

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Osika:** — I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to present petitions of names from responsible firearm owners from across the province. And I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly will be pleased to challenge Bill C-68 in court, refuse to allow the federal government to take over enforcement in Saskatchewan, and not allow the implementation of Bill C-68 in Saskatchewan while the Bill is being challenged in court.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petitions that I have here today are from White City; many from Regina. In fact I see many from the constituency of Regina South and Elphinstone.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased as well this afternoon to present a petition on behalf of people regarding the SaskPower issue. I'll just quickly read the prayer for you:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until an all-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.

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners come from all across Saskatchewan, and they are too numerous to count. And I am pleased to present it on their behalf.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Simpson, from Craven, from Saskatchewan Beach. They are

from all over Saskatchewan — Piapot Reserve. And I ask that you accept this, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Lumsden, Sedley, and throughout Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from such places as Bulyea, Sifton, Regina, and many other communities.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petitions are primarily from Vibank, but they are also from Moose Jaw, Regina, White City.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions of names throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the Regina area.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, from Watrous, from Lumsden, from Saskatoon, and from Moose Jaw. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Kipling, Holdfast, Chamberlain, just to name a few; Moose Jaw as well. Thank you.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that 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.

These petitions come from Carievale, Manor, Carnduff area of my constituency and also from the North Battleford area, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present them today.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition I wish to present to this Assembly. And I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that 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.

And these petitions are signed by individuals from the Kelliher, Leross area of the province. Thank you.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition I'd like to present and I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and to 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 a number of pages here and they basically all come from the town of Kelliher.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present several pages of petitions signed by people, that are jammed full of names, who are considering the need for the prayer as follows to be considered:

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.

Mostly from the Kindersley area of the province, Mr. Speaker.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre; and

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to cause the government to reverse its decision to route Highway No. 16 through the village of Borden; and

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates; and

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement.

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 11 ask the government the following questions:

To the ministers in charge of Social Services and the Office of the Rentalsman: (1) is there any limit to the number of security deposits issued to social assistance recipients; and (2) how much money is owed to the Department of Social Services for reissued security deposit overpayments?

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

To the minister responsible for SaskTel: have the pay telephones that have been removed from rural south-west areas such as Robsart, Vidora, and Govenlock been replaced; what is the reason for removing the only pay telephones available in the aforementioned areas that have no cell coverage and are located in the heart of the oil and gas industry; how many pay telephones have been removed from rural Saskatchewan over the past six months, and

what was the reason for the removal of these pay telephones?

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of the legislature, the members of the Saskatchewan Landlords Association who Mr. Calvert and I met with and Ms. Lorje this morning: Bonnye Moncrief, who is the president, and Wilf Hample and Orest Rebryna and Al Kostyna, and our two friends from Moose Jaw, and I don't know their names. Welcome to the legislature.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — I would like to add my welcome to the individuals in your gallery today and outline the names of all of the guests visiting our legislature. Yes indeed, Bonnye Moncrief is the president of the Saskatchewan Landlords Association; she's from Saskatoon. Wilf Hample is a director from Saskatoon, as is Jim Wolfe from Saskatoon. Orest Rebryna has travelled all the way from Prince Albert today to visit with the hon. ministers on this important issue. Shirley Barnsley and Violet Paré have joined us from Moose Jaw, and Al Kostyna is from Saskatoon.

I would very much appreciate everyone welcoming them once again.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members of the official opposition would too like to welcome the members from the Saskatchewan Landlords Association. Bonnye Moncrief, the president of the Saskatchewan Landlords Association; please stand, Bonnie. Al Kostyna, director of landlords association, Saskatoon. Wilf Hample, director, and Jim Wolfe, director of the landlords association, Saskatoon. Orest Rebryna from Prince Albert; Violet Paré, member from Moose Jaw; and Shirley Barnsley, member from Moose Jaw.

We welcome you and we appreciate having you here with us today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We too, through you, would like to take the opportunity to welcome Bonnye Moncrief and her delegation to the Assembly. We're happy to have met with these folks a couple of weeks ago and we sincerely hope that your journey here will help you in your quest seeking fairness from our democratic process. Welcome.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Lorje:** — Not to belabour too fine a point, but I would also like to welcome the members from the Saskatchewan Landlords Association. I won't introduce them individually since they've already been introduced two or three times. I do want to welcome you to Regina. I was very pleased to have met with you this morning. I apologize that I had to leave the meeting early, but I did notice that there was a good, fair, and frank

exchange of points of view and I hope that we can find a resolution to this difficult situation soon. Thank you.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly, I would like to welcome a past member of this Assembly, a member who really worked hard for his constituents, Mr. Joe Saxinger, behind the bar. The member from Kinistino and I'd like to invite the members to welcome Joe.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the Assembly I would like to introduce Gerry Sherman in the Speaker's gallery. Gerry is with the Christian Embassy International and is visiting our legislature from Edmonton, and I'd ask all members to welcome him here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

#### Farm Safety Week

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — With the frigid temperatures outside today, it's hard to believe that spring seeding is only a week away or . . . weeks away. Farmers across Saskatchewan, including myself, will be in high gear preparing equipment to return to the field. That's why it is appropriate we take time to acknowledge that today is the start of Farm Safety Week.

Sadly, 15 people died in farm-related accidents across Saskatchewan last year. For every one of those unnecessary deaths there were approximately 30 serious injuries. Over the years several of my own friends have been seriously injured in farm-related accidents, but while farming can be a dangerous job, many of these accidents can be avoided. Just a little extra time and preparation could save a life or prevent serious injury.

My heart goes out to the families of those who have lost members in farming accidents and to those who are recovering from injuries. I ask the members of this Assembly to join me in wishing all Saskatchewan farmers and their families a safe year ahead. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Power Cable Plant Expansion in Weyburn

**Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The city of Weyburn in my constituency received some very good news recently — good news for the province as well. Alcatel Canada Wire announced a major restructuring to the Weyburn plant that will result in significant growth and job creation. The plant has been in Weyburn since 1956 and manufactures a variety of power cable products. The restructuring will involve the installation of new production equipment which will allow Alcatel to explore new markets in Canada, the United States, and offshore.

And, Mr. Speaker, the expansion will result in 35 new jobs. When the project is completed by early summer, Alcatel in Weyburn will be employing approximately 110 people. As well,

Alcatel plans to use local and provincially based engineering and construction firms to complete this project. I believe this is what people mean when they talk about the multiplier effect. Whatever they call it, Mr. Speaker, this announcement is one more indication that Saskatchewan — every part of Saskatchewan — is a good place to establish and operate a business.

The successful record of Alcatel in Weyburn can be credited to its good management and excellent workers. I congratulate Alcatel Canada Wire for its long time association with the city of Weyburn. I appreciate and understand its confidence in the working people of Weyburn and wish it well in its expansion plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **REACT Waste Management Program**

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to commend several town councils and other citizens of Humboldt and district who have with their great vision made a commitment to environmental responsibility by developing the REACT (Regional Authority of Carlton Trail) waste management program. Not only is the REACT program aiming to improve the environment, but it is also creating much needed economic development and jobs for people in the area.

The proponents of the REACT waste management program have been on a roller-coaster ride these past few months after the provincial government put the project on hold in December. But several groups and individuals committed to the project lobbied hard and eventually convinced the Department of Environment to reaffirm its commitment.

This is just an example of the spirit of determination and perseverance at the hearts of residents in rural Saskatchewan, and I commend them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **Northern Saskatchewan Debating Tournament**

**Mr. Pringle:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had the recent pleasure of attending a debating tournament in Saskatoon involving high school students from all over northern Saskatchewan. The debates featured over 200 students debating the important and topical issue of welfare reform, using parliamentary rules, Mr. Speaker.

The debates were very informative, well researched, and passionate, and overall of very high quality. The nature and tone was one of compassion, of concern, and hopeful, Mr. Speaker. And I am very proud of our young people and comforted knowing that our future is in their hands.

Last week for the opening, two of the outstanding debaters, Jennifer Phillips and Rachel Stiglich, were present, and I was honoured to be their host. I wish to thank all members who took the interest and gave them time, and it meant a great deal to these young women.

I raise this today, Mr. Speaker, because young people are ready, willing and able to take on the tough issues of their day. I commend all of the young participants in the debate from northern Saskatchewan; Mr. Goranson, Holy Cross Collegiate, for hosting the event; the northern area teachers, parents, and volunteers for their active encouragement and support.

I know that all members will agree that these forums are wonderful educational and leadership opportunities for our young people. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, Hear!

### **Husqvarna Sled Dog Challenge and Winter Festival**

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the town of Porcupine Plain, the Porcupine Plain Lions Club, the Porcupine Plain economic development committee and the Porcupine Plain Chamber of Commerce who have sponsored day two of Husqvarna challenge sled dog races and winter festival.

Over 600 residents of Porcupine Plain and area gathered for the 63 kilometre race. Local teams from Star City and Hudson Bay competed against teams from Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the United States. The first team was back in Porcupine Plain in 5 hours and 38 minutes and 52 seconds. To keep with the spirit, the first mutt race was held. Seven kids aged 5 to 13 raced with one dog harnessed to any form of transportation, including a garbage can lid.

Mr. Speaker, the Husqvarna challenge is another example of rural Saskatchewan communities at work and at play.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **Special Olympic Winter Games Medal Winners**

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I would like to recognize the accomplishments of three special individuals in my riding who participated in the Canadian Special Olympics Winter Games in Calgary in mid-February. And all of them won medals in their respective competitions in cross country skiing — something our entire city is very proud of.

Mr. Rodney Correll won the gold medal in the 100 metre race, 8 to 29 age group, and a silver in the 2.5 kilometre Nordic event. Billy Kowbel picked up a bronze medal in the 100 metre and 2.5 kilometre event in the 30 to 99 age category. His brother Larry won the silver medal in the 500 metre, 22 to 99 age category.

Mr. Speaker, their achievements are impressive given the unfair track . . . unfamiliar track conditions they faced and they really didn't have a lot of time to train before the games were held.

I would also like to congratulate their coach, Shirley Gaitens, who pointed out that the goal of the games is to have fun and winning medals is a real plus.

Mr. Speaker, while I extend my congratulations to these athletes and their coaches, I would also like to wish them well and bid them good luck in their bid to be selected to compete in the

World Special Olympic Winter Games in Toronto next February. Again, congratulations and a job well done for representing the city of Yorkton, and congratulations in your games in Calgary. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Cut Knife Wildlife Federation Wins Conservation Trophy**

**Ms. Murrell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to call to this House's attention an award recently won by the Cut Knife Wildlife Federation in my constituency. The award is a Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation conservation trophy. This award is given once a year and to one project only. The Cut Knife group won the award for its wildlife trout pond.

Mr. Speaker, in 90 seconds I can only mention a few significant points about this project, a project which improves wildlife habitat in our province and at the same time improves the quality of life in the town of Cut Knife.

First, of course, the finished channel and reservoir provides necessary habitat for wildlife including blue herons, cormorants, wild ducks, and some domesticated ducks. And before I forget, for fish. A senior caught a four and one-half pound trout this year.

But this valuable wildlife habitat is also designed as a people's park on the west side of Cut Knife. The local hospital and nursing home is on one side and a 20-unit seniors' housing area on another. For them, and for the town as a whole, there is a tree nursery, a fountain, and a pathway through the park to the pond.

So this project combines recreation, urban green space, wildlife habitat conservation, and a source for stories about the ones that got away. As is so often the case, this project was created, designed, and built through the cooperation of the federation, the town, and hundreds of hours of volunteer work. It is a project worthy of the trophy and I congratulate the Cut Knife Wildlife Federation for winning it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Crown Corporation Tendering**

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan believe in common sense, compassion, and fairness. Yet this government once again feels it must interfere in what should be a common-sense business approach to tendering work done by our publicly owned Crown corporations.

The March 6 edition of the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* contains an article, and I wish to table a copy of this article, that indicates this government is now initiating, not only union preference but in fact native preference, to Crown construction projects.

Mr. Speaker, the aboriginal people of Saskatchewan do not want a government crutch. What they do want is this government to provide policies that reflect their true needs, such as a long-term economic and job strategy.

Will the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) commit today to quit playing politics and make the kind of choices aboriginal people need and deserve?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to respond to that question as the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Energy. I want to say that I think that this government has taken a responsible approach.

The tender was based on low bid, and the fact that we required in that particular tender an aboriginal content, I think speaks something to looking to the future of this province. Members opposite may not understand, nor may not want to believe it, but the aboriginal community is a growing part of this economy and is going to continue to grow, and we want to see them actively involved in developing our economy. And I say to the members opposite, that is a responsible approach to take; we'll continue to do it in the future.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Indian and Metis people of Saskatchewan have been asking that this government treat them fairly. The aboriginal people, particularly those in the North, are in need of proper roads. They're in need of health care, which means more than a few trailers pushed together. And they're in need of real job opportunities, the same as all Saskatchewan residents are. The real needs of Indian and Metis people are being ignored while this government uses Crown tendering preference to skirt the real issues. Will the minister take action today to ensure fair and open tendering?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member that this was a fair and open tender. There was an aboriginal content clause in it, and it was based . . . and it was in fact awarded to the low bidder.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that that member may want to lean across and ask the member from Athabasca whether or not he believes in affirmative action programs; whether he believes that aboriginal people should be involved in doing business with this government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member that I attended last night to the opening of a casino in Prince Albert, a business owned by the Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations. That is affirmative action — 120 jobs for aboriginal people. And I say to the member that the member from Athabasca should be proud of it and he should be chastising his colleague for raising it in this light.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at a time when this government is closing hospitals, eliminating services to rural families, children are going hungry and line-ups at food banks are growing longer, choices must be made with the best interest of the taxpayers of all of Saskatchewan. Clearly the Crown Tendering Agreement, which costs the taxpayers of this province \$115 million annually, is not.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain where this policy of showing preference for one select group or another is going to end, and will he commit today to eliminate the unfair and wasteful Crown Tendering Construction Agreement?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, once again I want to say that I am pleased to answer. What will not end is this government's commitment to create job opportunities for aboriginal people, whether that member likes it or whether he doesn't.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — And I say to that member again, this tender was awarded to the low bid. The low bid included aboriginal people working within that contract. And I ask that member to once again lean across, ask his colleague from Athabasca whether or not he agrees with aboriginal job opportunities awarded by Crown corporation tenders. Does he agree with that policy or does he not; or does he disagree with that member in the back row?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know I'm new and it also is obvious to me already why this is called question period, because you don't really get answers.

Mr. Speaker, this government has spoken often about not having the funds to meet certain campaign promises. Again at issue is the choices of this government. They cannot cry poor at the same time they refuse to eliminate the Crown construction tendering policy, which costs the taxpayers of Saskatchewan an estimated \$115 million each and every year.

Does the minister agree that this would be the very definition of hypocrisy?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, let me respond again to the member. The tender that he refers to was awarded to the low bidder. And I want to say that a partnership with aboriginal people in terms of involving themselves in tendering, whether it be construction of a SaskEnergy office building in Saskatoon or whether it be the development of a casino in Prince Albert, a job for aboriginal people is a job for aboriginal people. And it is something that this province and the government of this province focuses on and will continue to focus on.

Now you may take, you make take the approach of exclusion. And that might be the Liberal Party's position and that might be your caucus's position, but I want to say to the member that this

government believes in partnership, we believe in jobs for aboriginal and Saskatchewan people, and we will continue to base our policy on that particular premiss.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his government introduced a Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. They are solely responsible for this fiasco — not the federal government, not past provincial governments. It is they and they alone who are costing the taxpayers of this province \$115 million annually — and needlessly — in an effort to appease their friends in the labour movement.

Mr. Speaker, before this government can move into the future, they must correct their own mistakes and they must start by putting an end to the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. Will the minister make that commitment to this House today?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, what I will give the member a commitment for is a fair tendering process, which is what we've developed in this province. And I will also give the member that low bid is the accepted way of accepting a tender.

But I want to ask the member opposite, he banters around a figure of \$115 million and I challenge that member to table documents that would substantiate his allegation. You've got to have a little bit of credibility if you're going to stand up and throw figures around. So I ask the member, table the documents that concluded you to come up with that figure. Table them in the House.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Federal Budget Implications

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Premier. Yesterday, Mr. Premier, there was a federal budget, and there were a lot of things missing in the federal budget. There was no elimination of the GST (goods and services tax) as promised. There was no new job creation strategy or job strategy at all. There was no target for a balanced budget, and there was also no change in transfer payments which were announced in last year's budget.

That means, Mr. Premier, that you knew exactly what you could expect to federal cut-backs prior to the election. And there was . . . nothing has changed since then.

Mr. Premier, why are you using the federal budget as an excuse to break every one of your election promises? Why were you less than honest with the voters during last year's election?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Conservative Party for that question. And my answer would be that he might very well begin by asking his counterparts, the Conservative Party in Ontario, Premier Mike Harris, why it is

that Premier Mike Harris takes the position that there were new numbers of reduction, as he did, as Ernie Eves, the Minister of Finance did, as has all the ... Yes. The Leader of the Conservative Party shakes his head in disbelief, but he either doesn't know or he is faking that he doesn't know.

The reality is that this budget in fact has had an additional reduction. And not only that, but the floor that the Liberal Party has promised us, which now will kick in in the year 2000 with additional reductions and a hard attack on education and health care and social services, your argument should not be with us; your argument should be to join us against the Liberal Party of Canada, and Saskatchewan, which has perpetrated this kind of a massive assault on the very heart and soul of social programs in Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, you knew exactly how much federal cuts were going to be coming in last year before the election campaign, yet you didn't want to talk about those cuts during the election campaign. In fact there were a whole lot of things you didn't want to talk about in the election campaign.

You knew 12,000 farmers were going to get GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) bills, but you didn't want to talk about that. You knew there was a 12 per cent increase coming from SaskPower, but you didn't want to talk about that. You knew you had a major review of Crown corporations coming, but you didn't want to talk about that. And you knew there were cuts in federal transfers coming, but you didn't want to talk about that.

Instead, you promised increases in health and education funding — a promise you knew you couldn't keep. Instead, you promised everything as well to farmers. You promised that they wouldn't get a GRIP bill, but they did get a GRIP bill.

Mr. Premier, why won't you have the courage to stand in the legislature here and discuss the things you promised during the election campaign? Why don't you have the courage to tell the voters of Saskatchewan about the things you don't want to talk about any longer?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I have no problem in discussing the issues that we have raised — the issues of building and preparing for the 21st century and our program of change, whether it is in social services or education or local governance or in job creation or in the health care system. I have no problem in doing that at all.

We do have your idea, of course, which is to take us back to some 1930s or even earlier period. We do have your approach, the Conservative approach, which is to make us kind of an Alabama North, and we know that to be the case.

But if I knew, as you say I did know, then you, too, did know. And the question is: why didn't you raise that during the

election campaign? And the fact of the matter is you did not raise it because you didn't know either.

And the fact of the matter is as well that as the *Globe and Mail* today says, as apart from any official documents given by the federal government and by the provincial government, these are a brand-new series of reductions which the federal government has imposed on all Canadians. Premier Mike Harris says so; Premier Ralph Klein says so; all the premiers, regardless of political stripe, have been hit hardest. So don't tell me that I knew and didn't talk about it. Because if I knew, you did, and you didn't talk about it either. And you didn't know either.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Crown Corporation Tendering

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for CIC. This union-preference tendering policy and this new policy, Mr. Minister, are far too important for us to leave strictly in the hands of the Liberals, and so we want to pursue that just a little further.

I guess your union-preference tendering policy wasn't discriminatory enough, Mr. Minister; you've now developed a racial-preference tendering policy. Now the minister says that the tender was based on the low bid, Mr. Speaker. Well the truth of the matter is that the tender specified that only companies owned by aboriginal people would be allowed to tender. That's the important point.

Now, Mr. Minister, we have a couple of questions here. Are you going to combine this unfair policy with your union tendering preference policy? And on what basis did you develop this particular, blatant discriminatory policy for the province of Saskatchewan? When was the policy developed? And why was it never announced to the people of Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, I think it is only fair that I begin by correcting the member with respect to his comment that it was only open to aboriginal businesses. That's false. It was open to businesses who would joint venture with aboriginal people, and our goal was to include aboriginal people in employment opportunities for the construction of this facility in Saskatoon. It was awarded to the low bid joint venture. There will be a 25 per cent aboriginal employment component. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that a party that will refer to the first nations of this province as a cultural lobby group, as was done a few days ago, this is the reason you get these kinds of questions from this member.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, as I said to the Liberal member previously, this government will continue to work with first nations, with aboriginal people, to create job opportunities for them and for their kids. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be a partnership that will be ongoing for many, many years to come. And I'm proud of what this government has done and I'm proud of what we're going to do in the future as well. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **Rental Property Damage Deposits**

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan landlords provide over 100,000 rental units across the province. When their properties are damaged by irresponsible tenants, it costs just as much to replace a carpet or a window or repair damage in Saskatchewan, where the damage deposit is \$125, as it does anywhere else in Canada, where the average damage deposit is \$530 and the average damage claim is 600.

Does the minister responsible agree that the damage deposit is not simply there to assist landlords to repair their properties after damage is done, nor does it serve to deter those who wilfully damage rental properties?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. This issue of security deposits and how they are dealt with is a delicate one, and is one that we have been reviewing very carefully. And the whole issue is one where we have to divine the line between the landlords, who have some very legitimate concerns — and I've met with them this morning and we've looked at those possibilities — and also many of the renters, who are lower income — seniors, students — and those people have many concerns about this as well.

It hasn't been an easy question, and I've told the landlords that. And we are going to try and come up with a decision at the time of our budget, and we'll do it at that time.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Minister, you can understand, sir, the enormous frustration of the landlords association. They have been dealt with as though they're in a volleyball game. They dealt with the minister who was previously in charge, Saskatoon Fairview, then went to the member from Regina Northeast. It then went back to the minister who was from Saskatoon Fairview. It then went to the minister who is from Saskatoon Eastview. It then in turn went to you, sir, from Regina Lakeview and then to Regina Wakamow.

And people have been stalled over the years, not simply months but years, sir. In Saskatchewan social assistance recipients who wreak havoc on rental units can apply for second damage deposits at taxpayers' expense, while the working poor and responsible Social Service assistance tenants have absolutely no incentive to respect their rented homes.

Your failure to deal with this issue — and it's your government's failure to deal with this issue — has now forced landlords to withdraw . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. I'll ask the member to proceed directly to her question, please.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Yes, sir. There is a rental strike making it very tough for responsible tenants looking for homes. How long

do landlords have to keep their properties off the market until you resolve this issue?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for the second question. The issue here is surely responsibility. There are many ways to talk other than strikes, and that's what we did today. We had a very good discussion and I'd like to thank the people who were involved in the discussion.

I think one of the things that should be remembered in this legislature is that the present government, when they came to power in 1992, did a careful review of the rental legislation. They reviewed the whole aspect of the rent restrictions, removed that. They added in a streamlining of the disputes. They made some arrangements so that landlords could have better access to the use of the security deposits. There are many things that have been done.

As I said before, this is a very difficult question. There are very good arguments on both sides. There are many people of all parties who are involved in this and they all are looking for a fair decision and we will give that to them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, the landlord's association has not been unreasonable in its requests. They've offered a host of alternatives to the current impasse, but it is your government, sir, that has been giving these people and responsible tenants the run-around for years and years. If this situation continues, the social assistance recipients unable to find rental accommodation are going to have to continue to be put up in hotels at taxpayers' expense. I'm sure, sir, that you have estimated how much this is going to cost the taxpayers before this issue is resolved and I would like you to tell this House how much that really is going to add up to as a bill.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the further question about this matter. I would like to remind this legislature that Saskatchewan has one of the highest shelter allowances in western Canada, higher than in our neighbours to the west — Alberta — and that this is a very important factor for landlords. Approximately 20 per cent of the business are tenants that are supported by Social Services, and we in fact as a government, or as the people of Saskatchewan, the taxpayers, contribute approximately \$100 million to the landlords of Saskatchewan.

And I think that should be kept in mind, that it's a large amount of money that's involved here, but on the other hand we have many people who are of lower income and they need to be protected as well. It's a difficult question. We're going to deal with it fairly and that's our position. It's going to be a fair decision.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **K to 12 Funding**



**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Education. Over the last four years this NDP (New Democratic Party) government has offloaded funding to school boards by cutting grants some \$26 million. If school boards are to continue providing quality programs they must have adequate funding.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister of a comment her Premier made while sitting on this side of the House as leader of the opposition. He said, and I quote:

Don't let any government tell you that they don't have enough funds for education. The money is there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously education is not a top priority for this NDP government. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, will she stand up today and assure this Assembly that K to 12 education is her responsibility and that her party's education promise to increase grants by 2 per cent is exactly what the school boards can look forward to?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. As the member probably knows, our province was faced with a significant debt when we came to government in 1991. We were also faced with a significant deficit when we came to government in 1991, and through consultation with all of the various stakeholders in this province, we devised a four-year plan that got us to a balanced budget.

Last year we indicated in our budget that, barring some unforeseen circumstances, that there would be increases to third-party funding, particularly education. Well unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the member's Liberal counterparts in Ottawa indicated to the province that we would be losing federal transfer payments to Health, Education, and Social Services. The member wants me to announce the numbers for our 1996 budget and I believe I will leave that up to the Minister of Finance, who will bring the budget down shortly.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government cowardly sits back and blames Ottawa for everything. Well I can assure you that the people of Saskatchewan are getting very tired of this song and dance. Mr. Speaker, the parents, the students, and thousands of teachers in this province are afraid of what this government has in store for our education system. They fear that this government will approach educational reform with the same reckless abandon that they used in their health care reform.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister guarantee this House and the people of Saskatchewan that school closures and teacher dismissals won't be on the agenda of these new, large educational authorities she proposes?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, really what the people of this province are tired of is the official opposition being apologists for their Liberal counterparts in Ottawa.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Now the member talks about school closures, and I just want to say to him that I have a headline here dated January 20, 1996, *Yorkton This Week & Enterprise*: "Liberals meet with school board." And I want to quote:

Beyond that though, Krawetz said school divisions face challenges.

And I quote:

"The problem is we've had an enrolment shift," he said, adding because of that "there's no way in the world we're going to keep all the schools open."

So, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Liberal member that if he's going to ask questions in this House, he should remember his own rhetoric that he gives back home.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

### ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Murrell, seconded by Mr. Thomson, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Boyd.

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — Well I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to stand today in this House and speak in support of the motion that was presented by the member from Battleford-Cut Knife. I would like to congratulate her, first of all, for an excellent, thorough speech. It was really great to listen to and had excellent content.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — The speech certainly is a credit to the member, but there should be more credit, I believe, given to the wise people of Battleford-Cut Knife who sent her to this legislature.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — And I would like to congratulate the member from Regina South for his speech seconding the motion before us. As the youngest of all the members in this House — although, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite close — he brings a fresh perspective to our discussions, the voice of the next generation, and that message will be very much appreciated.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — I would also like to congratulate yourself, Mr. Speaker, on your election to your post. It was a historical event for this Assembly. And you, Mr. Speaker, and the hon. member from Regina Victoria, are at the centre of this historic event. And while I'm on the congratulations, I would like to congratulate the new Deputy Speaker, the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

And as many of the members will know, the member raises sheep on his farming operation and I know that he will be able to look after his flock. Now I'm not suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that you have to do that, and don't take the meaning that you should get into the farming business.

I would also like to congratulate all the new members who are speaking in the House for the first time in this debate. I have enjoyed the quality and the sincerity of their speeches, and the delivery of the same.

And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Carrot River Valley for their trust and for their support and the chance to serve them in this House.

The main message in the Speech from the Throne for this session is the importance of building for the future and of managing the changes and challenges that we face.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — From this vantage point, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's future looks very promising.

We can manage the challenges because Saskatchewan is in a position to do so. Why? Because of the decisions made in our first term of office. We have a balanced budget; our debt is being reduced; our population is increasing, now at 1.017 million people — unlike, Mr. Speaker, the time when the premier of the day was giving her snoose, Bruce, and never saying whoa in a mud hole. That was the time of million-dollar give-aways, Mr. Speaker, and that was the time of population decline in the province of Saskatchewan.

Crop prices are better than they have been in many years, and future markets for our farm products are promising. Things are certainly not perfect on the farm, but they are improving, even given the staggering input costs, Mr. Speaker, that get no or very little attention from the federal Liberal government. We have seen large investments in ag biotech and the value added area of agriculture. We have seen major growth in manufacturing and processing in those sectors of our economy.

There is great interest and activity in our resource sector — in mining, oil and gas, and forestry. Just ask the folks in Estevan or Eastend or Lloydminster or Hudson Bay or La Ronge or Meadow Lake.

Perhaps most importantly, we have seen a willingness among our people, the greatest resource that we have, to take hold of these opportunities and to make the most of them; not relying on government financial support but relying on community, Mr. Speaker, and on partnerships.

But, Mr. Speaker, we continue to face challenges and the impact of change. We face a constantly changing world where technology causes a speed of change like we have never, ever seen before. As individuals, we face constant change in our workplace, the budgets of government are restricted by debt, and we are challenged by reductions in funding from the federal government. We heard a lot about that yesterday.

In my own area of transportation, the people of Saskatchewan are challenged by the loss of the Crow, by rail line abandonment, and the federal government's approach to deregulation of railways, of airports, and of ports. These are unilateral decisions made by the federal Liberal government without a plan, without any consideration to the impact on farmers, municipalities, or the provincial government.

And in Saskatchewan we are familiar with the uncertainty of elements, Mr. Speaker — events like last year's forest fires. They were terrible and remind us of the power of nature. As government and as legislatures, it is our responsibility and duty to manage change as best we can, to adapt our policies and our legislation and our programing to meet the moving target of constant change; to work with farmers, with workers, with business and industry, and the resource sector, to make the most of the opportunities that are waiting for us, waiting for us to take up that challenge.

We live in very cynical times, Mr. Speaker, not just about politics but about every institution in our society, from churches to schools, from business to the professions. With the rapid change that we see every day, we risk a backlash from people who feel threatened, who see no hope. The rise of candidates like Pat Buchanan in the presidential election in the United States points to the power of negative message of hatred and fear. This is a threat to our democracy.

The most dangerous thing we can do to this is to foster the cynicism that is growing in western society. And the best way we can do this is to act responsibly.

I did not want to get overly partisan in this debate, but I have been listening to the members of the official opposition, and I think there has been a few times in this session and before this session that they have started to cross the line of responsibility. A few days ago the member from Athabasca, Mr. Speaker, was very negative about roads in the North. Always dealing with the negative; never giving credit to the government on the positives.

Since I became Minister of Highways and Transportation and since this government has been in power, Mr. Speaker, the Cumberland House bridge is now being built.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — Highway 965 — in partnership with the northern communities will have a new road in the Canoe Lake area. We signed an agreement with the mining industry, and now that industry is contributing to the highway structure in Saskatchewan, some \$2 million a year for the next 15 years to upgrade Highways 102 and 905 from La Ronge to Wollaston Lake.

And you know that the community of Grandmother's Bay, Mr. Speaker, who has no access by road, will soon have access by road.

(1430)

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — And the Black Lake road, Mr. Speaker, the road to Lake Athabasca will soon be a reality.

Now I know the member talks about the negatives and that things are bad in the North. And I agree that there needs to be more done. But I wished, I just wished that he would look at the good things that have been done and give credit where credit is due.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — It is essential to our democratic process for the members of the opposition to hold the government to account. And I agree with that. But one of the strongest messages from the public in recent years has been that they are sick and tired of some of the more partisan grandstanding in this House, which they find destructive and disillusioning.

I prefer to look at the positive and to look at the future, and the Saskatchewan people prefer that as well.

The plan laid out in the Speech from the Throne does just that. It prepares us for the future and for the opportunities and challenges that we face.

Earlier this year I was pleased to hold a series of meetings in almost every community in the constituency of Carrot River Valley; informal events where we sat around the table, coffee and doughnuts in hand, and had a really good discussion about the issues, about the concerns, and about their ideas for the province of Saskatchewan. The objective of these meetings was to get some input in the direction this province should take over the next few years.

And I'm happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that the address from His Honour deals directly with most of those basic concerns that were raised by my constituents. And when they have the opportunity to read the copies that I shall send them, they will wonder why the Liberals and the Conservatives opposite do not support it, and are supporting an amendment that would set this province back to the Devine era.

The people of the Carrot River Valley are builders. They look to the future and not the past. The north-east of our province is a place with a history of pioneers, of the building of farms and towns and businesses and schools and roads still part of living memory. Many of the people of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, came from other areas to rebuild their lives during the great droughts of the 1930s. They were looking for greener pastures. Others came as veterans after the Second World War to start a new life as farmers or forestry workers or small-business people.

Some of the buzz words of the 1990s are diversification and value added and innovation. The people of Carrot River Valley are very familiar with these concepts because they have been a way of life for them for decades. You only have to look at the history of the economic development of north-east Saskatchewan to see how innovation and diversification have built the local economy.

My constituents are leaders in honey production, alfalfa, and forages, the seed industry, leafcutter bees, and the nursery industry. North-east producers were pioneers in the development of canola and field peas and had game farming to their very developed . . . their great, I think just excellent, development of the livestock industry. And they are looking with enthusiasm for new ventures like potatoes and vegetable production, small fruit production. Add this solid agricultural innovation to the growing forest and tourism industry, and things look very positive in our area because strong, innovative people are building on our strengths.

**An Hon. Member:** — And a good MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) too.

**Hon. Mr. Renaud:** — Absolutely.

Just to note the value of the tourism industry, Mr. Speaker, the town of Nipawin and its business people have made a priority of marketing the area as a prime fishing destination. You only have to drive down the streets of Nipawin, take a look at the vehicles, take a look at the licence plates — the majority are from the United States of America and other provinces.

And just try to get a hotel room in the summertime in the town of Nipawin.

I would like to mention the efforts of Hudson Bay and other communities in the north-east at developing themselves as a winter destination, particularly, snowmobiling.

As I said earlier, the people of Carrot River are optimistic and forward-looking, as is the Speech from the Throne. A realistic and well-thought-out plan for economic development is a high priority for the people of Carrot River, and I know that they will be very disappointed in the federal Liberals' budget yesterday because there is no plan for economic development. There is no high priority for jobs. And they will be very concerned, as I am, Mr. Speaker.

The *Partnership for Growth* document released earlier this year shows a great deal of work by a team, a partnership of business, communities, and public servants. I would like to thank the Minister of Economic Development for his continued leadership in this effort.

The development of Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership as announced in the throne speech is a very positive development. A few years ago some farmers in Zenon Park started a small lumber company located in the middle of a quarter section. Now they are building houses for the Japanese market. Companies like this, Mr. Speaker, understand the need and the benefit of this initiative.

I would like to point out the success of NewField Seeds in Nipawin whose excellence in developing and producing seed has resulted in exports all over the world. Of course, the economy of Carrot River depends greatly on the wise use of forest resource and there is a great interest in the forest management legislation announced in the Speech from the Throne. The legislation will promote the development and sustainability for our future generations.

Education, Mr. Speaker, is also very important to the people of the north-east, the home of Cumberland Regional College. There is a great deal of interest in the reform of our education system. If we are going to take advantage of future opportunities we have to improve our education and training system. Cory Exner, president of the students' union at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), described to me what really needs to be done in education. He stated that we have to de-invent and then reinvent the education system so that the best sustainable education and training can be delivered to our young people. And I agree.

My constituents are also very concerned about the future of our social assistance program, and they look forward to the new initiatives to help foster independence, and support of our children. Welfare recipients, Mr. Speaker, want to be independent. They want a job. They want training. And they want a government like the New Democratic government that has responded to that.

This government believes in responding to people's needs in an appropriate, affordable manner. That has become our trade mark, and people have come to expect this from the New Democrats.

As one of the great winter sport regions of North America, there has been great concern in our area about snowmobile safety, and I will be introducing legislation to deal with this problem later this session. It will be sensible legislation, Mr. Speaker, that has been suggested by the stakeholders like the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), the Saskatchewan Safety Council, industry, and other stakeholders. Hopefully it will help to reduce fatalities and promote safety while allowing us to enjoy this wonderful family sport.

There has also been a great deal of concern and interest around the issue of impaired driving. And I am pleased that we will be considering new measures to deal with this very serious problem. And most of the ideas, Mr. Speaker, contained in this legislation were contributed by students, in particular by Students Against Drinking and Driving.

Another great concern among my constituents is the reinventing of government. Each level of government is faced with a great challenge. How do we offer essential and necessary services with greater efficiency? People have told us that government must put less into administration and more into front-line services. I am proud that we will be introducing a budget soon which focuses on working smarter and better to find the resources we need to offer the services expected by the Saskatchewan people — something that is expected from an NDP government.

Overall, the message of the Speech from the Throne is one of hope and a positive approach to dealing with the challenges of the future. It is not some throw-back to the past, unlike the amendments offered by the member for Kindersley, which if adopted would send this province back to the dark days of the 1980s.

I am happy to support the motion of the member for Battleford-Cut Knife in support of the address of His Honour — a direction and a plan that will move Saskatchewan into the 21st century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great honour for me to rise before the Assembly and respond to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne.

I would first like to congratulate you and the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood for your selections to these very important positions in the legislature. There are many people here this session who are occupying various posts for the first time. You two gentlemen certainly fit this category as you are each enjoying your inaugural terms fulfilling the roles of Speaker and Deputy Speaker. However, I'm positive your professionalism and experience on both sides of the House will serve you well in this capacity.

I would like to acknowledge Mr. Pat Shaw, our Sergeant-at-Arms, as he is also a new member to the legislative team. Despite the fact that this is Mr. Shaw's first session in this security position, I don't feel threatened at all, Mr. Speaker.

I must thank our Clerk, Gwenn Ronyk, and the other legislative staff members who have helped to educate and inform all newly elected MLAs, including myself. Their patience and understanding is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, my heartiest congratulations go out to my fellow members, from all corners of the province who now sit as MLAs, for their recent electoral victories. I believe we are in for quite an interesting and eventful session. For the first time in years in the province of Saskatchewan, we will be represented in the Assembly by significant numbers from each of the three parties. And I look forward to working with all members as Saskatchewan nears a new millennium.

Mr. Speaker, it's a tremendous privilege for me to represent the people of the Canora-Pelly constituency in the Legislative Assembly. Canora-Pelly is a newly created riding and I am especially honoured to be its first elected MLA. The Canora-Pelly constituency covers a large, diversified rural area in east-central Saskatchewan. It is comprised of 35 towns, villages and hamlets, and 12 rural municipalities. There are no large centres in our constituency, Mr. Speaker, with the most populous community holding 2,381 people. There are only small towns filled with good, honest, small-town folk, and farmers who understand the value of hard work and the strength of the rural way of life.

I'm proud to have been selected to speak on their behalf. They placed their confidence in me and I will do my best to represent their concerns and interests, Mr. Speaker. From Whitebeech in the north-east to West Bend in the south-west my constituents will have a voice.

The people of Canora-Pelly know how special the traditional values of family and community are, Mr. Speaker, and that is something often forgotten in our society nowadays. They know that rural Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, and raise children. In fact I recently had the pleasure of participating in an event called the largest family reunion in history. This was a cooperative effort among the communities of Norquay, Pelly, Stenen, and Hyas, to organize home-coming festivities for the area. I can tell you that anyone who joined in these celebrations left with a renewed faith in the rural community spirit. I am very proud to have participated in this event.

I am also proud of the tremendous effort put forth each year by the town of Sturgis and its Kinsmen Club in organizing a mini-miracle in support of Telemiracle. This mini-miracle draws performers from all through the region, allowing local folk to showcase their talent for a good cause. It is a large and popular event for the people of Sturgis and the entire area. And I can tell you that through their community spirit the Kinsmen Club raised \$24,509.04 for Telemiracle 20 this past Thursday.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(1445)

**Mr. Krawetz:** — What an accomplishment for a town of 701 citizens! These are merely two examples which typify the kind of good people I have been sent here to represent, Mr. Speaker.

Canora-Pelly had a hotly contested election on June 21, 1995, and this is shown by the narrow margin of victory. I took this seat by a total of 50 votes. Call me Landslide Krawetz. This tight race was due to a number of factors, primarily the strong campaigns waged by my two running mates, Mr. Ron Harper of the New Democrats, and Mr. David Sawkiw of the Progressive Conservatives. I would like to commend these gentlemen for their great efforts. They were gracious in defeat and proved that our constituency is one worth striving to represent.

But when the smoke cleared, Mr. Speaker, a Liberal was left standing, and when that Liberal looked around he saw a number of fellow Liberals who were also victorious in an area of the province once known as red square for its continual string of NDP election victories. New Democratic incumbents fell to the Liberals not only in Canora-Pelly, but to June Draude in Kelvington-Wadena; to Bob Bjornerud in Saltcoats; and to Ron Osika in Melville. Indeed the region may still be called red square, but it is now painted Liberal red. And trust me, Mr. Speaker, when we pull out our paint cans to colour the map after the next provincial election, we will not stay inside the lines.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — I'm very proud of our Saskatchewan Liberal Party and what it represents, Mr. Speaker. That is why I chose

to run as a Liberal candidate in my constituency. It represents a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan, not to special interest groups who grease your palms. The Liberals have long held the desire to return Saskatchewan back to its rightful owners, the average citizens. We want to empower the people, to give them back the controls and to remove the oppressive shackles of over-regulation and over-governance imposed by a New Democratic administration, seemingly hell-bent on controlling their every move. These values certainly appeal to me and to many other Saskatchewan citizens, Mr. Speaker.

I also chose to run as a Liberal candidate to defend our education system. I've been involved nearly all my life in education — first as a student at the Invermay School, then at the University of Saskatchewan; as a teacher in Invermay for 11 years; as a school principal; as a school trustee and chairman of the Canora School Division Board for nine years; and as a member of the provincial trustee executive for six years; as the president of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association for two terms; as a member of the University of Regina senate; and now as the official critic for Education and Post-Secondary Education, Skills and Training.

I felt that we in Saskatchewan had and still have a good system of education, with quality programs, a solid curriculum, and very competent teachers and professors. However, I was concerned that many issues were being addressed in a haphazard manner and I feared that education was no longer a priority of this government. For example, Mr. Speaker, in 1991-92 there was a total commitment of \$901 million to education in Saskatchewan. This funding was for K to 12 schooling, grants for universities and technical institutes, distance education programs, and teachers' pensions. By 1994-95, three years later, that figure had only risen by one-tenth of a percentage point to \$902 million. When you take into account the inflation rate over that same period of time, Mr. Speaker, one comes to realize just how much the education system has sacrificed during the NDP's term in government thus far.

Both SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) president, Al Klassen, and STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) president, Dwain Drew, have stated that further to cuts to education funding will certainly jeopardize the quality of our K-12 education system. U of S president George Ivany and U of R president Donald Wells have echoed this sentiment at the post-secondary level with the backing of faculty associations and student unions alike.

Yet the throne speech alluded to drastic and wide-ranging reforms to the education system, and that will generally mean more sacrifices have been planned at our children's expense. I am like every other parent in that I pray for my children to be able to enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle than I did, and for them to have all the opportunities in life that I had, and then some. But I am deeply concerned, Mr. Speaker, that this government will try to reform the education system much like it did the health care system, and that my children's future will suffer because of it.

As an SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) insurance agent, I also saw great injustice in the government's new

no-fault insurance scheme. And I wanted to make sure that my voice was heard on this issue. Now as the official opposition critic for SGI, I have received calls and letters from dozens of Saskatchewan citizens who have been victimized by certain aspects of this policy. And I am committed to representing them here in the Legislative Assembly.

Over the next few weeks you will be hearing from me a great deal on this topic, Mr. Speaker, as will the minister in charge of SGI. In due time I will also have much to say regarding proposed new legislation aimed at allowing banks and credit unions to sell insurance to Saskatchewan clients, as this is a serious matter in the province.

These grave concerns, and the knowledge that Saskatchewan could do better, influenced me to declare my candidacy for the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker. And I have found this decision to be very gratifying.

After the electoral victories of myself and my colleagues in red square, many New Democrats were left shaking their heads, wondering what the Liberals did to break their stronghold in the region. Well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for my associates, but I can tell you that in Canora-Pelly it was not only what the Liberals did but what the NDP and the Conservatives did as well.

When citizens looked at the strong platform and values of the Liberal Party and then considered what the alternatives had to offer, the choice became crystal clear. Many area residents who had never voted Liberal in their lives threw their support behind our party. And that is why I am in the Assembly today, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Order.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Conservative campaign asked the people to give them back the reins of the province and to trust them once again with Saskatchewan finances. Meanwhile, a steady stream of their former members were about to appear in court on charges of fraud and theft from the taxpayers from their days in government. This request was both sad and confusing to many people who remembered the sorry condition in which the last PC (Progressive Conservative) administration had left the province.

The New Democrats grew overconfident and pompous, believing that they would always be able to win in Canora-Pelly. Well, Mr. Speaker, ours are a very proud people, but they are by no means the wealthiest folks in the province, and if there is one thing they don't need it is to be knocked down by tougher economic times and tighter budgets while having the Premier rub their noses in it by squandering tax dollars.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — In a region where family and communities still take precedence above all, the destruction of the health care system also loomed large. Throughout our rural areas, where

the traditional values of honesty, integrity, and humility are still sacred, the outright arrogance, deceit, and broken promises of the NDP offended many people. Here was a party where ideas and policy flowed from the top down, not from the bottom up.

Canora-Pelly constituents remembered the election campaign of 1991 when the NDP decried the idea of government-sponsored gambling as an outrage. They said that even the modest introduction of small-scale gambling into Saskatchewan would result in the ruination of all we hold near and dear in our society. They also said that any party that would support such an initiative had to be stopped.

However, shortly after winning that election, one of the first actions of the new NDP Premier was to introduce video lottery terminals into Saskatchewan. From there, casinos began to pop up in every corner of the province. Now it seems that the only industry in which the New Democratic government has managed to spur any growth at all is the gaming sector. We have presently reached the point where we must have two government bureaus to administer over gambling — the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority and the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation.

This was all done with nary a peep of protest from the NDP supporters and MLAs who had so vehemently opposed gambling a short time before. Mr. Speaker, this arrogance was not forgotten by the voters in Canora-Pelly.

Each election, New Democrats like to spur on their disciples with the rally cry, let's do it for Tommy. But I wonder what Tommy Douglas would have to say about his New Democrats' rampant and haphazard expansion of gambling throughout this province. I have a feeling he would not be very impressed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Douglas would also be sorely disappointed with what his party has done to the once proud health care system that he helped build for all the residents of Saskatchewan. A total of 52 hospitals, including two in Invermay and Norquay of my constituency, have thus far received the axe due to NDP funding cuts. Severe cuts are still to come in this sector and several more institutions may soon join Regina's Plains hospital in the next round on the chopping block. Yet the members opposite still refer to themselves as the protectors of the health care system. What a sad joke, Mr. Speaker.

However I must commend the government for its efforts to establish a 9-1-1 exchange for rural Saskatchewan. This service is needed now more than ever, because after 52 hospital closures, most rural residents will no longer be able to make short trips for serious medical attention. And as those ambulances race across Saskatchewan to transport patients to distant hospitals, Mr. Speaker, they will be driving on some of the poorest surfaces since the wagon trails.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — The deplorable conditions of this province's highways and roads were not even mentioned in the throne speech, and this omission will certainly disappoint my constituents. One item that was discussed in the throne speech however was the government's blueprint for economic renewal,

which promises to decrease bureaucratic red tape for small businesses by 25 per cent over 10 years. This is akin to a store having a half price sale after first doubling its prices, Mr. Speaker.

Oppressive new labour standards regulations, unfriendly contracting and hiring policies, and impending changes to occupational health and safety which will hike rates and punish not only those who do break the rules but also those who do not — these have all been common themes of the NDP government, which claims to be business-friendly while it hammers away at private corporations and small-town corner stores alike.

One must also consider how business-friendly the New Democrats are after the recent attempts to gouge employers with large hikes to Workers' Compensation Board rates. A debt reduction charge was also planned for business owners, regardless of whether they had ever used the system, abused the system, or never made a WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) claim.

(1500)

Only public outcry forced the New Democrats to rethink their faulty strategy. Even so, their revised WCB rates will certainly be severe enough to force more than a few business owners to lay off staff or close down altogether.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of speaking with a gentleman named Leonard Sebulsky from Sheho, in the south-west corner of my constituency. He owns Sebulsky's General Store, a business established in that town back in 1906. In 1945 Leonard's grandfather purchased the operation and it has been a family business ever since.

The store has been an institution in Sheho for nine decades, Mr. Speaker. But like so many other businesses in Saskatchewan, it is now in jeopardy of shutting down. Understanding the necessity of diversifying a business, Leonard had set up a number of subsidiary divisions within the shop. However, it seemed that each time the store began to show signs of economic stability, the NDP government would enact some new policy that would knock the business back down again. Increased red tape and business levies forced the store to lay off workers to trim payroll, and also left its owners devoting more time to bureaucratic paperwork rather than the day-to-day operation of the shop.

Stifling power rate increases took their toll on the business as well. A meat-cutting division, once very profitable, soon fell as the cost of operating a meat saw and running large coolers 24 hours a day sky-rocketed so high that the shop could no longer sell enough meat to cover these expenses. A Canada Post outlet and an SGI agency remain in that store, but Leonard is now concerned about the prospects of government legislation which may allow banks and credit unions to sell insurance. This competition from much larger and more established institutions would effectively shut down the SGI division within his business.

Leonard Sebulsky and I spoke about the NDP's plan for economic renewal, and I must say he was disgusted, Mr.

Speaker. When he heard of their commitment to remove 25 per cent of the government red tape over 10 years he scoffed. The NDP will spend a decade trying to fix what took them a few short months to ruin. Well, Mr. Speaker, this entrepreneur would like me to inform the members opposite that a business needs a break now, not 10 years down the road.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — The Premier is correct in his statements that small business is the engine that drives the Saskatchewan economy and that any hope for improvement must begin at this level. However, Sebulsky's General Store is indicative of many Canora-Pelly businesses which have been harmed by constant government harassment. If the New Democrats kept their nose out of small business, Mr. Speaker, the economy would not need renewing because it would still be as strong as it ever was.

Small business can handle its own if the government just gets out of its face. This is indeed a common theme throughout my constituency, Mr. Speaker, as business owners cringe each time the NDP announces one of its business-friendly initiatives which end up causing more problems than they cure.

I alluded to SaskPower rates a few months ago . . . a few moments ago, sorry. And this is another sore spot for the people I represent. Constituents wonder why a Crown corporation which netted approximately \$159 million in profit over the past three years required a 12 to 14 per cent increase in charges. And, Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not have the answer.

The New Democrats supporting this rate hike will say a 12 to 14 per cent rate increase will not have a great impact on the average bill. But consider, Mr. Speaker, the devastating effect this increase has had on the agricultural sector. Greenhouses, dairy, poultry, and hog operations which consume large amounts of electricity have just witnessed a massive increase in one of their biggest cost factors. Yet this is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the blows Saskatchewan farmers have taken at the hands of the New Democrats. This province is still largely dependent on the success and prosperity of the agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker, and this is a fact that the NDP government must realize.

I receive calls almost daily from the northern reaches of my constituency wondering what is being done to compensate farmers for wildlife damage to hay bails and crops that have been cut but not yet harvested. I especially hear from constituents living along our eastern border with Manitoba who see their provincial neighbours being looked after by a government which obviously cares for their well-being, while they on the Saskatchewan side are forced to shoulder this tremendous financial loss themselves.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — I am asked about reductions in services by many farmers who must now travel longer distances to see personnel about crop insurance concerns. Offices were recently closed in Canora and Wynyard, which although not in the Canora-Pelly constituency, served ag producers in the Foam Lake area of my constituency.

Many now believe the next step in the NDP's attack on rural Saskatchewan will be the closure of rural service centres, which would certainly be a terrible blow to the agricultural industry and to small towns across Saskatchewan.

But it is the GRIP fiasco which has been most appalling to constituency farmers, Mr. Speaker. The broken contracts, the broken promises, these are already well documented. Now we have the Premier announcing to the media that Saskatchewan farmers will have to play by the rules even though his government keeps changing them.

I recently received a GRIP statement in the mail from Mr. Daryl Strilaeff, a young farmer in my constituency who began business in 1993. Although he only joined the program in that year and received no benefits, Daryl is being asked to remit \$837.71 to the government. As he so aptly stated in his letter, this bill does not give much incentive for a young person to start farming in Saskatchewan.

Recent Saskatchewan out-migration statistics support Daryl's statement and show that young people feel there is not much incentive for anyone to begin a career in a province where the government detests prosperity.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thousands of young people are choosing to leave this province in which they were born and raised to seek greener pastures elsewhere, most notably in our neighbouring province to the west, which to its credit has never elected an NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the disdain of the Premier and his party for rural Saskatchewan is well chronicled. In fact one need only consider the comments of Dr. Lewis Draper, a former NDP MLA, in a letter to the editor which appeared in the Regina *Leader-Post* a few months ago. I quote:

The message was spelled out early in 1992 and I have been trying to warn of it ever since. That message is that the NDP does not want or need the rural seats. This has been spelled out in great detail, starting with the revocation of GRIP, the plan to plough up rural highways, the closure of 52 hospitals simply because they were small and rural, and the elimination of eight rural seats in the legislature. So rural Saskatchewan is in a double bind. The NDP doesn't need our votes so they will continue to ignore us.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one can certainly gather from this statement and from the lack of attention devoted to rural Saskatchewan in the throne speech that the Premier does not have a very high opinion of the rural way of life. It also becomes painfully obvious that the Premier has never lived in rural Saskatchewan and that his MLAs who have are either not spreading the word or he is just not listening.

Now you might catch the Premier in a cowboy hat flipping burgers at some small-town party fund raiser saying how much he loves rural life, and he will most likely rise in the House over the next few weeks and tell of the great deeds he has done for

rural areas of the province. In fact the Premier will probably talk as if he is the best friend rural Saskatchewan ever had. But don't you believe him for a second. Actions speak louder than words, Mr. Speaker, and those of us from small towns across the province have witnessed the full extent of Roy's rural revenge.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Considering the NDP attacks on rural Saskatchewan, one might be led to believe that our larger centres are reaping the benefits at our expense, but this is not so. Within a few years Regina's Plains hospital will be closed or perhaps converted into another casino. The existence of the Providence Place geriatric unit in Moose Jaw is threatened as once promised government funding has also dried up. Further budget cuts will seriously jeopardize the operation of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and the University of Regina, while SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) campuses may be endangered in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw.

So the current state of Saskatchewan begs the obvious question: just who is prospering in Roy Romanow's Saskatchewan? The answer, Mr. Premier, is he's doing it at the expense of each and every citizen.

A good analogy would be a parent who gives a child \$20 to purchase a few groceries and the child instead goes to the arcade, plays video games, drinks pop, and buys bubble gum with the money, then returns home empty-handed and asked for more cash. What rational parent would provide more money for the child to squander, based on the level of responsibility and maturity displayed.

Yet this is what the NDP government is forcing taxpayers to do day after day. The New Democrats have shown little competence for making choices, setting priorities, or reallocating resources. The arrogance, the broken promises, playing political games with people's lives, this is all just a normal part of governing to the NDP. They will say whatever it takes to get elected and then do nothing positive for the average citizen once in office.

The job my Liberal colleagues and I will do, both in the House and outside the legislature, is to hold the New Democrats responsible and accountable for each of their destructive policies and broken promises.

On behalf of the people of the Canora-Pelly constituency and the citizens of Saskatchewan, we will remind the members of this government that they are the servants of the people, not the masters, as they so often think. And we will be very adamant about it, Mr. Speaker.

It is for this reason that I cannot, in good conscience, approve the motion to accept the Speech from the Throne. As I take my seat, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well as my fellow members, for the courtesy they have shown me today. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!



**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to congratulate the member from Canora-Pelly in his maiden address to this legislature and appreciate his thanks that we should extend him the courtesy — if I may say, it was quite an extended courtesy.

I would also want to say to the member from Canora-Pelly that it would appear to many of us on this side of the House that today you took some forward steps in advancing towards the leadership of the party and the caucus. I do congratulate you and I do know that you will make a significant contribution to this legislature and to the process of democracy in our province.

Mr. Speaker, it is invariably and must be my first task in entering this throne speech debate to extend my deep thanks to the constituents of Moose Jaw Wakamow for allowing me . . . lending me their support and allowing me the privilege to participate in this speech and in this legislature.

And as you well know, Mr. Speaker, Moose Jaw is described as the Friendly City and the people of Moose Jaw have been very friendly to both yourself and myself for three terms. And I deeply, deeply appreciate that and would seek again to serve them to the very best of my ability.

(1515)

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, I would want to join with every other member who has taken their place in this debate in extending my personal congratulations in this very public way to you, sir, as our new Speaker. Perhaps more than any other member in this House, I am cognizant and aware of the deep commitment to the democratic process, the passion for the democratic process, that you bring to this position.

Perhaps more than any other member in this House, I am aware of the love that you have for this institution and for the democratic process it represents. And I am confident that as a result of your term in that chair that both this legislature and its processes, the process of democracy in our province and indeed in our nation, will be well served and improved. And my hopes and prayers are with you in your task.

But however, Mr. Speaker, there is a caveat and there is a concern that has resulted from your election to this position. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and tell members of the legislature, that across the province, from Biggar to Bounty to Ogema, from Bengough to Beauval, there is one question being asked. And the question is this: does the election of the member from Moose Jaw North to the position of Speaker mean the end of the loose jaw from Moose Jaw?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — And, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately when I have to say that yes, unfortunately the answer is yes, there is, Mr. Speaker, there is deep regret, there is deep regret in the land. There seems to be less regret in the caucus, but there is deep regret in the land. And with that caveat . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now the member from Moosomin wants me to deliver the white cat, black cat speech.

Well I heard a Liberal member just yesterday in this House volunteer they are cats. Well we knew that before they came and it is even more true today than before. Now it is really a choice between the white cats, black cats, and the people who represent the true interests of the people of Saskatchewan, who sit on this side of the House.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan congratulates you and wishes you God's speed.

To turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to the Speech from the Throne, this, Mr. Speaker, is in some ways a throne speech which is typical of throne speeches, but in another very important way, an atypical throne speech, Mr. Speaker. Because this throne speech, not simply introducing a legislative session, is a throne speech which has the courage to look to the future — it has the courage to look beyond this lean horizon of our time to the future 21st century.

This throne speech, Mr. Speaker, has the courage to dream of new dreams; to dream of new visions; to look and to pioneer again, Mr. Speaker. And this throne speech has that courage because that courage is the courage of this Premier and this caucus and this government, Mr. Speaker, but it has more than the courage to look to the future.

It equally has the courage to seize the opportunities of today that can make that future. Mr. Speaker, you may remember and others in the House may remember, a little movie that was popular not so long ago. I think it was called the *Dead Poets' Society* starring Robin Williams. He played an English professor with a group of students who'd just as soon not be there, and to his group of students this English professor in the movie puts a bit of advice on the blackboard, two Latin words. The two words: *carpe diem, carpe diem*. And I'm told, Mr. Speaker, by the Legislative Library that the translation from the Latin to English of *carpe diem* is simply: seize the day. Seize the opportunity. Seize the moment. Seize the time.

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech has the courage not only to look to the future, but it has the courage to seize the day, to seize the opportunities of the day that can build for us a future that we desire.

So I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, from the Speech from the Throne. We all heard His Honour graciously deliver these words in this House, and I quote:

The 21st century holds the promise (for our province) of even greater things to come. Now is the time to prepare for that new century; to seize the moment with the plans, policies, and reforms required to build a better and more prosperous future for us all.

Mr. Speaker, this government has the courage to seize the opportunities of the day to build a future for our province. And you know, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member from Cut Knife-Battleford in moving this motion said it best when she said to the House, this government, and I quote, she said, this

government: "We have no intentions of driving into a new century on a Red River cart."

Mr. Speaker, this government has the courage, and this throne speech reflects it, to look into the future, the courage to seize the moments before us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand that we will be opposed. I know there will be those who will oppose us. The member from Shaunavon points directly at himself. I understand that. There will be those who will oppose us.

Ever it was so; ever it was so. When we had the courage to look to the future and seize the opportunities of the 1940s, when we talked about hospitalization, the Liberals and the Conservatives opposed us, Mr. Speaker.

When in the 1950s we had the courage to look to the future and seize the opportunities when Woodrow Lloyd pioneered education reform in this province, what did they do over there? They opposed us.

When in 1962 we had the courage to look to the future and give to the nation of Canada the dream of medicare, what did they do? They opposed us.

When in the 1970s, when in the 1970s we had the courage to look to the future to maximize the benefit of the resources of this province for the people of this province, what did they do? They opposed us.

And in more recent days, in more recent days when we endeavour to improve the working conditions for the working people of Saskatchewan, what do they do on a daily basis? They oppose us.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes their opposition is confusing — is confusing. How well I remember when we had the vision and the foresight to say that the farming people of Saskatchewan, the farming families of Saskatchewan, deserve something better than GRIP. How they opposed us. How they opposed us. The member from Shaunavon, I recall how he opposed this. He used it as one of his main reasons for leaving this government and joining the Liberal Party.

How they opposed when we had the foresight to say that the farming people of Saskatchewan deserve something better than GRIP. They opposed us.

Well now what makes it very confusing, Mr. Speaker, is that just in this House a few days earlier I heard the new Liberal agricultural critic say, and I quote: we're happy, as farmers, that the GRIP program has wound down. We're happy as farmers that the GRIP program has wound down.

Well this is confusing, Mr. Speaker, except maybe it tells us something. Maybe it tells us that we have an opposition caucus who will simply oppose for the sake of opposing — that will just oppose for the sake of opposing.

I don't just attribute it to the Liberal caucus; I hear it also from the Conservative caucus, and we've heard it in speeches in this throne speech. Just oppose, just oppose.

The other thing that tells us, Mr. Speaker, and I believe tells the people of Saskatchewan, that if all you can do is oppose, that tells the people of our province that you have very few, if any, new ideas, new visions, new hopes for our province.

If all you can do is oppose, it tells the people of our province that there is very little new, by way of thinking, in the Liberal and Conservative parties. Which tells me they are stuck, that they're stuck — they're stuck in the past. I mean we've listened now in this session to the Conservative members and that, to their credit, at least they advanced some ideas. They advanced some motions. They advanced some proposals.

Now the proposals they advance, of course, are nothing new. They talk about Draconian labour legislation. Well that's not new. I mean we've been there; we've seen that. They talk about *laissez-faire* free enterprise. We've been there; we've seen that.

We've heard the Liberal caucus today express their position opposed to affirmative action. We've been there; we've seen that. We see them defending, on a daily basis now, their friends in Ottawa. Well we've been there; we've seen that. That's not new.

And, Mr. Speaker, perhaps most troublesome in that last two days in this House, what we have seen from both caucuses now is the old political strategy of seeking to divide; of seeking to divide rural and urban; of seeking to divide young and old; of seeking to divide aboriginal and non-aboriginal. We see it. The people of the province see it. You're not fooling anybody. It's an old political strategy, and my friends across the way, it won't work — it won't work.

Mr. Speaker, let me just conclude here before moving again back into the throne speech. I remember taking driver training. Many of us took driver training. And my instructor was very clear that if you want to reach your destination safely, you keep your eyes on the road. You keep your eyes focused through the windshield where you want to get to and you steer a careful course.

Now what you don't do, what you don't do is keep your eyes glued in the rear-view mirror. And my observation of what's happening in this House is that we've got at least one political party, represented by the Conservative Party, who've got their eyes glued in the rear-view mirror. They'd have us go straight back. In fact I sometimes think they've got their hand on the gear shift ready to put the province in reverse if we should ever give them the opportunity to govern again.

And then I look, Mr. Speaker, at the Liberal caucus . . . And the member from Shaunavon is addressing the House from his seat. I look at the members of the Liberal caucus and what I see happening over there; they're not looking out the rear-view mirror; they're not looking out the windshield; they're looking at each other to see who is going to be in the driver's seat. And I tell you, they don't know whether they're going forward and they don't know whether they're going backward, Mr. Speaker.

What I want to say is this. This government, Mr. Speaker, is not prepared, not prepared to miss the opportunities of today which can take us down a better future road.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as you know, this throne speech speaks of the need to continue to build upon the foundations of health renewal that have been laid over the last four and five years. This throne speech continues to speak of our willingness to renew the delivery of education and training in our province; that we should equip our young people with the very best that we can provide, the very best opportunities in all of Canada.

This throne speech speaks of our willingness to tackle the challenges of providing strength and services across rural Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan. It speaks of our readiness, our readiness to ensure that public enterprise in Saskatchewan will be strong and secure into the next century. It speaks of new models of crime prevention, of new models of dealing with young offenders. And, Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that it speaks so boldly about this government's commitment to redefine and redesign social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, again let me quote from the speech. His Honour read these words:

Over the next two years, my government will work to redesign social assistance, replacing traditional welfare as we (have known) . . . it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few moments before I sit down to speak of what I believe is a very exciting, a very progressive proposal towards the redesign of social services. And I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, and all members to know, that in our proposals for the redesign of social assistance you will not find proposals that punish the poor for being poor. We are not taking the approach of the Mike Harris government. And you will, Mr. Speaker, not find proposals here that seek to export our poor with one-way bus tickets. You will not find the Ralph Klein approach.

What you will find here, Mr. Speaker, in these proposals is an approach which is based on responsibility. I ask you to note the word, based on responsibility. Because responsibility means just what it says. Responsibility means the ability to respond, the ability to respond. As a community, Mr. Speaker, as a community we have a responsibility to our neighbours in need. We have a responsibility to our neighbours in need and what we seek is the ability to respond to our neighbours in need. That's responsibility — the ability to respond to our neighbours in need.

Mr. Speaker, you should know and all members should know that fully 50 per cent of the case-load of Social Services in our province, fully 50 per cent and more are people who are there because of disability, because of physical or mental or emotional disability. In many ways these are the most vulnerable people in our province. They do not have powerful voices. They do not have a strong lobby. They are our neighbours in need. And I believe it is clearly the will of Saskatchewan people that we should have the ability to respond, the responsibility, to our neighbours in need.

(1530)

When I hear people say — and I do, Mr. Speaker — when I hear people say that we should just cut benefits, when I hear people say we should just cut benefits and that would be welfare reform, I ask them to remember who are the people they are speaking of. They are, Mr. Speaker, disabled people, some of the most vulnerable in our community. And just by the way, there but by the grace of God could go any one of us on any day of our lives.

We need not an ability to punish these people; we need the ability to respond to their needs. That's our responsibility. We have, Mr. Speaker, of the approximately 80,000 individuals in Saskatchewan who receive social assistance, of the approximate 80,000, Mr. Speaker, 35,000 of them are children; 35,000 of them are children.

The current system of social assistance is failing the children of our province, and we need the ability to respond to the children. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the child action plan which was pioneered by the former minister of Social Services, the member from Eastview, in addition to our child action plan which has now created hundreds of projects and programs around the province, we are proposing the creation of a Saskatchewan child benefit. It is a benefit that will provide for the basic needs of children outside the welfare system.

We do not need to burden our children with the psychological weight or the dependency of welfare. We are proposing a Saskatchewan child benefit. We're inviting the federal government to participate and join with us as a way, Mr. Speaker, of saying in very bold terms — as a way of saying in very bold terms — that every child of Saskatchewan is a resource of infinite value; that we value every child of this land. Mr. Speaker, if one child in our province is diminished, then we all are diminished. And if one child is lifted up, then we all are lifted up.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, as parents, as neighbours, as a community, we have a responsibility to the children of our province. We seek to find the ability to respond.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, just as an aside, what we're doing in this regard — the concept of a child benefit — is being noted now nationally. I quote here from *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 12, 1996, an editorial which says, "Child poverty can't wait." And it says in the body of this editorial:

Saskatchewan demonstrated this week that in an age of governing by doing less, real steps still can be taken to decrease child poverty. As part of proposed welfare reforms, Saskatchewan will give a monthly cheque to low-income working families as well as those on welfare.

The child-benefit program would be a first in Canada. Saskatchewan is prepared to go it alone, but it is talking with the federal government about expanding the scheme.

Mr. Speaker, we are prepared.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — We are prepared, Mr. Speaker, to accept our responsibility to the children.

Now I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, equally that individuals in our society and individuals who will be receiving social benefits also need to be responsible, to have the ability to respond. And we have today on welfare many, many citizens of our province, Mr. Speaker, who I can tell you, from personal conversations, do not want to be there, do not want to be there.

But what we have crafted over the years, with perhaps good intention, what we have crafted over the years is a system that has built into its very structures, disincentives to leave the system. It has built into its very structures those provisions which make it almost impossible for some individuals to become independent.

You see the way it currently works, Mr. Speaker, is this. If you're on welfare and you secure employment, you can only today earn a maximum of \$150. After the first \$150 we start deducting from the cheque. It makes it very hard to get ahead. And if you should start to earn enough to escape welfare limits and you're off welfare, then we will deduct your children's health benefits which can be just enough to force families back onto welfare.

Earlier this week in the House, the member from Greystone stood in her place and illustrated this with a real life example and appropriately said, this should ought to change.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're proposing to do. We are proposing to create a working income supplement that in fact rewards incentive as opposed to punishing incentive. And, Mr. Speaker, we propose to make available supplemental health coverage for children of low income families so that the health needs of children would not be that factor which puts people onto social assistance. Our goal is to support independence, to support responsibility, the ability to respond.

We also desire, Mr. Speaker, that our young people be given the ability to respond, to be given the ability to be responsible. We have too many 18- to 21-year-olds that are starting to receive social assistance. And what is troublesome, Mr. Speaker, is that many of these young people, young adults, come to social assistance having severed connections with family and support, neighbourhoods and friends. And perhaps even more troublesome, Mr. Speaker, is that of the 18- to 21-year-old group now coming to social assistance, fully 50 per cent of them do not have a grade 12 education . . . fully 75 per cent do not have a grade 12 and fully 50 per cent do not have a grade 10.

If we expect these young people to have the ability to respond to this world and the world of the 21st century, how can we expect that if they do not carry the educational skills, if they do not carry the family connections to support them?

And so, Mr. Speaker, we're proposing a youth futures program to encourage family connection and to encourage educational and work-related growth.

There are many other proposals, Mr. Speaker, in the paper. I shouldn't go on in much more length. But let me if I may, Mr. Speaker, just add one bit of scripture to the discussion. And this piece of scripture, Mr. Speaker, seems to me applies not just to social assistance but indeed to the theme of the throne speech, but I think very much to the redesign of social assistance in our province.

It comes from Matthew 9; some members will know it. It says at Matthew 9 that no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment for the patch will pull away from the garment and the tear is made worse. Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a commitment, a new commitment to meeting the needs of our neighbours in need. It has a new commitment to the children of our province. It has a new commitment to build responsibility. If we're going to achieve that commitment, that new wine of commitment, we're going to have to develop some new wineskins.

That, Mr. Speaker, is true in Social Services; it is equally true in Health. It is true in how we govern ourselves in the provinces. It's true in Economic Development; it is true in Education. If we are going to deliver the new wine of a new century, we need new wineskins. That's what we have the courage, Mr. Speaker, to undertake.

Mr. Speaker, I see here in the House this afternoon the member from Lloydminster, and I will be for ever grateful to the member from Lloydminster for bringing to the attention of this House in the last session of this legislature what I think is an extremely profound quote, and I would like to close my remarks with it.

This quote, Mr. Speaker, I believe is sound advice for any of us as we look to the 21st century, but interestingly it comes from the 19th century. It comes from a pioneer of our province in the 19th century, Chief Poundmaker. Poundmaker said these words:

It would be so much easier just to fold our hands and say there is nothing that I, one man, can do.

It would be so much easier, Mr. Speaker, to say that we, one province, there's nothing we can do. But Poundmaker went on to say, we all know the story about the man who sat beside the trail too long and then it grew over and he could never find his way back again. We can never forget what has happened, but we cannot go back, and nor can we just sit beside the trail.

Well I tell you, Mr. Speaker, this government has no intention of just sitting beside the trail while the rest of the world passes this province by. This government has the courage to seize the opportunity of today, that the 21st century can be and will be Saskatchewan's century and a century for all of our people.

Because I believe that is the message of this throne speech, when it comes time to vote, Mr. Speaker, I will stand in this place and very enthusiastically I will say, yes.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also wish to extend my congratulations to yourself and wish you all the best in assuming the duties of your new office here. And I trust that you will do these to the best of your abilities, and we do look forward to your guidance in these matters as we head through our first session here in the Assembly.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the constituents of Thunder Creek. Thunder Creek was a constituency during this past election in which we enjoyed a rather larger turnout than the provincial average in terms of voting. I do express my gratitude to the people of Thunder Creek for having done so, for having exercised their right to the vote.

I also take a great deal of pride in the fact that the people of Thunder Creek have entrusted me with the responsibility of representing their wishes, their concerns, and representing what they have as their needs in this Assembly.

I also found it very gratifying during the course of the campaign of last year, the number of people who came forward to assist me in my efforts. And ever more gratifying is, since the election, the number of people who have continued to work tirelessly for myself in helping me in my efforts to represent the people of Thunder Creek as effectively as I possibly can.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of some previous MLAs who represented Thunder Creek, or what was Thunder Creek proper prior to the previous election. Mr. Rick Swenson, who I do believe represented the people of Thunder Creek to the best of his abilities.

I would also like to recognize the MLA from the old Assiniboia-Gravelbourg constituency, which I ended up inheriting the town of Gravelbourg through redistribution, in one Dr. Lewis Draper. I'd also like to wish him all future successes as it relates to his duties with the health district board. And I do trust that this gentleman will continue to voice his concerns for rural health care in this province.

I'd also at this time like to recognize . . . a special recognition for some help and support that I've had from other MLAs who reside in my constituency. A gentleman that many of you may recognize from the past, Mr. Alex Mitchell, I found his help and his advice very gratifying. Also a gentleman that no doubt, Mr. Speaker, you'll be well familiar with and your colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow, in one Dr. Don Mitchell or Dr. Don MacDonald, I'm sorry, from Moose Jaw who also I found was of tremendous help and has provided a good deal of advice to myself.

(1545)

I'd like to just provide you with a brief profile of the Thunder Creek constituency, given that it has been so redistributed this past go-around and the fact that it is such a sprawling constituency. The constituency of Thunder Creek contains a full 21 rural municipalities. It contains close to if not over two dozen towns and villages.

There are five different health districts, Mr. Speaker, that touch upon the constituency of Thunder Creek. I could mention those health districts here, being Rolling Hills, Swift Current, South Country, the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek health division of which yourself will be well familiar, and then the Regina Health District as well.

It is a rather expansive constituency as I have said, bordering very close to Regina on the east side of my constituency; and as we head west, almost arriving at Swift Current. So you can see that, just not unlike many other rural MLAs here on any side of the House, how difficult it can become and the extra effort that has to be put forward to try and represent people who are spread over such a wide area as effectively as possible.

It is a challenge. It is one that I am up for. It is one that I intend to try and perform to the best of my abilities, as I am sure I can say for the balance of my colleagues here today as well, that all represent rural Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Aldridge:** — As I say, the Thunder Creek constituency is best described as rural by nature, a wide variety of agribusinesses in Thunder Creek, and as well light industries — Trailtech in Gravelbourg to mention one — but then you also of course are well familiar with the potash plant at Belle Plaine; the Saskferco fertilizer plant as well.

Because of the vastness of Thunder Creek, you would think there would be a more diverse number of concerns that may be expressed. However, there are a lot of very common needs and concerns the people of Thunder Creek share. And it is just these sorts of needs and concerns which got me involved in the process which led to my being elected to the legislature.

I decided to become involved to effect change. It is something that I feel there is a need for in this province, and it is something that I am fully prepared to undertake on behalf of my constituents. As they express their needs and concerns to myself, they will be brought forward and I will ensure that they are dealt with.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Aldridge:** — The people of Thunder Creek are concerned about openness in government. They are concerned about accountability. They are concerned about fairness, Mr. Speaker, and of course they are concerned for the future of their families and their friends in this constituency of Thunder Creek and throughout the province. These, Mr. Speaker, are concerns which I feel have not been adequately addressed in the recent Speech from the Throne.

I'd like to just also take a moment to express my gratitude to my wife, Margaret. She shares these same views and of course this was a big part in the decision that was undertaken to represent the people in Thunder Creek. I am fortunate to have both a life and a working partner who has supported me despite many difficult times that can be encountered in life and in business. And she has been a tremendous strength to me.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Aldridge:** — I also would like to take the opportunity to just express my gratitude to a couple of teachers at St. Matthew's School. These two teachers are entrusted to look after the education of my two children. We have my son Michael who will be 13 next week, and he is very fortunate to have a good teacher. My daughter Joelle who is eight, in grade 3, and as well a very capable teacher as well. And it is a tremendous relief to both myself and my wife that at this point in time they're able to attend and have capable people teaching them. So I do express my gratitude to them.

I would also like to point out to my children that I hope that they will consider that whatever they hear as far as the endeavours of their parents, and most particular in terms of the endeavours of their father as he attempts to represent his constituents in Thunder Creek as best as he can, that they continue to have their full faith and confidence in myself that I am convicted of what I think is right to do, and that I am taking every step that is proper in terms of fulfilling my responsibilities as representing the people of Thunder Creek.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank my parents. I have a father who from a very early age groomed me to make decisions, groomed me to be decisive, and groomed me to be persistent thereafter in following through with the decisions. And I also was blessed with a mother who taught me to apply the proper amount of compassion, Mr. Speaker, to those decisions which I undertook. So I am very grateful to them as well.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is the attributes that I've just mentioned that I have applied to the recent throne speech. And it's because of that that I am regretful that I feel I cannot support the motion of the throne speech. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with a great deal of pleasure I join in this debate today on the Speech from the Throne, the speech so eloquently moved by my colleagues from Battleford-Cut Knife and Regina South.

I would like to start, Mr. Speaker, by joining my other colleagues in congratulating you on assuming the most important role that you are carrying out on our collective behalves in an impartial way, which I know you will do, and to express my complete confidence in your ability to keep this legislature functioning the way it should. And I look forward to a little humour on the side.

To all of those who have special responsibilities in this House, with respect to staff functioning and the various caucuses, I also want to express my congratulations and my well wishes to all of you in making this parliamentary legislative process work.

I want to extend words of welcome to the new members of this Assembly on both sides of the House, and I want to congratulate the members, new particularly, on both sides of the

House, in their first forays into the debate on this Speech from the Throne.

Our speeches don't sound the same; we might disagree on policy and on the means necessary to reach desired ends. But everyone who enters this legislature does so with the same goal in mind, to do what we can to make this province a better place in which to live. That is an honourable goal to pursue and I want to take this opportunity to thank all the new members for their commitment that they've shown to this great province that we all love so deeply.

Mr. Speaker, the document we're discussing today, the Speech from the Throne, is one of the most important seen in this Assembly in a number of years. This is because it is the blueprint for how we reinvent this province as we move into a new century and in fact a new millennium.

Examining the status quo is the central theme of this throne speech, so eloquently put by my colleague from Moose Jaw. It is not an agenda to stick our heads in the sand. It is an exercise to work with the public to develop effective and efficient government in a changing world.

It is an honest commitment to find whatever weaknesses our system may have and direct our energies to correcting those weaknesses. I speak of weaknesses in our system, Mr. Speaker, not meaning to imply that we've not been well served in the past by our existing institutions, rather as a simple realization that as times change, the needs and aspirations of the Saskatchewan people change and the institutions that serve us must change with those changes.

This challenge to explore the future is being directed to all government departments, to our partners in local government, and to our Crown corporations.

In fact, the reason I'm standing here today representing a new constituency of Rosetown-Biggar is in fact a result of one of the early measures of change that we took in our first term in office to adjust the size of government to fit the expectations of people in this day and age. In fact a reduction of 12 per cent in the number of seats in this province.

As this first time speaking in the House as the new member from Rosetown-Biggar, I want to take the opportunity to thank all of the people in the constituency of Rosetown-Elrose who so faithfully advised and supported me in my first foray into the legislature. It is in fact with a great deal of excitement and warmth that I have been taken in by the new constituency of Rosetown-Biggar, and I want to speak a little bit about the honour of representing this new area of the province.

As members have often heard me speak of the Rosetown-Elrose constituency and the many strengths and the historical contributions that have been made in that area, I want to speak today about the history of the new area of my constituency, part of the old Biggar constituency.

This is a farming area, as many of you know. A farming area with a pioneering spirit. It extends . . . the new area of my constituency extends from Tramping Lake to Pike Lake — a

vast stretch of farmland with a great deal of variety and variety of scenery and farming enterprises along the way. Within this new area is a rail centre — the home of generations of railroaders who have made a commitment to supporting this vital industry of agriculture from the earliest days of the settlement of this province.

Within this new part of the constituency is an industrial centre wherein which Prairie Malt exists, and Advanced Ag, and I could name many other enterprises that are significant industrial enterprises in this new part of my constituency. And one of the most significant contributions that have been made from this part of the world is the political leadership that has come from that area. Other members have spoken about that today.

We have had leaders from this part of the world, from Biggar; leaders in challenging times of change since 1944. The first CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) member for the Biggar constituency was Woodrow Lloyd, and I think the accomplishments of this venerable statesman have been known to many and we need to remember.

This was a man who in the early days of the Tommy Douglas government, brought forward educational reform appropriate for its time. Not sticking his head in the sand saying the status quo was good enough, but moving forward and saying, we need to do something differently to serve the future.

And I think everyone who has lived with the Saskatchewan education system knows that it is recognized worldwide for its achievements, worldwide for its responsiveness to change. In the member from Moose Jaw's words, the responsibility. And in this little province of Saskatchewan we have developed one of the best educational systems in the world, led by Woodrow Lloyd's changes in the 1950s.

This same leader became, for a brief period of time, the Finance minister, before he became the premier. That led in another most significant change that has affected not only this province, not only this country, but the world, having been the premier that implemented medicare, having been the premier that faced the rioting crowds, supported by members from the opposition benches here today.

In the face of that, developing new institutions, supporting the development of new institutions. One of the first community clinics developed in the town of Biggar, in the face of the crisis that resulted from the mindless opposition of the Liberals of the day. And the contributions of this significant Saskatchewan leader will be remembered for all time.

(1600)

That wasn't the end of the contributions from that area. After Woodrow Lloyd served in opposition for a short period of time, he was succeeded in the new government by Elwood Cowley, the youngest Finance minister in the history of Saskatchewan. The minister in charge of Crown Investments during the time when we established three of the most significant Crowns and established the route for three of the most significant world-class businesses in this province — when the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan was established, when the

Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation was established, when Saskoil was established. These three institutions maintain their headquarters in Saskatchewan to this day. These three institutions represent the result of visionary leadership, willingness to change and face new circumstances with new tools.

And Elwood Cowley deserves a great deal of credit as we move forward into looking for models that we can use to redesigning Saskatchewan in the '90s and into the year 2000.

Following Elwood Cowley was a brief stint with the opposition, with the government of that day, the third party now, which we would want to forget as quickly as we could.

But following that period of time a young, new, energetic farmer representing a young, new farm family was elected in the Biggar constituency. And I feel honoured, Mr. Speaker, to succeed in this constituency, this area of the province, following in the footsteps of these great respected leaders and committed social democrats as we begin to examine the path of change for the next generation. The leadership demonstrated in this rich history continues today in business, in local government, in health care, in education, and in ecological conservation.

In my constituency, as I've spoken before, long before we ever came forward with a new health care model, health boards in the Midwest Health District had put together a new vision for change. It wasn't the model that finally resulted, but was certainly a significant step towards the larger district approach to planning health care in Saskatchewan. And they deserve credit for that.

And they have not stopped. Within the Midwest Health Board is the little town of Beechy in the southern end of my constituency. I think it's actually the one time home of the member from Greystone. These people in the village of Beechy have put together the first model in Saskatchewan for the use of advanced clinical nurses with the practising doctor in the community to set up a different model of health care delivery than the traditional model that we had. And this model in the village of Beechy of 300 people, is beginning to be written about as one of the great new approaches to the delivery of primary care in Saskatchewan.

Within the local government area . . . members opposite complain when we challenge local government to examine new models. Local governments don't complain. Local governments look forward to being challenged to change.

Before we issued the challenge, the west central local government association was formed. To do what? To look at ways of better coordinating the use of resources they had within their area; began to look at ways they could share in capital investment to reduce their overall costs. They began to look at ways of planning transportation systems so their own transportation dollars were focused on the best way to support the social needs of the community, but also to support the greatest benefit for economic development in their communities.

These are visionary people; these are visionary people who know that change is necessary. And they welcome change and they welcome the challenge of change, and they work with us. In fact they sometimes lead us in bringing change forward to make this province a better place. And I hope the members of opposition pick up on that spirit of positive growth and change that is everywhere in Saskatchewan except on the opposition benches.

The Eston-Elrose School Division, in education — one of the best models of distance education, working in partnership with SaskTel. I had the privilege of working with one of the schools in a direct two-way television broadcast with North Carolina where the students in Kyle, Saskatchewan could look at students from the community of North Carolina, hear each other's accents, see the difference in their clothing, talk about what their parents did for a living, talk about the local economies and the school system and how it worked. What a way to see the world. And through our advanced technologies, through one of our Crowns, and through the advanced thinking of the people of the Eston-Elrose School Division, challenging, using new technologies to aggressively pursue change.

Entrepreneurs 2000, one of the first and one of the most unique economic development agencies in Saskatchewan, using a business model to put forward new economic ventures within the area. Very, very great success in this area. And to parallel it in the north end of my constituency, a new economic development association has recently been established in the Biggar area.

I had the . . . talking about people aggressively pursuing change, my last day in the constituency office on Monday, I had visitors from . . . two business proposals looking to construct guest ranches in Saskatchewan. They found a market. It wasn't the government finding it. These are two local businesses finding it. They found a market in Europe for people who want to come and see the clean air, the wide open spaces, the unaffected ecology, the warm hospitality of prairie life; who pay good money for this; who want to come out here as relaxation. And they want to work with government in developing these resources.

There are new ideas emerging daily in response to the needs of the rest of the world because we have the opportunity here in Saskatchewan to meet those needs and to build our economy on these new observations, on these new niches in the business community.

The Saskatchewan Landing marina of which I've spoken before. The marina is being developed, the community is pursuing a new golf course, the community has put their . . . the community of Kyle and the district around there and Swift Current have put their hearts behind a wall-eye tournament annually. It brings people from all over the United States and Canada in there to explore the beauties of the area, and to compete.

There is no end to the energy which emerges from rural Saskatchewan. And I'm just very, very proud to be a member that has the privilege of representing an area with this kind of energy, and I know that it's an energy that infects all of

Saskatchewan. And I hope it soon affects the people in the opposition benches.

I could continue, but there isn't time to talk about all the good things that are happening in this area of the province and this area of my constituency — both old and new — which I have the privilege to represent. But I can say that they are demonstrating the central theme of the throne speech. The world is changing. Change offers opportunities, and let us collectively capture those opportunities and not run from them and not criticize each other when we are finding solutions that are on new paths through new areas.

And that's what I want to talk about today as minister responsible for Crown Investments — capturing the opportunities for Saskatchewan through the Crown sector and the role of the Crown review to position us to capture those opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that we presented an outline of this review process last week. I believe it is, as I said at that time, the most comprehensive review of Crown corporations ever seen in the province or, if I may say so, ever seen in Canada. The goal of this review is to position our Crown investments to serve us well in the next century, as they have served us in the past century. That might mean change, but it will not be change for change's sake. We will be seeking change to strengthen our province as a whole and, as I said before, to seek out opportunities that change offers.

Therefore we need to examine virtually every aspect of the operations of public enterprise in this province, including their history, what they are doing today, the future problems they may face, how equipped they are to face these challenges, their current fiscal health, their contribution to the economy of Saskatchewan, and their future economic opportunities.

We will hear from the public what services they expect in our new economy. This process is as open and transparent as we could make it. The people of Saskatchewan are the owners of our Crown corporations and it is important that they have ownership over any review of the future of those Crowns. In the private world, Mr. Speaker, you certainly wouldn't have a major study of the future of your company without consulting your partners. And we think it only proper that the same standard apply in the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, I think I speak for most of the people of this province when I say that Crown corporations have served us well in the past. And I firmly believe that if they are given the opportunity to strengthen in a changing world they will continue to serve us well, well into the future. But they will only be able to do that, Mr. Speaker, if they are allowed to change to meet these changing times. Planning the route of that change is the whole purpose behind this review.

Mr. Speaker, before we embark on a discussion of the future of our Crown corporations, I think it is important that we spend at least some time on their history in our province. It is safe to say that public enterprise has been with us virtually as long as we have had a province.



Just as 1995 marked the 90th anniversary of Saskatchewan, 1996 marks the 90th anniversary of public enterprise in this province. It was in that year that the Department of Agriculture organized and operated commercial creameries, which eventually became cooperatives and transformed themselves into the Dairy Producers Co-operative. And as we have seen in recent days, and not without pain, even that has now evolved. And this evolution stands to remind us that sometimes change can bring with it difficulties, but change will and must come. It is a challenge to us to predict, and where we can, direct the path of change to make it a positive experience and to end up with something stronger than we had before.

Mr. Speaker, from 1906 on Saskatchewan has had a continued commitment to and growth in public enterprise. Crown corporations as we know them today date back to 1908 when the forerunner to SaskTel was formed. Then in 1928 the establishment of a royal commission on electrical power generation and distribution in the province led to the creation of SaskPower.

In 1944 this province elected the first democratic socialist government in North America when Tommy Douglas and the CCF took power. SaskPower's mandate was strengthened by Tommy Douglas's commitment to rural electrification which was completed in 1961 and which still stands as one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of this province.

When many people are questioning SaskPower's rate restructuring program we should keep in mind that those of us who live outside of the major centres in this province — farmers, small business, people in small communities — we have electricity brought to our door and are paying about 80 per cent of the actual cost of that service because we are able to cross-subsidize our smaller users with the payments by larger users in the system as we've designed it.

This stands in direct contrast to the model that the members from the opposition benches would promote — the model that's practised in Alberta — where the little guy pays more than the cost of generating and the big guy gets a break on the price. Now we know that open competition may pressure us, as it's done already, to begin to reduce some of that cross-subsidization. But I can tell you that as a social goal and as a goal for people in this province, to the extent that it's possible, the people in Saskatchewan believe that everyone living in every corner of the province has the right to access these important services at the lowest possible cost and we will be governing with that philosophy as long as we are in these benches.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, this is yet another challenge for our Crown sector — meeting social needs such that every farmer on every farm in Saskatchewan has electricity at affordable costs. And as long as we have the ability we will do so, as I've said.

But the challenge of this review is to find the best ways to do this. A challenge made more difficult by competition. A challenge made more difficult by the voices of opposition that

would challenge some of the basic ethics of these important institutions in the province.

Saskatchewan's Crown corporations such as SaskTel and SaskPower have been strengthened and grown from their earlier days that I mentioned before.

But along with that new institutions have been formed such as Saskatchewan Government Insurance and the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. During those years there were a number of new enterprises established in the government as well. There were ventures in air transportation, fish marketing, fur marketing and timber marketing. As well, there were a number of commercial Crowns established.

And during Tommy Douglas's time the province was making equity investments in firms such as IPSCO — investments which allowed these firms to establish here and to prosper. During the Lloyd and Thatcher eras the focus was on enhanced development of our utility Crown corporations, ensuring their growth to meet the changing demands of the Saskatchewan population.

(1615)

Then in the 1970s under the Blakeney era, and as I mentioned before under the tutelage of Elwood Cowley, we had a dramatic increase in Crown investments in the resource sector. We had the establishment of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Mining and Development Corporation, and Saskoil. In all three of this province's major non-renewable resource sectors — potash, uranium, and oil — there was a strong government presence.

During the Devine era there was a change of the form of government enterprise, but no one can deny that there was not a decrease in the government's portfolio. In fact the government became partners in such ventures as fertilizer plants, heavy-oil upgraders, paper mills, life insurance companies, and numerous commercial enterprises such as food containers, jet trainers — if some of you want to remember that — forest products, life insurance, translation systems, and golf simulators . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. Mr. Speaker, the increased portfolio during those years is a testament to that government's continued commitment to public enterprise.

I might make one qualification here. The fact that I and so many of my colleagues are on this side of the House serves as a testament to the public's view of how that portfolio was managed, how they undermined the financial stability of the province, and how they gave away many of Saskatchewan's prized possessions. But nevertheless they, like other governments before them, understood that people of Saskatchewan believe in public enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, my point is that despite the party in power and despite the vehicle used, public enterprise has always played a strong role in the economic development in this province. While public enterprise is one of the principal ideals of social democrats, it is clear that it also has the support of other parties which from time to time do govern this province.

The reason for this, Mr. Speaker, is because the people of Saskatchewan are firm believers in public enterprise. It is, as the Premier has described on a number of occasions, one of the three engines of economic growth in Saskatchewan. The other two very important engines being the private sector and the cooperative sector.

And that, Mr. Speaker, brings us to today when the government sits with a diversified portfolio of holdings worth in excess of \$7 billion built up over 90 years by governments of every stripe and political persuasion. These Crown holdings have served our province very well in the past. The task before us today is to ensure that they continue to serve us well into the next century.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said that the world has changed more in the past 50 years than it has in the preceding 5,000 years. I would also argue, Mr. Speaker, that our part of the world, the province of Saskatchewan, has changed more in the past 10 years than it has in the preceding 80.

And more change is happening and more rapidly every year. Our Crown corporations are finding themselves in a world much different than the one they are accustomed to operating in, and these changes are just beginning. We are starting to see competitions in areas where our utilities had previously operated as monopolies. That is already evident in the telephone and natural gas distribution fields. It is clearly coming to electrical power generation and distribution as I mentioned earlier. And what will happen with SGI should the federal government eventually give in to the big banks to get into the insurance business? Those are questions that need to be answered and fights that need to be fought.

What about technological changes? The telecommunications industry faces a challenging but exciting world with the advent of fibre optics, the worldwide Internet, voice-activated telecommunications, and on-line services. In short, the electronic global village foreseen for years is now at last upon us. We need to examine the opportunities this will bring to our province in education, in medicine, in business, in virtually every pursuit.

Technological change does indeed present a challenge but it also opens up a whole new world of opportunities worth exploring. There are changing trade patterns which must be considered. With the lowering of global trade barriers, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), and freer interprovincial trade, Saskatchewan is reminded time and time again that we do not exist as an island. We could no longer simply tell the world we don't need your goods and services, we can get along quite nicely without you.

We have the changing global economy. The world has gotten smaller, markets have gotten smaller, and many corporations have had to expand their marketing initiatives to grow.

Our Crown corporations fit into exactly the same box. They are restricted by our comparatively small population base. They have to evaluate the challenges and opportunities of looking beyond our borders. These are only some of the challenges and opportunities facing our Crowns as we move into a new decade — and significant challenges indeed.

How do we meet those challenges? I don't have all the answers. I would propose that nobody in this Assembly has all the answers although some would be satisfied to offer old views and quick fixes. It is in fact to get those answers, Mr. Speaker, that we have implemented this wide-ranging review of our Crown sector, a review for a \$7 billion integrated company to ask its shareholders to join in shaping its future in identifying the design for a long, strong, and healthy future.

Mr. Speaker, the history of Saskatchewan has shown time and time again that the vision for the future comes from our farmers, our teachers, our small-business operators, our working men and women who go to work every day to bring home the bread for the family. And it is to them that we are looking again.

This review, Mr. Speaker, is not, as some have categorized it, a simple question of, do you support privatization, yes or no. It is about exploring any and all options for recreating the Crown sector to ensure that it serves this province well in the next century. Mr. Speaker, I have faith in the people of Saskatchewan. I have faith in their knowledge and in their imagination.

We are going to ask the people what they think should be the future of our Crowns and we are going to listen to what they have to say. I have no doubt that in the course of this review we are going to hear the views of people with extremely different views, and that's good. From this act of discussion will come a pragmatic direction for the future of our Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that we are living in a world of rapid change and that the status quo is not an option for our Crown corporations. Mr. Speaker, I said at the beginning of my remarks that this throne speech is about reinventing Saskatchewan. The reinvention of the province will be a long-term project which will see a reshaping of the delivery of government services to meet the changing needs of our people.

What is true of the province in general is true of our Crown sector. I stand in this House today and reaffirm the commitment of the New Democratic Party to the idea and the ideal of public enterprise. Part of that commitment is the commitment of our political party to seek solutions which work.

Mr. Speaker, social democrats do not fear change. Quite the contrary — we have over the years promoted change to make a better world. We know that if you manage change, it can shape our future and serve the social needs of our people well.

Our successes in that field are too numerous to recount. One thing our government and our party will never do, Mr. Speaker, is to stand still. We will not rest until the world is changed to meet the social and economic needs of its people and we will begin right here at home.

We welcome change. We welcome it in every facet of government including our Crown sector. We know that change, when properly managed, will move us further along the road to the New Jerusalem that Tommy Douglas so often spoke of. Mr. Speaker, because I do not fear change and indeed welcome it,

and because I represent a party which does not fear change but welcomes it, I'll be voting in support of the motion. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Pringle:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me also to rise to speak to this throne speech. I want to join with other members in commending the mover and the seconder, the hon. member from Cut Knife-Battleford who did all of us proud, and I'm sure her constituents; and of course the member from Regina South who again — I believe the youngest member here — did all of us proud as well. It's an honour to join those members, those colleagues, and the rest of the colleagues on this side to endorse the throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to express my thank-you again to the voters in Saskatoon Eastview who have again, for the third time, trusted me and our party to represent their interests, which are really the interests of all people of Saskatchewan. And I am indeed very, very honoured. This is a special privilege. We all know that. And I will continue to the best of my ability to represent the constituents of Eastview, and in fact all members of this province.

And also of course it is important to acknowledge, as many members have done, the importance of your family in this whole process. Of course, as I found out not that long ago, sometimes when you get into hot water in this business your family is always there for you. And I want to pay special tribute to my family and to all families of the members here.

And of course it's important to recognize that none of us get here by ourselves. We're here based on the important contributions I believe that this government has made in the last term. And we're here again because we have the support of our parties, which is the essence of the system that we're in. And there's no doubt that all of us on this side are very proud to be members of the New Democratic Party, and the thousands and thousands of workers and volunteers, and the tens of thousands of, of course, voters who keep putting us in. So I acknowledge the workers who worked very hard to get me here as well, as we're all part of a team.

There have been many excellent speeches already, Mr. Speaker, and I want to echo the comments of many colleagues, veteran members, to congratulate and commend the new members. I know that, as they have said, they view it a special privilege to be here. And all the members who are newly elected will make their mark in the Assembly. I have no doubt about that. They will represent their constituents to the best of their ability, and of course, the people of the province as well. So I wish the new members well, and of course, all members.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are many things that every member here can be proud of and would agree on. One is that Saskatchewan is a wonderful place to live. We are known within Saskatchewan but certainly around Canada — which became clear to me in my tenure as minister of Social Services and minister responsible for seniors' issues — that we have

something that they refer to as the Saskatchewan spirit. Not only we do, but of course people outside Saskatchewan do that.

I think all members here would recognize that while we may have our differences philosophically — we have differences based on our experiences — we have more in common than that divide us. And I think that is evidenced in my eight years of experience here by the fact that 90 or so per cent of the Bills that are approved here are done by all-party support, all-party consent.

Again I know when I was a minister, I had the pleasure of moving six or seven Bills through this Assembly. I think every Bill had support from the opposition because they were involved from the outset and I think that is the practice that occurs with every minister. And sometimes we lose sight of that because there may be those three or four Bills in which . . . where our philosophical differences really come to the fore. By and large, the vast majority of Bills are passed with consent.

I haven't forgotten you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to add my congratulations to you. I think all of the tributes have been made and I agree with all of those. You did forget my riding yesterday but, you know, you're fairly new in the job so I'll . . . I know you corrected that today, so I appreciate that.

You know I remember back to my by-election — 1988 — and you stand out in my mind, as do other members here, but you stand out in my mind, Mr. Speaker, as someone who welcomed me right off the bat. And you've been a great teacher on the processes in here over the years for me, and a wonderful role model for me and others. And your acceptance speech from the heart, to all members in the Assembly and to the public, it was very touching. But it also, I think, was one of the most oratorical speeches I've heard here in that it was from the heart, it was genuine; that's how you feel; we all know that. And it was very relevant and there's just no question, as the Minister of Social Services just recently said, that when we look back four years from now, your grace having been in that chair, I think will make all of us proud. I know it will. So thanks again and all the best to you.

And I will also add my congratulations of course to the member from Regina Victoria who also distinguished himself as Deputy Speaker in the last term, and we're very proud of that work and also that he put his name forth again. And he would have made a wonderful Speaker as well, and will continue to be a valuable member of this Assembly.

(1630)

I want to commend as well the Deputy Speaker, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, who we're all very proud of as well. He will do a good job.

And of course the hon. member from Moosomin, who was here before I got here. I think he was elected in, I believe, '86. He's been a very distinguished member of the Assembly, a good friend, and there are many things we have in common. We went to a football game about two years ago, and we both cheered for the Riders. So I think that that shows you that we have more in

common than divides us. So I give my congratulations to that member as well.

And of course I welcome the new Sergeant-at-Arms and pages, and I know that they will continue to do a good job.

Mr. Speaker, just before I talk about the throne speech, I just wanted to make a few passing comments about my tenure as minister of Social Services. I hope that's in order because I want to just take the opportunity to thank my colleagues — my cabinet and caucus colleagues — for their support and cooperation, and indeed the opposition critics, because they worked very closely with me as well. And it was a great learning experience for me, that two and a half years.

I know the new minister, the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow who distinguished himself in Health, will continue to do that in Social Services. The departmental staff in Social Services, the management are a great team that is looking to the future. And the new minister has mentioned the income security redesign. That innovation, a lot of that innovation, has come from the ideas of the staff there as well, and they are very future oriented and are making a lot of changes that would be very consistent with the thrust of the throne speech.

So I want to give my thanks to the deputy minister and all of the staff in the Department of Social Services and all of the communities around the province who are creative and innovative as they take a look at their communities and try and find ways to strengthen the families, the supports to families, and strengthen their communities. And I want to commend them and thank them for their support when I was the minister.

I've been in this field for 22, 23 years, the human service field. I find that it's getting, in many ways, more complex. The challenges seem greater. We don't always feel that we know what the solutions are, but I've always believed, Mr. Speaker, that the solutions lie within communities anyway.

And I think the essence of the action plan for children that the Minister of Social Services referred to, the key thrust of the economic development strategy, of our educational programing, of our health care reform, is that the solutions lie in communities, and communities are best able to determine their needs and develop their strategies and prioritize their choices. And I think that that is again the integrated approach which will become very evident to everyone, including the members opposite; that this government has an integrated strategy. Whether it is economic development, health care reform, education, social services policies, and so on, the integrated strategy is unfolding.

And I can tell the House, just from my experience based on attending a number of ministers' meetings and a number of negotiations with the federal government, that nobody has the solutions. I can assure the hon. members opposite that we are as well advanced, perhaps more so than anyone else in most of these areas. And I had that validated to me many times by ministers of Liberal governments. James Smith, a good friend from Nova Scotia, who is the Minister of Social Services, he believes that we are doing some fundamental things in terms of developing supports and services to families.

And of course we've tried to suggest to Ottawa that in their reforms of social programs — we've pleaded with them — you can't just reform the UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) system on its own. You can't just phase out the Canada Assistance Plan, which I believe is perhaps one of the most important things that is happening today in Canada and will have devastating consequences in terms of social policy and income support programs in the future.

You can't just make those decisions without any connection to a whole bunch of other things that are going on, like the taxation system. Child care, which has been promised and withdrawn, I don't know where that stands now with the federal government. The issue of labour policy. I don't know what the economic development policy is of the federal government. That didn't become any clearer yesterday.

We were trying to suggest to Mr. Axworthy and some of his colleagues that you have to have that holistic approach, that integrated approach, and you expect and need that kind of leadership from the federal government.

Now I'm not an expert, but in my humble opinion, having been in the field a number of years and reading articles and talking to people whom I have a great deal of respect for, there just isn't that national vision in these areas.

And I can say that a number of ministers who I know across Canada are looking to Saskatchewan, as they so often have, whether it be health care or education reform or social policy, for the innovative solutions. And I believe that they recognize that our solutions are community based, community driven, and they are compassionate and holistic. And that's why Saskatchewan is being viewed across Canada by those who know something about income and social policies especially.

Mr. Speaker, as I just leave my little tenure as minister of Social Services, I like to believe that I was part of some things that will be very important as we look back down the road. For example, the family service agreements with first nations and the partnershiping there whereby first nations are establishing their own child welfare agencies, as they should, to manage their own affairs — another important step in self government. And I would hope the member from Athabasca would see that as a very positive initiative as carried on in an integrated way by this government.

Certainly the Action Plan for Children that the minister referred to is viewed as a model across Canada. Certainly the establishment of the children's council and the child advocate office, the child advocate is certainly a servant of this Assembly. And I can say to the members opposite, and I know that you would appreciate this, that this is the only legislature in Canada where the child advocate reports to the legislature, unlike any other province.

Now we've learned from their experiences. We appreciate that. But for example in Alberta where the child advocate reports to the Minister of Social Services, recently got fired because of a critical report. We made sure — that is, this government made sure — that the child advocate would have the independence

necessary to hold all of us accountable; not just the government members but the opposition members are of course accountable as well for the state of services for families in this province.

But now the advocate can hold us accountable and we believe that that independence is very important for that position. I believe there has been some important work done in the post-adoption area which allows, of course, birth moms and adult adopted children, with the support of the adoptive parents, to make those important connections as we all have some need to understand our roots.

And what I think . . . some young offenders' programming alternative measures, again the former minister of Justice, the hon. member from Fairview was very innovative in some of these ideas. And we know that the current Minister of Justice is going to make a great contribution here as well, because we know that locking young people up is not the solution.

One of the things that I'm most proud of over the last term and right now, Mr. Speaker, is that we in Saskatchewan — and again I think this is where we get respect across Canada from those who matter to us, that is those who are concerned about preserving Canada as a compassionate nation — is that we did not cut . . . we did not deal with our deficit on the backs of poor and unemployed people, on the backs of poor seniors and disabled people. We, Mr. Speaker, were the first government to balance our budget the first time in this province in 12 years, I believe. And we did it in a fair way, which is a tradition of this party. We didn't do it on the backs of low income people.

And the National Anti-Poverty Organization, Mr. Speaker, recognized us. They decided to have their annual meeting in Saskatchewan because we're the province that isn't trying to deal with our deficit on the backs of poor people. And they used us as a model.

We're trying to deal with our deficit in the way that we did by restructuring government, by tight controls and good management, and by economic development initiatives, and by expanding the pie. And they held Saskatchewan up, Mr. Speaker, as a model. I'm not saying that — that's a reality, that's a fact. And they met with the government caucus and were very supportive of the approach that we were taking. And that is the view of the National Anti-Poverty Organization across Canada, is that the Saskatchewan way is the way to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, in some of the speeches — and there were some very good speeches by the new members on both sides of the House — but in some of the speeches by the members opposite there was a sense that this government has been a disaster, Mr. Speaker. Well I do not accept that proposition. More importantly I would say and with respect, that there's a certain arrogance to suggest that we were a disaster in the last term. Like it or not, the Premier and this government had the largest second term mandate in the history of the province.

So to suggest that this government has been a disaster, in my view is a bit offensive to the voters of the province who gave us the largest second term mandate in the history of the province. And so I think that while individuals may not agree that we

were a good government, it would not be fair to say that we were a disaster. Because that would be somewhat offensive to the voters of Saskatchewan who chose to elect about 65 per cent of New Democrats for a second term. And I think that they're very astute and they pretty well can make decisions that are ones that should be respected.

But let's take a look, for the benefit of some of the members opposite, at what we inherited in 1991. And I want to do that so I can then lead into the speech. Because I think what we did in the last term is really a continuation of what we're doing in this term; because some of the groundwork for the redesigning that were in the throne speech today, some of that groundwork was done in the last term. But in 1991, there was no question — and these are objective facts that I'm sure that all hon. members would agree with — out-migration in Saskatchewan was rampant. There's just no question about that — about 30,000 net in the last term of the previous administration.

The second point is, in 1991 this province was a financial basket case. And there are many indicators of that. I won't go into them, but again everybody knows that. There were a litany of failed economic ventures. And again, GigaText, and there are so many that they just don't come to mind. There's no point in repeating them. There were multi megaprojects that were drafted on the backs of envelopes or cigarette boxes or something. They just didn't have any credibility. Of course, it became clear that in fact in many ways the politicians didn't take the advice of their advisers and just made bad decisions that we had to correct.

It was a government that was totally in disgrace from many points of view. Wouldn't call, you know, vacant seats open for over two years, and this kind of thing. The previous administration gave away \$9 billion in assets — potash, oil, gas, and so on, highways equipment — \$9 billion and they still left the people of the province with a \$15 billion debt.

There were punitive social policies. Absolutely punitive is the only way to describe them. And on and on. In fact, a summary was . . . of the last administration, prior to us assuming government in 1991, was a study done by the Red Cross, which is a public study but basically their conclusion was that Saskatchewan people had lost hope. That was the bottom line. That was sort of the story line of that study. It was that Saskatchewan people had lost hope.

Now this isn't my list; this is me saying these. All of these indicators I mention are pretty well accepted publicly as a situation. This is the fine legacy, this is the PC legacy that people will never forget in Saskatchewan. And they'll be reminded because they got a \$900 million interest payment every year, which is more than the education budget, to remind them of the Devine legacy, Mr. Speaker. So this has been devastating for future generations.

Well after 1991, again I would say this is pretty well accepted by the public in Saskatchewan and across Saskatchewan, and I would say by opposition members, that we've restored financial integrity to the province. I don't think anybody in good faith could say that that hasn't been done. We're not out of the woods but we've made great progress there and I think that . . .

and we've opened the books and we've made accounting transparent to the public. I think everyone would agree with that.  
(1645)

The democratic reforms that have been initiated, again are the envy of many other governments. I know that. I recently talked to the members in the Northwest Territories. Whether we like it or not, or whether the opposition members like it or not, they've used Saskatchewan as the model in terms of parliamentary reform.

There has been an incredible attitude change and that's been because we have things like the *Partnership for Renewal*, with the REDAs (regional economic development authorities) as our economic development strategy whereby again, by regions, local people are looking at their strengths, their natural advantages, their potential, and they're developing their economic development strategies. And they're working in partnership with their government. And, Mr. Speaker, the course, the *Partnership for Growth*, builds on the *Partnership for Renewal*.

Health care reform — it has not been a disaster despite what the members opposite are saying. It has been innovative; it has saved the system. Everybody else is trying to jump on the bandwagon. I'm not saying it's been perfect, you know. The hon. member's smiling. But it is getting international recognition. Now that is a fact and when I see, when I hear members talking about what would Tommy think today as we did hear today . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Douglas, I think about a year ago, wrote to the Premier and told her what Tommy would think today and she was very proud of what this government had done. And you know what she was the most upset about? What she was the most upset about is that people who he had fought all of his life, like Liberals and Tories, kept bringing his name up as if he somehow wouldn't agree with what the Premier and this government had done.

But she was asking him to stop doing that because he spent his whole life fighting those kinds of backward and punitive ideas. It was an insult to the departed Mr. Douglas. It was an insult to the family. So I hope that the new members don't continue to bring up Tommy's name because he did not stand for anything that I've heard from the opposition benches with regard to especially issues like health care. We're on the second phase of health care as he intended it to be, Mr. Speaker. He'd be very proud of what we're doing. It's community based, it's community controlled, it's community driven, it's preventive. And those are the things that Tommy Douglas stood for.

And it is an objective fact, it is an objective fact, that the Liberals of the day — at that day — fought with all of their might. The Ross Thatchers fought with all of their might, medicare, and they pretend now that they're trying to defend it and they've got some ownership of it. And they got the same opposition to the reforms today that they had in 1962.

**An Hon. Member:** — *Déjà vu* all over again.

**Mr. Pringle:** — *Déjà vu* all over again as Yogi Berra would say.

Mr. Speaker, as well, since 1991 we've advanced a great deal working with aboriginal people, first nations and Metis people, on a number of fronts, and as I just referred to, certainly the area of child welfare is something that I believe that is moving along very rapidly, but so are many other initiatives of self-government.

Certainly a lot of ground work we did with regard to the welfare reform, and I think it would be fair to say that there is . . . We went into the election with a sense of Saskatchewan people believing in themselves again and having a sense of confidence. And there's no question that a sense of . . . that this is a place to invest, because we had an economic development strategy; we had our finances under control; we had a compassionate government who wanted to work in partnerships with communities. And the integration and the holistic approach of the government working with communities was something that was appreciated as well.

The new member from Humboldt — and I listened to her speech very carefully and she was very articulate — she will be a very good member; I have no doubt about that. And she is a very bright person. She talked about the economic development initiatives in her area, about the innovation and the special strengths of small businesses in her riding. And I would agree with that. She's right on.

However, again, as my colleague from Tisdale said — not Tisdale now, it's Carrot River Valley, I'm sorry — said there are many positive things as well that have been provincial initiatives and provincial cooperation that have supported the kind of economic development that has occurred in that member's riding. For example, a balanced budget. Who could argue that a balanced budget isn't good for small-business people? In the last two budgets there has been a \$70 million tax reduction in the manufacturing sector for companies just like the ones in her riding who are doing well.

So the fact that they're doing well is not unrelated to what we're doing. We believe that we work with those communities. We've taken their advice, but she's given us no credit. She's given us no credit and, Mr. Speaker, it's important to have informed critique. I just wanted to give a sense of history, that there are a number of things that happened in the last term of this government that are the very reasons as to why those businesses around St. Brieux and Humboldt are doing well. It's because of the environment created by this government and some of the specific tax initiatives undertaken by the government in tax breaks for small-business people.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Pringle:** — Mr. Speaker, we have, in my view, few lessons to learn from the Tories and Liberals with regard to small business. I want to talk about the Tory agenda, and that's been discredited and will be — the \$900 million interest payment will remind Saskatchewan people for the next 50 years that they don't want those people again.

But, Mr. Speaker, what we're getting is the same old chicken because basically what's happening is that the same people are sort of drifting back to the Liberals. I mean there's two Liberal parties here, so they're confused about that too, but, Mr. Speaker, we don't have any lessons to learn there. And based on, with respect, based on the speeches that I've heard, I would hope that the new members, because they're part of their communities, they're legitimately elected here, would feel free to forward their ideas to us on initiatives that they think are important.

You know the member from Greystone was going to give us an idea a week for economic development initiatives. I don't think we received any in the last three years from her, and we would certainly welcome them.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that all provinces, and the hon. member from Humboldt is here, all provinces are struggling with the challenges that face us in the human services area, which is your critic area. And I was suggesting earlier, I think, that based on the feedback we're getting from other provinces, that there are a lot of lessons that they believe they can learn from looking at Saskatchewan, and the child action plan is one of them; the income security redesign; the approaches in alternative measures for young offenders.

And certainly, of course, what people like is that we've had a compassionate approach. We're the only government in Canada that did not cut social assistance budgets during the tough times. Every other province in Canada did. Liberal provinces did. On top of that, compounding the problem of course, was the fact that the federal government was putting cuts on the provinces like crazy.

The federal government was dumping . . . the federal government right now has dumped about \$67 million worth of social assistance, new expenditures to us, where we're having to pick up the total cost of those expenditures. Now we could have fixed a lot of other problems — a lot of other problems — for that \$67 million. We chose not to cut benefits to the poorest of the poor. And on this side of the House we are very proud of that. Every other administration did that but we still balanced our budget first. So there is another way. And I would like to suggest that the other way is the social democratic way and it is based on the thrust of this throne speech.

So we are trying to restructure the systems and procedures. We're trying to reshape policies and services. We're trying to redesign strategies that deal with today's realities. This will be done, this will be done by Saskatchewan people in their communities working with each other, working with their government.

And, Mr. Speaker, the consultation process that we were engaged in was important. I know that there's been some fun made of that but Saskatchewan people took that process seriously. That's who it was intended for. And they have reprioritized the things that are important in their communities, to strengthen their communities and to strengthen supports and services to families. And it is no surprise to us. But those priorities happen to fit with the thrust of the government because we have been in touch all the way along, Mr. Speaker.

This is why our values of community, compassion, and opportunity are important. Because you need a philosophical framework. We didn't see yesterday's budget based on a philosophical framework. Not only did we not see a plan in a number of areas, we didn't even see a philosophical framework that will be the basis of decision making by the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to say . . . the members can say that the throne speech was too ambitious. They can say that the throne speech lacks some detail in some areas. They can say we could emphasize some area more than the other. But it would be unfair to say that the throne speech is off the mark, and to simply oppose it really puzzles me. And I want to talk a bit about why it puzzles me that they would just simply outright oppose the throne speech.

The thrust, Mr. Speaker, is change and it's preparing Saskatchewan for the new century. Why would Liberals and Tories oppose change? Why would they oppose preparing for the new century? Saskatchewan people don't oppose it; they welcome the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech prioritizes economic development and job creation. That's the number one priority of Saskatchewan people. Now why would the members opposite oppose economic development and job creation?

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech talks about an additional \$200 million going into agriculture for agri-food innovation, agri-food development, diversification, ag equity funds. Now many of those members are rural. Why would they oppose 200 additional million dollars going into agriculture? I don't understand that.

The throne speech talks . . . has many strategies for further development of northern people and in the forestry area. Why would members opposite oppose that? Why would the member from Athabasca oppose those initiatives?

Mr. Speaker, there are many other things I want to say about the throne speech, which I'm very committed to, but at this particular time I would like to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:58 p.m.





