform and the kinds of reform initiatives that the opposition has put forward. And unfortunately, following on the member from Saskatoon Wildwood's comments, who has missed the mark totally as she normally does, Mr. Speaker, we'll try and confine our remarks to reform of government which is what we're talking about this afternoon.

We have introduced, Mr. Speaker, a number of reform initiatives into this legislature during this session that we think are extremely important: fixed election dates; the public utility rate increases, control over them through a legislative utility review commission; and free votes. And the government is opposed to those initiatives, Mr. Speaker, because I think it goes to the very heart of the concern that they have about control, Mr. Speaker.

(1645)

This is a government that would do well, I think, to listen to the people of Saskatchewan and ask the people of Saskatchewan about the kinds of reforms that they would like. And I don't think the kinds of reform that we saw being introduced in the House earlier today are the kinds of things that people want. The initiatives that the government puts forward as sweeping reforms, Mr. Speaker, the kinds of things like asking people if they want . . . the Saskatchewan people, the Saskatchewan taxpayer, whether the people in the legislature should be allowed to use laptop computers and what kind of beverage we're going to be able to drink when we're sitting in the building here, sitting in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

That's a really big reform package that I'm sure the people of Saskatchewan will be most interested in knowing that we've been discussing this afternoon on the government's agenda. What does the member from Saskatoon Wildwood like for a beverage this afternoon?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it almost will get to the point it will be so ludicrous we'll be asking the pages: would you mind bringing me in a drink of Beep this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, or a lemonade or something of that nature? That's the kind of government reform initiative that they have put forward this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. And it's so ridiculous that I'm surprised that they'd even want to bring it forward.

The taxpayers of Saskatchewan, they find out about this sort of stuff -- as I'm sure they will before very long -- will be most interested in knowing about the kinds of initiatives the government is putting forward and the strong legislation that they're backing up all of their promises with. Bringing in laptop computers so the member from Churchill Downs can do case-loads and the member from Saskatoon Wildwood can do that sort of work and play games and computer games and all of that kind of stuff, Mr. Speaker.

And we couldn't believe, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, we were talking about it in the lounge behind us a few moments ago. We couldn't believe our good fortune today when we had this motion come forward and be able to discuss it on the very heels of the . . .

An Hon. Member: -- It's not good fortune; that's planning.

Mr. Boyd: -- The member says it's good planning. I'm not quite sure that many people would believe that. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't believe our good fortune in noting that this motion came forward after the committee's meeting of last night.

And what kind of disgraceful sham they tried to put forward on the people of Saskatchewan last night, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely disgraceful, the kinds of action that this government brings forward and tries to disguise it under some sort of reform initiative, Mr. Speaker, saying that they are going to be the ones that bring forward the real and important changes that the people of Saskatchewan are looking for, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that's exactly what the problem is. The heat's on, Mr. Speaker. They realize that the people of Saskatchewan . . . The reform-type initiatives that are being put forward by the official opposition are the kinds of things that people want, Mr. Speaker. We should be discussing, I say to the member from Churchill Downs, things like fixed election dates. That's the kind of reform initiatives that the people of Saskatchewan want to talk about. We should be discussing a public utility review commission that has strength to curtail this government from slapping on utility rate increases at every opportunity.

We should be discussing free votes. And the member from Prince Albert Carlton stood in his place and said he's had a free vote the whole time he's been here. It would be interesting, Mr. Speaker, to go back and check the record of his voting record and see whether he has on one occasion in his entire political career voted against the party that he represents. And, Mr. Speaker, I would bet, I would bet that he has never, never voted against the will of his party and his leader after he's been directed how to vote, Mr. Speaker. But he's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . absolutely.

But he's willing to stand in his place, stand in his place and today vote against the people of Saskatchewan in bringing forward the kinds of initiatives that he's talking about bringing forward, Mr. Speaker. All of these weighty issues that the government puts forward and says they're reform initiatives -- changing the hours, so we come to work a half hour earlier now on Mondays and Tuesdays, work a half an hour later, and cut back on the Thursday evening sitting.

Mr. Speaker, surely there's better things to be talking about in this legislature. Surely the taxpayers of Saskatchewan want us to discuss more important issues than those kinds of things . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and the member from Biggar chirps from his seat about these kinds of initiatives, Mr. Speaker. He would do well to pay a heck of a lot more attention to his constituents than worry about the hours of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, he would do well. In question period today we discussed one of his constituents and how they aren't being represented by that member, Mr. Speaker. And he knows exactly what I speak of, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it was, I think, a sorry day that we witnessed in the legislature today when we saw the kinds of things that this government is trying to suggest to the public of Saskatchewan that are real reform initiatives. We're disappointed in that kind of initiatives, Mr. Speaker. Things like -- as we discussed earlier -- election dates, free votes, are far more important, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that those are the issues that the public of Saskatchewan would be more interested in hearing about today than some frivolous ideas that the government has put forward. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: -- I am pleased to stand up in favour of

this amendment. Reform is taking place, and it is significant in spite of the opposition's ranting. I'm a member of the Rules Committee, and I take exception to the members opposite saying our reforms are insignificant.

After 10 years of patronage, lack of accountability to the people of this province, the people of this province voted for change and wanted accessible and accountable government, and that's what we're delivering. Our reform package could not be called window-dressing.

I suggest that the members opposite when they voted for change two years ago and now three weeks ago they voted for change in our Rules Committee, but yesterday all of a sudden they changed their minds, they didn't want change. They didn't want reform. Even some of their own proposals now have become insignificant to them. I guess that maybe to them they feel it hasn't gone far enough. Reform hasn't done enough, so they don't want to do anything. Sit back and leave everything as it was.

I acknowledge reform is an ongoing process, and we will continue with it, and there will be a never-ending process that we will continue to reform. But let's review just some of the things that they feel are insignificant and the things that are window-dressing.

First of all, the appointment of the Saskatchewan financial review commission to open the books and provide an independent audit of the province's financial affairs, I don't think the public thought that was insignificant. The implementation of the recommendations of the Gass Commission including the adoption of the accrual method of accounting, the tabling of financial statements in the legislature for the Crown Investments Corporation and its subsidiaries, and the release of a mid-year report on the province's financial situation -- I don't think that that's insignificant. Legislation to ensure that both the legislature and the public is fully informed when Crown corporations are established -- the public won't find that insignificant.

Amendments to The Financial Administration Act which require the release of the **Public Accounts** within seven months of the fiscal year end. A new MLA Conflict of Interests Act and code of ethical conduct to ensure that elected representatives carry out their public responsibilities openly and fairly -- not what I would call insignificant. The adoption of strict rules ensuring greater accountability of elected representatives with respect to their constituency offices -- the public asked us for that kind of change. Changes to the operation of the Board of Internal Economy ensuring public access to meetings. Amendments to legislation ensuring that by-elections are held within six months of a vacancy.

Now these are just some of the changes that have already been implemented. With some of the new rules that we're putting in, gives a greater role for MLAs in private members' statements, in debate. I don't think that the public thinks that these are

insignificant changes.

The other statement that I want to make about democratic reform is that it's a process of governing. It's a process in which we have taken on to involve people more and more in decision making, more consultation, more consensus building. It's hardly insignificant to the public. We've been around this province and we've been thanked by people all over this province that we are listening, that we are evolving a more open process to government.

I ask the members opposite to be part of reform, to not be afraid of change and that we will continue to meet, and it will be an ongoing process and not to be so cynical. I support the proposed amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: -- I too want to speak to the reform issue that's being addressed here this afternoon and comment very particularly, if only for a few, brief moments, on the words of the Leader of the Third Party, the member from Greystone. In an article in the *Yorkton This Week* and *Enterprise* from December 22 of last year, staff writer to the *Yorkton Enterprise*, Calvin Daniels, talks about the Leader of the Liberal Party commenting on the legislative process in this Chamber. And she said: What are these yahoos doing dealing with legislation that is completely irrelevant? End quote.

Yahoos -- she refers to her colleagues in the legislature as yahoos. Hon. yahoos, perhaps. But she calls them yahoos. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that bespeaks her disdain not only for this Assembly but for many of the procedures that go on in this Assembly. And so when it comes to her charges about democratic reform . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The 75 minutes allowed for this debate has elapsed.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:56 p.m.