

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
February 13, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a follow-up to the petitions I presented earlier, I have more petitions that the Minister of Highways will want to pay attention to:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program towards double-laning Highway No. 1 rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in the province.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These come, Mr. Speaker, from the town of Maple Creek and Golden Prairie, I see. And that's basically where those are from.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions which have previously been laid on the Table in the Assembly, so I'll just read the prayer today.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate the total amounts of funds garnered from the taxpayer for fuel tax, vehicle licence fees, and provincial sales tax on new vehicles toward the maintenance and capital costs of Saskatchewan roads; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan dedicate any monies available from the federal infrastructure program toward Saskatchewan's road system rather than provide these sums toward capital construction of casinos in Regina and Saskatoon.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I have petitioners from the communities of Eyebrow, Saskatchewan; Marquis, Saskatchewan; Brownlee, Saskatchewan; Foam Lake, Saskatchewan; Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; an individual from Kenora, Ontario; an individual from Weyburn, Saskatchewan. Obviously people from all over concerned about this issue, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Commission: (1) what is the total revenue to the province in the fiscal year to date for video lottery terminals; and (2) what is that revenue for each community in which video lottery terminals are located?

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Commission: (1) how many studies have been done on the problem of addicted gamblers; (2) what was the cost of those studies; (3) who conducted those studies; and (4) what are the results, findings, or recommendations of these studies?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week

Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former teacher and principal, I would take great pride today in recognizing the significant contributions that teachers and school staff members in Saskatchewan have made to the lives of children throughout this province.

This week has been proclaimed as Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week in Saskatchewan. During the week, parents have organized community events in recognition of the personal dedication and professional service of teachers and school staff. The impact Saskatchewan teachers and school staff have made on children is invaluable and will help guide them through the changing world.

These teachers and staff members are the most important people outside the home in helping children to learn and grow as individuals and citizens. I salute our teachers, teacher assistants, guidance counsellors, school secretaries, nurses, custodians, and bus drivers.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we are committed to high quality education. Teachers and staff play a major role in achieving this. On behalf of all members of this House, I would like to express appreciation for the hard work and long hours Saskatchewan teachers and staff contribute to the development of one of our richest resources: our children. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

1995 Canada Winter Games

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you that Saskatchewan is represented by an outstanding group of men and women at the 1995 Canada Winter Games being held in Grande Prairie, Alberta. Team Saskatchewan '95 has representation from all areas of the province, including my own riding, the riding of Wascana Plains.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan contingent includes 325 people and is comprised of the athletes, coaches, and other support staff. The games effectively demonstrate the collaboration possible between provincial, territorial governments, the federal government, the host community, and others working together in partnership to increase sport development opportunities at all levels.

They bond Canadians together, focusing attention on the many positive aspects of being Canadian. In other words, the games are a much-needed expression of unity between Canadians — something which is desperately needed in this time of Canadian history. The games' theme, Capture the Vision, is a very positive one and reflects the goal of the athletes of Team Saskatchewan to be the best that they can be.

The 1995 Canada Winter Games will be the first games to include wheelchair basketball as one of the events. The Saskatchewan team is made up of some outstanding athletes and is coached by a former Olympic medalist. These games will also provide an opportunity for athletes who are visually impaired or physically disabled to compete in alpine skiing. The games will be an exciting and enriching experience for every competitor, and I'm sure all members here would wish that our Saskatchewan athletes have the best of luck at these games. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Housing Starts Increase

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with good news about the number of housing starts in Saskatchewan and in my riding. In Saskatchewan, housing starts in the last quarter of 1994 were at their highest level since the second quarter of 1993. The total number of housing starts in urban and rural Saskatchewan increased 73 per cent in the fourth quarter of 1994 compared to the same period, 1993.

A quote from Bruce MacDonald, a research analyst with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, printed in the Lloydminster *Meridian Booster* February 8, 1995 reads like this:

It is significant that much of the increase in housing starts stems from families purchasing new single-family dwellings . . . This is a clear sign of rising consumer confidence.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of optimism we're hearing across the province and in my own riding. I would like to add that for the first time since 1988 that total number of housing starts in Saskatchewan reached above 2,000. In addition, construction began on 692 houses in the fourth quarter compared to about 400 in the same quarter last year.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one example of how a renewed optimism is sweeping the province. People in Saskatchewan are displaying the kind of consumer confidence that indicates economic renewal is moving in the right direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Discrimination in Minor Hockey

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about a discrimination problem affecting a constituent of mine. My constituent coaches in a Regina minor hockey league which has run up against a discriminatory rule of the Saskatchewan Amateur Hockey Association. The SAHA has forbidden boys from playing on girls' teams. That's part of the Queen City Hockey League and it's now bereft of male participants.

A six-year-old goalie who had been playing on the girls' team since November became a bystander on the weekend. The SAHA does not permit girls to play on boys' teams, hence this young six-year-old boy did not dress for the Tigers during the QCHL's (Queen City Hockey League) novice coaches' tournament this weekend. His coach faced a suspension if the boy played in the tournament.

Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that this incident is a case of gender discrimination perpetrated by a bureaucracy on the lives of children who just want to play hockey. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Casino Agreement

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the gambling minister. Madam Minister, let's recap the story as we left it off on Friday. The Premier of Saskatchewan formed a gambling partnership with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), gave them one and three-quarters of a million dollars to form that partnership, then gave them 25 per cent of the profits from a venture which will be totally funded by taxpayers, and now has allowed them to open their own casinos.

Madam Minister, being that tomorrow is Valentine's Day, it would be appropriate to call this a sweetheart deal. Unfortunately, it appears that this relationship has been formed under duress.

Madam Minister, you have been saying in the media that you and your Premier had to sell the farm to avoid conflict. Could you elaborate on your comments regarding potential conflict. Was this deal signed under a threat?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank the member for his question. I would have to say that there was no duress involved because our goal has always been to improve regulation, to limit expansion, and to affirm provincial control over casino regulation. This agreement does all of those things. In the area of regulation, I think we've greatly enhanced our ability to regulate charitable gaming on reserves by establishment of the Indian first nations' licensing authority. That's going to much improve that level of regulation on reserves.

They have also conceded that we're responsible for the Criminal Code enforcement and that they will back us up in our obligation to do that. So if any casino is to proceed, there's a whole regulatory framework that gets put in place, and the province is still responsible for implementing that.

As far as limited expansion, we have not exceeded the original agreement of Regina plus Saskatoon, and the only casino that has any approval at this point is Regina. The rest have a very thorough process of market study and community approval that they have to go through. So this agreement has only approved one casino and a process for the future with a cap at the level of the original agreement.

As far as the jurisdictional issue goes, I don't doubt that there will be further discussions across Canada on this issue. But I have to say right now that this agreement is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, it becomes quite obvious that you must be under a fair amount of duress. No person of a sound mind would have come forward with this kind of deal. The Premier wouldn't. Oh, you laugh. I say to you, the Premier wouldn't. If there was no duress, the Premier wouldn't because in Saturday's paper it quotes him, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

Privately . . . Romanow . . . wished (he) had never heard of gambling. (He) didn't want to see a proliferation of casinos around the province, maintained it was not sustainable economic development and believed on-reserve casinos would turn into social and economic nightmares.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we have. Your own consultant's report said that too many casinos would result in marginal, if any, profits for the facilities and jeopardize the industry as a whole.

Madam Minister, if your Premier sees a nightmare, your consultant sees marginal profits, if any, the public hasn't had any input, you say you're not under threat, the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) now has jurisdiction, then why on earth are you proceeding? Why, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I thank the member from Rosthern for his question. Mr. Speaker, we are not under duress. We have come to an agreement which I think enhances every aspect of how we are approaching gaming in this province. And I might add, under the Conservatives in Manitoba they get 15 per cent less at the government level from these revenues, and there is no revenue-sharing formula in place; it just goes directly to the location where the casino is. So maybe you might want to discuss that a bit; see if you can get some consistency happening over there.

The Fox report said that one casino would be sustainable. Any other proposal that's put forward by the FSIN must have market study. And there's not really much advantage. I tend to think that they have thought about this quite carefully, and certainly the chief does not strike me as someone who would not be considerate in what he's doing here. And what would be the advantage to him to set up competition to the Regina market where he already has a share in the revenue? It would be a bad business decision. So I think within the range of all of the economic development options that the FSIN are pursuing, that they would look very carefully at this as one of many possible options.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All right, Madam Minister, then let's see what's in it for the FSIN. I can see why they are proceeding and would want it. In Saturday's paper, Chief Pillipow of the White Bear Indian Reserve said that he:

. . . believes the agreement represents another step toward total recognition of Indian jurisdiction over gaming and other economic activities on reserves.

Now you have sold the farm, and you don't even know what the consequences are. Madam Minister, can you tell this Assembly if you have considered the impact on local communities and small businesses should the PST (provincial sales tax) not be charged on all items sold on surrounding Indian reservations? Is this the economic nightmare that the Premier has been talking about?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member from Rosthern for his questions.

I'll just aside for a moment the fact that the Tories would advise anybody on how to conduct a business deal.

But aside from that I would have to say that one of the particularly good features of this arrangement is that the chiefs unanimously, without exception, at their recent assembly agreed to get approval from any community in which a casino would be located as well as any municipality affected by the market. And this shows to me the kind of relationship that they hope to establish in the municipalities. And I think it's very negative that you are running against the chiefs' intention to set up a partnership arrangement with municipalities.

So I would suggest that you watch a bit as this unfolds and give people a chance to be active players in their economy. You never complained about all the exhibition associations where the money all goes to urban charities.

Well these people also have needs for recreation and sports and other services in their communities. And I think it's absolutely appropriate that they would have some funding to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I get into my question I should apologize for elevating Mr. Pillipow up to Chief Shepherd's status there. So I apologize for that.

But, Madam Minister, getting back to the economic situation, you are in the process of setting up tax-free islands all around the province, Madam Minister. You are giving up gambling jurisdiction along with economic and taxation jurisdiction and you have no idea of the consequences to small towns and villages and to the small-business families that operate them. And you're talking about pitting community against community.

Madam Minister, Mayor Henry Dayday of Saskatoon said that you are driving a wedge between local government and the natives, or between the local government and the electorate.

Madam Minister, could you explain how this sweetheart deal is going to build bridges, given the overwhelming opposition to it? Or was it simply your Premier from the city of bridges trying to build another political bridge.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member from Rosthern for his question. At some point in this discussion I think it's probably necessary to have a little less rhetoric and a little more common sense on what we're discussing here.

We have communities in our province who need employment, who need services. I know it is their intention that people get a pay cheque and not a welfare cheque. They're looking at a wide range of economic development options and they're certainly asserting through this agreement their desire for accountability for the gaming that already takes place.

I would suggest that a responsible thing for a member of the opposition to do would be to urge SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) to work in partnership with the reserves in their areas, so that we can get on with having a real relationship in this province where there's some equity and some provision of services to communities who very desperately need it. And I would suggest that it would be greedy to suggest otherwise, as you were doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Investigation of Phoenix Advertising

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, a caucus colleague of yours and a former member of the NDP (New Democratic Party) cabinet has been charged and found guilty of fraud. This fraud involved receiving a kickback from Phoenix Advertising Group, your government's advertising agency of record, a company your government has done millions of dollars of business with over the years. Mr. Minister, can you tell this House, is the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) conducting any further investigations into the activities of Phoenix Advertising?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm not able to advise whether that's happening or not. As the member will know, ministers of Justice by long tradition in this province, and by good practice I think, are not informed of the investigations that are going on, have no authority over those investigations, and nothing to say about whether or not the investigations lead to prosecution. So I simply don't know the answer to the member's question.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, even though the member of Quill Lakes was found guilty of accepting a kickback, no charges are being laid against Phoenix for giving the kickback. Why is that, Mr. Minister? Why has your department chosen not to lay charges against Phoenix for its involvement in this incident? What did the Crown prosecutor mean when he said, further charges would not be in the public interest?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid I don't know the answer to the member's question. As I have said, I think it would be highly inappropriate for the minister to be trampling around in the prosecution's department or in the investigation conducted by the police force, bringing a political dimension to either of those two activities. I keep out of it. I'm advised from time to time as to decisions that are made in the department but I wouldn't for a moment think about questioning them with respect to an issue like that.

I can attempt to learn what decisions have been made in the department and communicate those to the member and I will do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, Phoenix Advertising is your government's agency of record. It received millions of taxpayers' dollars in government contracts each year and I'm sure you want to clear the air regarding the dealings between your government, your caucus members, and Phoenix.

Mr. Minister, have you considered an independent investigation into the dealings between Phoenix and members of your caucus, or will you today consider appointing an independent prosecutor to conduct an investigation to ensure that there have been no further incidents of wrongdoing?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, I will not, Mr. Speaker. For the information of the member, Phoenix Advertising is not the agency of record for the government. The government doesn't have an agency of record.

Furthermore, investigations in this province are traditionally undertaken by a police force, either the RCMP or a municipal force, depending upon where the offence is located and the type of offence it is. So I think we can leave it to them to investigate any allegations of crime and no doubt they will hear what the member's had to say here today and take that into account.

Provincial Income Tax Revenues

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question will be for the Minister of Finance this afternoon.

I presume that the government's budget predictions for income tax revenues have been based on their expectations of growth in jobs and the economy. They claim that there have been thousands more jobs than they thought in the province of Saskatchewan. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, income tax revenues should have at least met or surpassed their projections.

But, Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. The government actually earned less income tax revenue than they budgeted for, by \$65 million in 1993, and by \$16 million in 1994. The Minister of Economic Development claims that we have thousands more taxpayers in our province, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Finance minister is: how do you explain why there is less income tax being generated than you budgeted for?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the minister, who is at a federal-provincial conference, as I think members know.

Thursday, I say to the member opposite, I'm sure she will join all Saskatchewan people on Thursday in expressing a good deal of pride in a budget in which it will all come together. The sacrifice, the hard work over the previous four years, is going to come together in a budget in which I think Saskatchewan people will be quite proud and should be quite proud. All the more so because it's being done at a time when the economic activity in the province is increasing, jobs are increasing, as is the revenue from them.

The member opposite may be interested in knowing that in Saskatchewan our unemployment rate is down by 2 per cent, while in New Brunswick, to pick a province out of the air, their unemployment rate has remained static over the past year. That is partially as a result of the budgetary steps which we have taken.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister would like everyone to believe and the associate Finance minister would like everyone to believe that there have been thousands of new jobs in Saskatchewan created over the last two years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Even though, even though, Mr. Speaker, we still have fewer people working than in 1991 when they came to office. But there appears to be a very unsolved mystery, Mr. Speaker. In 1993, the Minister of Finance budgeted \$1.1 billion in income tax and missed that target by \$65 million. In 1994, she missed her income tax target again by \$16 million. Mr. Associate Minister, don't you agree that if there were more jobs you should be exceeding your income tax targets, not falling short?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I think all members will know that our very capable minister is in Ottawa attempting to assist the federal government in working a similar sort of miracle nationally. I may say, given the convoluted nature of the question from the members opposite,

if it's any indication of Liberal thinking, our minister certainly has her hands full in attempting to work with the federal minister.

I say to the member opposite there is little connection between income tax revenue and jobs. It is interesting that in the search for a statistic that will buttress their position, they have gone from StatsCanada which they abandoned; gone from Revenue Canada which they've abandoned. The Premier offered up Environment Canada. They seemed to have abandoned that and they're now into 1993 income tax revenues apparently.

I do wish the member opposite good luck in trying to find the statistic which will buttress her position if jobs have decreased. I think she's going to need a lot of good luck, because she flies in the face of the bald facts — and that is that the jobs in this province has increased markedly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For every two jobs that are created here, Mr. Speaker, this government's policies destroy one.

I think I can explain, Mr. Speaker, why the government keeps missing their income tax targets. The Premier of this province said in this very legislature, on May 2, 1991, and I quote directly from *Hansard*:

... Won't you agree that taxes are the silent killer of jobs, that enough is enough, that higher taxes do not create jobs, higher taxes take jobs out of the economy.

Mr. Associate Minister, will you admit that your own policies are the reasons that you're missing your income tax targets; that the policies of your government have caused you to miss your income tax targets, and actually held Saskatchewan at the bottom of the job recovery list — the bottom relative to the rest of the nation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Notwithstanding the best efforts of the member opposite to contribute to the unemployment situation in Saskatchewan, I gather you've added one more to the list. I gather yet another communications officer has left your office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Notwithstanding, notwithstanding your best efforts, Madam Minister, the number of jobs are up by 12,000; the number of unemployed are down by 9,000. I say to the member opposite, there is little connection between budgeted and forecast income tax revenue and jobs. If the member believes there is some connection, you may want to try to draw that for us. But I say to the member opposite, there's none.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, in 1991 this very Associate Minister of Finance was quoted as saying, and this is a direct quote: the NDP won't raise any personal taxes for four years. End of quote.

In June of 1991, this very minister, the Associate Minister of Finance, was saying, and I quote: just as the prodigal son needs not more income but more discipline, so government opposite needs not more income but more discipline in its spending. End of quote.

The evidence clearly points to one thing, Mr. Speaker: this particular government — your government, Mr. Associate Minister — cannot be trusted.

Mr. Minister, when is your government going to start practising exactly what both the Premier and yourself were preaching in 1991? When are you going to start learning to live within your own means, instead of gouging the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I say in the flight of the members opposite from one set of statistics to another, may I suggest that you may want to pay a fleeting visit back to StatsCanada. May I suggest you may want to review the level of personal taxes for a family of 25,000. Saskatchewan is second lowest in Canada and indeed is lower than Alberta at that level.

So the member opposite, in developing these arguments, may want to pay a visit back to StatsCanada and begin to use their material again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Polling

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for government polling, the Provincial Secretary. Last week your government released the results of some recent polling about the federal gun control legislation. I'd agree that this is an important issue to consider for the people of Saskatchewan and doing some polling on this issue is a worthwhile exercise.

Mr. Minister, could you tell us what other questions were asked as a part of the poll, and will you release those results today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be pleased to respond to the member's question. And I can tell him that all of the poll that was asked that was pertaining to that particular issue was released, as is the practice of this government, which is a change from the way it used to be.

The polling that is done, paid by the taxpayer, that is prepared, other than the commercial things that would effect on competitiveness in the Crown corporations, has been released for the last two or three years on a regular basis — I believe every three months — and the questions that were asked are the questions that are presented in that information when it is provided to you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, could you tell us whether there were any political-type questions asked? For example, I have a copy of the questionnaire from the recent poll about gun control. Among other things, it asked respondents to rate the performance of the federal Liberal government; who they would vote for if a federal election were held today; who they voted for in the past provincial election; and who they would vote for if a provincial election were held today.

Mr. Minister, I thought you had assured us that your polling . . . your government does not do this type of political polling. Why are these voter preference questions part of a government-commissioned poll, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, may I respond to the member opposite? I want to say very clearly to him and to the House that the polling for which the government pays for does not ask any political preference questions. The pollsters, as the members may very well know, may have various questions on their poll which are not part of the questions that are being purchased by one particular organization. There may be other questions paid by other organizations, but I want to say with absolute certainty, Mr. Speaker, that no political preference questions have been paid for in the polling that the government does, by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, will you provide to this Legislative Assembly, first of all, a breakdown of the questions in the poll, and then the costs attributed to each one of those questions so that you can show it to this Legislative Assembly and to the people of the province of Saskatchewan that you did not pay for with taxpayers' dollars the polls that dealt with the questions that I asked you just today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite in response to his question that the questions which were asked for which the taxpayer paid for through the Government of Saskatchewan have all been made available to the members already, and to the media, as they are on a regular basis. And I don't know what more information can be provided because as long as . . . ever since this process was begun, it's part of the democratic reform system the government has implemented. And there have been a lot of those measures that have been implemented.

The questions that are asked for which the taxpayer pays for, which are not questions that may affect some commercial sensitivities of the business side of the government, are always provided, as they were in the last release to the members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you today a friend and fellow minister from British Columbia, Mr. Glen Clark, who's the Minister of Employment and Investment. He's also the House Leader and minister responsible for B.C. (British Columbia) Hydro. He's the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Vancouver-Kingsway and is here in Saskatchewan to meet with a number of various groups, including people associated with the changes to the WGTA (Western Grain Transportation Act), because of the important role and change that is occurring as a result of a change in policy at the federal level.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish all members to join with me in welcoming Mr. Clark to the Assembly and wish him the best in his visit here in Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 6 — An Act to amend The Crop Insurance Act

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to move first reading of a Bill to amend The Crop Insurance Act.

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

Bill No. 7 — An Act to amend The Apiaries Act

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Apiaries Act.

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

Bill No. 8 — An Act to repeal The NewGrade Energy Inc. Protection Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to repeal The NewGrade Energy Inc. Protection Act.

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

Bill No. 9 — An Act to amend The Environmental Management and Protection Act

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Environmental Management and Protection Act 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.

MOTIONS

Referral of *Public Accounts* to Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I would move:

That the *Public Accounts* of the province of Saskatchewan for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1994 be referred as tabled this session to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I so move, seconded by the member for Regina Churchill Downs.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I understand, by agreement of all members in the House, I have a condolence motion I'd like to introduce and speak to.

Leave granted.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, members. Mr. Speaker, it is with much sadness and much regret that I rise today to note the passing of a well-loved friend and former member of this Assembly, Mr. Hans Ove Hansen, or Ove Hansen as he was known, of Wilkie, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Hansen died quietly at the Wilkie Union Hospital on July 3, 1994 at the age of 89. He leaves to mourn his loving wife of 60 years, Marie, and their children, Byron and Carole, and several grandchildren.

Mr. Hansen was a man of vision who saw clearly how to best serve his fellow man. Throughout his lifetime he kept abreast of economics and political issues and when he was unable to personally participate in public discussion, he turned to the power of his pen. He was well known for his precise, hard-hitting and well-documented and numerous letters to the editor. And more often than not those letters would lean, obviously, to the political left.

Very early in his life, Ove Hansen developed a strong socialist political ideology, and even with the passage of time, his passionate convictions never dimmed. His political interest led him to the philosophy of the blossoming of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), which paralleled his line of thinking.

And in 1933 he attended the party's founding convention in Regina. He later served as a member of the CCF provincial council. Mr. Speaker, Ove Hansen was a builder of both the CCF and the New Democratic parties, and a builder of his constituency and of his province.

On June 21, 1941, Ove was nominated to contest the Wilkie constituency for the CCF and he was elected and served as an MLA in the first Tommy Douglas government from 1944 to 1948. He won that seat after having introduced a new method of campaigning to the electors.

For the three years in which he was the candidate, Ove found his way into nearly every home. He ate with the constituents, and spent the night at their homes as often as possible.

This type of close, personal contact was something new to the area, and his victory was a testament to both the man and the message and his closeness with the ordinary folk.

(1415)

Losing his seat in the legislature did not dim Ove's interest in politics. He maintained a keen interest in the economic and political life of his country and he maintained an even keener interest in the well-being of the political party that he helped to form.

Ove believed that with any political party there is always the danger of time causing a shift in its basic ideology or, as Ove thought, a shift to the right. And he made it his personal mandate to prevent that shift in his party from taking place.

Well as all of us, he personally mellowed with age, except for one thing — his politics did not. As a reiteration of his views, he was fond of saying: I just never saw it any other way.

Ove did not want to be known as a politician nor were all his interests political. He gave wholehearted support to the cooperative movement as well. I've heard of how he borrowed his father's old Ford car and ploughed through mud and bucked through the last remaining snowbanks to help launch the Landis Co-operative Association back in 1929.

He also served as a director of the united farmers. He was the first president of Canadian Co-operative Implements Limited in district 12.

In his own modest way, Ove never claimed any of the credit for his successes and instead shared the accolades with his partner, his wife, who he said stayed home to allow him to carry the torch of a new and better social order. And that surely must be a loving, understanding relationship.

His quest, his thirst, for knowledge and understanding never diminished. The CCF and now the New Democratic Party in Saskatchewan owes its success to people like Ove and Marie Hansen, who throughout the years never ceased to follow the ideals of progress, freedom, compassion, cooperation, community, and security for all of our people.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that all of the people of this province owe a debt of thanks to Ove Hansen and all the other brave women and men of his generation — and brave they were as they fought against formidable odds — all those people of that generation who did see a better way and worked incredibly hard to bring about a new and better order. The high quality of life

we enjoy in Saskatchewan today can be directly traced back to their convictions and to their actions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that all members will join with me in supporting the following motion which I'm going to move, seconded by my colleague, the member from Morse. Mr. Speaker, I move, by leave of the Assembly:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and express its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and this province.

Hans Ove Hansen who died in Wilkie on July 3, 1994 was a member of this Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Wilkie from 1944 to 1948.

Mr. Hansen was born on August 14, 1904, on a Danish settlement in Iowa, United States of America. At three years of age he moved with his family to Saskatchewan where his parents established a homestead east of Leipzig.

His parents provided his early schooling until the Standard School opened nearby in 1916. He completed his studies at Concordia College in Edmonton before pursuing his lifelong interest of farming.

On June 28, 1934, Ove Hansen married Marie Baron of Wilkie. The family farmed in the Wolfe district for three years and then established their own family farm near Reford.

Mr. Hansen took an active interest in his community and in the cooperative movement. He was an early and active supporter of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the National Farmers Union, or as it was called then, the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, and other local retail cooperatives.

Ove Hansen assumed a leadership role in many organizations including serving as the first president of the District 12 Canadian Co-operative Implements. In 1954 he held the position of vice-president of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union. He helped also to organize the Landis Co-op and served as a director for several years.

Mr. Hansen is recognized as a founding member of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and served as a member of the CCF provincial council.

In 1944 he was elected to serve as a member of this Legislative Assembly for Wilkie. Mr. Hansen's bid for re-election was unsuccessful in 1948 but he remained interested and active in the economic and political life of this country.

In his retirement Mr. Hansen pursued his quest for knowledge and understanding by embarking on numerous travels to countries around the world.

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

Mr. Speaker, I do so move, seconded by the hon. member from Morse constituency. Thank you.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to second the motion moved by the Premier.

Mr. Hansen, a former member for the constituency of Wilkie, passed away this past summer, and he served this Assembly from 1944 to 1948. And as the Premier has pointed out, he did that rather well.

His family must feel extremely fortunate that their father, uncle, and grandfather enjoyed life to its fullest for almost 90 years. Although born in the United States, Mr. Hansen chose to remain in Canada. He furthered his education by attending university in Edmonton and pursued his lifelong interest in farming in Saskatchewan. Mr. Hansen obviously held the Prairies close to his heart. Mr. Hansen made many important contributions to the Wilkie area, and was an integral part in many of the cooperatives in the Wilkie area as well. And for that he will be remembered there.

I know that Mr. Hansen will be fondly remembered and greatly missed for the many years that he served the public of Saskatchewan, and this Assembly acknowledges that today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I join other members in this House as we pay tribute to the former member, Mr. Hans Hansen, who served four years in this Assembly as the member for Wilkie.

Mr. Hansen served in this legislature during a time when Saskatchewan's history had enormous challenges and excitement too faced the people and the government at the time. His term covered those years when optimism ran high for our province's future because inflationary growth had taken over after the devastating decade of Depression and the recessionary war years. His community service and public service are commendable accomplishments which I wish to acknowledge on behalf of the Liberal caucus today. As well, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, I wish to extend my condolences to the family and the friends of the late Ove Hansen.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Thunder Creek, by leave of the Assembly:

That the resolution just passed, together with a transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Bradley, seconded by Mr. Knezacek.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to get back into the debate on the throne speech today.

I don't want to add to the throne speech what I see as something missing, and that's any inspiration, so I will sort of cut to the chase, quickly go through a few of the areas, and let other members speak.

But just to recap, Mr. Speaker, on the financial stability portion of the throne speech, I think it's obvious that it was a throne speech that's just before a provincial election — very lacklustre. And really all they have to brag about, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that there's going to be some balanced budget legislation and the fact that the annual deficit is now going to be taken care of.

And somebody of course deserves a great deal of credit for that. And I maintain, as I did the other day, reading right from the auditor's report, that it really isn't the government of the day that deserves the credit. It's the people of this province that are going to get all the credit in the end. They deserve the credit. If what's happening here is a lead-up to an election, well of course I think the people will be the ones that will win the election. And I dare say, they're not speaking for those people. And I would caution them if they feel that any positive news from the budget is going to help them win an election because I just don't see it happening.

I think the people will win out at the end of the day — those people who you've cut all the programs from. You've threatened everything from gravelling their highways. You've closed the hospitals, on and on and on, taken away their farm programs. Those are the people that will want to be thinking of you when they go into the polling booth that day.

Mr. Speaker, on the areas of jobs and economic renewal, I see that there's some mention of the oil and gas sector. And in the area of the province that I'm from, oil and gas is a very big ticket item for us. In fact when we take a look at last year's, or the '94, budget where there was revenues I think of some \$20 million budgeted, those were ballooned up to some \$200 million. And that's quite a windfall for the government.

The concern I have — and I've raised this, I guess, with the Premier and different members at different occasions — is the fact that some \$85 million of this money come from the part of the province that I'm from, right in the south-west corner. And I

have to have a look, Mr. Minister, at the amount of things that that particular government has cut back from that area of the province, and then yet again take a further \$85 million out of that corner of the province and not put a dime back in.

I think that's shameful, Mr. Speaker. At a time when the need for nursing homes, a need for some highway repair or rebuilding or new highways, and they have yet to announce one thing.

If they wanted to come out with something very positive, I'll tell you, the Shaunavon nursing home is in such terrible need of repair — or not repair, actually — to be replaced. And the people down there are asking me on a regular basis: if the government has access to so much money that really is from this area of the province, why on earth couldn't they at least give back to that area of the province what they so badly need and some of the things that they've taken away?

I think, Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at this section on jobs and economic renewal, there too if the government feels that they're going to receive credit from the people of the province, it's not going to happen. We've got a thousand displaced health care workers in rural Saskatchewan. And I take a look at all the hospitals . . . all the health care workers that this particular government has taken the jobs away from. Health care workers, so many nurses out in rural Saskatchewan that help keep the farms viable, they're going to remember you at the polls. And that'll come soon enough.

Mr. Speaker, also there's a number of SaskEnergy offices, SaskPower offices . . . In the last session we raised this time and time again — the need for the SaskPower, well the utility office, to remain in some of these communities. It wasn't for the jobs at the time; that wasn't our point. But the fact of the matter is the length of time it takes to get service out in I guess what they would consider now to be remote areas. It's unforgivable when we're talking a couple hours to get service from SaskPower.

(1430)

The offices were there. There were jobs in the community. These were people that had children that were keeping schools going. And you've cancelled all those offices, you've cut out those jobs, all for the sake of amalgamating.

The whole picture that this government sees is just to move everything into the larger centres. And I think at some point they're going to sit back and wish that they had never tried that.

The Minister of Highways was recently out in the community of Val Marie, Mr. Speaker, at the request of community leaders in that community, and local RMs (rural municipality), because they were also going to close highway depots — several of them throughout the province. But in the community of Val Marie there was a threat of losing their highway depot.

Well the community banded together, they completely filled the town hall, had the Minister of Highways and myself there to talk or debate the issue. And I will give the Minister of

Highways credit for at least reversing the decision to close it after the people in that community had talked some sense into the government.

But it seems like it's never ending, Mr. Speaker. This was the same community, this was the same stretch of highway, that the now Minister of the Environment, who was Highways minister at the time, wanted to gravel that entire area. This is the area where they've lost the hospitals and they haven't replaced it with ambulatory care. So, Mr. Speaker, that too will come to service.

I note in the throne speech there was mention of tourism, and of course we all like to see some positive tourism projects. And the one they happened to mention is the T-Rex fossil discovery in the Frenchman River valley. And of course that got . . . news of the find got around the world and it was pretty positive for the area.

But I question the government on one hand, when we have something as positive as the T-Rex find — we have people coming from Europe to view it — how then do they justify closing hospitals and gravelling highways and closing down highway depots and utility . . . You're completely shutting down rural areas of the province and yet you want to brag about somehow promoting some tourism projects down there. Well this is not going over well with the people. That again is going to come back to cause a lot of grief, I think, for these members.

In the throne speech, we have an area on agriculture diversification. And one would almost think in a throne speech which is going to be the lead-up to a provincial election — and especially in a province where over 50 per cent of the farmers in Canada are within the provincial boundaries in Saskatchewan — that there would be some real positive news coming out, some leadership and some real direction as to where this government, with its strong majority and a lot of signs of the economy picking up and getting healthy, would want to take the agriculture industry.

Yet what do we have? So far, we've got a federal Minister of Agriculture which had to come and rescue that particular government and that particular Minister of Agriculture in Saskatchewan because he couldn't get in with the other provinces and agree on an ag program. After they used retroactive legislation and cancelled farm programs, they had to have a federal Agriculture minister come and save them at the end of the day with an interim program.

Well some of the members laugh, but that's how the farmers view it out there. The Minister of Justice is sitting there laughing. But you know, the farmers when you use retroactive legislation against them, no different than you've used it against the judges and the co-op. Do you think they're going to forgive you? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I say they won't. I say they won't at all.

And when I look here, we see one of the new Acts coming in, agriculture Acts, the agriculture operations Act. And it's to protect producers from unwarranted legal actions. If this is the only positive news that we have in the throne speech, it's even more lacklustre than I had first thought. And for unwarranted

legal actions . . . I dare say this could be termed the Jack Messer Bill before it's all over because the only unwarranted legal action that I recall in the last 12 months which would perhaps bring about some mention of an Act in the upbringing session here was the lord of the flies trying to sue his friends and neighbours for some problems that he had with flies on his farm. So hopefully there's more to the Act. And I guess at some point the minister will have to explain himself for this.

And when we take a look, Mr. Speaker, at what the government has done budget-wise in the Department of Agriculture, where they've cut back year after year after year and really have done nothing to promote any diversification in agriculture . . . there's been a lot of talk about it, but no true action. And I don't think that the farmers are going to forgive them either.

Mr. Speaker, when I take a look in the throne speech, I think what probably causes everyone the most grief is the part on health care. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that this is probably the area that this government has faired the worst in. It's where their performance has been, well very uncompassionate I guess is the word that would come to mind as far as how their treatment to rural Saskatchewan would go.

After having closed down all the hospitals that they could in communities — I guess some 52 — and putting some citizens of those communities an hour to an hour and a half away from any kind of emergency or acute care help. In fact I look at the community of Ponteix, where after they've closed down the hospital, they now have some clinic, a 9 to 5 clinic. And let's be honest, people are not going to use these clinics on a 9 to 5 basis for anything of importance at all.

And what the government did to try and relieve the fear of the people is to hang a pay phone on the outside of the hospital — bolted it right to the front of the hospital, a SaskTel pay phone. And you know, that I think hurt the community worse than any action that this government has taken upon itself. When it comes to needing a quarter to phone for some kind of health care, I mean, that is two-bit health care in the rawest of forms. That is going to come back and haunt them.

But what I really find disappointing is the fact that when they go and they do these harmful effects to some of the communities — they close down their hospitals and their SaskPower office and the highway depots — that the members never show up to explain to the people why they're doing it. They stay out of there. They'll deal with them through the news media from Regina. Other than the Minister of Highways, who did go out to Val Marie and actually had his mind changed. None of the others cared to go out into the rural areas. I dare say it's not even the ministers . . .

An Hon. Member: — They're afraid to go there; they'd have to change their minds too.

Mr. McPherson: — That's right. I say it's not just the ministers, it's the other back-bench members. How often do they ever get around in their constituencies?

And I enjoy listening to some of the replies to the throne speech when members say that out in my rural constituency people are really accepting all these cut-backs and actually liking it. Well I can assure you that we're going to be taking some of those *Hansard* copies and making sure that people out in your area read that, because if that's a misnomer I think we'll want you to perhaps stand up and correct that at some point.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we see what's happening out in these rural areas, I mean even the community of Climax of all places, there's a northern tax allowance, some deduction that's allowed I think from the 58th parallel and north, and it's an isolation pay. Well they receive that in the community of Climax and it has to do if you're a citizen that's within so many hours from a centre of so many thousand people, you're considered to be isolated. Well in Climax, Saskatchewan, they receive that tax allowance, Mr. Speaker, and yet they lose their hospital.

We have a police officer that must be stationed there because it's a port, a busy port through to the United States. They receive tax allowances because of their isolation, but they had to lose their hospital.

And I would enjoy having some of these members come out to some of those community halls and debate some of what they'd see as some of the positive issues in their throne speech. I'd love for them to come out and discuss in front of the people why they did that. Because they've never had to do that, Mr. Speaker, and I think they're going to have to soon.

The other day we raised an issue, Mr. Speaker, in the House, on Friday I guess it was, in regards to what this government sees as a replacement to health care professionals now that they've taken those jobs and those professions out of rural Saskatchewan and they've replaced them with volunteer effort. Nobody's against volunteers, but to have first responders replace health care professionals? That's an insult to the people.

Well the current Minister of Health was debating whether or not these doctors were actually leaving the province with me, Mr. Speaker, but I noticed on Saturday's *Leader-Post*, it . . . and I'll quote:

Dr. Joe Baretto has some advice for travellers in southwest Saskatchewan (and I quote): "Don't have your accident around Ponteix."

There's no . . . ambulance service to come and pick you up, and the local doctors are so frustrated with health reform they're thinking of quitting, Baretto said.

"Most of us are sitting on a knife edge at the moment," Baretto said in an interview Friday.

"One of my colleagues said he is amazed at the number of people who are leaving that he thought would never leave."

This is the kind of testimonials we get from rural residents as to how well they're accepting these health care cuts, Mr. Speaker. They're not. They're not. They, like myself, question the facts

and the figures from the Minister of Health over whether or not people are really leaving the province, doctors are leaving their practices and such.

But the one that really, really makes me wonder, Mr. Speaker, is the one that is raised by the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, and I've got several copies from his local paper here, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to quote the one:

"Just keep your fingers crossed that when you have a heart attack you're standing next to a volunteer who has completed his 40-hour course and will help you for free because so many nurses have been fired that you won't get any professional care for a long time. Unless, of course you live in Regina close to the minister. Talk about doing things on the cheap. Merry Christmas Dr. Scrooge, and God help us, every one."

Well that's quite a statement from that member, and I also see on another edition of the *Tribune*, Tuesday January 31, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg is talking about running for the NDP nomination in Wood River. And of course on one hand he's saying how disappointed he is with the government, where the government has went, and the cut-backs to rural care, especially rural health care.

Now they've been in power for three years, over three years, and it's only now that this member is starting to speak up. I recall when I crossed the floor from that group over these same issues, over health care issues in particular a year and a half ago, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg was on the front page of all the major newspapers in the province condemning me for doing that. And, Mr. Member, I'm telling you, you think you're going to get away with this? I hope you win that nomination. Although I am . . .

An Hon. Member: — I will.

Mr. McPherson: — Your nomination? Well you'd have to talk to one of the members. You'd have to talk to the member that you had to introduce in here in the House the other day, Mr. Allen Engel. I was actually even embarrassed for him. Here's a member that sat throughout, oh I think for some 14 years, throughout all the '70s. And what we hear is the Premier has called him back from Texas. As we all know, Allen's a millionaire, and a very well-to-do guy, got called back from Texas to take a run at the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg because they're so embarrassed that somebody else would stand up and speak out against all these cuts. And I just thought it was a real knife in the heart to have to watch this member stand up and introduce in the House somebody who's trying to take his job away.

I don't think you'll ever have this job again anyway. I wouldn't create bad friends with these people about it, if I were you. But that's not for you to decide that.

And we take a look at some of these quotes in the *Tribune* where the member says: "I am very impressed by the caliber of

my caucus colleagues and I must live by the old adage 'win some, lose some.'"

Well I've got to say to the good doctor from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, I don't know if you really did win some, lose some. What have you lost? Have you taken any cuts?

But I'll tell you what some of the people up in your area have done. They've lost their hospitals. They would've lost their highway depots because you said nothing about it. It was only the people of Val Marie that put up a meeting that we finally made some inroads and stopped this foolishness before it could happen. You said nothing, Mr. Minister.

Win some, lose some. I can't believe anybody would stand up and still support the party with the amount of cuts that the area, the south-west corner of the province, has taken, of which he too is a member, and still wants to represent them. And talk so flippantly — it's like you win some, you lose some.

Well no, it's not. It's not that way to those people that are 70, 80, 90 years of age that need nursing care out in that member's riding and aren't receiving it. They'll find out how flippant your remarks are and how little you care.

(1445)

Well let me read on here from the *Tribune* on January 31st. It states:

This time around he feels he has a higher profile not only in the riding but across the province and believes that will give him more clout in a new government.

Well I don't know, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg feels he's going to have more clout. And I'll have to be honest. You know while we're sitting back here taking a look, trying to figure out who's going to get into cabinet, and there is no cabinet minister south of No. 1 Highway. It was a pretty good chance that he was going to go in for that reason alone.

We had a Health minister resign. He's the only doctor in the caucus. So I thought, well isn't it obvious that he's going to become the Health minister. Well I don't think you're going to have any more clout than what you now have. And obviously you're not going a long ways at this point.

In Regina *Leader-Post*, December 19th, we want to find out how his own party views his progress and his stand now after three years after the fact on health care. It says, "MLA didn't speak for others." It's signed by Louise Walker, Walker is president of the Wood River NDP constituency. The opening line: "I am writing on behalf of the table officers of the Wood River NDP Constituency Association to formally disassociate our association from the remarks of MLA Lewis Draper." It's a direct quote, Mr. Speaker.

And well Allen Engel's putting him up to this, member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, or you really don't have a lot of support in your party. And I question at the end of the day why you go against your constituents in favour of a party that isn't

supporting you either. I mean at some point you've got to stand up and kind of square this in your own mind, where it's going for you and the people you're supposed to represent.

Mr. Speaker, now I won't go much more into the health care because it's obvious it's going to be raised several times in this upcoming session. There are so many concerns and so many problems that aren't getting dealt with out there. And I assure you that the people, even in that member's riding, do have somebody speaking out for them. And I'd be more than glad to do that on a regular basis.

A few things that are of interest I think in the throne speech that I heard the other day on health care was the fact that there's some 1,400 workers going to be transferred into the health district boards. And this I think needs some clarification too, because if what we're talking about is just changing the employer and the people out in rural Saskatchewan — the nurses, the doctors, and so on — still have jobs, well then that can be accepted.

But if in fact what we're talking about is moving a bunch of New Democrat bureaucrats from Regina out and putting them on the pay tabs of these health district boards that don't have enough money to operate the present system, well we're going to have revisit them. You're going to have to answer up to a lot of this stuff.

And, Mr. Speaker, like I said earlier, I don't want to give anything inspiring to the throne speech because it wasn't there before, and I don't want to try and add to it.

But I did note that they made mention of the Saskatchewan 90th birthday, and you know when I talk to people out in some of these rural communities, this I think . . . This big birthday bash for a million bucks probably hurts them about as much as anything. And we got pamphlets and hand-outs where you can get free stuff. Well it says here, send my free balloons to . . . you know, addresses for free things for the birthday party, a million bucks, a million bucks we're spending.

Well I'm telling you that I don't think that all the hungry kids in Saskatchewan were taken care of by a few of your announcements that were pretty much meaningless in the last couple of years. If hungry kids were real important to you in the last few years, I'm sure that we could have found a lot better way to spend a million bucks, perhaps feeding some of the underprivileged in the province, than giving people balloons and stickers and pins and having some birthday party that when you look at it . . . Alberta is having their 90th birthday and even some Scandinavian country. They're not even celebrating it, Mr. Speaker. Only in this province are we trying to, in an election year, build some hype and make it seem like there's something fun out there. But there's nothing fun about spending a million bucks unless it's for very needy things.

And I would have no problem standing up in this House and giving the government all the credit in the world if they'd say, well we're going to redirect that million dollars and we're going to put it towards feeding the hungry.

I'll tell you one thing that it's necessary to do in the very near future is replace — replace — the Shaunavon nursing home. And I'd have no problem standing up in this House and giving all the credit in the world to the government if they would look at some of these communities that really are in need of health care or senior care. And I'd give them all kinds of credit if they would redirect that money. But I would have to hear a commitment fairly soon before we get too many balloons and posters printed up, I would think.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll close. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to thank you for recognizing me and to speak in this new session of the twenty-second legislature.

I want to begin by joining other members in welcoming new members who serve us here in the Legislative Assembly and thanking the members who have served us before for their continued good service and look forward to our joint efforts in making this one of the most exciting sessions in Saskatchewan's history.

It is indeed a time to be positive in Saskatchewan and this throne speech sets out both a strong challenge to Saskatchewan and recognizes the positive achievements of the last several years.

I want to congratulate the people of Saskatchewan for helping to make 1995 a come-back year. For this is the year in which we turn the corner on debt and deficits and begin to bring in a balanced budget.

It is also a year in which we are going to take the same determination and singleness of purpose and begin to address the challenge of jobs. We've set it out in our economic development plan that we want to maintain the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, as we've done to this point. We want to continue on the path that we've set, by increasing the number of jobs by 7,000 in the last several years, by continuing to focus on youth employment, to continue the roughly 1,000 new jobs per year for youth.

And I know that with the support of the Saskatchewan people and businessmen and all of those in Saskatchewan who've helped build our economy in the last number of years, that we will be as successful with our job strategy with their help as we have been in achieving our . . . wrestling the deficit to the ground. So again I want to thank Saskatchewan's people and look forward to working with them in the next challenge in achieving our job targets.

As you've heard, 1994 was a banner year for Saskatchewan. Economic growth in all sectors was up. What I'm particularly proud of in terms of achievements in Saskatchewan is the achievements of our agricultural sector. Saskatchewan farmers have pulled off a miracle in the last couple of years because they've taken the changed world in which we found ourselves, the world introduced by challenges such as trade agreements which they were not particularly crazy about, and other international developments, and they have taken those

challenges and changed their practices, not like everybody else, but at rates much exceeding those of our neighbouring provinces.

Saskatchewan farmers have diversified at a rate double that of Alberta farmers and four times the rate of our neighbours to the east in Manitoba. I want to take my hat off to Saskatchewan farmers for their particular effort and their particular response to a new era and a new time with their energy and creativity.

I want to particularly pay attention to not only the farmers in my constituency but other people as well, more generally, in our constituency. The throne speech pays tribute to the economic development in the Rosetown area. And I want to say that that tribute is as important to the area south towards Lucky Lake and Beechy and Kyle as it is to the north to Biggar. Because in our region of the province, like in other regions of the province, people have taken the business of economic development seriously and taken it on their own shoulders.

I just sat down to jot down a few things about what's been going on in our part of the world and recognized that it's not an accident that our area of the province showed up in the throne speech for its achievements. Because beginning with one of the very first REDAs (regional economic development authorities), the Entrepreneurs 2000 — this is a rural economic development association which has contributed to 70-some new jobs in the area in the short time in which it's been in existence — it has stimulated economic thinking; it has resulted in a wide variety of new activities.

Just let me name some of the things that are going on in our corner of the world. Ten miles from my place in a little town called Fiske, population 100, is a little manufacturing enterprise called D & R Manufacturing. They began a few years ago, responding to the new world, building environmental sheds for Sask Wheat Pool and United Grain Growers. They began building elevators that serve the new diversified markets so that you can elevate specialty crops without damaging them. They've begun to develop new styles of grain bin floors — a number of new initiatives — in a little town of 100, creating 20 to 30 new jobs. They're doubling the size of their enterprise this year. That's one little example of one little farm-based enterprise in one little Saskatchewan community that is a basis for this recovery and this turnaround in Saskatchewan.

If I look to the South, we have on Lake Diefenbaker the AgPro Fish Farm, a wonderful new idea and a huge new future as a diversified venture in Saskatchewan.

In the same vicinity we have a new potato project, the Sask Ida potatoes. With minimal help from government and a lot of local initiative, they're using irrigation for the purpose for which irrigation was intended — to make money, up to \$15,000 an acre for the potatoes that are grown in that area. If they . . .

An Hon. Member: — Fish and chips.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — And in the same area . . . Not only fish and chips, as my friend from Meadow Lake says, but pork and

beans. Because in that area there are three or four new significant pig barns.

Only a few days ago, the Beechy Pork Farm was opened. And over the last couple of years several at Birsay and one at Macrorie and another one at Outlook, and there's one being planned at Plenty. And they're looking at new dried bean production in the area; therefore, my friend, the pork and beans.

Right close to home, another direction from D & R Manufacturing is the Twin Towers Ski Area. It's a wonderfully beautiful scenic spot in The Bad Hills near my home of Herschel, near Stranraer, where they put . . . last year they went out on their own and they put in snow-making equipment and they are now one of the top ski areas in Saskatchewan.

Between the quality of the snow and the quality of the management and the quality of the hill and the quality of the seniors, and beyond that the quality of the people in the area who are there to serve the people who visit in the best sense of good tourism, that ski hill is off to a wonderful success this year as well.

And not very far north of me is the community of Biggar where they have their Biggar Malt plant and a number of associated developments, and there's an exciting announcement happening there this week. And to the south of me, near the Saskatchewan River, we have the new development of tourist facilities in Saskatchewan Landing Park.

I can say that it's an exciting exercise to be in the legislature representing the people of this area who know what it is to take a challenge and take it seriously and pursue it with vigour and with energy. They are symbolic of the people of Saskatchewan who've helped this great turnaround -- helped us achieve this great turnaround which is reflected in this budget speech.

There are other areas in which our area has been a leader. Before we got into health reform as a government, the Midwest Health District had begun to form. The seed of the idea of integrating health services was planted several years before we came to office. And the people in that area, the local district . . . the local hospital boards had gotten together to plan for a different kind of future because they realized there were advantages in integrated planning.

In the same area, the Prairie Centre Credit Union was formed. It began as the Rosetown Credit Union, integrated with Eston and then with Kyle and then with others, to recognize that there was a unique service needed by rural people from the credit union movement. And rather than being urbanized, this group said, we're going to form the strongest rural credit union in the world. And so the Prairie Centre Credit Union now stands as a monument to the vision and the efforts of people in that area.

(1500)

And for the future, there are equally visionary sort of activities going on. There's a group of people at Mildred who are looking at working with the Department of Health in seeing if there's not a better way to address eating disorders for the tragic eating

disorders that particularly young women fall prey to. So I say there is . . . a great deal of credit goes to the people of our area, not only for their efforts in changing the economy, but their efforts in changing the very nature of the service that's delivered and improving the quality of rural life in that area.

A fact which has become obvious in the '90s is that jobs and a healthy economy depend on a healthy environment. Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure, therefore, that I can say that it was a banner year this year not only for the economy, but for the environment as well. Not only governments, but encouragingly industry, business, stakeholders, and individuals alike realize and have begun to act on the realization that we cannot separate the environment from the economy or from our community or from our spiritual well-being.

Hazardous waste producers, such as Queen City Cleaners here in Regina, are voluntarily using environmentally friendly products and methods. Mr. Lube has a free used-oil collection program for people who change their own oil. Many Saskatchewan communities have hazardous household collection days, when common chemicals such as solvents, cleaners, and paints can be dropped off and properly disposed of or reused.

On the way in this morning, I stopped at the Rosetown Co-op to tank up my car, and proudly one of the members of the board and the manager of the co-op were there, and they showed me their newly renovated chemical storage facility. They are responding to the changed needs of a changed age. Businesses and consumers alike know that good practice and good management is better than the difficulties associated with clean-ups and the risks to health and safety of careless management.

Recovery and recycling businesses inject millions of dollars into the provincial economy, provide hundreds of jobs and greatly extend the life of landfills by removing thousands of tonnes of materials from the waste stream each year.

Businesses such as Ecol Laser products in Saskatoon, and Uptime laser products in Regina remanufacture used laser printer cartridges. SaskTel, in partnership with SARCAN recycling, operates a telephone directory recycling program. Our largest recycler, Interprovincial steel mill, on an annual basis uses approximately 135,000 tonnes of recyclable steel from within the province.

My department is finding that more and more developers are considering the impact of their actions on the environment. They are coming to SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), looking for help in identifying environmentally friendly and sustainable options, rather than as an afterthought or because people in my department require environmental impact statements.

These are just a few examples of the fast-growing awareness and positive actions that people of Saskatchewan have taken to protect the environment and the resources of our wonderful province. The opportunities environmental businesses offer will continue to expand and diversify our economy and continue to be a basis for new jobs for the future.

One of the early steps we took as a government was positioning ourselves to fulfil our sustainable development objective by restructuring our efforts through a new Department of Environment and Resource Management with a new focus. Many initiatives and opportunities flow to Saskatchewan people from our natural resources. Eco-tourism is expected to be one of the major growth areas in the tourism industry. We are well positioned to take advantage of this opportunity. Saskatchewan has some of the greatest unspoiled areas in the world, from the prairie regions of the South to the forests of the North and everywhere in between.

Yesterday I had the privilege of sitting in on a presentation in our little school in Herschel, Saskatchewan, by George Tosh. George is a true Saskatchewan citizen; farmed in the Harris area all of his professional life, took time to enjoy nature, to take pictures, to appreciate the creation which we are privileged to be a part of.

Last night he showed a presentation to about 70 people in that school, which took away the breath of most of those of us who had the privilege of being there. He demonstrated the beauty of the simple . . . the simple beauty of the prairie landscape, of the hills and the bad hills and the bare hills area in which we live and which my farm is located. He demonstrated the beauty of the changing seasons, taking pictures in identical spots at different seasons, and helped us all appreciate that much of the world's finest nature is right under our eyes, if we will only open our eyes. I can tell you that this is an example of the kind of thing that the world has not enough of and that opens the door for eco-tourism activities there and in every other corner of our province.

As a province we are also well-positioned to fulfil our mandate of environmental protection and sustainable resource development because of the contributions of the public, because of the partnerships we have formed in the province, and because we have harmonized our activities with other governments.

One of the best examples of this cooperative planning is the regionalized approach to handling waste. In cooperation with 16 municipalities from the Humboldt-Watson area, we have begun to develop a regional waste management strategy. Together we are deciding how best to manage our waste. As well, the western provinces and two territories are negotiating a hazardous protocol agreement to seek cost effective, sensible solutions in hazardous waste or waste management.

Today I introduced for first reading a Bill to amend The Environmental Management and Protection Act legislation to establish a province-wide collection system for used oil, containers, and filters. This program will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure that industry stewardship and support and to recognize and give opportunity to the industries who have encouraged us to carry this program forward.

The new used-oil management program will provide for the collection of up to 37 million litres of used oil — a valuable,

non-renewable resource that is currently being lost. It will create direct employment in the collection system. It will encourage the development of recycling and . . . (inaudible) . . . businesses new to Saskatchewan, and most importantly, it will reduce the risk that this hazardous substance currently poses in our environment through improper disposal.

I want to pay tribute to all of those who laboured cooperatively in bringing forward this stewardship model which is the way of the future. Virtually every Saskatchewan interest was represented at the last meeting when they encouraged me to implement their proposal, including representatives from the consumers' association and the environmental community.

Ministers of Environment across Canada are working to eliminate duplication and overlap in environmental legislation and regulations by negotiating a new agreement on an environmental management framework agreement. This initiative is an important component of the Canada-Saskatchewan Efficiency of the Federation Agreement which was agreed to by our first ministers only a few months ago.

The goal is to ensure a consistently high level of environmental protection across the country while at the same time minimizing the cost burden on consumers, industry, business, and municipalities for regulatory compliance.

Saskatchewan businesses and communities will benefit from a more streamlined and predictable environmental management and regulatory regime. We will be consulting on the new agreement before it is finalized later this year.

Mr. Speaker, this government embarked on a new road of fiscal responsibility when it came to office. We also embarked on a new road for public involvement and cooperation in the development of our policies, regulations, and management strategies. Historically governments, industry, and the public have viewed the environment as a source of raw materials and as a receptacle for waste products. We treated the environment as a free economic commodity. As a result, past policies and programs often did not recognize the linkages between economic activities, environmental conditions, and quality of life considerations.

In the past, governments addressed environmental problems sectorally without understanding the interrelationship between sectors. Our efforts concentrated on measuring and restricting pollutants, which only succeeded in minimizing certain specific undesirable effects, not considering the health of the whole ecosystem.

This old approach, however, is reactive and unilateral. It fails to anticipate and prevent environmental damage or to recognize the connection between environmental resource protection, a healthy economy, and quality of life.

It also fails to develop consensus among stakeholders. Clearly we needed new, proactive, flexible, and innovative approaches for managing the environment and its resources, as we did for managing the fiscal problems that the province had inherited from the previous administration.

Saskatchewan is well positioned to meet these challenges. We have created a new organization whose guiding principle is sustainable development. Its mandate is sustainable development. It isn't a narrow focus on a particular element of the ecosystem; it's an integration of all elements, including human activity. It views the ecosystem as one all-important, inseparable whole.

We are reinventing the role for government and developing new ways of doing business — public involvement, integrated approaches to planning and decision making, and partnerships. Our focus is on public involvement, client service, ecosystem management, consensus decision making, sound planning, and sensible regulation. This integrated approach recognizes that it is not possible to have a healthy economy or society in the long term without a healthy environment achieved by common understanding, common belief, and common action.

The government believes that long-term cooperative planning is required to truly effect change. In 1992 the Round Table on Environment and the Economy completed its *Conservation Strategy for Sustainable Development in Saskatchewan*. Building on this excellent strategy, we have developed an environmental agenda for the province, Saskatchewan's environmental agenda, securing a sustainable future.

This strategy incorporates the round table's recommendations and identifies how they fit not only with each other, but also with the other major policy initiatives of our government, including the ag strategy, our health strategy, and our economic development strategy.

The environmental agenda is a comprehensive strategy for coordinating and directing the government's initiatives in environmental protection and resource management.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is blessed with a clean environment and rich natural resources. Our government is taking the leadership role in ensuring that we pass this blessing on to future generations. A sustainable lifestyle founded on the principles of sustainable development.

In the coming year, Saskatchewan will continue this leadership role. Fishing in Saskatchewan is a small but important industry. The commercial fishery provides employment and jobs, recreational fishing is a major contributor to Saskatchewan parks and tourism activity, and the fledgling fish farming industry has great potential for future investment, as I was so proud to note about the development in my own area earlier in this speech.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is on the leading edge of provincial efforts to establish authority for the management of our own important fisheries resources. Saskatchewan Fisheries Act passed in 1994 represents the first comprehensive provincial fisheries legislation in Canada. Our new fisheries Act, developed through widespread stakeholder consultations, will come into effect this year as regulations are adopted by cabinet and existing federal fisheries regulations are withdrawn or amended.

Direct provincial regulation of our fisheries will make our future fisheries management more responsive to the needs of Saskatchewan people.

A significant contributor to Saskatchewan's economic health is our forest industry. It is a major initiative which in the South often goes unnoticed. Our forests are extremely important to all Saskatchewan people, and therefore in this session of the legislature, we are proposing a new forest resource management Act, and beginning the implementation of the integrated forest resource management plan.

Our current forest legislation is almost 30 years old and it reflects the thinking of that time so long ago. We have come to realize that our economy and lifestyle must be in balance with the natural resources sustaining life. The challenge is to apply the principle of sustainable development to the management of Saskatchewan's forest resource.

During the past three years, the government has held extensive public meetings and workshops to ask the people of Saskatchewan how their forests could be better managed; and out of this process, a common vision has emerged.

Our forests will be maintained in a healthy state and the natural variety of life will be conserved. We will balance the need for protection with the opportunities for use, and resources will be harvested no faster than they can be renewed. Such use will contribute to the prosperity of Saskatchewan residents into perpetuity. An informed public will take an active role in planning. A spirit of cooperation and creativity will prevail as we seek to find solutions to our common problems.

This vision represents a fundamental shift in how we view the forest and make decisions about its use. Forests must be viewed and understood as ecosystems performing a variety of interrelated functions. These functions can only be sustained by protecting ecosystem integrity and quality. The process for making land use decisions must be shared with all parties that have a stake in the outcome.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Forestry Association has recognized Meadow Lake as the National Forestry Capital of Canada for 1995.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — This award reflects our progress as a province towards the objectives we've stated and it will help to improve the awareness of the importance of this resource throughout the province.

Over half of Saskatchewan, about 35.5 million hectares, is forested — not much around Morse unfortunately. The management of about 97 per cent of this land is a provincial responsibility, with federal and private lands making up the rest.

Mr. Speaker, our forests contribute to our quality of life in many ways. They provide habitat for wildlife. They help to

regulate water cycling, affecting local climate. Forests take up carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, helping to mitigate the greenhouse effect that we've become so concerned about in the last number of years, and they help to prevent soil erosion.

In addition forests provide us with social and cultural benefits, whether the special spiritual relationship maintained by aboriginal peoples or simply a quiet place to think and reflect.

Forests are critical to Saskatchewan's economy. Approximately 8,000 jobs depend on the forestry industry, which contributes \$635 million to the provincial economy annually.

Other forest-based activities such as recreation, fishing, trapping, hunting, private wood lots, valued added industry, and related equipment manufacturing also provide additional social and economic benefits. This year we'll see a number of exciting new forest product developments in Saskatchewan. These new industries will provide hundreds of new jobs within the framework of sustainable forest management.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to the sustainable management of our forest resources. This means that we will balance the use of forests for various economic, social, and cultural purposes with the need to protect the long-term health of forest ecosystems. This commitment is reflected in eight strategic directions for forest management.

The first and overriding one is stewardship. Stewardship is the care and safeguarding of our forest resources. Our forests will be managed in such a way as to maintain over time the natural quality of the physical environment: air, soil, and water, and the natural variety of living species and — needless to say — the beauty associated with this wonderful resource. A systematic approach will be used to identify forest areas requiring protection for various conservation purposes: recreation, cultural heritage, rare or endangered species, and biodiversity.

A second principle is sustainability. Timber harvesting will be carried out using techniques sensitive to the long-term sustainability of the forests. Reforestation will continue to be a priority. Harvesting methods, ranging from selective to clear-cutting. Where clear-cutting is practised, the size and shape of harvesting areas will be compatible with renewal requirements and ecosystem requirements.

Other uses of forest resources will also be guided by the principle of sustainability. Forest resources will be shared amongst all users. We've often seen the forests as trees. As the common adage goes, you can't see the forest for the trees. The fact is that the forest is a whole ecosystem and there are multiple living systems within it.

Economic growth and diversification will be encouraged in relation to available resources and local support, but not to the exclusion or elimination of the other benefits growing from the forest. User fees will be set to reflect the value of the resources, the benefits received by resource users, and the cost of managing and administering the resources.

Another principle is environmental protection. Forest use and related activities — harvesting, transporting, manufacturing — will be carried out in ways that maintain environmentally acceptable standards for air, land, and water quality. Through the environmental impact assessment process, environmental implications of proposed forest developments will be considered fully before approvals are given. Regulations will ensure that environmentally acceptable standards are met.

Another principle is public involvement. As I've already said, we have reinvented government with respect to the principle that the public needs to participate in all decisions of government.

The public has the right to participate in forest management. We have a need as a government that the public participates in forest management. The benefits of an effective public involvement process are many. Input from all interested parties means better decisions, with consideration of the whole resource before decisions are made. Conflicts can be resolved at the initial stages before decisions are made, and individuals will be more willing to support management activities and to help in their implementation when they have been part of designing them.

Consistent, quality public involvement opportunities will be provided for all Saskatchewan residents, including forest dependent communities, stakeholders, and of course our aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal participation — the participation of aboriginal peoples and jurisdictions are very important to the work we do. Aboriginal peoples have cultural ties to the land. We will respect these ties, consulting the people affected as forest management activities are planned and implemented.

Co-management with northern people has been a guiding tenet of our government. We will continue to encourage active co-planning and joint involvement of aboriginal peoples and other northern peoples in our forest resource industry, promoting economic opportunities which are in harmony with their traditions and beliefs. Work with aboriginal groups will continue in many areas, including forest fire management, technical and management training, and business development.

Another principle is the sustainable management on private lands. There are 400,000 hectares of privately owned forest lands in Saskatchewan, the majority in the agricultural fringe area. We will encourage sustainable management of natural resources on private lands. Private landowner agreements and landowner assistance programs are two ways to accomplish this.

Another principle is the improved decision making and information management. The ongoing development and refinement of scientific knowledge, expertise, and management tools are fundamental to achieving our goal of wise forest management. We will continue to explore many new ideas and techniques, including integrated planning, ecosystem management, inventory and forestry monitoring, forestry research, and public education.

Mr. Speaker, delivery of the forest resource management plan is a long-term process. However many actions can and are now being implemented to improve our forest resources management. Our challenge is to apply the principle of sustainable development to the management of Saskatchewan's forests, to explore the many opportunities our forests offer us, while respecting the whole ecosystem.

The proposed new forest resource management Act will provide the legislative framework to help us meet this challenge. New forest management licence agreements, the major tool used to allocate forest resources, will be negotiated based upon these new policy objectives. A new policy planning framework is being developed which will incorporate resource management and land administration activity with forest management licence agreement planning.

A protected area system plan is being completed that will identify areas within the forest to be set aside for conservation purposes. A forest renewal strategy is being developed to ensure that adequate forest regeneration is occurring.

Mr. Speaker, for the past two years Saskatchewan has been developing an ecological land classification system. I am proud to have released to the public our new eco-regions map. Representatives of other agencies — Environment Canada, Agriculture, Agri-Food Canada — were involved with us in the development of a new, national, ecological land classification system.

Ecological land classification is a means of identifying and classifying ecologically distinctive areas of the earth's surface. As you, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure know, several years ago in Rio we agreed on a biodiversity strategy which suggested we should set aside 12 per cent of the earth's surface in representative form to make sure that the living systems which have been a part of our being continue to be there for the future.

This land classification system is the first step in setting aside the areas in Saskatchewan which are important to ecosystem maintenance. This type of classification can have numerous applications and is well suited to structure information with regard to components of the environment. This work in Saskatchewan not only contributed to making a stronger national program, but also ensured that the provincial system is compatible with the national system.

As well as the above agencies, other Saskatchewan agencies and departments — the University of Saskatchewan and Regina and the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre — participated in this work.

The ecological land classification project is now complete and a standing testimony to the results of good cooperative planning, where all resources are pulled together to make for Saskatchewan a better program and to make for Saskatchewan a provincial poster map outlining Saskatchewan's eco-regions. Initiatives are continuing to build on the progress achieved by this successful joint venture. The Saskatchewan land classification system will provide an invaluable tool for

systematic state of the environment reporting, developing an ecological planning framework, and for long-term ecological monitoring.

As previously noted, an ecosystems approach needs to be used for true sustainable management of our forest and other resources. The eco-regions of Saskatchewan will provide the basis for this approach.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that Environment and Resource Management has, since its inception two years ago, accepted the challenges of integrating its dual responsibilities of resource management with environmental protection. I am proud as a member of a new government with this important new initiative.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as a province we have once again entered a time of hope and opportunity — the hope and opportunity indicated in the Speech from the Throne. This is true of our financial picture and our economic outlook, and this is true of our environmental future as we enter this session.

I thank you for your work and your attention, and wish Saskatchewan people all the best as they continue to work with us in achieving the hope that we all have for a successful Saskatchewan economy. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise in the Assembly and speak in the throne speech debate. This is the first opportunity I've had to rise to my feet this session.

Some things never change, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe this is the fourth time we've had a throne speech delivered by this New Democratic Party government over here and it's always the same old story: a lot of wishful thinking and then when one looks at the facts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're never quite up to the mark. And we haven't been disappointed this year.

In fact, when one thinks back to 1991 and some of the promises made by the now Premier, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, we're reminded of a whole lot of promises that were made for this province — promises that I don't think have been kept, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and promises that purposely weren't kept because it would have interfered with the political agenda of that particular political party.

We've had this government come forward and tell the public that everything's going to be fine because we have achieved a balanced budget in the province of Saskatchewan. And that is all well and good, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But one has to ask yourself: at what cost did we achieve the balanced budget in the province of Saskatchewan, and could we have balanced that budget in a way that would've made this province continue to grow and prosper, instead of falling behind nearly everyone else in Canada?

And I hearken back to those words of the now Premier in 1991 where he stood on platform after platform in this province and

was on the media all the time, talking about how if he were only Premier, this province could be run on \$4.5 billion. But that was enough. The government simply didn't need any more money than \$4.5 billion. They would simply open up the books, they would change some accountability things, and the rest would all fall into place.

And this was all at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as other members of that particular political party which he led, were running around telling people that we had to make this province ungovernable so that we could have the New Democrats elected, and then everything would be fine.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that figure of 4.5 billion on a yearly basis, has never, never been approached by this government. In fact today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see that figure well over \$5 billion. We see three and a half billion more on the provincial debt than when this particular government came to office.

(1530)

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in tandem with that, we've seen something else which really causes concern today for families in this province. We see young people continuing to leave the province at an alarming rate — the brightest, the best educated — but we see the number of people who require government assistance continuing to grow. We see over 30,000 more Saskatchewan citizens today on social assistance than we saw when the member from Riversdale was sworn into office.

And on top of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see, if you take the government at the best figures that they can possibly wring out of the statistics, we still see over a thousand people less employed today than we saw in a corresponding time in 1991.

So when you consider all of the promises made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of the promises made, all the accusations that were made, all of the proposed clean-up changes that would occur, when you stack that up against reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that we have a throne speech delivered this year, in 1995, which is a throne speech of duplicity.

Because we are going into the fourth year of this government. We are coming to a time — and we'll soon see if the Premier keeps his promise of elections every four years or if he gets the urge to go a little quicker because he can feel it slipping — this is the time when you should measure the promises made four years ago and stack it up against the reality of today. And there's a lot of people around this province doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A lot of them are looking at the reality of today against the promises made by this government four years ago.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have thought this party and this government would have had the courage of their convictions to make that comparison themselves, but they haven't done that. They simply deliver a throne speech that once again is full of innocuous presentations. They talk about balanced budgets over the four years of a term. They talk about new job strategies. They talk about, the Premier talks about, 30,000 new jobs by the year 2000.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's fairly safe stuff — just like, I believe, back in 1991 when he was running around this province making those promises that he made. He felt it was pretty safe stuff because he didn't intend on living up to any one of them at any near date in the future.

You know I sat in the Assembly last week when that speech was delivered, and I had to see the smiles on the faces of everybody when the Meadow Lake pulp mill came up and about Meadow Lake being the forestry capital of Canada in the coming year. And I think that's just tremendous for Meadow Lake, but for this Premier and this government to claim any sort of credit as to why that's occurred is laughable. And I saw the smiles and the nods on people all over this Assembly when that one came by, because everyone knows and understands who had the courage to ask Millar Western to come and be part of the forestry industry in this province.

And now the results are that Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, is going to be the forestry capital of Canada for this year. And that I think is a positive thing. But for these people to put this in their throne speech and take up a bunch of space and time and claim it for their own is unmitigated gall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unmitigated gall. And I looked over at the government benches, and they were even sort of hanging their heads and grinning when this thing was put in there because they knew that there wasn't one sane person in this province would believe a word of what they said.

You know I expect next year, if these people haven't called an election by then or if we've gone through one . . . will be claiming that the fertilizer plant down the highway here will make Belle Plaine, Saskatchewan, the fertilizer capital of North America. And it very well might because I'm told it is the best, most efficient, most productive nitrogen fertilizer plant in North America. And they'll be claiming that somehow this was all their idea and that we're now the fertilizer capital.

The fertilizer that goes with those kind of remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has another name attached to it and it's one that we're not allowed to use in this Assembly. But it's the kind of fertilizer that this government has been throwing out for a long time. Because when you look at their record of what they've actually created, I can see why they would like to glom onto someone else's ideas in order to have something.

I was looking in the paper here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the *Leader-Post* and there was an article in there, I believe, by Dale Eisler talking to some businessmen in the city of Swift Current. And he's very emphatic about what this government has created. And I think that's the rub. I would just quote the headline here, Mr. Deputy Speaker; it says: "PST hurting merchants."

Well what's going on in Swift Current and what's going on all over this province is the fact that because of taxation, because of the use of the Crown corporations to gouge, we see business and people fleeing to the province of Alberta in unprecedented numbers. And when this individual that's quoted in the paper went to see his MLA, he found a locked door and he found no

explanation of why this was occurring to his business and why this was occurring to his community.

And I would have thought the government, if they were at all serious about correcting some of those problems, would have said in the throne speech, as we're going into this election year, we have some definitive answers for the individual quoted in the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Kushner, and we have some definitive answers for the 80-some thousand on social assistance, and we have some definitive answers for Saskatchewan people about why we would project for the third year in a row to create a whole bunch of jobs that they probably won't make.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier, the now Premier, had been kept at his word, you would have seen a different approach. If he had indeed run the Government of Saskatchewan on \$4.5 billion, he would have done what the Premier of Alberta next door is actually doing. In other words, he would have cut the spending of the Government of Saskatchewan by 10 to 15 per cent.

And the Premier evidently when he's in private with the Premier of Alberta likes to brag about the fact that he's not really a New Democrat, that he's something else, and that he likes what he sees in jurisdictions that are keeping government spending under wraps rather than taxing — taxing us to death.

So it's the same old story as we saw in '91, Mr. Speaker. It's say one thing and do another. Say one thing and do another, depending on the audience that we've got, and the results are very obvious. You know it's just unconscionable, Mr. Speaker, that you would take Crown corporations like SaskEnergy, and SaskTel, SaskPower, and you would just absolutely milk the Saskatchewan public for everything that those Crowns could possibly get away with, and then say that — look at the great job we've done. Folks, we've balanced the budget. We've balanced the budget, we've driven people out of the province, we've got all sorts on welfare, we have taxation like we've never had taxation, and then we wonder why this province is going nowhere fast.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that poll that was done on television by the Reform Party identifying taxation and the effects that it has on the economy, I believe was right on. I do believe that it is now the single largest issue facing Canadians and how we govern ourselves.

And if this throne speech is the blueprint for how we address the question of taxation and cutting the size of government, of having government live within the means that we as taxpayers provide to it, then this throne speech is as dismal a failure as the promises made by the member from Riversdale back in 1991.

Because nowhere, nowhere in this document do we see that question of taxation addressed. We have highfalutin sentences in here talking about how well agriculture is doing. Well, Mr. Speaker, as if any one of them — and I don't believe any of them do — have the courage to stand up and tell me how net farm income was influenced one iota by the New Democratic Party government of this province. If anything, these people probably kept net farm income from rising even faster because

of the way that farmers in this province were discriminated against compared to Alberta and Manitoba.

But we see it in the throne speech. And there isn't a darn thing that this government has got to do with it. The same with the oil and gas industry — not a thing that they've got to do with it. The same royalty structure is basically in place as they have been for the last 12 years, 13 years. And those people are out there drilling holes and they are producing lots of royalties in natural gas, oil being found in record quantities.

But, Mr. Speaker, the primary question that Saskatchewan people ask about taxation and how that taxation question is going to be addressed is not answered by how well the oil industry or agriculture is doing all on their own because this government has nothing to do with that, Mr. Speaker.

They talk about educational programs as they have done for the last three years. And I guess if they were working, the welfare numbers would be coming down and the job numbers would have been better than they were four years ago.

But that isn't the case. That isn't the case. What we have is strategies, consultation, and nothing concrete, Mr. Speaker, for the businessman in Swift Current or Kindersley or Lloydminster or anywhere else who has to compete with outside forces to hang his hat on — to hang his hat on.

And I guess we can only hope, Mr. Speaker, is that when the budget rolls around, when the budget rolls around, that there will be something concrete in there. There will be. That we simply will not be subjected to more of the same, Mr. Speaker, and that this government will get on with the primary duty the government should have in the 1990s, and that is cutting itself. The government has to look at delivering goods and services at a lower cost to the taxpayer, and that means government must cut back on its size, it must cut back on its expenditure, because that is the only way that the question of taxation will be addressed.

And maybe in that budget, Mr. Speaker, the government will find the courage to do things which taxpayers have been demanding for a long time. For instance, on the Crown side, that the legislation introduced in this House the last two years by the official opposition to put a committee of this House in charge of utility rate increases before they happen so that the people of this province can be assured that it isn't back-door taxation will be adopted.

And you know that would be an easy budget measure to take, Mr. Speaker, because there would be no cost to the taxpayer, because you already pay the members of this Legislative Assembly.

But those issues, Mr. Speaker, should be delved into and debated in this House. We can't have the Minister of Energy running out and hitting us with a 9.5 per cent tax increase before Christmas and the next minister responsible coming in and chopping it back to 6.5 and not telling us, Mr. Speaker, as home-owners and taxpayers, why the difference between 9.5 and 6.5, what the justification was for the increase in the first place, and what the justification was for the decrease in the

second place, and what is the actual cost to SaskEnergy, of natural gas.

(1545)

And unlike the former minister from The Battlefords, who claims that we're all too stupid to rationalize out the process, Mr. Speaker, I think if members of this Assembly were given the opportunity, they would understand it quite easily because the purchases of natural gas are long-term contracts, mid-term contracts, short-term, and spot. And you know what? There's a transmission cost that goes along with it, Mr. Speaker, to put it through the pipeline. And I think most members of this House would catch on to that process fairly quickly.

And it would be fairly easy to determine, Mr. Speaker, if an increase was warranted because there was capital expenditures to be made by SaskEnergy or there were problems that they saw arising in gas markets that they needed to step forward and rectify by adjusting the amount of long-term versus short-term that they might buy over the next 12-month period.

And you know something, Mr. Speaker? The Provincial Auditor thinks that we're smart enough to talk about that. He said in the last couple of years, he thinks that members of the Legislative Assembly are smart enough to sort of gauge those questions and decide whether there should be those types of rate increases. Because, Mr. Speaker, right now they aren't rate increases, they're taxation, because we don't know.

And I would think, Mr. Speaker, in this upcoming budget they would like to look at a number of the reform initiatives put forward in this House last year, put forward again by the member from Kindersley, the Leader of the Opposition, because they would be cheap, they would be doable, and they would bring to this House the type of fiscal accountability, Mr. Speaker, that would allow the Premier of this province to finally live up to his promise of 1991 — for the Government of Saskatchewan to live within a budget of \$4.5 billion.

And I think that should be the role of all MLAs here, regardless of party, to represent their constituents and to help the member from Riversdale keep his promise of 1991 — that the Government of Saskatchewan should be able to live within a budget of \$4.5 billion.

And I can say to the government members that we would do everything possible to cooperate, and have done, by bringing in an entire legislative package. Not simply standing and criticizing, but bringing in an entire legislative package to help the Premier keep his promise. And I'm amazed at the reluctance and the resistance that we get from government members to help their Premier keep his promises to Saskatchewan people.

Evidently the only message I can gather from it, Mr. Speaker, is they believe a promise made is not a promise that should be kept because in the interests of their political hides they would rather tax the people, put them on welfare, drive them out of the province, and simply ignore the fact that in other jurisdictions in this country that the same balanced budgets are being

achieved without the rack and ruin displayed by this government, Mr. Speaker.

So when I say that this is a throne speech of duplicity, I think it is very easy for us to understand that it is one of duplicity, and it is one of a lack courage. Because I look next door and I see the Government of Alberta creating in one year as many jobs as this Premier says will be created in this province by the year 2000 — in one year. Because they had the courage to take on the issue of taxation and take on the issue of the size of government, they have created 30,000 jobs in that province through the private sector, and this Premier says we might create 30,000 jobs by the year 2000.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the contrast is there for everyone to see. And if the Premier in private can tell the Premier of Alberta that he admires what he's doing and he's not a New Democrat anyway, why don't we just get on doing what everyone in this province would like to see him do, and that is live up to those commitments made in 1991 in October, live within that figure of 4.5 billion, and get on with creating the wealth and the jobs in this province that we know can be created if the government of this province will simply get off the taxpayers' back.

Mr. Speaker, we'll have to give them until budget day to see if there's any more beef in the bun than we've seen so far. I doubt it. But so far, Mr. Speaker, this throne speech is empty and hollow. It's up to the government to keep the Premier's promises of 1991.

Ms. Stanger: — Oh thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to take part in this throne speech debate although I admit so far the debate has been slightly one-sided. But then the member from Saltcoats and Bengough-Milestone have a lot of statistics to work with and after all we have the good news of what our government has been able to accomplish. I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I'm proud to be part of this government because we've worked as a team, guided by our principles and values to accomplish what we have.

We've had the courage in the face of adversity to stand together and work for the people of Saskatchewan, and that's what they expect when they elect us. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see you in your place again, just as I'm sure you're happy to see me.

You will understand that I am an enthusiastic supporter of the government and its achievements and sometimes I get a bit carried away, but I will try to curb my enthusiasm without changing my character -- a tough act, but I'll try. I also want to congratulate a couple of my colleagues.

First, to the new Leader of the Opposition, I offer my congratulations. You have taken on a tough job, not an impossible one. As we know in this business, anything is possible. That's why the member from Rosthern has a secret stash of leadership pamphlets under his desk. But assuming the leadership of the Tory party at this time is a bit like a description of a character I read in a mystery novel: "He was hanging on to the edge of the planet with suction cups." But I do wish the Leader of the Opposition good luck.

I want to join practically all the MLAs in wishing the best to the members from Regina Hillsdale and Swift Current. We have all admired the skill and professionalism and humanity with which they both manage their portfolios and we're going to miss you greatly.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Morse, I was proud to hear pay tribute to these two retiring ministers by praising their efforts while stating, of course, he often disagreed with them. That statement was decent, measured and fair, what we should expect from all members when one of us steps down.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting though, that in his first question period the Leader of the Opposition from Kindersley returned to the song of Tory leaders of long ago. I wish they'd get on a different tune. Do it like in Alberta, he said. Imitate the Klein government, he urged us. Balance the books the way Klein is supposedly doing it, he cried. In a phrase, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, no thank you.

There are a couple of points to make about the suggestion. First, let's remind ourselves of the opposition leader's wants, what he wants for this province. If he is asking us to go along with what Mr. Klein is doing, let me tell you that my constituency borders on the Alberta side, and I know what I'm talking about.

First, for our young parents with children just starting, he wants to savagely cut the school system, with all control taken away from local boards and placed in the hands of government. Not only that, it's a school system that is quickly deteriorating into a two-tiered school system — something what we do not want in Saskatchewan. He wants a pay-as-you-go kindergarten system. You can't pay; your kid doesn't get the start every child in Canada deserves.

And health care, the member from Kindersley wants, number one, a system where job after job is lost. Over 5,000 jobs were lost in the first year of Klein care alone. Here's the one no Tory ever mentions. The opposition leader wants Saskatchewan people to pay \$864 a year per family for health care premiums. And that's a 20 per cent increase over last year's premium. What compassion. He wants — like Klein has suggested — income tax on health services. Finally and despicably, he wants a two-tiered health system — private clinics for the rich, a flea market medicine for the rest of the people in Alberta.

We can go on, Mr. Speaker. I could compare auto insurance rates and so on. In fact, when the Leader of the Third Party and the Leader of the Opposition speak about increased taxes, they don't speak about the whole bill and how much it costs to live in each of the provinces. Let's take a comparison of how much it costs to live, if you're earning \$45,000, in Saskatchewan versus Alberta versus B.C. versus Ontario versus New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. We fare very, very, very well in Saskatchewan. It's all right to take one statistic, camp on it, and turn it around to your advantage. Ask people who have lived in Alberta and B.C. and Manitoba. We fare very favourably. Yes, our income tax is high, but other things we do not have. We don't have a health premium. Our auto insurance is the lowest in Canada. These are the kind of things that you have to

compare. You just don't take one part of something. You take the whole package because that's what it costs a person to live.

I think I've made my points. We could operate like the government in Alberta acts, if we were only interested in the bottom line.

What we are interested in besides the bottom line is having a society that cares, that works together, and through cooperatively, builds a society so every citizen in it has equal opportunity.

The measure of a society is only as . . . when you measure a society, you must measure from the lowest part of your society to the highest. I mean it's okay to say 5 per cent of them are earning such and such. What about taking the lowest part of the society where you live?

In Saskatchewan we decided from the beginning that we would restore financial integrity without sacrificing our sense of human decency and our responsibility to the less fortunate in our society. In fact our Minister of Social Services over there is the only minister in Canada who has increased his budget every year, and I'm proud of that.

Klein's way is not our way. Saskatchewan is a . . . I mean Alberta is a lovely province with many advantages and fine people, nice mountains too, but the member from Kindersley should not be too hasty in supporting the Klein revolution. He should check with some of those people with one-way tickets out of Alberta about how rosy it really is under the government that he admires so much.

We can agree to disagree on how best to conduct the affairs of the province, but the Leader of the Opposition's love of Klein reminds us somewhat of what has motivated the Tory and Liberal parties here and elsewhere.

The motivation is the desire to divide people and turn person against person, class against class, province against province, pit city against country, farmer against worker, professional against service worker, north against south, any group against any other group. And I have to say this week I have seen some incredible racism cropping up.

And if the Klein government is not creating a two-tiered system with its so-called reforms, please tell me what it's creating. And we will watch closely the Liberals in Ottawa and see how their so-called reforms shape up.

As I said, we will not bring this attitude to Saskatchewan. As I said when I was honoured to move the throne speech of two years ago, we believe in inclusion, not exclusion. I'm going to repeat that again because the hon. member from Maple Creek didn't hear that. We believe in inclusion, and not exclusion. There is a place for all at our banquet table. Some members want to sell box lunches to those with the one-way tickets. I don't agree on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Bengough and the member from Saltcoats talked very forcibly about the good economic news from our province, and we all saw the incredible knots the member from Regina North West tied herself into while trying to dispute those numbers, though it really wasn't her fault. I feel sorry for her but that's what happens when you read from a script. Go from your feelings rather than from a script.

We also saw the Leader of the Third Party decry the supposed loss of jobs in Saskatchewan and then we saw her for the first time in her life, go absolutely silent when the real numbers came out.

Well I hate to disappoint the opposition by bringing more good news, but as I've been saying in my newspaper ads, isn't it about time we heard some good news in Saskatchewan?

But here are some numbers, plain and unadorned, Mr. Speaker. First, just today, StatsCanada released its latest updated job figures for the country. Here they are — I should say last week. Fact: 12,000 more people are working this January than last January — 450,000 as opposed to three, four thousand and thirty eight thousand . . . 438,000. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

(1600)

Fact: there are 9,000 fewer unemployed people in Saskatchewan than a year ago.

Fact: January was the third straight month of strong job growth over last year.

Fact: Saskatchewan still has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. And here we are, just got this from my colleague: Regina, 6.8 per cent; Calgary, 8.1; Edmonton 9.1. And I can tell you I visited some friends in Edmonton over the Christmas holiday and many of them are suffering a great deal because of the policies of the Klein government.

And, Mr. Speaker, the question that the opposition keeps asking, where are the children? Well I have an answer. They're working, and they're working in numbers unprecedented in Saskatchewan of course. According to them these couldn't be Saskatchewan youth because they've all left. That's what I heard the Leader of the Third Party say today. So she said. Must be someone else's kids, and I say welcome to Saskatchewan.

At any rate, more numbers, Mr. Speaker. Fact: last January there were 67,000 youth working in Saskatchewan; a youth is defined as someone between the ages of 16 and 24. This January there were 72,000, an increase of 5,000. I'm happy to announce that my children were able to come home this year from Ontario after being there for five years. They left during the Tory rule.

First, there are 3,000 fewer unemployed youth this January. Fact: average employment has increased every year of our government. Average employment.

Mr. Speaker, these are just numbers. Usually I don't like to speak using a great deal of numbers because it's boring. But the

fact remains, when the Leader of the Third Party and her colleagues use numbers we have to defend ourselves, and I've used these numbers.

But let me tell you, I'm not so much concerned about numbers as I'm concerned about the people behind the numbers. Behind each number is a person working, probably supporting or helping to support a family. Each number is a person receiving a wage in Saskatchewan and spending that wage in Saskatchewan, thereby pumping the economy and helping to create other jobs. Behind each number is a person adding to the social, cultural, business climate of Saskatchewan. The key behind each number is a human being contributing to the rich mosaic that makes up our province.

I say to the Leader of the Third Party, who imitated the crocodile so aptly the other day, tell these people these facts behind the numbers that they should be afraid. Tell them about the climate of fear you feel everywhere you go. Tell them that they are not contributing to the society.

I can commit to the people of Cut Knife-Lloydminster that we will be going after jobs with the same determination as we did go after balancing the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'm on a roll with numbers, and I want to mention just a few more, some that were quoted the other day by my colleague from Meadow Lake.

Much of the increased economic activity in our province comes from the gas and oil industry — an industry that I'm very proud of — and from this government's cooperation with the industry to ensure a fair return for all involved. Remember the old cry — my colleagues can attest to that — you elect . . . You know what they did last . . . the opposition parties did last election? They went around to all the oil workers and said, if you elect an NDP government they will leave this province in droves. There won't be . . . there won't be an oil company left working here. That's what they did during the campaign; scared young people that I had taught and were working out in the oil patch. And many of them still voted for me because they knew me as a person and as a teacher. Well now they're going to vote for me because oil activity has increased a great deal. And the reason is because of the way we structured our royalties on the horizontal drilling. I'm very proud of that.

The old cry of the old parties is that the NDP government drive out the oil people. Well let's see who's being driven out. Somebody is drilling on the run as they leave the province, Mr. Speaker, because the fact is the number of oil wells drilled in Saskatchewan increased in 1994 — 1,176 in '93, 1,294 in '94. Fact: same with gas wells — 1,000 last year, 969 the year before. Fact: producing wells for both oil and gas increased. Fact: production in both increased. Fact: the value of production increased astoundingly. In oil it increased by \$229 million, to an amazing \$1 billion of activity in this province — \$796,000. Fact: out of that, resource revenue increased by 180 million, to \$565 million.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but all this good news is a bit rich for a good old Saskatchewan person like me. After 10 years of Tory times and after listening to the fantasy land of gloom and doom the Liberal leader lives in, I don't want to decompress too quickly.

Let me just say to the people of Cut Knife-Lloydminster and to people in this province, that I make a commitment to work hard with my colleagues to continue to balance the budgets, to continue to put forward jobs as a major priority, and to contribute, to be an accountable, responsible government member and part of an accountable, responsible government.

I'm proud to be in this caucus. I want to say thank you to my colleagues who have spent hours working. We've all worked together. They've been just . . . During these three and a half years, I have to say that the people that I have worked with have just been tremendous, and I want to say thank you to them. And we're going to make the day where at least we're going to see the site of the New Jerusalem.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and hon. colleagues of the Legislative Assembly. I'm honoured to again have the privilege to rise in my place and participate in this throne speech debate.

Before I begin I want to join with other colleagues who have spoken before me to wish you, Mr. Speaker, the very best in your role during this session. From the early tests that you've already experienced it appears that your conviction to the fairness and management of decorum in this legislature hasn't been faded much by the sun of the golf course that you enjoyed last summer.

I am however a bit concerned, Mr. Speaker, about your recent admission that your ageing process is beginning to affect your vision when you acknowledged having difficulty in distinguishing gender as was the case of my desk partner from Biggar just a couple of days ago. I can appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that you might have some difficulty seeing this far because when my constituents ask me where I sit in the House, I tell them when I reach back, put my hand out behind me from the chair that I sit in, I can nearly touch the edge of my constituency. So for you to see almost to Yorkton from where you sit, Mr. Speaker, is quite understandable. And from time to time I think you might have some difficulty deciphering which gender you are really seeing.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I too want to take the opportunity to welcome the new pages to the session. I know that this will be a most exciting experience for them that they too will not forget. And I want to say to them that it's okay for you to spill the odd pitcher of water, because over the past 20 years I know that the member from Churchill Downs has tipped enough water glasses enroute to and from his chair that it would compare favourably to the level of water that was in the newly constructed Rafferty Dam.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay recognition to Miss Meta Woods whom first I had the pleasure of meeting and working on Public Accounts and accordingly welcome her to the session. I heard the member for Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, state in his speech, that fortunately or unfortunately, you, Meta, got to know several members through your association with him and them at conferences and committee work. Mr. Speaker, I think it would be fair to say that your judgements, Meta, should be not clouded by what you've observed through those experiences.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this occasion to congratulate my colleagues from Regina Lake Centre and the member from Athabasca in their recent appointment to cabinet, and to say to them that they will certainly have my support and that of my constituents as they make their way in their new portfolios.

And, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Swift Current, and Regina Hillsdale, I want to thank you for your contributions. The many accomplishments your government has achieved to date is part of your doing and may your future endeavours meet with the same success that you got at your ministries and the very best to both of you in your new futures.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member from Kindersley in his recent appointment, being chosen the Leader of the Opposition, in spite of our different political views and our philosophies. And I know the work of an MLA is very consuming and demands many sacrifices. To see leadership in public life . . . or to seek leadership in public life with a political party requires a commitment that most people are simply not prepared to make. Thus in extending my congratulations, I wish to him much success and longevity in the chair of the official opposition.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to note that the Leader of the Third Party has finally rearranged their chairs, from following the leader to ring around the rosy. And, Mr. Speaker, as I give thought to this Speech from the Throne and listen to other members of this Assembly speak, I note with interest references of this throne from the speech being and depicting a new day, a time for many firsts in Saskatchewan.

For example, this throne speech states that we will see in this session, for the first time in 12 years, a balanced budget and balanced budget legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, this is a major accomplishment by anyone's standards. And to establish legislation which fixes for the future travesties like the one the people of Saskatchewan have endured after 10 years of accumulated deficits, is an accomplishment that Saskatchewan people are demanding and, Mr. Speaker, are applauding.

In the recent speeches thus far from the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party, they scramble to find words which they can use to make the argument about the

fact that balanced budget legislation is coming simply because of their efforts.

Well in the case of the Tories, it is precisely because of their inept management that balanced budget legislation is necessary. They are responsible for the current debt in most part. So if by chance they were to form government in the next 50 years, this legislation would be helpful in protecting my children from their historic spending habits.

The Liberal leader and her caucus are busy stating, what's the big deal about balanced budget legislation? It's already been done in several other provinces across Canada.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when you listen to what she would do if she was in charge of the public purse, of course she would not be excited about balanced budget legislation. Because, when you do the math on what she's promised to do in Saskatchewan, there is no way that she could ever balance a budget in this province.

It is clear that we have a party and a leader . . . or they have a party and a leader that has no idea, no idea of how to manage a provincial treasury. We have emerging here the old cliché about the Liberal Party where they're like the NDPs when they're not in government, but they're like the Tories when they're in government.

At least the Leader of the Opposition and his members have finally seen the light of day and have drafted their own position on how balanced budget legislation might work in Saskatchewan. And I commend the Leader of the Opposition to bring forward his ideas and suggest ways to protect Saskatchewan people from the throes of wayward governments of the future — not so for the Liberal leader and her caucus, but not unusual that there again they are absent of thought on major pieces of legislation.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see this piece of legislation on our democratic reform timetable in this legislature and will be supporting it on the day of the vote.

As a fleeting thought, I recall the speech of the Leader of the Opposition and his comments as he expressed too his first experience of Saskatchewan becoming the leader . . . a process of one member, one vote. Pay your \$20. Dial PC (Progressive Conservative) leader, and you got the member from Kindersley. Well too this was the first to Sask Telecommunications. Our government is pleased to learn that our advanced technology in telecommunications can also play a part in promoting the democratic process. I know that our minister is now satisfied that our Saskatchewan telecommunication system can handle 3,000-member calls simultaneously.

What remains yet to be tested is the simmering rumour, Mr. Speaker, that our system may get the opportunity this year or early next year to handle maybe some 6,000 or so Liberal calls simultaneously wishing to select possibly a new leader. Out there in Saskatchewan land, long-standing Liberals who are

paying \$100 a plate to hear . . . from what I hear, Mr. Speaker, was just good food . . . are not impressed with the member from Greystone's lack of consistency and her flip-flop on many issues. They are not happy, Mr. Speaker. Just ask their communications staff. Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm not sure. Fair number.

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech highlights our government's perseverance to make Saskatchewan a home to young people where they can receive a good education, find employment, and raise their families.

Mr. Speaker, in the last several days in this House and throughout the media, I hear and read that there are jobs being created. The debate, Mr. Speaker, in this House has been, how many are there? Are there 2,000? Are there 9,000? Are there 12,000? But I say, Mr. Speaker, irrespective of what those numbers are, the consensus remains in Saskatchewan that there are more opportunities and more jobs than there were when we came to government in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, everybody in Saskatchewan knows how difficult it has been for our government to try and balance our spending and at the same time achieve a growth in our economy and sector of our employment.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal and Conservative leaders say we have not done enough to create employment, and they tell us that our government spending is too high. Well if you expect government to create jobs, as we have done, and reduce government spending, as our mid-term financial report indicates, then it is clear that our *Partnership for Renewal* document is working. And truly Saskatchewan people are seeing gradually a plan and, in a systematic way, growth. We are seeing the rebuilding of Saskatchewan that we have talked about since we were elected in 1991.

The Liberal Party leader says our government has done nothing to salvage and create jobs in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth — leave alone her mental confusion over StatsCanada and Revenue Canada figures.

I want to cite just two — just two, Mr. Speaker — several policy decisions that have sustained and assisted in the growth in Saskatchewan over the past year . . . or the past two years.

Mr. Speaker, upon election of government in 1991, our Premier kept his promise, as this government does, saving 7,000 jobs in Saskatchewan in the food service industry by simply doing away with the PST on restaurant foods. Seven thousand jobs in Saskatchewan we saved, Mr. Speaker, by one policy change. We hear we're doing nothing. Mr. Speaker, today in my community, which has by per capita one of the highest number of food service outlets in Saskatchewan . . . have not forgotten our promise. It is because of our government's decision there has been significant additional growth in this industry in my community alone.

Not only, Mr. Speaker, did that policy salvage jobs in Saskatchewan and in Yorkton, it has created new jobs, where they are today being reported all over the province.

To my second example, Mr. Speaker, within the past year, this government, under the guidance of the minister of Energy and Mines, from Battlefords, introduced and implemented a new royalty rate policy in Saskatchewan. This new policy has been overwhelmingly accepted by the oil and gas developers and producers. The outcome is staggering as we see land sales in Saskatchewan for oil and gas development reach unprecedented levels in the history of this province — never before.

New opportunities and jobs are following as the exploration, development and production begins to unfold. Just last week I hear on our local broadcasting station that Estevan is experiencing difficulty in filling jobs in their community, specifically due, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, to the expansion in the oil and gas development, a result of the revenue royalty policy.

Mr. Speaker, these are just two policy decisions alone by this government that have saved and created jobs in this province that are real. So for the opposition to state that this government has done nothing to preserving and creating jobs is simply not true.

Mr. Speaker, it has always been my position that governments will always be involved in some direct way in employing people and creating jobs, but as well governments must create climates so that the private sector and the cooperatives can work in partnership with governments to create jobs.

And I can recall on many occasions the Premier, our Premier, stating that Saskatchewan operates best when all three cylinders are working, when he talks about the private sector, the cooperatives, and government. And that's been the case and examples are many throughout work opportunities in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this government and this administration is practising what it preaches and, accordingly, has created jobs in Saskatchewan and, in this fashion, will do more, providing new opportunities in the future for young people and unemployed people. The proof is in the pudding. There are more Saskatchewan people at work today, irrespective of whose numbers you use.

As the president of the chamber of commerce, Ms. Sonya Prescesky, states during a recent interview last week, which shows clearly that there are significant growth in employment in Saskatchewan by the revised figures of StatsCan, she says, and I quote: the revised job numbers reflect qualified optimism within the business community. End of quote.

Optimism, Mr. Speaker, hope and opportunity, because there are good things happening in Saskatchewan all over the place. Just look around the province and we see Biotech, expansions to Flexi-Coil and Bourgault, excitement about agriculture, value, and processing.

In my neighbouring community, some work being done along the flax fibre project, Canora. Discussions with companies around canola-crushing plants coming to Saskatchewan, and a \$20 billion expansion under way at Prairie Malt, Biggar. And the list goes on and on and on. Quiet optimism and growth is what the president from chamber of commerce says.

Mr. Speaker, this is what Saskatchewan people are talking about. Of course there are pockets in Saskatchewan where things might be moving a little slower. But truly, I see tremendous growth in east-central Saskatchewan which is the home in which my riding is in.

Mr. Speaker, I have noted in other speeches and highlight again that my constituency of Yorkton is the major trading centre, is a major trading centre in Saskatchewan, irrespective of whose figures you use: StatsCanada's, Revenue Canada's, or the opposition map, or Wildlife Canada.

Yorkton is the third largest trading centre in Saskatchewan. In the past two years we have seen our housing starts double over 1991. In the past two years we have seen our building permits, by comparison to other Saskatchewan cities excluding Regina and Saskatoon, lead the province in new development.

Mr. Speaker, in 1994 both of our agricultural farm industry manufacturing plants, Morris Rod-Weeder and Leon's manufacturing, have production demands and increased their workforce to levels that we have not seen in that part of the country for more than 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, in tourism alone we saw an increase in our community of better than 46 per cent over the previous year of 1994. Just less than a month ago, I was at a chamber of commerce luncheon meeting in my community and we had the legends of hockey in our city and I had the privilege of meeting some of the hockey greats, like Guy Lafleur, Frank Mahovlich, and Jean-Guy Talbot, just to name a few.

And they talked about the wonderful spirit in our community and the genuine, good old Saskatchewan hospitality that was awarded them, a trait that our community is well known for. Of course, Mr. Lafleur and Mr. Mahovlich were interested in having me play on their team as they toured Canada, Mr. Speaker, but I couldn't get a release of contract from Coach K as you can well appreciate.

An Hon. Member: — He wants you to wear your salary cap.

Mr. Serby: — That's exactly true. Salary cap; as well I was under contract.

Mr. Speaker, that is why when I talk . . . Mr. Speaker, when I also talk to the hotel manager, Mr. Greg Fox, of the Corona Motor hotel, just recently, he reinforced that tourism to Yorkton in 1994 was unprecedented in the 12 years that he in fact has lived in Yorkton and done business there. Steady and quiet optimism and growth in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in 1995 we saw for the first time again the signing of an unprecedented agreement of the new Saskatchewan

Tourism Authority — an agreement which shifts responsibility, funding, and personnel, from the government to that of the private sector. Mr. Speaker, here again is another example of our government and private sector working together in partnership.

As I listened to the new chairman of the authority, Mr. Dick DeRyk, speak — who, by the way, lives in and operates a business in the community of Yorkton — he talked about the wonderful opportunities that this partnership will bring; how in 1995 and onwards there will be a strengthening of approaches to expanding the tourism industry. He talked about bold and new, innovative approaches in promoting Saskatchewan tourism industry.

Mr. Speaker, in his address he explained how the new Tourism Authority would promote new opportunities for stakeholders who are within the Tourism Authority and how this would translate to more jobs for Saskatchewan people.

Another example, Mr. Speaker, is how our government is working to build Saskatchewan in spite of the Liberal leader from Greystone saying that we are doing nothing. I say to the Liberal leader from Greystone and her two soldiers to talk to Mr. DeRyk and the new executive of the Saskatchewan Tourism Authority and tell them that they're doing nothing — tell them that they're doing nothing. And I can assure you that they will arrange for you and your members yet another unguided and wilderness tour which is where you appear to be spending most of your time.

Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech we talk about how our government will place emphasis in a very direct way in getting the unemployed and young people into the workforce. In spite of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition thinks that Future Skills and JobStart are some form of computer games, I suggest that we need to be patient with him and to work collectively to educate him, because he is new and does not have the opportunity to benefit — does not have the opportunity to benefit, Mr. Speaker — from the wisdom on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, for the next little while we must be forgiving because he really appears to be trying to disassociate himself from his predecessor. That certainly was confused because he's the guy who thought that Saskatchewan had so many resources that not even he could spend it.

The Leader of the Third Party and her members have caught on that Future Skills and JobStart are something to do with creating jobs and training people all right. But somewhere they have lost focus and say we are trying to give these people to the federal government. They call it offloading. The fact of the matter is the federal Liberals are so busy moving responsibilities to the provinces that I'm sure that soon they'll have to expand their own immigration policies so that they have a population of their own to serve.

(1630)

Future Skills, Mr. Speaker, is new money with the objective to provide employees and employers . . . to take advantage of immediate opportunities that are being called for. Future Skills is about workers getting lasting, lasting skills, and which will be trained in the workplace — yet another example of a partnership approach with the private sector. Today, as I stated, there is an employer outcry for specialized careers in agri-food, the transportation industry, and certainly in manufacturing.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is not about recycling people, as the Liberals suggest it might be or misunderstand it, passing people from one provincial . . . from the provincial jurisdiction to the federal jurisdiction and back again to the province. It's not about that.

This is about real jobs and communities. This is about providing job entry skills to young people to make the transition to work a lot easier. This is about school divisions offering applied learning leading to high school credits and credits toward apprenticeship and advancing standing in post-secondary trade or technical training.

These new programs will meet the needs of people who are unemployed due to the lack of specific skills or outdated credentials or are underemployed or are young people at risk due to the changing labour markets or young people who are certainly not university bound.

Mr. Speaker, in my community we have a Future Skills consultant. And she tells me that this program, in our region alone, has already created 75 jobs in the short life that it's had. And more and more young people are becoming employed, and the employers are taking up the interest in the program which will include Indian and Metis people . . . have included Indian and Metis people, women in non-traditional fields, and people with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, to my friends on the opposition benches, this is what this initiative is all about.

Mr. Speaker, to the Liberal member from Regina North, who is writing her party's educational strategy, I say to you, we don't mind you promoting our government's educational policy and direction. But before you begin plagiarizing our policies, you really need to understand them better. Just as a suggestion to the member, you might consider requesting from our leader an opportunity to come over here on this side, sit in the old chair that was vacated by the member from Shaunavon, and really learn more fully about what this reform is about so that you can go out and speak intelligently about this reform to people across Saskatchewan.

Because this government is about working together and partnership. There is nothing more frustrating, Mr. Speaker, to the public than an uninformed opposition. And it really is the case when you take a look at the information that was provided a couple of days ago in this House by the Liberal leader on the policy that she put forward, of her party, on education.

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech speaks to our government's working towards making Saskatchewan health care again the leading health service in the world. Throughout the past three years, our government has talked about having to make some

difficult choices. These choices, Mr. Speaker, have created much agony and turmoil in my chest and stomach as well, because I know that with difficult choices come some very tough and often painful decisions.

There is little doubt, Mr. Speaker, in the minds of the majority of Saskatchewan people that changes were required and were necessary in health care. The issue in question and the debate has centred around process. Mr. Speaker, to be perfectly clear to this Assembly, I too have raised my own issues to that area and we continue to do so and will continue to do so when I am unclear with what the outcomes might be for my constituents and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I come to this job after several years of public service, as many years in public service as the longest-sitting MLA in this House. Much of my professional life outside of politics has centred around community development and community services, and it is without question in my mind that our government's wellness model is the only approach that makes sense to ensure that we have accessible, sustainable, and affordable health care services in the future of this province.

Truly community-based services permit communities to provide services and resources that are based on health care needs in communities. The devolution of funding to district boards and responsibility is the concept that is met well and appreciated by local communities.

Mr. Speaker, in 1995 we see in Saskatchewan yet another first, and that being the election of health care boards. What disturbs me most, Mr. Speaker, about the debate that's gone out around this is that I hear the comments from the opposition benches that it's taking too long to reach this undertaking and that we should be electing everyone and that we have not . . . and that we should not be appointing folks to the board, and that our boards are too partisan and will only make decisions that are of an NDP base.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that if you were to, or members of this Assembly were to, speak to members of my district board in Yorkton, they would say this to you and they could prove it to you, that their memberships on the district board are not because they have any partisans or association to the NDP Party, but because their past experience was brought in the areas of health reform. Their work in strengthening community . . . their work and strength in community organizations and long histories and respect of service in their communities.

That, Mr. Speaker, is how the district board in my constituency was elected and that's how I know that most of them were . . . that's how some of the members on my district board in Yorkton were involved in getting appointed. In fact we had an interesting process where some of the folks who sat on the steering committee were in fact elected.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the members of my district board tell you that board elections sooner than this fall would have been disastrous, because it is really only now, better than a full year later, that they have fully got an appreciation for the magnitude of their mandate.

Please keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that in the district that my folks provide health care services mandate over, we have four district home care boards that had to come together. We have three municipal hospitals, and the largest regional hospital in Saskatchewan with over 700 employees in it. We have four nursing homes; three ambulance, three different ambulance operations; several special care homes in our area, one integrated level 2 and 3 facility; a large regional provincial mental health centre; and a large provincial regional community health department with a significant urban and rural mix of volunteers of various type and form working in that district.

Mr. Speaker, I would challenge any member in this Assembly to put their name forward to this mammoth undertaking, an undertaking of this magnitude as a volunteer — is what these board members are — and expect that just better than in one year, not only would they have completed the district's amalgamation work and put into place the functional and operational systems, then, Mr. Speaker, be prepared to transfer all of that work over to a new entity of a new board.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely, in my opinion, no wisdom in those statements by the opposition. What they're asking for is absolutely impossible and defy, in my opinion, any logic. There are government departments who have been in place for better than 50 years who have not achieved the expected standards that the opposition is requesting would be achieved in one and a half short years.

Mr. Speaker, in the months ahead, through our legislative democratic process, we will see people changing on district health care boards. We will see broad-based representation from across the communities and there will be continuity. That, Mr. Speaker, is true community development, and that's what I will be supporting as that time comes.

Mr. Speaker, our health care system in Saskatchewan is moving forward despite the perceived ignorance of people who should know better but choose to fuel the anxiety for pure political purpose.

Mr. Speaker, let there be no misconception on how I view this. I view the world out there as it applies to health care professionals and district operations. There are many anxieties in Saskatchewan around health care, and I am evident . . . I am informed and I'm on the front line with those folks, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people and my constituents can be assured that my efforts will be to continue to promote and sustain a fair and equitable health care system in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, last fall I had the privilege of being very much involved in the 10th annual student leadership conference in Yorkton. There were just over 1,000 students from across Canada and some from the United States who attended that conference, and half again as many teachers and chaperons. In our city, Mr. Speaker, this conference talked about — as young people gathered — about how change through technology and mobility and global relationships are placing demands on young people that require broad and extensive discussions, they said, by governments and society.

Mr. Speaker, these young Canadians asked questions like, what types of educational training will I need in the future? They asked, where will I get these skills and where will I find the train? And they also asked, what might our futures look like in this world of high technology that we live in and within a multicultural society?

The overarching theme, Mr. Speaker, of their deliberations was working together in partnership, is what they talked about. Cooperation and a better understanding of each other's similarities and differences.

Mr. Speaker, the national student leadership conference had its beginning in Saskatchewan. In fact it began in Yorkton in 1984. Over 10 years the student leadership conference has been hosted across the country, coming back to Yorkton for its 10th anniversary.

And at the same time last year we had in Yorkton the very first national high school student rodeo ever held in Canada, which by the way, Mr. Speaker, will be coming back to our community this summer because of the tremendous job that our people did in hosting the first rodeo last year. And I want to commend and congratulate the people of that organizing committee for making it the success that it was.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, our government played a major role in assisting in the '94 conference, as did the government in 1984. Saskatchewan's future depends on our young people and this government is making an investment in them in a major way.

Mr. Speaker, in my short life of some 25 years in public life, I have to tell you that I've never experienced an event that was more touching than the student leadership conference. Young people and adults, organizers from across the country, laughing and singing and hugging one another and crying. Two thousand people, with our Premier in the midst, displaying emotions that reflected people's pride of being Canadians and how much they cared for each other, a feeling that is difficult to describe, Mr. Speaker, as tears rolled down my cheeks as well.

Mr. Speaker, my decision to serve in public life as a politician — or public servant, as many people call us — is that I might, in a small way, some small way, contribute to the quality of life for my children and future generations. That's what the young people from across Canada were saying at the student leadership conference.

Today, Mr. Speaker, when I reflect on this throne speech, I see a flash of what those people were asking for: hope, opportunity, community, and a willingness and preparedness to work together. Mr. Speaker, it was to us that they were speaking and it is this institution that they look for to set their standards. To achieve those objectives that they have set for themselves it will be necessary for us in this Assembly and those across this vast country to set from time to time our partisan politics aside if we have any hope of achieving the kind of plea that young

Saskatchewan youth or young Canadian youth were asking us to do at that conference.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal more that we need to do and I have seen us come a long way in a short while, but I know that the people of Saskatchewan and as a New Democrat will always have as our guiding principles the future of our children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address the House and it will be my pleasure to be voting with the mover and the seconder the throne speech debate later this week. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise and speak in support of the throne speech which was presented here last week. Before I get into my comments, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you yourself for doing a very fine job and very difficult at times, but I appreciate your efforts here in the House.

In 1991 when we were campaigning, the biggest issue at hand was our debt and people wanted to get a balanced budget. And time and again when door knocking, this was a message given. And it was our number one challenge and commitment to the people when we were elected as government, was to balance the books. And here we are three and a half years later and we have basically achieved that in our budget speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Scott: — When we announce our budget next week we will have a balanced budget. It will be the first balanced budget in close to 12 to 15 years in Saskatchewan and the first balanced budget in recent years across Canada. A very significant achievement, and this has only been possible because of the people of Saskatchewan who were prepared to bite the bullet.

In my particular area we have a large number of seniors, Mr. Speaker. About 25 per cent of the population is over 65. And these people worked and toiled and scrimped and saved and did without things in order to make Saskatchewan a great place to live. And they did not . . . it was really troublesome for them to see such a huge debt hanging over not only them, but their children and grandchildren as well. And so this was very heavy on their minds.

And today these people are looking back and really pleased that we've made it through a very tough time with high taxes, cut-backs which affected everybody, young and old alike, urban and rural alike as well. So having a balanced budget is certainly a major accomplishment and is but one of the many highlights of this throne speech. The throne speech is full of optimism and looking ahead positively in many areas.

Now that we've balanced the budget our next task will be to get our people back to work, and particularly young people, and

hopefully have a number of young people return to Saskatchewan as well. In my particular case I have a boy who will be graduating this year and be looking for work, and many of us are in the same boat. We want our children to stay at home in places like Indian Head and Milestone, and not have to go to Calgary or Edmonton.

So job creation is our number one item, our number one ticket, as we look ahead for the next few years, Mr. Speaker.

And there are opportunities here in Saskatchewan. We have a vast variety and a wealth of resources and it's up to us to develop them responsibly. And looking after the environment, at the same time creating jobs.

So jobs will be the number one issue as we look ahead, and in fact job creation is already showing strides. And as has recently been reported by Statistics Canada, our job opportunities in Saskatchewan have increased each year for the last several years in many areas. And in particular, the oil and gas area in the south-west part of the province, and in the south-east it is reported that the companies are not able to get enough people to work in the positions available. So this is good news for sure.

Other areas that job creation is becoming more prevalent is people . . . ordinary people in Saskatchewan developing industries, in particular . . . or an example, I should say, is the machinery industry. Saskatchewan is leading the world in zero till and minimum till machinery.

I have a neighbour down the road a mile and a half, Mr. Jim Halford, who was instrumental in developing a Conserva Pak, a no-till seeder. And he is now exporting this machine throughout North America and as far away as Australia. And he has also got a dozen . . . or more than a dozen employees working right in the shop on his farm in rural Saskatchewan, creating jobs for people, and at the same time creating industry and bringing money back to Saskatchewan. So that's but one example of farmers diversifying and leading again the way in agriculture. Diversifying not only in the development of machinery, which is important for soil conservation, but also diversifying to other crops.

We are growing crops today which were unheard of 20 years ago: mustard, lentils, and canola, for an example, peas. This again is farmers adapting to the climate which they face. And basically why grow wheat when nobody wants it? But instead let's grow these other things and other crops which there is a demand for. And that is a case of farmers helping themselves, and the government is also participating and encouraging where it is able to in research. So with the added income, we do see a net farm income increasing and we are confident that farmers will continue to keep pace with the times and lead the world in production.

As I mentioned earlier, our seniors are a very important component of our society, and we believe that we are working with seniors and helping them out where we can.

We have an affordable drug plan which we will be maintaining. Unlike many other provinces, we are looking forward to

expanded home care so that seniors can stay in their homes longer. People like to remain in their homes as long as possible, and we will be looking forward to working with various communities and having community leaders developing programs to keep seniors in their homes. And also we do have the long-term care beds where needed. Unfortunately in some areas we could always use more, but this facility is there again to provide as much comfort and support for our seniors in the years ahead.

As I mentioned, there is a mood of optimism out there in rural Saskatchewan. In door knocking, main-streeting in Indian Head-Wolseley constituency, Mr. Speaker, invariably every small business, from the corner garage to the corner grocery store, reported a better year. People were spending more. They had better sales, and in other words they were looking forward to the future.

And we only need to look at my small constituency to just see some of the things which have happened there in the last few years. The Paterson grain company, a Canadian owned private company, built their first inland terminal at Indian Head a couple of years ago and it is very successful — again, creating jobs. In Indian Head, we've got a new Co-op store going up. The local car automotive dealer called H & L is expanding. And the new Indian Head hotel opened up this Christmas, a year after a fire devastated it.

Down the road at Wolseley, Abbott Laboratories, formerly Canapharm, is now very viable and providing a very good business in Wolseley, creating jobs for roughly 70 people and new jobs are being added each year. A very successful venture in rural Saskatchewan.

In the hamlet or small town of Glenavon, population of about 300, in the last year or so we've had a bakery and a florist shop open up. Again, small business is the backbone of the economy in Saskatchewan and this is where we need the jobs.

In other communities like Vibank and Odessa, which are within an hour's drive of Regina, both communities report new housing starts and people moving into the communities. In fact Kendal with a population of less than 100 recently had a couple from Toronto retire there. So people are moving back to the province and moving out into the rural areas, and of course that helps our schools and small businesses in these communities as well. The town of Windthorst in the south-east corner of my riding recently opened a brand-new skating rink facility.

So rural Saskatchewan is alive and well and this is again largely due to volunteers. And volunteers in Saskatchewan have been known for many years for pulling the communities together, whether it's the hockey teams or if somebody is injured or sick or having problems, putting on fund-raisers. We really need our volunteers to continue pulling our communities together and working for the betterment of society.

Also in the last election, Mr. Speaker, one area which many people were concerned about was the credibility of elected politicians. And that too we have tried to address. There's more to be done. But for an example, we have brought in legislation

to have by-elections within six months after a seat becomes vacant. We can no longer take our computers and furniture home when we are defeated or retire. And certainly accountability has been tightened up, and should be, because we do work for the people. We are in the process now of having a committee look at our salaries and allowances, to try and put things in a better perspective so that people can see what's happening.

An issue which is probably one of the most controversial right now in rural Saskatchewan is the federal gun control legislation. Now let me say, Mr. Speaker, from the outset, that this government is not opposed to crime control, which is the real issue. We support fully the clamping down on criminals who smuggle guns in or use guns illegally and we would wish to see stricter fines and enforcement of these fines.

However, we do question the wisdom of asking law-abiding citizens to register every gun that they have, at a cost of anywhere from 75 to \$100 per gun. Myself as a gun owner, I do not see where if a gun is registered, it's going to be any safer in the hands of a law-abiding citizen. As it is, this province has graduated 140,000 students through their hunter safety program, including myself 30 years ago and my daughter last year, who is now 14.

We need to teach responsible use of firearms, and as a result, we have seen our hunting accidents drop from 106 in the 1960s down to three last year. So, Mr. Speaker, we do hear the people in rural Saskatchewan saying that their guns were acquired illegally. They're not breaking the laws and they don't intend to. They use their guns for legitimate uses on the farm, to control predators and also for hunting, which is a very viable industry creating \$49 million in the province economy each year. So we hear the gun owners and we will continue to support legitimate gun owners in trying to make it so that it is not a criminal offence to not register a gun.

Mr. Speaker, there's many other issues which we have dealt with in working with people. Underground fuel tanks; we'll be looking at used-oil recycling; The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. And the only way that we have achieved these goals is to work cooperatively with groups of people and we plan to continue to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, in my closing remarks, I view the budget as a good news budget. There is optimism. And we don't need any petty politics picking away at this and that. What we need to do is pull together. We are a small enough province to begin with; we need to work together for the betterment of everybody, rural and urban, native and non-native alike. And certainly the gaming agreement which was reached last week will do a lot for our native people on the reserves.

So it is my pleasure to speak in support of the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, and I will certainly be voting in favour of the throne speech. And thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

