

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here today that I'd like to present to the Assembly regarding SaskPower. I'll just read the prayer to the Hon. Assembly of Saskatchewan:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth that Saskatchewan people have had to bear the brunt of frequent utility rate increases by Crown monopolies with no recourse; that SaskPower Corporation has posted net incomes of \$107 million in 1992 fiscal year, \$81 million in the 1993 fiscal year, \$85 million in the '94 fiscal year; that in spite of huge net profits, SaskPower has raised power rates by 12.7 per cent over the past three years and has proposed an additional hike of 12 per cent for home-owners, 13.7 per cent for farms, 2.7 per cent for small business.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people all across Saskatchewan that have taken part in this SaskPower petition and I would like to lay it on the Table before you today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review, and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility rate process in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

These petitions come from the Carrot River area of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present to this Assembly, a petition signed by individuals from the Saskatoon, Dalmeny, Dundurn area, and this petition suggests that the NDP government's Crown tendering agreement policy is grossly unfair:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and replace it with a fair tendering policy which awards all government contracts to the lowest qualified bidder, union or non-union, with no union-hiring quotas.

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

I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I too have a

petition to present this morning on behalf of people from the Saskatoon area of our province — the great city up north. I'll read the prayer for the Assembly.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and replace it with a fair tendering policy which awards all government contracts to the lowest qualified bidder, union or non-union, with no union-hiring quotas.

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

I'm happy to present this today.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present, coming from Prelate, Saskatoon, Mendham areas. And I'll read the prayer for you.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility rate process in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to be able to present, along with my colleagues . . . will be presenting as well, a number of private members' Bills totalling 15, on various items that we believe are of significant importance to the people of Saskatchewan.

The first one that I have, a notice of motion.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act respecting Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan .

The second one, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move the first reading of a Bill, An Act respecting the Protection of Saskatchewan Taxpayers.

The third one, Mr. Speaker:

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move the first reading of a Bill, An Act respecting the Accountability of the Workers' Compensation Board. The short title for that is The Workers' Compensation Board Accountability Act.

The fourth Bill that I want to present, Mr. Speaker:

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to Amend The Referendum and Plebiscite Act dealing with the Canadian Wheat Board.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that these are significant pieces of legislation that we're prepared to present to you very soon.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act respecting Property Rights of the People of Saskatchewan.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, Legislative Utilities Review Committee (LURC).

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act respecting the Accountability of Crown Corporations; short title, The Crown Corporations Accountability Act. And I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for SaskTel, please provide the following information regarding Mr. Don Ching: (1) provide details of the severance paid out by SaskTel to Mr. Don Ching, including total dollars paid out, any investments or other monetary pay-outs; (2) provide copies of all correspondence between Mr. Ching and SaskTel prior to reaching a settlement on this issue; (3) provide a copy of the final settlement.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to give notice of Bills. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to Amend the Education and Health Tax Act Respecting the Taxation of Saskatchewan Indians Off-Reserve; short title, The Education and Health Tax Act Amendment 1996.

I also give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to Amend the Members Conflict of Interest Act Respecting the Definition of Family; short title, The Members Conflict of Interest Amendment Act 1996.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act Requiring a Union Certification, Decertification and Strike Action by Secret Ballot; short title, The Democratic and Unionism Act.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act Representing the Right to Work in the Province of Saskatchewan.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act.

The Speaker: — Order, order. The Speaker is having a difficult time hearing the member introduce his Bills, and I'll ask for cooperation of the House.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will read this last one over because I don't think it all got on *Hansard*.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to amend The Labour Standards Act.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to revoke The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement; short title, The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement Revocation Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly Council Act.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill to Provide for the Enforcement of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly (Anti-Corruption).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature, two visitors in your gallery. The first is a former distinguished member of this House for the constituency of Canora, former cabinet minister in the Blakeney government, Adolph Matsalla.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — And beside Adolph is Eugene Pura who is a long-time friend of mine, a graduate at about the same time as me from the legendary Sturgis Composite High School and I'd like the legislature to welcome Eugene here this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly a very astute civic politician, a good friend, a lady that I admire a great deal. It's our mayor of Fort Qu'Appelle, Mayor Fran Hahn, who's sitting in your gallery. I would ask the Assembly to please welcome Mayor Hahn to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to introduce through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly, two very special guests, my sons Alan and William MacKinnon, who are in the gallery opposite.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you give two young men a few days off school, they head to the most exciting place in the province — the Saskatchewan legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the

members of the Assembly, a guest of mine in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, who I invited down for the throne speech yesterday. She's a constituent of Saskatoon Greystone, Mrs. Nancy Wilkinson. Stand up, please.

This very young-looking grandmother has recently received her doctorate in educational counselling psychology so I should have introduced her as Dr. Wilkinson. She did her thesis in . . . it's entitled Women's Experiences of Self-care in Relationships and Dr. Wilkinson convokes this spring at the University of Toronto.

The reason she's here, Mr. Speaker, today with us is because I took her out for dinner last night and it got a bit late. Some of you will note that the dinner I took her out for was at Government House but . . . Anyway, if you would join with me in welcoming Dr. Wilkinson here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — It's my pleasure to introduce to you a member who . . . an individual who is sitting in your gallery today who has come down to give me a little moral support in my duties later on, my stepfather, Ed Leson, who is actually a constituent of the member for Prince Albert Carlton. So we arm-wrestled earlier and decided that I would get to introduce him. So if you would join with me in welcoming him, thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and my pleasure to introduce one of the greatest farmers in Saskatchewan, my husband, Robert Julé. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured also to introduce the gentlemen right beside him, Mr. Marty Draude, one of the greatest small-business people in this province. We welcome him, and I'd ask you to welcome him also.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the legislature very close family members and friends, Ward and Lorraine Dixon from Regina here. They are my aunt and uncle, and important supports to our family. Welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to introduce to you and to the Assembly a very good friend of mine; he's also my youngest son. Jordan is sitting in the west gallery. Hi, Jord.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of our Legislative Assembly, sitting in your gallery, Ms. Nikki Hipkin, who is the president of the Young Liberals of Saskatchewan, a very devoted person to the province and someone who I think has been committed to policy development for all of us in the province of Saskatchewan. Please welcome her.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) in welcoming two constituents of mine and people I would consider good supporters and friends, Ward and Lorraine Dixon. And I'd just like to say thank you to them for coming today and viewing our first full day of operation and ask the members to join with me in welcoming them once again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Best Wishes to New Speaker

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, as one grizzled veteran of this Assembly to another, I want to, for the first and only time this term, to presume on our long and warm association by delivering the first member's statement of your tenure. And I want to use this opportunity to speak on behalf of all of my colleagues and wish you our best as we assume our duties as Speaker . . . as you assume your duties as Speaker. Once I sit down of course the august neutrality you inherit from that chair takes over, and I become just another noisy parliamentarian clamouring for your recognition — all past associations on hold, as they should be.

Mr. Speaker, the person who sits in your chair must be one who knows and reveres the traditions that you are sworn to uphold, must be a special person trained in partisanship who must now put that aside, and must be a representative of one's constituency who must now speak evenly for all.

As said the great parliamentarian, Edmund Burke, the Assembly you represent is "a deliberative Assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good." The general good is yours to uphold; we know you will.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government caucus, I welcome all new members as I take the mantle of parliamentary responsibility. And as I resume my seat, I say in the words of the famous Dolly Parton, here we go again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Invermay Precision Skating Champions

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have always been glad to hear tributes being paid here in the House to groups or individuals from small town Saskatchewan. Today this event is even more special for me as I rise to acknowledge the accomplishments of some citizens from my home town of Invermay, Saskatchewan. To honour the successes of young people is even a greater pleasure.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, February 10 of this year the Invermay Icicles skating club won the gold medal at the 1996 Saskatchewan provincial precision skating championships in

Melfort. The group also received the club plaque for this event

Members of the Icicles range in age from age 8 to 15. And they are: Susie Barteski, Elyse Franke, Halayna Franke, Melissa Gray, Salina Gray, Maria Mikkonen, Krystal Nieckar, Kyla Puryk, Tegan Puryk, Amy Velichka, Julie Velichka, and Sherisse Velichka. The group's coach is Glenna Nord, a young lady who lives in Foam Lake, a community also in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, at the same competition in Melfort, Katherine Belitski, an Invermay native who attends the U of R (University of Regina) and skates with the Regina Silver Blades senior competitive precision team, captured a gold medal and earned the right to advance to the Canadian nationals in Hamilton on April 4 and 7.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the Assembly join in extending congratulations to the Invermay club, and best wishes to Ms. Katherine Belitski in her venture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kinsmen Telemiracle

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The stage is set; the entertainers are in place; the volunteers are willing and able; there is an air of excitement around the Saskatchewan Centre.

I am referring to, of course, the Kinsmen Telemiracle telethon which will be held this weekend in Regina. This year's event is special because Telemiracle is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

There has never been a telethon so successful on a per capita basis. When the first telethon was held in 1976, Saskatchewan residents demonstrated their generosity by donating \$1.2 million. Since then the amount collected for this worthwhile cause has doubled to \$2.4 million last year.

Twenty years ago the entertainers at Telemiracle, many of whom were from outside Saskatchewan, were so impressed with the telethon that there was an unanimous feeling that they would do it over again, any time. Mr. Speaker, all of the money raised through Telemiracle stays right here in Saskatchewan and helps physically, mentally, and socially challenged children and adults.

The telethon, which will be broadcast on television starting at 9 o'clock on Saturday evening, has become a source of miracles for the people of Saskatchewan. So to everyone I say: "Ring those phones."

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Big Valley Jamboree

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that the Kinsmen and Kinette clubs in Saskatchewan do wonderful work right across the province for so many good causes, and Telemiracle is no exception.

In the riding which I represent, each year thousands of people from across western Canada get together for the biggest country musical festival ever held in Saskatchewan — the Big Valley Jamboree.

While Kinsmen members are busy preparing for Telemiracle, the Regina Queen City Kinsmen are also busy organizing the jamboree for this summer. I would like to congratulate the Queen City Kinsmen for keeping this worthwhile event alive by deciding to sponsor the 14th annual jamboree.

Big Valley and the community of Craven will benefit from the decision because the organizers have a proven track record in Saskatchewan. They can attract many volunteers, and the jamboree will be run by a charity. Saskatchewan people have always been country music fans, and I am sure that the Regina Queen City Kinsmen Club will be arranging the very best entertainment possible.

I encourage the people of Saskatchewan to support the 1996 version of the Big Valley Jamboree which — I am sure — will be the best ever held in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Condolences

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in every one of our lives we all reach a point of time where the loss of a family member is very special and very dear. And I believe it's very fitting in acknowledging the fact the member from Regina Dewdney has recently lost his father. His father has left us.

And I would like to extend, on behalf of our caucus, to the member from Regina Dewdney our deepest sympathy, condolences, and trust that the member will find comfort in knowing that his friends and foes alike are thinking of him at this time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Freedom to Read Week

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we heard His Honour the Lieutenant Governor say that child poverty is poverty in its worst form. Ninety years ago, the Fabian socialist, George Bernard Shaw, said that: "The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty." This week, February 26 to March 3, has been declared Freedom to Read Week by the Book and Periodical Council of Canada — a week dedicated to the defence of intellectual freedom in this, the best country in the world.

I mention the two together, Mr. Speaker, because the freedom to read with no interference is intimately connected to freedom from poverty. Or put differently, one way to perpetuate poverty is to keep people in ignorance by restricting their reading and thus their knowledge. Illiteracy is the best friend of the totalitarian.

It is shamefully astonishing that in some quarters, ignorance is still seen as a social good. There are still those who would tell

us what we should be allowed to know.

We legislators have not done our job as long as these forces of repression are still heard in our land. Despite our best efforts, poverty is still with us. Despite our spoken support for individual freedom, censorship still imprisons our minds.

Mr. Speaker, no book was ever used to kill a human being, no novel ever beat a spouse, no poem ever molested a child, no essay ever robbed a bank, and yet we still must set aside a period each year to honour and observe Freedom to Read Week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Condolences

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too, I would respectfully wish to add our sincere condolences, as has the member from Moosomin. Sir, on our behalf as well, I would like to extend condolences.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Police-Fire Games

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last November the city of Regina and the province of Saskatchewan changed from the little city that shouldn't, to the great city that did. Saskatchewan people restored the Grey Cup to its proper place in the Canadian consciousness and we gave a very necessary boost to the Canadian Football League. The extra revenue that came into our province wasn't bad either, Mr. Speaker.

All of this was the result of hard work by an army of volunteers and some judicious support by our Premier. But that's last year's news, Mr. Speaker.

This year I'm delighted to acknowledge that Regina is at it again. The 1998 Can-Am Police-Fire Games are coming to Regina. With the games will come approximately 7,000 athletes and visitors. With them will come between 10 and \$12 million right into Regina's economy.

Mr. Speaker, one of the linchpins of economic development in Saskatchewan is tourism. Because of the Grey Cup and because of the very impressive effort put forth to attract these games, we are becoming known as the place that can —the place to hold professional games.

It's no accident also that in 1998 the Scott Tournament of Hearts will be held in Regina — more good news and more cash jingling in our registers. I congratulate the chairperson, Dick Rendek, and his group of volunteers; Mayor Archer and the city department of public affairs; our own Minister of Economic Development, for their efforts to attract these games to Regina.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Overpayments

Mr. McLane: —Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 1992 this government broke a contract with the farmers of Saskatchewan and they have not looked back. The record of this government with farmers in the province is poor to say the least, and they have as much as admitted this by promising last spring in this very legislature not to collect the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) overpayments.

Will the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, now own up to his government's promise and cancel the bills his department has sent to Saskatchewan farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. The direct answer to the member's question of whether or not the bills will be cancelled is no.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that does confirm in my mind the lack of sincerity and interest in rural Saskatchewan agriculture by the minister.

However, Mr. Speaker, today is the day that this government begins adding interest to GRIP bills that they had promised again not to send to Saskatchewan producers.

The farmers of this province need and deserve an answer from the Minister of Agriculture that is acceptable. They are calling on the minister to do what is appropriate and honourable. The choice of the minister to date of course is to ignore the farmers of Saskatchewan, as he is doing, and that is not acceptable to us.

What does the Minister of Agriculture intend to do then?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the member opposite is aware of how the GRIP wind-down and the GRIP contract operates. I assume he does not know that or he would not be asking the question.

Mr. Speaker, if you were in any other place of business, not to ask for an overpayment returned, and in particular in this situation, you'd have one farmer subsidizing another. Because all the overpayments were put back into the main pool, and then they were paid out individually.

So if the member opposite thinks that that's a fair way to do things, he may; I think that's not the fair way.

Mr. Speaker, this program is wound down. It's going to be gone. I'll tell you, we're looking to the future, not to the past, for farm programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess we're happy as farmers that the GRIP program has wound down. What we're unhappy about is the way it's wound down and the lack of commitment from the Minister of Agriculture and the government.

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief and that of 12,000 other farmers who have received GRIP bills that the issue is at the very least worthy of debate in this Assembly, in this legislature.

Unfortunately for the producers involved, interest will be accruing on these bills after today, and today. Will the Minister of Agriculture provide an assurance in this House today that interest will not be charged on this matter, on these GRIP statements, until we have a chance to fully debate it in this House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, I'm glad to see that he finally understands that the GRIP program wasn't a good program and he's joining with us and getting right behind us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — It took him four years to understand that, and it might be another four years before he understands the contract that was arranged between the federal and provincial governments and how this contract dictates the rules by which the program operates.

If the overpayments have not been repaid, then, Mr. Speaker, then there will be interest charged.

Again, it's a matter of fairness for those people who have paid their bills; and those people who have not paid their bills, to get their interest waived, it doesn't make any sense. It's not fair; the rules are there.

I just ask the member that when he gets up to ask his next question, if he'll ask the . . . tell the people of this province what he would like to see in a farm program. He's going to have opportunity to do that. Tell us your policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister opposite wishes to ask questions, we'd very much like to oblige in the next election so he can sit here and ask us the questions. We'd be very happy to do that. Otherwise we'd appreciate an answer.

Mr. Speaker, I must question of the Minister of Agriculture: is he so far out of touch with agriculture that he does not realize the costs that the farmers are going to incur over the next several months with spring seeding — the cost of the inputs: the fertilizers, the fuel, all those things?

And does the minister not realize the financial burden he is placing on farm families with the biggest bill of all from his government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. Thanks for the question, Mr. Member. This program is a program that's been put in the past. We have processed . . . we wound down the program. That process is going to be adhered to.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the problem that we have here with the GRIP over there is that . . . And again I'm glad to see that the members are joining with us in the wind-down. I was right — even the member from Shaunavon who sort of left because part of the GRIP wasn't not what . . . now he's happy. So that's . . . we're all happy now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this to the member opposite. I want to say this: early in your political career, do yourself a favour and be credible. Because what you're doing and what you've been doing over the last few weeks is raising false hope, false hope to the farmers of this province. You know and I know, we all know, the rules and the rules will be adhered by and people have to pay interest on overdue accounts.

So be honest with yourself, starting . . . and be honest with the people of Saskatchewan. Maintain your credibility. Don't listen to some of your friends over there, and you will go places in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that I ran in Arm River to get elected was for that very reason as the minister opposite talks about: integrity and honesty. And it's his own predecessor in this very House that has broken the promise. Where's the honesty and integrity there, Mr. Speaker?

However, Mr. Speaker, I have received bills from hundreds and hundreds of Saskatchewan farmers from across the province that have asked us to debate this issue on their behalf. I believe in Saskatchewan farmers that this is a question of honour and trust — none of which the government appears to possess.

I would like to quote from a letter from one particular farmer, and I'd like to table a copy of it, Mr. Speaker, so that the minister and the government can deal with this person to person. And I quote from the letter, Mr. Speaker:

If we stole money belonging to someone else, we'd be put in jail, but the government can do what they want with the farmers' money.

One of the hundreds of examples, Mr. Speaker, of the frustration that producers out there are feeling.

It's only appropriate that this issue be debated in this House so the Minister of Agriculture today will announce that interest will not be charged on these bills until we have a chance to debate it. What's your problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've had three or four or five questions on this issue, and the problem is, is to be

a direct answer. The problem is that the members opposite either don't care to understand the program or can't understand the program. The rules have been laid out. If you want me to go into detail, I can go into detail.

Farmers were sent a letter in December 1994, another one in January 1995, explaining how the wind-down would be put forward, explaining that they would have so long to pay the bill, and after that interest would accrue. These were all laid out.

The grandstanding and trying to provide false hope to the farmers by the members opposite does nothing — and I say nothing — to help the integrity of that party or to help the farmers, who many of them have problems paying bills these days. Although things are starting to improve. It doesn't help them.

I think the member opposite should take another tack to his questions and talk about the future rather than the past, because all you're going to do by talking about the past is bury yourself in it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. For four years now we have heard one throne speech after another promising jobs for the people of Saskatchewan. For four years now we have seen the NDP (New Democratic Party) erect one barrier after another to prevent job growth here in the province of Saskatchewan. Higher taxes, over-regulation, union tendering policies, changes to labour standards, occupational health, workers' compensation — the list goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, in January there were 5,000 fewer people working in Saskatchewan than in the previous year. And once again the NDP is making the same empty promises of job creation. Mr. Speaker, why should we believe the Premier on this, this time around, when he's talking about creating jobs, given your dismal record, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to answer the question. I thank the Leader of the Third Party for it.

I want to tell the Leader of the Third Party that the Minister of Economic Development, our Deputy Premier, advises me that we're averaging about 3,500 jobs, new jobs, a year since 1992 — 10,000 new jobs during the term of our administration. And we're well on the course to achieving the target which has been set out for us in *Partnership for Growth*.

And we've done this notwithstanding the fact that your administration has saddled the people of the province of Saskatchewan with a \$14 billion debt and has thereby really stifled economic activity.

And I have to tell you that we've done this through a very balanced approach. And if the Conservative Party thinks that the way to get jobs is by what they did this morning — getting

up and tabling the Bills which they're going to debate, Bills which would revert Saskatchewan to Alabama or Arkansas with right to work — I just invite the Leader of the Conservative Party to take a look at what the jobs record is there in one of the poorest states of the Union. I tell you, that may be your approach; it is not the approach of this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, this government has loaded one unnecessary regulation on business after another. And now the Premier is promising to reduce regulation. That's like the arsonist promising to help put out a fire.

Mr. Speaker, from January of '92 to January of '96 there were 3,000 jobs created in Saskatchewan. During that exact same time frame, there were 103,000 jobs created in Alberta. That's a hundred thousand jobs in Alberta that is ahead of us in four short years. That's the records of the two provinces, Mr. Premier. And the Finance minister says Alberta's low tax regime is overrated. That's what she says about it. Mr. Speaker, it's time the NDP took some lessons from Alberta.

Reduce the tax burden, reduce the regulatory burden, get off the backs of business and start creating a positive job-creation climate for the people of Saskatchewan.

When can we expect to see that happen, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question again. If he asks when we are going to take some lessons from Alberta, I have news for the Leader of the Conservative Party. We're not going to adopt the lesson of the elimination of the kindergarten program for preschool kids. We are not going to adopt the lesson from Alberta of an \$860 per year premium for a family of four on health care, which somehow they say is not a tax. We're not going to adopt the approach from the province of Alberta of entirely denuding the social safety net and the protection of the people of the province of Alberta.

No, we're not going to adopt that approach whatsoever.

And when the Minister of Finance on our side says that the taxation situation of Alberta has got to be looked at very carefully, it's got to be looked at very carefully. They pay a premium of \$860 for a family of four for health care. We don't do that here.

You Tories say that's not a tax; I tell you it smells an awful lot like a tax to me. And our tax regime compares very, very favourably to Alberta, and our jobs creation record, in the face of the mess that you left this province, is getting better and will be better with every passing year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Overpayments

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my two remaining questions are for the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I happened to run into the Minister of Agriculture at an evening reception. He probably recalls that. And he told me how much he was looking forward to debating the GRIP bills in the legislature here.

Well you can imagine my surprise, Mr. Speaker, when yesterday we proposed that very debate and he chickened out. We were quite surprised that he did that.

Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple to the minister. Why did you, Mr. Minister, break the NDP campaign promise, a promise made by the Premier, a promise made by the former minister of Agriculture and promises made by all of your people during the election campaign?

Mr. Minister, why did the Minister of Agriculture send out 12,000 GRIP bills after both the Premier and the former minister of Agriculture vowed that no farmer would receive a GRIP bill from you people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is words to describe the question that the member opposite posed in this House that I can't use in this House and it's referring to something that's not usually true — and he knows that. The member opposite, Mr. Speaker, knows there was no campaign promises broken. And the people of Saskatchewan know.

The member opposite also should know that in the throne speech he's got seven days to debate anything he wants to. All the members can take all the time they want, and the throne speech debate's wide open. And so that proves the fact that the little grandstand yesterday, which was quite out of character with the dignity of the opening of the legislature . . . But that's fine, that's fine. All it was, just that — grandstanding.

And the member opposite knows, and the people of Saskatchewan know that we again . . . and we see the Liberal-Tory plot here — try to stay buried in the past. Again the people of Saskatchewan are going to be moving forward with the new crop insurance program this winter to ensure that we have covered your farmers, and this government will maintain that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, for years you stood in this House and moaned about how the government is not doing enough for farmers when you were on the opposition side. For years we've heard you talk about the different things that you would do if you ever were in charge. Unfortunately, you are now. Finally your turn has come. The Premier has entrusted you with the Agriculture portfolio. That he has frankly no one else to choose from, as I understand, I can recognize that.

But what is your very first act? What was the very first thing

you did for the people of Saskatchewan, the farmers of Saskatchewan? The very first act that you did in any meaningful fashion was to break your party's word and to break your Premier's word. That was your first action. And then you sent out 12,000 bills to GRIP producers, farmers in this province, Mr. Minister. That was your first act.

Mr. Minister, will you take the opportunity to correct that problem, your actions. Will you admit that you've made a mistake, honour the Premier's campaign promise, and let Saskatchewan farm families know that the GRIP bills have been cancelled?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the member opposite something he should know. The commitment of this government to Saskatchewan farmers, as opposed to Alberta, is \$460 per capita; as opposed to Alberta, that's \$173 per capita. Now that's commitment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that shows to me the member being stuck in the past, as I say, we've seen the GRIP program come and we've seen the GRIP program go. And it's gone.

And you know what this tells me, Mr. Speaker, it tells me that the member opposite, and as the Liberal Party, doesn't have anything else to talk about in agriculture. That tells me they're stuck in the past because the 450-some dollar commitment that this government has to farmers is doing well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Size of Cabinet

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. For the last several weeks, we have heard the Premier using municipal governments as an example of waste in this province. Yet those governments by law, Mr. Speaker, balance their budgets year in and year out. And, as the Premier tells us, the so-called waste of local governments has to be cleaned up. He tells the people of Saskatchewan they'll have to wait 18 months to 2 years for him to begin cleaning up his own house and appointing a smaller cabinet. Two years, Mr. Speaker.

How can the Premier possibly point his finger at those low-paid municipal representatives as a source of waste when he continues on his merry way with a cabinet that is too large, filled with members who have too few duties?

Why won't the Premier reduce the size of cabinet immediately if he is so worried about waste in government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, what we've seen this morning is selective interpretation of campaign promises by both the Conservatives and the Liberals — which does not surprise me, since they barely conducted a campaign in the last

provincial election; they've got to refer to our situation — and the Hon. Acting Leader of the Liberal Party, Leader of the Official Opposition, talks about using municipal governments as an example of waste.

Totally false, totally wrong. I do not use them as an example of waste. I say here is an example of how we can modernize for the 21st century; that the levels of government need to be rationalized, not from the point of view of eliminating waste. There may be waste to eliminate there, but that's not the point. It's a point of getting cooperation and providing the best possible infrastructure that we can for rural Saskatchewan and for Canada.

What we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is we're building for the 21st century. This government and this party is about preparing Saskatchewan for the growth and the opportunity and the hope and the equality around the values of Saskatchewan. We're for change. Those are our values. That's where we stand; where the Liberals, they simply stand still.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question again to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, you'll forgive me if I felt a little sceptical yesterday during the throne speech when we heard of this government's new-found commitment to job creation, especially what has transpired over the last four years. In 1992 this government promised to create 30,000 jobs. And what did we get? We got tax hikes, we got utility rate hikes, and we got oppressive labour legislation. And strangest of all, Crown union preference policy that costs the government money.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this: given all that this government has done to kill jobs in its first term, is this new-found determination to create them an admission that this government made the wrong choices during the last four years? And will the Premier commit to ending some of the practices of the first term, particularly the Crown tendering policy and high taxation policy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again the Acting Leader of the Liberal Party — I should say the official Leader of the Opposition for the time being — has his facts wrong.

Our promise is to have 30,000 new jobs by the year 2000. We have been going at 3,500 a year since 1991-92. If that record continues, we're going to exceed it, and we're going to do it without the necessity of going back to Arkansas or Alabama or right-to-work laws or your attacks on the working men and women of the province of Saskatchewan who contribute to the wealth and the job creation in this country and in this province. That's our position, and we know that to be the case.

And you have some members of your caucus who are very much the recipients of job and economic activity — I don't say because of our government — because of their risk and their entrepreneurial activity. But they know that the numbers are there. They know the numbers are there. You know the numbers

are there. The stats are there.

Please don't play with the facts. If the Liberals hope to gain some semblance of credibility after what took place in the last several months — I say sadly — if you have any hope of getting some credibility, please stick to the facts. I know the member from Shaunavon is laughing because he's very, very pleased at what took place in the Liberal Party. I for one am very saddened at what took place in the Liberal Party. Elevate the debate please, Mr. Acting Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dore Lake Forest Resources

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, as you know doubt heard on the morning news, there's a great amount of concern by the people of Dore Lake about clearcutting practices in northern Saskatchewan. These people have been waiting for months and months to meet with the Minister of Environment and Resource Management. The question I have is, why hasn't the minister met with these people to discuss these very pressing, serious concerns?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. I am happy to tell the hon. member and the members of the legislature that I have met with these people as recently as last week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, that's news to us because this morning, the newscast indicates that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member put his question. Allow the member to put his question.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the clear-cutting methods being used in the Dore Lake region — for the minister's sake — are threatening to significantly destroy the forestry potential of the area because of the poor soil conditions. This was on the news this morning, Mr. Speaker, and it's surprising that the people of Dore Lake are asking for this meeting and yet he met with them last week and they're still asking.

The question we asked before, we haven't got an answer yet. But can the Minister of Environment assure the people of Dore Lake and the people of Saskatchewan that these clear-cutting methods and poor soil will not adversely affect their forestries, their fishing industries, their wildlife industries, the hunting, and so on and so forth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. And I certainly agree with the hon. member — our forests and all of our natural resources in the North and the Dore, Smoothstone Lake area are very important to us and we are committed to work with the forest

industry, the people in the Dore Lake area, and all the people of Saskatchewan to utilize and manage our resources to the best of everybody's interest. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, members of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to rule 27, it is now your duty at this time to elect a Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

Procedures to be used in this election are the same as those used to elect the Speaker, and I now ask the Clerk to initiate the proceedings.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

Clerk: — Pursuant to the procedure specified under rule 27(1) and 27(5), the following members have declared their intention to stand as candidates for election to the office of Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dale Flavel, the hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Clerk: — And Mr. Don Toth, the hon. member for Moosomin.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

Clerk: — In preparation for the vote, the Sergeant-at-Arms will now bring in the ballot box and the pages will distribute the list of candidates to members and post the list in the polling booths. The ballot box will then be inspected and the sealed ballots opened.

The members proceeded to cast ballots.

Clerk: — If there are any members who have not voted and wish to do so, will you please vote now.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order, please. Order in the House, please. All members having voted, the House will now recess to the call of the bells while the Clerks at the Table count the ballots.

The bells will ring for three minutes to recall members to the chambers when the results of the first ballot are ready to be announced.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

The Speaker: — The House will come to order to hear the results of the ballot.

Clerk: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to inform you that you have elected as your Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole, the hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood, Mr. Dale Flavel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, I take this opportunity to thank all members for the trust and the confidence that you have placed upon me by electing me as your Deputy Speaker.

I want to say thank you to the hon. member from Moosomin for letting his name stand and therefore making this procedure a true democratic procedure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — I look forward to working with you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of the Legislative Assembly in reducing the amount of cynicism that the public has against us as servants of the public. And in doing so, to increase the trust and the respect that the people of Saskatchewan have for this institution and for all of us.

I want to echo the words of the Premier from yesterday to say that the big victor in all of this is certainly this great institution and the democratic process.

I close by making this commitment — to do the very best that I can to carry out the duties that you have honoured me with today. And in the service of the people of Saskatchewan, I thank you for your trust and confidence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The House will now proceed to other business before orders of the day.

MOTIONS

Appointment of Deputy Chair of Committees

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Before orders of the day, by leave of the Assembly, I would move, seconded by the Deputy Premier:

That Mr. Kim Trew, member for the constituency of Regina Coronation Park, be appointed to preside as Deputy Chair of committees of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention and to the attention of this Assembly that under rule . . . or point of order, pardon me, I guess.

The Speaker: — Point of order.

Mr. Toth: — My point of order is this, Mr. Speaker, is that under rule 88(3), it is my understanding that "A Deputy Chair of Committees shall be elected at the commencement of every Legislature."

And while the Premier has put forward the name of an individual to be appointed to the Deputy Chair, I just want to remind the Assembly that the rules do state that this individual should be elected by the Assembly.

The Speaker: — I have heard . . . Order. I have heard the point of order put by the member from Moosomin and I understand what he says. I also do recognize that the tradition has been honoured over the years in this Assembly in exactly the same way that it is being presented today and I find his point of order not well taken . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Order, order. Order, order.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Annual Reports to the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day and with leave of the Assembly, I move:

That the annual reports and financial statements of the various Crown corporations and related agencies as were tabled during the twenty-second legislature and not reported upon by the Crown Corporations Committee during the legislature be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

I move that, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Reports of the Provincial Auditor to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move, by leave of the Assembly, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That the various reports of the Provincial Auditor, as tabled during the twenty-second legislature and not reported upon by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and as tabled in the present session, be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood:

That the *Public Accounts* of the province of Saskatchewan as tabled during the twenty-second legislature and not reported upon by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as submitted to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly pursuant to The Financial Administration Act, 1993, and as tabled in the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

(1130)

Referral of Retention and Disposal Schedules to the Standing Committee on Communication

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

That the retention and disposal schedules approved under The Archives Act by the Public Documents Committee be referred as tabled to the Standing Committee on Communication.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Communication

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Northcote:

That the annual report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library, as tabled during the twenty-second Legislative Assembly and not reported upon by the Standing Committee on Communication and as tabled in the present session, be referred to the Standing Committee on Communication.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Continuing Select Committee

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Regina Wascana Plains:

That members Bradley, Lingenfelter, Lorje, Kowalsky, Renaud, Whitmore, Draude, Krawetz, and Toth be constituted a continuing select committee pursuant to rule 92, with the power to call for persons, papers and records, to examine witnesses under oath, and whose duty it shall be to establish from time to time select committees with the power to call for persons, papers and records, and to examine witnesses under oath; with the power to travel and to hear testimony away from the seat of government; and that the continuing select committee will have the power to set the terms of reference for each select committee; and that each select committee shall report directly to the

Legislative Assembly from time to time.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Legislation

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under rule 19 we would propose an emergency debate on the GRIP legislation.

The Speaker: — This morning a notice under rule 19 was delivered to the Office of the Clerk to seek authorization to proceed with the priority of debate motion. The requisite two hours' notice was provided, but I note that the text of the proposed priority of debate motion required under rule 19(2) was not received as part of that notice and was in fact received after the notice deadline. I advise . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Order. I advise all hon. members to be aware that the motion text is required as part of the priority of debate request. I shall now address the matter at hand.

With regard to the importance of this issue, I believe the Leader of the Third Party has established a case that the matter does warrant urgent consideration. The Speaker is obliged, however, under rule 19(5), to pay "regard to the probability of the matter being brought before the House within reasonable time by other means."

Yesterday this Assembly adopted an order that the Speech from the Throne be taken into consideration today. I advise the Leader of the Third Party that the debate on the Address in Reply to His Honour's speech is an important opportunity for him to forward his case through amendment.

Order. I point out paragraph . . . Order. I point out paragraph 267 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th edition, page 82, which states:

Amendments to the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne are used by the Opposition for the purpose of challenging government policies or actions.

Furthermore, I submit to the Leader of the Third Party that an amendment is a more effective means of forwarding his argument because amendments to the Address in Reply are considered confidence motions.

Because the Leader of the Third Party will shortly have an opportunity to participate in the debate on the Address in Reply, I find that pursuant to rule 19(5), the matter he has raised could be brought before the Assembly within reasonable time by other means.

For this reason it is the Speaker's decision to deny the request for priority of debate.

Why is the member on his feet?

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Bills

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I rise pursuant to rule 46 to ask leave of the Assembly to engage in a debate of urgent and pressing necessity regarding the recent sending of GRIP bills to farmers. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'll ask the Leader of the Opposition to briefly put his case as to why it should be considered urgently and advise the Assembly of the content of his proposed motion.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, as a result of the immediate interest being charged as of today to those farmers, those some 12,000 farmers who have received these bills, these bills contradict a solemn promise which this government made to the farmers of this province in this House on March 31, 1995. The participants of the GRIP program relied on the word of the former minister of Agriculture and made their financial plans accordingly. Now they find that this government is going back on its word, creating financial problems for farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that priority should be given in the House today to discuss the implications of this move. I now ask for leave of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Leave not granted.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Will members come to order. I hereby table the annual report on operations of the Office of the Provincial Auditor for the year ended March 31, 1995.

I also hereby table the annual report of the Saskatchewan Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner for the year ended March 31, 1995.

In accordance with section 35 of The Members' Conflict of Interest Act, I hereby table the opinion of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner pursuant to section 29(1) of the Act respecting an inquiry in the matter of the Hon. Robert Pringle.

And finally, in accordance with section 30(5) of The Members' Conflict of Interest Act, I hereby table the opinion of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner pursuant to section 29(1) of the Act respecting an inquiry in the matter of the Hon. Carol Teichrob.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a friend who once taught a class inside the walls of the Prince Albert maximum security prison. The first day he was escorted to the classroom. When the guard left, locking the door behind him,

my friend looked at the 15 students who had done he knew not what to qualify for entrance into this school. His first words were: I'm nervous; are you? Well, Mr. Speaker, for reasons somewhat, but perhaps not totally, different, I am nervous and I wonder if you are too.

Nerves aside, I am honoured the Premier has chosen me to move the motion in support of this Speech from the Throne. I have the lucky distinction to be the first speaker of this, the second term of the Romanow government, and the first MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) to address you in your new position, Mr. Speaker — a strong assignment for a rookie, but the Premier obviously believes in the old navy tradition of throwing the new sailor overboard to see if he sinks or swims. I'm referring to myself, not to you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel especially privileged to be here in this Chamber which echoes with the history of our province. This is a new experience for me, but it is one I have shared with elected members in the British parliamentary tradition throughout the world and through the generations going back to the 13th century.

Our province is 90 years old, our legislative traditions, somewhat more mature. I am privileged and humbled to be part of this tradition, a feeling I know I share with all members.

And as members from the beginning have done, I begin my remarks by congratulating you on your election to the Speaker's chair. You have learned and demonstrated wise impartiality as caucus Chair, knowledge which I know you will transfer to your new position. My colleagues tell me we should promise to be less rowdy than in the past. Whether we keep our promise or not, I know you will preserve the order and the decorum of this Chamber with the wise firmness of your predecessors.

On June 21, the people of the new constituency of Battleford-Cut Knife elected me to be their first MLA. I thank them, and I pledge to give them the best representation I can in repayment for their confidence in me.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1145)

Ms. Murrell: — The constituency of Battleford-Cut Knife is a large, diverse area in north-west Saskatchewan, a constituency where farming, entrepreneurship, oil, and small business are integral parts of the economy. I represent people who are hard-working, creative, adaptable, and resilient — people who believe in community and cooperation. In this respect, it is a traditional Saskatchewan region.

But like Saskatchewan as a whole, there are exciting new ventures taking place because our people have the industriousness and the ingenuity that is the Saskatchewan trademark. Plans for a mineral spa, a community feedlot, and for a pelletization plant are under way. A project that I'm very excited about and which I will report on more fully is an environmentally friendly leather tannery which already has gathered interest from around the world. As the kids say, Battleford-Cut Knife is a happening place.

And it is a progressive place with progressive people who are taking the responsibility themselves for improving our quality of life. For instance, the people of Poundmaker Reserve are in the process of making their home an alcohol-free reserve. And the four other reserves in my constituency are also striving to improve living conditions. I congratulate them for their initiative.

The 4-H students of Unity and the Wilkie school division both have undertaken projects to improve the environment and conserve energy. Thirty years ago, John Kennedy said that the supreme reality of our time is the vulnerability of our planet. Our children are responding to this truth.

And as is the case throughout Saskatchewan, we have a host of volunteers who make life more amenable for the less fortunate and more rich and varied for the active. It is these support groups that build and sustain our communities. I am proud to represent this unique constituency and I thank the people for their trust.

I also thank the members from Lloydminster, North Battleford, and Rosetown-Biggar from whom I inherited many of my constituents. Because of their tireless work during the last term, the voters were kindly disposed to me. Of that I am sure. I am proud to be your neighbour and colleague.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — I suspect as well, Mr. Speaker, that my election had something to do with the record, the platform, the whole team of candidates, and the leader of the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — To the Leader of the Third Party, my neighbour to the south, I offer my congratulations for his re-election — not only his election, but his party's survival, something some pundits said was in doubt before the election. The old line about the reports of my death being greatly exaggerated certainly applies here.

To the temporary Leader of the Opposition, we look forward to constructive criticism and suggestions for viable policy alternatives.— the very honourable role of the opposition.

Finally, I feel that all of us on both sides of this House, veterans and rookies alike, have a great deal in common: the common goal of conducting the people's business to the best of our ability, mindful of their trust and expectations. We have differing views, allowing for stimulating discussion which will enable each of us to raise the concerns of our constituents. Despite our differences, we have this Assembly in common. The working out of our differences within these walls is the essence of democracy, and I look forward to this honourable and necessary exercise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — His Honour the Lieutenant Governor began yesterday by talking about a renewed mandate. I intend to

follow his lead.

Mr. Speaker, on June 21 the people of Saskatchewan gave this government a new mandate, a mandate to prepare the way into the new century. This is a pivotal time, Mr. Speaker. Once every thousand years all the numbers on the calendar change, a very significant milestone on the odometer of human development. We can approach this marker fearfully, or we can come to it positively and enthusiastically. In Saskatchewan we have chosen the latter course. This throne speech, which I am proud to support, sets the direction for the first lap of our second term.

The budget we will hear from the Minister of Finance in a few days will outline the means by which the race will be run. And, Mr. Speaker, the achievements of the New Democratic Party Government of Saskatchewan in the past four years have put us in proper shape to prepare for the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — As His Honour said, we are tackling our challenges, building in a manner consistent with our long established values.

This is a new session, my first. And although I have been a long-time enthusiastic member of my party, I do not want to use this first opportunity in this House reliving the past, except for this: the election last June was about trust. It was about record. It was about vision. We put our record on the line. And, Mr. Speaker, that was the easiest thing I've ever had to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — We reminded the people that in 1991 we promised to put our financial house in order. We did that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — We reminded voters that we promised to get medicare off of the sick bed, and we did that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — We said that we would restore open, accountable, efficient government, and we did that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — I am told that the Premier often waves the election card from 1991 at the members opposite, and checks off our campaign promises one by one. In 1995 we ran on our record because we kept our promises from 1991.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — And the people trusted us to keep our promises again. The result of the election was the largest second-term victory in the history of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — That's what keeping your word will do.

I mention the past four years to remind us that the people's choice was not an accident. Our success in the past leads to our eager ability to meet the future.

Mr. Speaker, when I learned I was to give this speech, I read the last mover's speech eloquently presented by the current member from Weyburn-Big Muddy I was particularly impressed by her mention of the Boundary Commission of 1874 and how it demonstrated many of the virtues which have come to typify our province and our people.

In 1874 the Boundary Commission went about its business of marking the border under incredibly harsh conditions. As the member from Weyburn said, they were quiet, unassuming, unheralded, and thorough. And they defined our nation for us, the line that separates us from the more flamboyant, more individualistic, more violent society to the south.

We are continuing in that tradition because, like the commission of the last century, we are quietly doing a job — a job with a plan, a purpose, and a foundation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — The job is to govern with insight, compassion, ingenuity, and wisdom befitting the people we represent. The plan is to rethink, review, and retool every aspect of government — every department, every policy, every program. We will make them work better and more efficiently. We have no intentions of driving into the new century on a Red River cart.

The foundation is those tried and tested values which have guided the people of this province from the beginning, the values best defined by the second great commandment which simply says: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — And, Mr. Speaker, the job and the plan are to be carried out in cooperation and in consultation with the people. We whipped the deficit together. Everyone helped. Everyone sacrificed.

As we have already seen, we are preparing for the new century together. We have recently been engaged in the largest public consultation process in the history of Saskatchewan. It was an exercise in listening. We held public meetings, electronic town halls, enlisted responses through an 800 telephone number, and through that exotic new tool of technology, the Internet — all of this in addition to the normal daily contact we all try to keep with our constituents. This was effective and useful consultation. We are preparing — and the people of Saskatchewan are preparing with us — the direction we should take.

Here's what they told us. They told us they want an emphasis on economic development and jobs. And they want education and training to prepare students for the future. They told us they want social programs that work. They told us they want sustainable health care. They told us they want us to continue making government frugal and effective.

And we listened. The proof that we listened is in the throne speech and in the actions we have already undertaken. For example we know that our ability to deliver the kinds of social programs we desire depends on a vibrant economy. We also know that the economy does not come from government but rather is facilitated by government, hence the *Partnership for Growth* announced last week by the Minister of Economic Development along with the cooperative business and community leaders.

It is important to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that the announcement was made together in partnership: no one acting alone, all acting together for the good of all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — The opportunities for growth are good, and the response has been favourable even in our naysaying media. The partnership announces that this government will be doing what it should do, and that is cultivate a positive business environment which will allow all partners to build on their economic strengths, to help nurture small businesses that are responsible for creating most of the new jobs in Saskatchewan. We will reduce regulations which impact business without relinquishing the protection our progressive labour legislation gives to workers. We're striking a balance, Mr. Speaker.

The key to economic development is local control. That is why the *Partnership for Growth* will make regional economic development authorities the focal point for development in their local communities.

It is a truism that we are a trading province in a trading country. Increased trade will be a key to our growth — now and into the 21st century. Therefore we are establishing the Saskatchewan trade and export partnership to help our exporting firms develop and expand their markets, thereby creating more jobs and wealth for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — *Partnership for Growth* also includes plans to build on our strengths in agriculture, forestry, mining, energy, culture, tourism, and information technology. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that this partnership will create the new jobs that are necessary for our continued growth and prosperity.

We are confident of growth because, as I said earlier, we have a solid record of economic good news to build on; 1995 was a good year, and we expect more of the same. In the first nine months of 1995, retail sales in Saskatchewan increased by more than 5 per cent to \$4.7 billion.

Oil and gas production increased by around 9 per cent each. And in agriculture more than 23 million tonnes of grain, oil seed and specialty crops were harvested. There was real cash, not grant money, in the pockets of farmers, and we all know the ripple effect in our economy when there is cash on the farm.

As that last figure indicates — and this is something we all know — no matter how much we diversify, no matter how

many new industries we develop, Saskatchewan's economy will always be driven by agriculture. We have the land. We have the farmers. We have the initiative. And, Mr. Speaker, in agriculture too, we are redeveloping and redefining partners to prepare our traditional industry for transition into the future.

Agriculture today faces many challenges from new technology, from differing consumer tastes, from transportation pressures, from environmental problems and so on, all of them deserving of discussion by itself. Here too we have developed a strategy with rural residents that grows directly out of consultation. That strategy is called *Agriculture 2000*, a direction for the future of Saskatchewan agriculture and food industry, and it goes hand in hand with the *Partnership for Growth*.

(1200)

This plan focuses on diversification, on secondary processing, and on long-term research to develop new ideas, new products, and better crops. Agricultural biotechnology, a phrase that didn't even exist a few years ago, has tremendous potential for all of us.

A few years ago I was listening to a radio call in show. The guest was the leader of the opposition, now our Premier. I remember one caller who said, and I quote, what will you give me and other farmers if you are elected? Mr. Speaker, that is a dangerous and defeatist attitude, an attitude that I believe is rare in Saskatchewan at any time and practically gone now. We are developing an agriculture policy of real work, real production, real contributions, real protection, and genuine partnership. That's the Saskatchewan way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — As I said earlier, the people said we must have social programs that work, that suit the times. Here too we have responded. Our social assistance program was established more than 30 years ago. During that time it has worked well. But times have changed. Unemployment across Canada is substantially higher. Unemployment insurance has shrunk. Case-loads have increased, and the problems of the unemployed or under employed have become more difficult.

We had two options: the Alberta option or the humane option. We could have had the one-time expense of a bus ticket, or we could redesign the system in light of current realities so that those caught temporarily in the net would not be condemned forever.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — We chose option two. As former New York governor Mario Cuomo said, we will never curse or castigate our way out of the welfare program. Throwing people off the rolls might make welfare itself go away, but it won't make the problem go anywhere because the real problem is poverty and the real solution is producing jobs and opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — The discussion paper, *Redesigning Social*

Assistance, recently released by the minister, prepares us to do just that, train recipients for jobs and give them an opportunity at the same time that it increases their responsibility to themselves.

There are several proposals which extend the traditional applications of welfare. The end result, we believe, will be reducing a system that keeps too many capable people alive but at the poverty level. That way lies hopelessness, and that's not good.

We don't want to perpetuate a system; we want to eliminate it as much as possible. Punishing the unfortunate is not the answer. Nor do we need more band-aid solutions. Unlike the federal government which seems bent on abandoning its responsibility to social programs, this government has the courage to design a program that is compassionate, challenging, coherent, cost effective, and credible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — I want to say just a word about health care and wellness. I know that much of the last term was taken up with what Tommy Douglas called the second stage of medicare and we are well on the way to implementing the necessary reforms which quite literally saved this most treasured Saskatchewan institution. The health board elections have taken place. And even though there are growing pains, health care is now in the hands of the local people who know the needs of their area. That, Mr. Speaker, is the essence of democracy. Only a government dedicated in practice and not only in word to the ideals of democracy would dare put it into the hands of the people — this most basic instrument of the people. And while we listen to the members opposite decry the health boards, I can flatly say that no government now or in the future will dare try to take back control from the people.

Compare our commitment to the health care to that of the federal government. What do we make, Mr. Speaker, of a questionnaire sent out last fall by Saskatchewan MP (Member of Parliament), Mr. Goodale? He asks his constituents the following questions. Number one, if individuals are willing to pay for health services, should they be able to access medical treatment ahead of those who are either unwilling or unable to pay? Number two, should user fees be introduced to help offset the cost of medicare? Number three, should premiums be re-established as an additional source of revenue? And most frightening, Mr. Speaker, is the last question, number four, do you support the five basic principles set out in the Canada Health Act — universality, portability, accessibility, comprehensiveness, and public administration?

Why did he ask those questions? What possible reason could he have had to call into question this fundamental institution of Canadian life? And if he sent out these questions, did Liberal MPs across the country also send them out? I don't read commitment from that document. I read a government desperately looking for a way out or another way out of its responsibilities.

The obvious fact is this. Liberals are looking for a way to sabotage medicare. New Democrats have found a way to save

it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, I could name other examples of cooperation and consultation, of how this government is not leading, not following, but going together with the people into the future, in education and training, in government reform, in municipal streamlining, in fiscal management, and in numerous other ways.

Certainly there are voices today that say government should absent itself from all meaningful activity. That government is an enemy of the people. We reject that opinion, believing as we always have, that government is the instrument of the people — a tool like any other that can be used for good or ill, depending on who wields it. We believe in cooperation, not in desertion.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the world is changing, perhaps faster than you and I might like, but it is changing. We are having to live with computers, freeze-dried peanuts, the 500-channel universe, Internet, and rap music — well, maybe not rap.

You might be familiar with the comic strip Calvin and Hobbes. We are just learning to function in an economic world which resembles a huge game of Calvin ball. A game in which the rules change with every play, and no one knows the rules except the person who makes them, until the next person changes them on the next play, and so on.

We now live in an ongoing game of Calvin ball. Deregulation, realignment of populations, information technology, the global economy — these are the buzz words of today. We can resist today and deny the future, or we can use our traditional values as a base to come up with new solutions to a new age.

These solutions are not the sole possession of any single group — private, corporate or government. We know that, and I believe the actions I have just described prove it. Together, in the past four years, we the people have turned this province around. Together in the next four years we will see our province realize its economic potential while it enhances its social framework.

Mr. Speaker, I have come to this Legislative Assembly as a member of my party because I like many other members, have been inspired and motivated by the exceptional men and women before me; by the dedicated work of all members of all parties who served before us, some of whom we will remember in a few days.

As well, I am in the debts of my parents who taught me the fundamental principles of caring and sharing by the example of their own lives. I am proud of my personal and my public antecedents. I am thankful for the society they built for me. Because of them, Saskatchewan is the best place in the best country in the world to live.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — I believe we are all responsible to do for our

children what our forebears did for us. I believe we should leave for them a Saskatchewan as good or better as the one we were given. We can do no less.

Therefore, because I believe we are on the right path to economic plenty and social generosity, and because I believe this throne speech outlines a workable and democratic plan to keep us on that path, I move, seconded by the member from Regina South:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable John E.N. Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address you today and in particular to have had this opportunity, not to have simply gone directly to the vote.

It is a pleasure today to rise as a member of this Legislative Assembly. I am particularly pleased to have been asked by the Premier to second the motion in response to the throne speech. To be permitted this honour on the occasion of my first address to this Assembly is in fact very humbling.

It's a unique privilege to be elected by one's peers to serve in this House. It's a unique privilege to be able to speak on their behalf and to vote on the legislation as they desire.

For four generations Saskatchewan and its leaders have gathered in this chamber to debate the issues that define our province. I am particularly humbled to be here in one of the truly historic assemblies of our nation, for it was here that many of the greatest debates to shape this century have occurred.

These debates have profoundly changed and defined the Canadian experience and in the process they've helped to define our country. Saskatchewan has been well served by its elected representatives; however, as the Speaker mentioned yesterday, there's no doubt politicians today are viewed poorly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on being elected to your position within this House. I know that you'll do well in discharging your duties.

I also want to thank you for your words yesterday to this Assembly and indeed for your advice to me personally over the past several months that we've served together as colleagues.

I don't want to draw you into the debate, but I do want to say

that I think you were right when you say there is broad cynicism in our community. And I guess after how many decades of scandal and disgrace by those who've used their office for personal gain or greed, after how many court cases, after how many lectures by the unelected elite and the media telling us that we are ineffective and inept, is it any wonder that there is cynicism in our population.

(1215)

Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that change will only occur when people are presented with real alternatives. The stereotypes can seem to become real. I don't believe that to be true. I believe that we can change the system. I believe each of us is here to change the system. And I want to join with you in doing that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, your comments yesterday in many ways mirrored the reasons I decided to enter politics.

When I was running for my party's nomination I was frequently asked two questions. First of all, why would I want to take a pay cut to go into politics . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It is a good question. And why, as a young man, would I want to give up my position in the civil service to take on a role in public service . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Not exactly the most encouraging response, thank you.

I guess the answer was relatively simple. I decided to run for office, I decided to take a pay cut, I decided to give up my career in the civil service for the simple reason I still believe there is no greater honour than being elected to serve your peers in the public.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a family where we saw the good the government could do. We saw that government had a role to play in doing as a province and as a community what we could not do individually.

Both my mother and father have been politically active, not because their families were but because they too sought change. It's with some pride that I stood in this Assembly with my dad the day I took the oath of allegiance, because the first campaign I really remember was one that he fought almost 20 years ago in Kindersley.

At that point he was fighting against a would be Liberal leader named Neil McMillan and a soon to be Finance minister named Bob Andrew. Although he managed to beat Mr. McMillan, he was not quite so successful against Mr. Andrew.

It was a pleasure some 20 years later — or almost 20 years later — to be campaigning again with him. And even more pleasurable that this time not only did we win but that I too was able to join him as the second Thomson to defeat a would be Liberal leader.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — There's so many of those would-be's.

Mr. Thomson: — There are a few of them still about. While my dad was the person in the family who sought elected office, it was in fact my mother who taught me most about party politics. She was the one who served on the governing council of the party and who would drag me off to party meetings to sit and to vote and to colour. Actually I guess even at that young age I would have been well qualified to be a member of some of the opposition caucuses.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, in our party we strive for more. As I introduced to the Assembly earlier today, I am particularly pleased to have my stepfather, Ed Leason, seated in the galleries today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Ed is really one of my closest friends and is perhaps one of the people who has helped to shape my view of politics most. He's taught me that this is not in fact a debating society. He's taught me that there is more to politics than simply being a spectator sport.

Rather, he has served to remind me that change is brought about by people. That the forces in our society that are important are not necessarily the forces of history, but the forces of biography. I think that those are important things for us to remember.

I agree with that assessment because Saskatchewan for generations has been shaped by the vision of its leaders. From our first premier, Walter Scott, to perhaps our greatest premier, Tommy Douglas, the 20th century has been shaped by the people who have served in this Assembly.

An Hon. Member: — We've got a great Premier now.

Mr. Thomson: — I'm coming to him in a minute.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — If I was a couple of rows closer I would come to him quicker.

For those of you who have served in this Assembly before, you know the importance of the debates and the discussions that go on here because you have seen the results. Four years ago, Saskatchewan stood on the edge of the abyss. Talk of insolvency was at hand. Expectations of give-aways and greed continued to be fuelled by the opposition, and the province stood divided on which course to take.

On the eve of one of the most important sessions in this legislature's history, the government presented its vision for rebuilding our province. In moving the speech in reply to the throne speech at that session, my colleague and current bench-mate, the member from Meadow Lake, stood here to caution the province on the arduous journey ahead. In so doing

he said, Rome was not built in a day; Saskatchewan was not bankrupted in a week, and it would not be rebuilt in a month.

Wise words. As we are aware, he was of course right. It had taken eight years and \$8 billion of taxpayer borrowed money for the Tories to turn Saskatchewan's economy from one of bread basket to basket case. And it took four hard-fought years to bring it back from the brink of bankruptcy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — In 1992 the government set in motion a variety of initiatives that would put Saskatchewan on the road to recovery. After being stalled by two terms of tax and spend Tories, in 1992 we started to see tax relief for business. We started to see tax relief for consumers. And this has resulted in a retail economy today that is envied across Canada.

The jobs plan introduced in that session, *The Partnership for Renewal*, spurred on renewal and resulted in an improving economy. After a decade of jobs created on the false economy of unprofitable oil upgraders, high risk insurance companies, and bloated bureaucracies, we saw small business start to hire again. After 10 years of economic upheaval, we saw 10,000 new jobs created. And after a decade of out-migration and job losses, Saskatchewan people began to come home.

Four years ago you came together with the objective of rebuilding our province and once again restoring honesty, integrity, and confidence to government. Today we see the results of your initiatives. Today we have a balanced budget. Today we have a climate for job growth and investment in our economy. Today we have a health care system that's built on wellness, not illness. Today we have a debt that's shrinking. Today we have a province that's united. And today we have hope.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, these changes were not lost on the people of Saskatchewan, and that's why on June 21 they returned this government with the largest second term mandate afforded any party in the history of our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — I don't either want to be particularly partisan or provocative today. It's not my style. But let me offer this observation of that campaign in 1995. In many ways, I think the campaign was a campaign of clear choices. It offered a choice between an NDP government that stood by its convictions or a PC opposition that stood by its convicts. It offered the choice of an NDP government that would offer change and leadership or a Liberal opposition that simply offered to change their leadership.

Mr. Speaker, change is an important part of what we're here for today. I know that the Liberals agree with me when I say that they too want change. They're prepared to change their party membership. They're prepared to change sides of the House. They're prepared to change leaders.

But that's not really the change I'm speaking of. When I look at the House today, I have to admit I'm a little bit confused. I look across at a Liberal opposition that's leaderless. On the other hand, I look at a Liberal leader that's oppositionless. I'm new to this, but I think I'm starting to catch on to how the system on the other side of the floor works.

Mr. Speaker, as we can see, all parties support change of one kind or another. Our party supports real, substantive change that will move Saskatchewan forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — The voters of Regina South, like voters in 70 per cent of this province's ridings, voted to stay the course of real change. They opted for the kind of change that Saskatchewan has had over the past four years: a reversal of fortunes that saw our jobs increase, saw retail sales rebound, that saw a balanced budget plan introduced; and, even better, a balanced budget passed. It saw a new balance struck between business and labour that recognized the needs for profit and the needs for jobs. Saskatchewan saw real change during this government's first term.

In many ways, Mr. Speaker, I believe Regina South is representative of the changes we have seen in Saskatchewan politics. Once the bastion of establishment Liberalism, today Regina South represents a changing, more modern Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Where once long-established Liberal families ruled the riding, today ours is a community of young families. It's a community of small businessmen. It's a community of seniors. Regina South remains one of this province's most affluent and confident communities, but it's a confidence that's built on compassion and, dare I say, common sense.

It recognizes that we need a balanced approach to leadership; that government provides labour with jobs; it provides consumers with cash flow; and business with customers. That's the business we're in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I say that the days of give-aways and greed are quickly declining. Instead we're starting to see a new self-reliance emerging in our province. As New Democrats, we can be proud of those changes.

But we too know the value of change within our party. You might remember that last session, this particular spot in the Assembly was held by the former member from Regina South. And while there are many similarities between us, not the least of which are our good looks and charm, I tend to be a little bit younger. And in fact Regina South has again opted for distinction in this Assembly. Last term it was represented by the oldest member to serve in the Assembly; this year it's represented by the youngest.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that change is testament to the strong leadership and the future-oriented vision of the leader of this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — It took a while. Not only, under his leadership, have we seen 42 New Democrats return to this House, but we've also seen a strong contingent of first-time members. In fact six of us in this side are serving for the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I said I did not want to be particularly partisan and provocative, and perhaps I've failed. However, I want to make one further comment about the campaign in Regina South.

As you know, the political pundits said I would not win. They said that given the option of a middle-aged lawyer from the Liberal Party and an unknown 27-year-old New Democrat, the people would choose the old-line Liberal. Mr. Speaker, they were wrong. People in Regina South rejected the cynicism in the politics-as-usual approach presented by the Liberal Party and the media.

There are those in the province today that still don't get it. There are people that believe that politics today is still about special-interest groups. That it is still about power. It's not. It is about people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but one of the reasons people are cynical about politics is for the very reasons that they were told a Liberal should be standing here and not me. They were told by the media and others that you need to be a lawyer. They were told you need to be a Liberal. They were told you need to be part of the elite.

Well let me tell you this: after Regina South on June 21, 1995 there should be no doubt that politics today is all about people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — My colleague from Saskatoon says the times are changing and in fact that is true. This is all about change. People want change. People want to be listened to and people want to be represented.

During our consultation process, people told us they wanted change. They told us they wanted the government to live within its means. They wanted us to restore fairness to Saskatchewan's politics and our public policies. They wanted to restore balance between rural and urban communities. They wanted to establish a balance between young families and seniors. They wanted to establish a balance between business and labour.

(1230)

They told us that high spending, high debt, and high taxes were not the way of the future. They told us they wanted lower spending, lower debt, lower taxes. They told us they wanted change.

Well, Mr. Speaker, nowhere is that desire for change more prevalent than in the new generation of Saskatchewan people who today are starting their families and joining the workforce. In large part that's because of this party and this government's ability to deal with the complex issues of the economy while making government simpler and smaller; that this new generation, my generation, strongly supports this government's agenda.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — I think in part that's because we're a generation that knows we're not likely to see the standard of living our parents have enjoyed. I think we know we're not likely to have the opportunity to get a job and stay with it until retirement. Our generation's unlikely to know the same benefits at retirement that seniors today do. One thing we know for sure though is that the bills for decades of over-billed, under-funded government are coming to us with our names on it. We're a generation that's concerned about managing the affairs carefully today. We want to ensure that tomorrow there is some degree of hope.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there's good reason for this concern. On Monday *The Globe and Mail* reported on an article done by The Institute for Research on Public Policy that showed members of my generation will pay almost \$300,000 more in taxes over their lifetime than they'll ever receive in services. That's not new services, that's simply the cost of maintaining the current services.

Those costs have been built up by previous governments that have simply desired to spend. They have desired to build bureaucracies. They have desired to build and make big government.

An Hon. Member: — With no purpose.

Mr. Thomson: — With no purpose. The Premier is right — with no purpose.

I'm part of a generation that'll soon assume full responsibility, fiscally and morally, for maintaining the social security system that people have come to depend on. That's why the changes being contemplated this session are so important.

The legislative and budget changes that'll be introduced in this Assembly this session will help to provide Saskatchewan with a firm foundation to move forward into the new century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, these changes that have been announced in the throne speech will help to create jobs. They will re-establish a system of labour force development that meets the needs of people and the needs of the market. And they will also continue to reform government at all levels in

recognition that while there are different levels of government, there is still only one taxpayer.

As a young person and part of a new generation of New Democrats, I'm pleased to support this blueprint for a better Saskatchewan. In so doing I want to share with you my views on how this plan will help us ready ourselves for the new century.

Let me talk first about our jobs agenda. There was a time when Saskatchewan's economy was relatively simple. It was supported by dry land farming. It was a time when townships actually contained towns, when land was affordable and crops sustainable. It was a time when all jobs related back to the land in one way or another. And we've built on that foundation and we've expanded.

Our economy from that time has been built to not only deal with the staples of growing food but to providing shelter, the materials for shelter and fuels for heat. We have been the hinterland of Canada's economic engines for generations. Today, however, we stand poised to enter a new era of growth and expansion in this province. Reforms undertaken by our government in the first four years of its mandate, called the *Partnership for Renewal*, have provided the basis for rebuilding an economy better suited to match the new global economy.

And as a result, we've seen remarkable growth. While the rest of Canada has seen a jobless recovery from the recession, we've seen job growth. While the rest of Canada has seen retail sales slow, we've seen them grow. While the rest of Canada has seen record business and personal bankruptcies, we've seen them decline.

In short, the *Partnership for Growth . . . Partnership for Renewal* saw a growth in profits, growth in jobs, growth in the economy and new industries, and a growth in consumer confidence.

Today we seek to build on that agenda. In doing so, our government intends to outline an agenda for growth. This new agenda, this new plan, will highlight the importance of the new sectors of our economy. It will provide new opportunities for business to enter into new ventures that are now just emerging in the world economy. And it will provide us with an opportunity to add value to our already existing commodities.

Our jobs agenda will continue to be built around partnerships. It will continue to be built around prosperity and it will continue to be built around people.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, our economy is built in several key sectors, including agriculture, forestry, mining, engineering, energy, and information. Because of our commodity-based economy, we have been able to build opportunities for people throughout Saskatchewan on a regional basis.

We've started the process of regional economic development. This is a process that will allow individual people in local communities to make the decisions about their own future.

We remain committed to providing the new tools of a new

economy. We remain committed to ensuring that local communities are able to participate in a changing global environment. This includes a commitment by our colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, who proposes a new trade development corporation. This in turn will help innovative Saskatchewan products get to Saskatchewan's markets.

It includes a commitment to new tools like the Internet, that the Premier has noted our province is one of only two in all of Canada to offer universal access to businesses and citizens through our phone company.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — The Internet is more than simply a fancy telephone. It is in fact an ability for us, no matter where you are in Saskatchewan, to be anywhere you want to be in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — It includes a commitment . . . our proposals include a commitment by the Minister of Finance to maintain a balanced budget plan; a plan that over the past four years has provided for tax relief for selected businesses, that has promoted job growth in new industries like telecommunications, and a commitment on behalf of the energy sector that has helped Saskatchewan, not Alberta, lead the country in the renewal of our oil sector through new technologies like horizontal drilling.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — We've seen responsible development in our northern mines. And through better representations by government we are seeing better opportunities for Northerners to work in them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, our economy is built on the strength of our commodities: oil, natural gas, uranium, agriculture, forestry, information, and energy. But there is one final commodity that is important for us to remember, and that commodity is hope.

Our plan for economic development is built on a single, simple principle. It is built on the understanding that through individual initiative and cooperative action this province's economy has grown over 90 years. And it is on that same principle of individual initiative and cooperative action that we will ensure that this economy grows for another 90 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — It is because of that understanding, Mr. Speaker, that this government will introduce a solid and secure plan to help Saskatchewan's economy grow. It's a plan that will target scarce resources to leverage maximum benefits. It's a problem that will . . . it is a process that will target tax relief to provide for job growth. It'll reduce government regulation and spur on innovation. And it will provide infrastructure to help the emerging technologies move from the microscope to the market-place.

Our plan for economic growth is a plan for job growth. We know that it's more than just profits that make our economy strong — it is people. That's why we're committed to providing a made-in-Saskatchewan strategy for workplace training. That's why we've taken the first steps in this regard by establishing a Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training.

I am a strong supporter of this move. I believe education must be about more than just learning. We need a comprehensive skills training program that includes universities, the technical colleges, and local business. We need to develop an education system that returns us to the focus on accessibility, affordability, and accountability.

The system we have today is antiquated. It's redundant and it's unresponsive. It is permeated by massive overlaps in some areas and huge gaps in others. It's a system that's come to represent complacency rather than scholarship excellence and achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I say this not to be critical of those who are involved in our post-secondary sector. As you are likely aware, I too have for many years worked in that sector. I served four years on the University of Saskatchewan senate. I spent five years on their academic council and spent a term on the university's board of governors. During that time I joined with many others in that senate, including the member for Lloydminster, in arguing for change.

I'm a firm believer that the system must change to recognize the facts of the modern information age.

Gone are the days of Ivy League institutions, isolated from markets the graduates compete in. I say gone are the days of students being able to earn their tuition by working part time in the summer. They simply don't exist. And gone are the days when we can afford a system that is more focused on academic meritocracy than on accreditation and marketability.

We must change the academic system, not by subjugating academic freedoms, but by subjecting an antiquated system of governance to the realities of the modern economy.

An Hon. Member: — Sounds like a Meadow Lake quote.

Mr. Thomson: — It could be a Meadow Lake quote, but it's not. It's direct from Regina South.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments about the future of our province. I believe that students are in fact a vital part of our changing economy. They're the people who are prepared to forgo the short-term earnings in order to achieve longer-term benefits in our economy and to provide jobs and opportunity. They're the people who have hopes and who seek opportunity. And our academic institutions are failing them. For all the opportunities education presents people with, it is still unattainable by many.

I find it distressing that women continue to be under-represented in our universities, that parents are under-represented, that aboriginal people are under-represented, and

that the poor are under-represented. The reason for this is that we see rising tuition, we see expanded course lengths, we see increased entrance requirements. And I would argue, for the Tories in the crowd, that we see a law of diminishing returns.

No longer does a degree guarantee you a job. No longer does it guarantee you a decent wage; no longer does it even guarantee you the security of knowing you'll be able to pay off your student loan.

That is the product of the system we have today. The result is that rather than having a system of education that supports growth and jobs and industry, we have an industry of education.

Our universities and technical colleges provide Saskatchewan with a remarkable opportunity for economic advancement. Take, for example, the University of Regina. This university is among the best in Canada in a number of areas. Unlike its Ivy League counterparts, it has pioneered in providing co-op education programs that pair students with business. It provides real opportunities to apply your academic education in a real workplace environment.

Its College of Engineering is one of the most advanced in western Canada in the area of software engineering, and it's providing Saskatchewan with a foothold in the new information age. We have software engineering in Saskatchewan because we have the University of Regina. Because we have the University of Regina, we have companies like ISM (Information Systems Management Corporation) and CDSL (Co-operators Data Services Limited) located here. These are the examples of government policy, through its post-secondary sector, supporting the economy. They're examples of us using technology transfer to move technology from the microscope to the market-place. They demonstrate the potential our universities hold.

As such, we must find ways to improve them. We must create real centres of excellence — excellence in all areas — education, economic development, and employment upgrading. That's the challenge this government is presented with.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of where the reforms lead us, we must ensure that we remain vigilant in ensuring that accessibility to the students, to employers, and to taxpayers is maintained. We must ensure the system remains affordable and accountable as well to these people.

Mr. Speaker, education reform at the post-secondary level can be a cornerstone of our economic development. It can provide us with improved linkages between our labour force and our labour market. And it can provide us with the opportunity to ensure that all people in Saskatchewan, regardless of race, of gender, or of economic advantage, have the opportunity to contribute to renewal of our province.

If we decide to forgo meaningful education reform, the type of meaningful reform that will be presented in this session, whether it's because it's politically unpopular or politically unpalatable, I say then that the decision has been made that we are confident the institutions and laws that governed the 12th century are the same ones that can guide us into the 21st.

I think that that is an ill-founded decision. This government will be providing you with a plan for leadership and vision and growth.

(1245)

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan stands on the edge of a new century. For most of the past 50 years, Saskatchewan has been governed by CCF-NDP (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) administrations that have firmly established Saskatchewan on the cutting edge of the Canadian experience. Saskatchewan people have again chosen to support this CCF-NDP tradition as we make choices over the next four years that'll shape our entry into the new century.

The changes our government is proposing in building a climate for jobs and economic growth, in reforming and modernizing our education system, in protecting the future of our families through a balanced policy of fair taxation, fiscal responsibility and reforms to our social programs, these are the changes that'll ensure that the new century is Saskatchewan's century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — In closing, Mr. Speaker, permit me to say that as part of a new generation of New Democrats in this Assembly, I am proud to second the motion by the member from Battleford-Cut Knife

I am proud to serve in a government that is led by one of the most experienced and innovative Canadians in our time. And I'm proud to be part of the great social experiment called Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin my remarks on the reply to the throne speech by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker as well. I'm sure you'll hold the institution in high honour, and we'll help you do that, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to congratulate the mover and seconder of the throne speech. Being new members, you know, it was rather interesting to listen to them begin debate in the House today. It's quite an experience. I barely recall when I first did my maiden speech, and I do congratulate them.

But I found it most interesting listening to the seconder in particular, the member for Regina South. You know he made some comments about standing up for convictions and the how the public's rather cynical. He talked about real change. And the only real change I saw really from that member is from the election, which he referred to on many occasions, was his position on the Plains Health Centre, and I'm sure we'll have lots of time to get into that.

Real change, Mr. Member, is not changing your mind; it's doing things, you know, proactively for the economy and such.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Come to due order. Thank you, and I'll recognize the hon. member from Wood River.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for bringing them to order. I also heard them talk about the fact that what people have been telling them and what people have been telling the member from Regina South in the election was in fact they wanted lower taxes and such, and I'll get into that more on Monday. I would like him to take the weekend though and maybe contact the Minister of Finance and just bring her up to speed on that, given her remarks the other day in the news.

But getting right to the point of what was and what wasn't in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, I see that that on the first page it talks about *Preparing for a New Century — Making Choices for Today and Tomorrow*. But I think to get a real good understanding of where we're going in the future, one has to judge them by where they've come from in the past. And that's where we're going to talk about some of the choices that they have made in the past. And those are the ones I think that will come around to haunt them more than not. Those are going to be choices of how it's affected their government, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, we don't see from their choices that they've had a lot of effect that the other people have had, where their cabinet is as big as ever, they're still continuing with policies of Crown tendering for their friends, continuing with patronage. And nobody knows that better than the member from Regina South, who of course was on the receiving end of that patronage.

But yet when we look at some of the choices that have affected the people out there, the people of the province that really would like to see some changes, the change that they're looking for though, is not to have to give up their hospitals, not to have to give up some of the services out in the rural areas, the SaskPower offices and their rural underground programs. Those are the type of things that they want to see changed from that government.

But, Mr. Speaker, on Monday we'll get into a lot more of the discussion on choices and the breaking of promises. But, Mr. Speaker, I think given what has transpired earlier today and the fact that I'm sure there's farmers all around this province that would like to have access to some of the members opposite to explain why they took some of the actions they did today, and refusing to debate something as important as what was put before the government today, I would move adjournment of debate on the special order of the throne speech.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:53 p.m.