

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today on behalf of many concerned citizens of this province of Saskatchewan:

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

And the names on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Weyburn, Fort Qu'Appelle, and many other smaller communities throughout southern Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, today I'm representing a petition to do with the closing of the Plains Health Centre also. The prayer reads:

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

And the petition contains names of numerous southern Saskatchewan communities, along with Regina.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present names of many concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the closing of the Plains Health Centre.

The petition of the undersigned of the people of Saskatchewan humbly showeth that the Plains Health Centre should remain open.

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

These people are from throughout Saskatchewan, primarily Regina, Carievale, Swift Current and so on. I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise as well on behalf of people concerned about the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. The petition reads as follows:

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 this petition are from the communities of primarily Bangor and Waldron, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today also to present petitions with names of people 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 who have signed this petition are from Moose Jaw, Regina, Carievale, Bengough; all over Saskatchewan.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition has been signed by people from Odessa, Francis, Vibank, Pense; south-east Saskatchewan.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. And 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 Assiniboia, Gravelbourg, and Moose Jaw.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I once again rise 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, and thousands of signatures from all throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with my colleagues and thousands of people all throughout Saskatchewan to bring forward a petition regarding saving the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

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 these petitions are mainly from Moose Jaw, some from Regina, Chamberlain, and several of course from Regina Albert South constituency.

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 repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and replace it with a fair tendering policy; and

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Labour regarding former Labour Relations Board member John R. B. Hobbs: (1) why did Mr. Hobbs receive an *ex gratia* payment of \$4,435 when he was terminated from the Labour Relations Board after five months of service, in order to accept a Crown counsel I position in the Department of Justice; (2) what formula was used to calculate these monies?

I so submit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding the New Careers Corporation: firstly, the number of projects in which New Careers placed its clients during 1995; secondly, the names and descriptions of those projects; and thirdly, the locations of those projects.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 16 grade 6, 7, and 8 students from W.F. Ready School in the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains. They're here today with their teacher, Mrs. Wettlaufer, and chaperons Mrs. Dennett and Mr. Apperley. I've been able to be at a number of the morning sessions where all of the school gets together to talk about different issues and to recognize the work of the students. And so I'm very pleased to have students from W.F. Ready here today. I'll be meeting with them after their tour in room 218 and then for a photo session.

I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming the group from W.F. Ready School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and through you to the members a group of grade 8 students. Now the sheet I have says 8, 9. I think there's more than that, but they're here from the Cornwall Alternative School in my riding and they're accompanied by their teacher Vonnie Schmidt.

And I would ask the members to join with me to make them

feel welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Aboriginal Tourism Strategy

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday another part of Saskatchewan's *Partnership for Growth* was announced, and it is I believe, a very fundamental part.

The Economic Development minister released a new aboriginal tourism strategy that will help Saskatchewan's aboriginal people take advantage of an economic sector that has great potential for growth. This of course means jobs for aboriginal people and spin-off benefits for the whole province.

Mr. Speaker, this strategy begins with an inventory of new or expanded aboriginal tourism opportunities with a market analysis done by KPMG Management Consulting. The study was commissioned by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Saskatchewan Tourism Authority.

The possibilities for development are exciting: parks and heritage sites, museums and galleries, the performing arts, guided hunting and fishing trips, and wilderness tours, to name a few.

As the rest of the world becomes more and more urban, as tree-zoned boulevards replace forests, and reservoirs replace free flowing streams, the more attractive and vitally necessary our natural areas become. Already there is growing interest in aboriginal tourism from people in Germany, Britain, and France.

Mr. Speaker, this strategy will bring economic development to Saskatchewan, and just as importantly it will give us even more reason to preserve what we have — some of the most beautiful and unspoiled resources on this planet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Livestock Show and Sale

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would today like to welcome all the exhibitors and buyers to Regina for the annual bull sale. It is a long-standing tradition, with this being the 91st annual Saskatchewan Livestock Show and Sale featuring Hereford, Angus, Limousin, Shorthorn, Simmental, and Charolais. I think there are about 300 bulls up for sale in total.

Buyers and farmers from across Canada and the United States travel in for the show every year, and it's events like these that provide a great showcase for quality Saskatchewan livestock. They are essential to Saskatchewan livestock producers.

Given what we hear, Mr. Speaker, every day from across the floor, I am very happy that there is finally some genuine bull in the city of Regina, and I welcome it here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Soil Conservation

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Conservation of our natural resources is critical to our survival. Today I would like to congratulate the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association for the important work and leadership they have provided in preserving this resource.

Farmers are doing their part in preserving the soil through various means such as direct seeding, crop rotation, and shelter belts.

While I applaud our Saskatchewan farmers for taking responsibility for this matter, there are several individuals who should also be recognized for their contribution. Recently, the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association awards were presented at a meeting in Regina. Ken Allport of Kyle, Saskatchewan and Larry Janzen of the Seager Wheeler farm at Rosthern received awards for outstanding farm practices in soil management.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the award winners and the soil conservation association for excellent work with regard to zero tillage, tree planting for shelter belts, crop rotation, and the advancement of machinery manufacturing promoting soil conservation.

Good management is the key to preserving this resource and the environment is everyone's responsibility. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Indoor Pool

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Humboldt indoor pool project organization. The chairman, Mr. Dave Gullacher, and the people of Humboldt and area are to be commended for their dedication and hard work over the past several years.

Local efforts have committed \$150,000 to the project and an indoor pool for Humboldt will soon be a reality.

Construction on the pool started in fall of 1995 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of May 1996. The pool structure adjoins the Humboldt Uniplex, which houses the curling rink and the arena which is the home of the Humboldt Broncos, and several other meeting halls.

To Humboldt and area, congratulations on your dedication and perseverance in the pool project for the betterment of Humboldt and area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Apprenticeship Program

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, you've often heard me speak of the leadership provided by the people of my constituency.

During Education Week, I want to recognize especially, a program in my constituency that has been recognized now nationally.

The Eston-Elrose School Division and several local businesses, along with the students of the school division, have gone into partnership to create an apprenticeship program that has been selected as the Saskatchewan provincial winner in the 1995-96 National Partners in Education awards program.

Sponsored by the Royal Bank, this year's competition drew more than 135 partnerships across the country. All provincial winners go to the third international partnership conference in Toronto on April 13 to 16.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit this program last summer and it's very, very exciting to see the students working in cooperation with the local businesses, learning something for which they then get accreditation when they are done.

Mr. Speaker, the Eston-Elrose program is offered in conjunction with SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) at Palliser college. It gives students the opportunity for some practical experience in the professions and businesses before they throw themselves into the workforce. As well, the students are given credits for these classes.

The participating businesses are showing both community responsibility and worthy self-interest. People with experience make good employees and getting experience is very difficult. These students are getting experience in auto body repair, in commercial cooking, in journalism, in sales, in agricultural machinery repair, and in a host of other areas.

I congratulate the Eston-Elrose School Division and its business partners for winning this prestigious award. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Naicam Cadets Win Biathlon Awards

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the hard work and dedication of the Naicam Legion Cadet Corps Unit 2815. Its boys and girls biathlon teams represented the province of Saskatchewan's Army, Navy, and Air Cadet Corps at the National Cadet Biathlon Competition in Val Cartier, Quebec, March 3 to 8.

The competition consisted of four races. The first male competition was eight kilometre individual, and female competition was six kilometre race with each skier shooting five rounds three times.

The Naicam Legion Cadet Corp Unit 2815 boys biathlon team consists of Cadet Scott Roenspies, Carl Dosch, and Darren Zimmer. They won bronze in the aggregate and silver in patrol.

The girls biathlon team of Louise Weber, Kristy Leonard, and Jennifer Griffith place fourth in all of their races.

I would ask the members of this Assembly to join with me in congratulating the Naicam Legion Cadet Corps biathlon teams and their leaders, Captain Scott Ponath and civilian leader Sid Roenspies, for their admirable representation of Saskatchewan at the nationals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Environmental Award to Lloydminster School

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Responsible management of our environment and education go hand in hand. It seems appropriate during Education Week that I congratulate a school in my constituency that is demonstrating a leadership role in both of these areas.

Avery School in Lloydminster has reached a milestone in the environmental field and has been recognized by the SEEDS (Society of Environment and Energy Development Studies) Foundation for this accomplishment. The school has reached emerald status for completion of 500 environmental projects. The students reached this target in mid-December when they completed a Christmas art project using nothing but natural materials to create centrepieces.

The school began these environmental projects in 1991, and things began to pick up as they completed 250 projects in just over a year. The principal of the school, Debra Brown, says the students have shown a great deal of interest in these projects and will carry this knowledge with them as they get older. Educating our students about this issue at a young age means a cleaner and safer environment for the future.

Mr. Speaker, while this school deserves a pat on the back, I should also point out that Lloydminster is in the top 10 school divisions in the country for environmental projects per capita. Congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moosomin Restaurants Benefit from Casino Regina Visitors

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The buses are headed in the opposite direction. Instead of leaving the province, they are now travelling to Saskatchewan in droves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ward: — I'm referring to the benefits rural Saskatchewan is reaping from the new casino in Regina. We all know that the casino has created hundreds of jobs and spin-off benefits with the tourism industry in Regina. But it has not been widely publicized that a restaurant in Moosomin has hit the jackpot with an increase in customers. Busloads of people are stopping at Tinno's Restaurant and other dining establishments for something to eat when they travel to and from Casino Regina.

A spokesman for the touring network is quoted as saying it works out to about \$5 million a year for a dozen or so restaurants in rural Saskatchewan. And the owner of the restaurant is quoted as saying it is like a small factory moved into town, or a few oil rigs, and more people are working.

Mr. Speaker, these casino visitors are spending tourist dollars where they have a large impact, in rural Saskatchewan. This example demonstrates that the spin-off benefits from the casino are reaching out across the province, and in this case, several hundred kilometres away. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Teacher Employment

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as everyone in this House is well aware, hundreds of students who have graduated from education programs at our universities have been unable to find teaching jobs in this city or this province. They've been forced to find employment in provinces other than Saskatchewan. What makes this situation particularly frustrating for students and parents alike is the fact that the member from Regina Dewdney recently went back into the classroom to teach, while he continues to hold a seat in this legislature.

Will the Premier explain if he believes the action of his former right-hand man are appropriate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member opposite that he will have to worry about the appropriateness of the members on his side and their conduct and, if you will, leave for us on our side how we think our members have conducted ourselves.

And I want say to you specifically that the former deputy premier, who was elected in this legislature in 1971 and serves to this day with high distinction both the House and the people of Saskatchewan, has absolutely nothing, nothing to account for. And it should be your good fortune to serve even a fraction of that kind of service in the public as honourably as the member has from Regina.

Finally, I would simply say this, Mr. Speaker: that it is in my judgement a fallacy for the Liberals to say that jobs in teaching are available elsewhere, when you look at Liberal administrations and Conservative administrations like Alberta and Ontario and New Brunswick, where the teaching and the education cuts have been massive and extensive, unlike the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, my daughter is one of those who have been forced to leave the province to take a teaching job elsewhere. She, like many education program graduates, would prefer to teach in this province. However there remains a very limited number of opportunities, one of which has been snatched up by the member from Regina Dewdney. Will the Premier explain to my daughter and hundreds of other education graduates why there are no opportunities for them in Saskatchewan, yet there is for a member of his government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would be kind enough to tell us who it is that will be putting in his crop this spring and who it is that will be taking off his crop this spring and who it is that will be taking the returns from his farm operation, hopefully successful as they might be, as I pray they are in his case and for all the farmers of Saskatchewan, all the while that he takes down and holds down the job here in the Legislative Assembly in the province of Saskatchewan, which would apply to virtually every member in this Legislative Assembly.

And to argue in any other sense, I think, is a lowering of the standard of this Assembly, and I would say with the greatest of respect to the member, but more importantly with respect to his daughter, to raise his daughter as an example in this House, is very, very unbecoming in most circumstances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Premier is confused. I'm a chicken cook, not a farmer. And the reality is that I'm in private enterprise.

As the taxpayers of Saskatchewan know, the member from Regina Dewdney has a million dollar pension, but that's not good enough. He's now working on a second pension at the people's expense. It's not enough that this member has a well-paying job as an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly); he must also take opportunities from our young people so he can correct exams at the taxpayers' expense. Does the Premier not find it ironic that the member from Regina Dewdney was part of an NDP (New Democratic Party) government that has eliminated more than 1,000 teaching positions over the last five years and now has personally taking a teaching position from one of our young people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should, rather than directing his question to me in the first instance, direct this question to his own leader. His own leader takes a pension that I pay for, being a former member of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police). He is taking the taxpayers, that I have contributed to and everybody in this House, on that pension plus a full-time salary as MLA. If he's not taking it, he's going to be taking it. Did you ask this of your leader? Is there a double standard for Liberals? Okay to do but nobody else to do?

I think that the Liberals have got a little bit to learn here about consistency and morality when it comes to this issue and we don't need to have any lectures from them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Overpayments

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture has stated consistently during the ongoing GRIP

(gross revenue insurance program) controversy that farmers are honourable and they will do the right thing. Mr. Speaker, the farmers of Saskatchewan appear to be doing the honourable thing by holding this government to a promise that GRIP wind-up bills would not be collected.

A CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio report yesterday indicated that two-thirds of the money that farmers have been billed for has yet to be received by Crop Insurance. Would the Minister of Agriculture agree that this is an indication that farmers feel they are on the right side of the issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. Yes, the numbers are in and over half the farmers have paid back their bills. As a matter of fact we, as government, paid back our bill to farmers. We paid 39,000 of them, used the rest of our money to put into agriculture programs for the most part. I don't think that the, Mr. Speaker, that the farmers in rural Saskatchewan who may be having difficulty, some of these people, paying their bills, appreciate the member opposite making a spectacle of them.

I have said many times that they can go to the corporation and make their arrangements to have this bill repaid. The process is laid out before them very clearly, and that's what will remain. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to send over some bills for the minister to deal with personally if I could, and ensure that he intervenes as he did earlier and have Crop Insurance review these cases on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Speaker, the deadline for farmers to pay these bills was more than two weeks ago. If they felt obligated to pay, the majority of farmers would have done so by now. What, if any, measures is the minister taking to recover money he feels is owed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I think, Mr. Speaker, the member knows the answer to that question. We have processes laid out to . . . have explained to farmers how the bills should be repaid. If they can't be repaid, the interest will accumulate at the rate 9.6 per cent. But the key factor is they can go to the organization, go to the corporation, and make arrangements to have them repaid.

Mr. Speaker, I just really want to ask the member opposite if this rule applies to the federal government as well. I ask him to table the representation he's made to the federal government for the 1,300 bills, overpayments, through the WGSA (western grain stabilization account) that they are collecting.

Now he can stand in this House here and I'll take the criticism. I'll answer his questions. But I want him to show me and table today the letter that he's written to Mr. Goodale saying that they

shouldn't collect their overpayments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

McDowell Report

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning our caucus announced that we are not going to accept the MLA pay hike. Right now I'd like to table a letter from each of our members stating our intention to give up the increase by simply not claiming the full amount of per diems.

This afternoon I'm challenging every member of this Assembly to do this, to follow our example.

I would now ask for the assistance of a page to distribute to each member a similar letter, starting with the Premier. All you have to do is sign them and hand it in to the Clerk. It's that simple.

Mr. Premier, my question is to you: will you show some leadership, get out of the trough, sign that letter and give back the pay increase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to answer this question on behalf of the government. I'll try to take a measured approach because there's some things I'd like to say to the member and he may give me an opportunity to say them in a subsequent question. The purpose of McDowell was never intended particularly to be a pay cut, although it did turn out to be a 2 per cent reduction in pay. Its main purpose was accountability and transparency.

Now with July 1 implementation there is a one-time increase which is more than — and I'm going to emphasize more than — offset by the reductions overall during all of our elected terms of government. The member knows that and I assume that's why he voted for it in the first place.

And if you think your \$40,000 payback is going to make people forget your 14 billion in debt that's your legacy, then I think you're sadly mistaken. So you stand by your record and we'll stand by ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think when it comes to debt we have to take a very serious look at the \$22 billion in debt that the Provincial Auditor says we have today that has increased from that 14 billion in a mere five years since your government has been in power.

Mr. Minister, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, you recently broke a campaign promise by sending out GRIP bills to 12,000 Saskatchewan farmers. You said this was an overpayment and it was only fair that farmers should pay that back. Mr. Minister, you're receiving a \$4,400 overpayment and you're refusing to pay that back. Why do farmers have to pay their overpayment back when you are keeping yours. Mr. Minister, will you sign that letter today and get out of the trough

and pay back your MLA overpayment?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say again and again and as many times as I have to say it, that there is no increase. Our pay is calculated over the term. If it upsets him that there is a short increase during the transition period, I can't help that; it's more than offset by the reduction. In fact, in-Regina members, the reduction over the session is over \$3,000 and for out-of-Regina members it's over 2,000. So I'm not quite sure what this tempest in a teapot is, but my figures say it's a reduction. And if you want to make a donation to the Legislative Assembly, we thank you for it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — It's important to notice that the government's own employees, the good ones, seem to know what the actual cost is, and not the ministers. Mr. Speaker, my minister is for the Minister of Post-Secondary Education. That minister, the other day, said that we discovered that SIAST is planning to cut hundreds of jobs and thousand of student positions. We were told this was because of federal government cuts and there wasn't any money here for back-fill. Well there doesn't seem to be any money for back-fill but there seems to be enough money to fill their back pockets.

Mr. Minister, how can you justify cutting thousands of student positions at the same time that you're getting a \$4,400 pay hike. Will you sign your letter, get out of the trough, and give up your MLA overpayment?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to remind the members of a few measures that we've taken over the years, besides balancing the budget, which was not a small task. Cabinet took a pay cut of 5 per cent. MLA salaries under our government have been frozen since 1991 but actually back to 1987.

An Hon. Member: — 1987.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We hear you — '87.

Eight fewer MLAs is a result of redistribution. And now we have a clear, transparent, accountable MLA pay system which should help some of the members stay out of trouble.

And no pay hike over the term. No pay hike over the term. And I find it passing strange that the member opposite would want to manipulate the numbers to the detriment of his members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, your government has devastated health care in this province. You've closed rural hospitals. You're closing the Plains Health Centre. And more cuts are on the way.

Mr. Minister, your Premier said cuts would start at the top. Yet right at the top of your department, you as a minister get a \$4,400 pay increase this year. Mr. Minister, will you sign the letter that you have received today and give up this one time MLA pay increase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No doubt you are desperate to make people forget the billions of dollars of debt that's the legacy of your government's policies in the '80s. And it's not surprising to us that again you make these desperate attempts at instant credibility.

But I will emphasize that there is no pay increase over the term. This balances out. In '95-96 fiscal, it was 46,000; transition year, 48; and down to 44 in every subsequent year after that. These are the figures provided by the Legislative Assembly. I reiterate them for your information.

And based on the amount of time you spend in this House, which is about 25 minutes a day, as well as missing most of the votes, I would say that you should . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. I will remind the minister that it is contrary to the rules of the Assembly to refer to a member's presence or absence. And the minister knows as well that it's not acceptable to do indirectly what you can't do directly. I'll ask the minister to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I forgot that, and I'll withdraw that remark.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Highways. Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan highways are a disaster. You don't have enough money to fill your potholes, and yet somehow you found enough money to fill the big hole in your wallet. Mr. Minister, the Premier said the cuts would start at the top. Yet Saskatchewan highways get poorer while the Minister of Highways gets richer.

Mr. Minister, will you sign the letter and give up your MLA pay?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well obviously this is a topic that has greatly absorbed the members opposite. You might think they'd be discussing the economy. You might think they'd be figuring out some other things that would be of some use to anybody. But instead they continue to want to grandstand on the basis of what is after all a pay cut.

So I will just emphasize that we will live with the results of McDowell, which we know to be a 2 per cent reduction in pay. And that was our commitment, and that's what we're doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Balanced Budget Commitment

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 1995 election platform document, the NDP government made a commitment to, and I quote, "four more years of balanced budgets."

Just months after making this promise, this government spent \$16,500 taxpayers' dollars to conduct an opinion poll in which

they asked respondents whether they would, and I quote, "favour a balanced approach in which there is a small deficit budget."

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance explain why she wasted taxpayers' money trying to wriggle out of her promise of four balanced budgets.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, this government was one of the first governments in the '90s to balance our budget.

An Hon. Member: — The first.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The first — I stand corrected — to balance our budget. Our commitment is to sustainable balanced budgets.

Mr. Speaker, just because we go out and say to the people of Saskatchewan, we'd like your opinion, we'd like your input, doesn't mean that we've changed our commitment. Our commitment is to prudently manage the finances of the province of Saskatchewan, to provide tax reductions when affordable, and to continue to balance the budgets of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, last year the Canadian Bond Rating Service indicated that if spending results, and I quote, "indicate that the province's budget figures are on track, a rating outlook revision to positive could occur."

Mr. Speaker, a bond rating service is suggesting it will make it cheaper for this government to service the debt if Saskatchewan continues to balance its annual budget. Will the minister explain to the people of this province why she and her government would even consider running a deficit, threatening our credit rating and breaking a solemn promise to the taxpayers of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the member is in the right legislature. This is Saskatchewan; this is not Ottawa. We have balanced our budget, unlike his counterparts in Ottawa who have yet to see the end of the light at their tunnel.

What we said to the people of this province is that we are going to balance our budget. And we're going to continue to balance the budget, whether we have to deal with forest fires, drought, or massive reductions in transfer payments from the federal government. This province is committed to balanced budgets, and that commitment will remain.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I thought the blaming and whining were over last week, but obviously we continue this week.

When offering this government's commitment of four balanced budgets, the minister stated, and I quote:

If the federal government decides to act unilaterally by offloading its problems onto the provinces, there may be adjustments to our long-term plan but there will be no change in direction.

Mr. Speaker, federal funding to Saskatchewan was as promised. Will the minister now stand in this House and justify why she and her government would have even considered running a deficit budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I find the question amusing. This government has never talked about deficits; we've talked about balanced budgets.

But the member opposite has to think very carefully about what his role is in this House. Is he here to defend his constituents? Or is he here to defend his counterparts in Ottawa? And I will read a quote from a newspaper in his very own riding:

Why does . . . (the member opposite continue) to defend the federal Liberals? The long and the short is that Chrétien and his Liberals have slashed and burned social programs.

If these programs are in a mess, it's the federal government that needs to answer.

Mr. Speaker, what I say to the member opposite is, speak for the people of Saskatchewan. That's his job in this legislature. This government will continue to speak for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, in her 1995 budget speech, the minister stated, and I quote: "Sound financial management is a pre-condition to economic growth. Business is reluctant to invest in a province that cannot manage its money."

Mr. Speaker, running a deficit budget would make Saskatchewan the first province to go back to running deficits, as they attempted in their polling to find out. Will the minister tell the jobless people of Saskatchewan whether this government considered just how damaging this sort of mismanagement could be to job creation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether the member opposite was sent into the House with these questions and he has to keep asking the questions no matter what my answer is.

This government has never considered running a deficit. We were the first government in Canada in the '90s to balance our books. Our commitment is to long-term, sustainable balanced

budgets. No matter how many times he asks that question, I will continue to give him the answer: we balanced the budget, we intend to keep it balanced, and Saskatchewan people are very proud of that fact.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, would the minister and her government have a commitment to balanced budgets, but their 1995 NDP election platform document stated, and I quote:

Under our plan, Saskatchewan will set the goal of reducing government spending by at least reducing their expenditures by \$40 million through increased government efficiencies.

Would the minister now explain when we can see such reductions in internal spending?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, wait for the budget. But I'm very pleased that the member opposite has introduced the topic of election platforms. We came out with an election platform which was realistic. We didn't say, here's our great plans, as the Liberals did, and the only thing that you have to assume is that the economy will grow by 8 per cent. Even though they couldn't find a real economist who would say that.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is practical, that listens to people, and speaks up for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Latimer Trial Inquiry

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, it has now been five months since the people of Saskatchewan learned of misconduct by the Justice department in its handling of the Robert Latimer trial. It will come as no surprise to members of this House that since the allegations of jury tampering by the Justice department came to light, the public's faith in our system of justice as been greatly shaken.

The public wants to know what went on in this case and they want to be assured the Minister of Justice is taking steps to prevent this from happening again. However, it appears the Justice department is dragging its heels in releasing the findings of its internal review into this matter.

My question to the Minister of Justice is, how much longer will the people of Saskatchewan have to wait until they get some answers into this very sorry affair? We have a suspended Crown attorney with pay, sir.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer with 17 years of experience in this province, I'm very pleased to say that there are many fine, capable people who work within our justice system, and I'm very proud to say that Saskatchewan can be proud of those people. And it just so happens that many of my compatriots in the legal profession happen to support the party opposite.

The whole criminal justice system isn't a contest where you get a score card, and I think we need to remember that. There's a role for the criminal justice system that presents the facts and the whole situation. And I think we need to not get into some kind of a situation where we're keeping track of the justice system on a basis of keeping score. We have a very good justice system in Saskatchewan, and we will be continuing to support that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, with this investigation coming so closely on the heels of the Martensville fiasco, it's not surprising that people have so many questions about the minister's department.

Mr. Speaker, this year the Justice department's budget was over \$175 million. With these doubts and questions swirling around the department, will the minister not admit today that a full-scale review of the entire department and how it operates is in order to ensure people are in fact getting their money's worth, especially when we're told of how cash strapped this government is?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'll thank the member for that question as well. I fully respect the member's position as a former RCMP officer, and I understand his role in upholding the justice system in the same way that I have, and so I appreciate his questions, and I'll deal with them directly.

I know that we all need to work together if there are problems, and we will do that. I would say that within the Department of Justice — I've been minister for three months now, or I guess it's going on four months — we have in that department reviewed quite a number of the different areas.

It's possible that we will take a detailed review of the prosecution sides in the same way that we've looked at the land titles system and the same way that we've looked at the corrections division. When we do that, I will make the appropriate announcement, and I'm sure I will give advance notice to the hon. member across the floor because I do really respect his opinions. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 30 — An Act to amend The Hotel Keepers Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Hotel Keepers Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 31 — An Act to amend The Municipal Hail Insurance Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Municipal Hail Insurance Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 32 — An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Local Government Election Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 33 — An Act respecting Service Districts and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting Service Districts and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 34 — An Act to amend The Electrical Inspection Act, 1993

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Electrical Inspection Act be now read and introduced the first time.

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

Bill No. 35 — An Act to amend The SaskEnergy Act

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I move that first reading of a Bill to amend The SaskEnergy Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I table the answer to written question no. 13.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 13 is tabled.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Convert.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 14 is converted to motions for return (debatable).

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — New Approaches to Farm Security

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks, I will be moving the following motion:

That this Assembly work with farmers, with farm organizations, and with the government in designing a workable, fair, and affordable approach to farm security.

Mr. Speaker, GRIP was the shortest long-term program that enabled farmers to be dependent on a system instead of encouraging them to become adventurous, enterprising, and assertive.

Mr. Speaker, my background is in farming, and I know very well to be a farmer these days you must be a special person. You must be committed and optimistic. Who else would go into a profession where for weeks at a time you work all hours of the day, seven days a week, to seed the crop, and then when you meet at the local coffee shop, you wonder if you did use the right seed or fertilizer and whether it will rain.

Mr. Speaker, in the last two years farmers have said that they wanted a revamped crop insurance program. This is what they are saying about all agricultural programs. — less duplication, a simplified process, and less administration costs, user friendly. That's what farmers want.

Saskatchewan's diverse regions are affected by different weather conditions, diseases, insects, and soil conditions. And yet we as farmers want to be competitive, productive, and financially stable.

We need effective programs that will prepare our farmers so we will be able to compete in a changing global world — programs that take into account our input costs, weather, and other circumstances beyond our control.

Our programs must be flexible and supportive so that as farmers we are responsible to ourselves, that we work to be traditionally toilers of soil, with pride in our daily accomplishments, and that we have the ability to control our own destiny and budget, to plan and prepare our future based on sound farming practices.

Farmers are initiating positive changes in agriculture, finding new markets and products. Examples include: vacation farms, including bed and breakfast; livestock, from cattle to elk and ostrich; speciality crops. We are venturing into these areas, expanding into global markets, and using modern technology — computers and the Internet — to keep us up to date with all of the information.

Our plan in agriculture is clear as we prepare for the 21st century. This strategy includes *Agriculture 2000* which is *A Strategic Direction for the Future of Saskatchewan's Agriculture and Food Industry*. This plan focuses on three main areas: the farm, diversification, and adding value to what we produce — an institutional development.

The objective is to promote economic development and opportunities which will diversify Saskatchewan's agriculture

base and create the kind of jobs that are needed to sustain rural Saskatchewan.

Long-term research and development commitments are necessary to nurture new ideas, better crops, better livestock genetics, new technology and projects. Agricultural biotechnology is another leading edge undertaking that shows enormous potential for farmers in business. Value added and agribusiness activities provide an opportunity for farmers to access more marketing options with the potential for higher net returns.

A recent example of how we are diversifying and sustaining rural Saskatchewan through more profitable primary commodities and increased value added opportunities include: the \$91 million Canada-Saskatchewan agricultural food innovation fund, to provide research and development assistance to emerging and value added sectors. This fund will create long-term jobs and help the province meet its export targets.

Other examples: the Agriculture Development Fund has been refocused to increase funding that will encourage development of agriculture-related, value added industries.

The \$20 million agri-food equity fund provides start-up for agricultural and expansion capital for companies which add value to the province's primary production base.

Our Saskatchewan Agriculture minister is listening to what the farmers have to say about programs and services. Number one, regarding crop insurance, we must renew the national public policy to maintain provision of a basic risk management package for farmers.

As part of that renewal, we are now conducting consultations with farmers in a review of crop insurance programs. Both levels of government need input from farmers on that kind of program, a program that will meet their needs in the changing agricultural and food industry.

Number two, a whole farm safety net is needed to provide income protection. We do not want to see a reversal back to the days of makeshift government programs. The federal government has come to realize that the province is not in a fiscal position to make up for Ottawa's budget cuts in the area of safety nets.

We also need companion programs that will address the province's specific needs. Work on these initiatives will be developed through further consultation with stakeholders in the agricultural community. The agricultural and food industry is facing rapid changes: new technology, different consumer tastes, pressure on transportation, debates on marketing structures, a rethinking of the relationship of government and the agricultural sector, fiscal constraints and so on.

That is why it is so important that changes affecting the farm industry — loss of the Crow, rail line deregulation and centralization of grain handling — are responded to by programs that will enhance our own initiatives. It is our job as government to provide leadership so all of the stakeholders can

decide how to manage the changes we are experiencing. We will implement a workable, fair and affordable program that will be acceptable because we as farmers, farm organizations, and government, all will have contributed through consultation, keeping in mind the values of our citizens — of cooperation, caring, and community.

By working together we can help each other to adapt and become more diversified, a united approach that we can all benefit from. Together we can work to ensure a sustainable future for agriculture and for the province of Saskatchewan as we move toward the 21st century.

Discussion on this very topic seems timely because March 24 to 30 has been declared Agricultural and Food Week. A good time to talk about the changes we are facing in the agricultural community.

Mr. Speaker, I move that:

This Assembly work with farmers, with farm organizations and with government in designing a workable, fair and affordable program that will benefit Saskatchewan farmers and their families.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would ask the hon. member if she would like to inform the House who is seconding her motion.

Ms. Murrell: — Oh I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Walter Jess, Redberry Lake will be seconding the motion.

The Speaker: — And I will remind the member of what she's just remembered, not to use proper names of members in the House.

(1430)

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of the private members' motion introduced by the member from the Battlefords-Cut Knife that reads:

That this Assembly work with farmers, with farm organizations and with the government in designing a workable, fair and affordable approach to farm security.

I am very pleased that our government, led by the Minister of Agriculture, has seen the importance of consulting with farmers throughout Saskatchewan to develop programs that are a fair and affordable approach to farm security — security that can be provided by programs designed by Saskatchewan farmers in conjunction with the provincial government. Incidentally, Saskatchewan taxpayers provide twice as much per capita to agriculture as the highest level of commitment made by any other province in the entire country.

In addition, the commitment of my government goes beyond the dollar figure and is consistent with a statement made in 1949 by Aldo Leopold, and I quote:

The earth is a vital, living organism whose permanent well-being must never be endangered. All people have a right of access to the earth's resources to meet their basic needs. The use of people and the earth for profit contradicts this trust we have inherited and threatens both the well-being of the earth and the lives of people.

When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the aesthetic harvest it is capable, under science, of contributing to culture.

It is very important that we as legislators keep in mind our responsibilities to the environment to ensure that we have productive land for future generations. This is an area of interest that involves the potentially negative impact of the use of chemicals and fertilizers on a long-term basis.

A great many people have indicated concerns over such items as growth hormones in livestock. While we as farmers are somewhat limited by the restrictions in this area, we also find ourselves with new opportunities for niche markets that are only available to organic producers. Saskatchewan has some major advantages because of pure water, clean air, and a relatively unpolluted environment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — It is the responsibility of any legislators to maintain and build on that advantage. I am pleased to say that my goal is approaching the protection of the environment with the utmost responsibility, much as we are taking a responsible approach to farm security.

On coffee row, through telephone calls as well as in the public forum, my constituents discuss a wide range of issues including crop insurance. The comments I had from the farmers in my area indicate that, for the most part, they strongly support the crop insurance program that has served them so well for the past 35 years. Discussion centres around wanting to maintain individual coverage and very strong support for the spot-loss hail clause that my government introduced after a major lobbying effort on behalf of the farmers. The spot-loss hail clause had been removed by the previous Tory government in an attempt to support the private insurance companies.

My farmers strongly support the inclusion of spot-loss as part of crop insurance. We listened to their wishes and responded positively to their request. In fact my government's approach to the consultation process is well received by farm organizations and farmers alike.

Protection for Saskatchewan farmers is more a necessity now than ever with the high cost of inputs, and of course the destruction of our greatest protection to a land-locked province. I refer of course to the Crow rate and its complete destruction by the federal Liberals.

About 10 days ago, I had the rare privilege to hear the federal Minister of Agriculture speak on farm programs. He talked for

over half an hour about a great many subjects, but he never once mentioned the Canadian Wheat Board. What he didn't say scares me more than what he did.

Never once did he indicate any support for the greatest marketing service that prairie farmers have ever had working on their behalf. I am concerned that trusting the Canadian Wheat Board to the federal Liberals is just asking for the same protection that the Liberals, both provincially and federally, gave us through the Crow battle, the battle that was fought long and hard by farmers and farm organizations. But Ottawa prefers to listen to the likes of the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway).

Not only are we now in a post-Crow period with the obvious disadvantages of having the federal Liberals take hundred of millions of dollars out of farmers' hands, but they have created a situation where farmer renters are in competition with farmer landlords for the meagre dollars that Ottawa decided belong to us for the untimely assassination of our favourite bird, the old Crow.

Not only did the federal government abuse farmers and landowners in that way, now they want to give up thousands of hopper cars that were purchased by farmers and taxpayers to the railways for a meagre 25 per cent of their cash value. Then in another demonstration of universal Liberal financing, they decide that we as farmers should have the opportunity to pay for these cars once more. What is even more ridiculous is the support of the official opposition in this Chamber — support for such a process.

I realize the Liberals opposite want to support their federal counterparts if they can, but what kind of voodoo economics are you trying to promote? Perhaps the provincial Liberal Party should not have hired so many advisers from the dark back rooms of the former Saskatchewan Tory government.

I want to ask the Liberal opposition if they are going to stick with plan A, which consists of blindly supporting the Liberal government in Ottawa, or open up your eyes and ears to what is going on here, which is the most negative move that any government has ever done to Saskatchewan farmers.

I used to argue with a friend of mine that the Tories were worse than the Liberals. He always made the argument that the Liberals were the worst because, as he says, the Tories for the most part do nothing while the Liberals do something to you. Well this time I want the Liberal opposition to change their ways and support us on this one — support us as we struggle against Ottawa for the ownership and the ultimate control of the fleet of hopper cars. We as a government will do our part with the 1,000 cars that Saskatchewan people now own, and we will not be asking farmers or taxpayers to buy them again for the railways.

Stand with us. Stand with the Saskatchewan farmers for once. Don't line up with the Ottawa Liberals against Saskatchewan people.

One very positive direction that my government has decided to emphasize is the education and training of young people so that they are prepared for a future in the area of practical agriculture.

The first two groups to agree to try out a program were the dairy producers and the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association. The support from the dairy producers is much appreciated at this time, and we have many trainees on the dairy program. Lately we have been getting a lot of interest from cow-calf operations and growing interest from grain farms.

At the present time, we have 59 trainees in the Green Certificate program. The program is a way of conducting staff training on Saskatchewan farms. The goal of the program is to fill key roles in the farming industry with skilled people. It provides farm workers with a way to obtain certification for mastery of practical, hands-on skills without leaving the farm. Family members are eligible. In the case of our dairy trainees, 90 per cent of the trainees are family members.

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food is working in cooperation with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development until the program is fully organized. The specific skills which form the basis of the curriculum were identified by farmers in the various industries' specializations. Funding for materials in the program coordinated is provided by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food through the Agricultural Institute for Management in Saskatchewan. During the pilot project, the Green Certificate program currently covers several areas or skills profiles in agriculture including cow-calf, feedlot, dairy, sheep, crop, and irrigation crop production training.

This is structured around skill profiles which list all the skills or tasks required for proficiency in a particular training area. Participants receive a training curriculum representing the skills needed to obtain the Green Certificate. The trainee receives most of his or her knowledge through apprenticeship-like training under a competent trainer-farmer. The farmer is responsible as well for the major assessment of the trainee's proficiency in performing skills.

Trainees must understand why a skill is performed and be able to demonstrate the skill with competent ability. Once the trainer has completed the assessment in each performance objective, the skills are initialled, signifying they have been mastered and the trainee is able to perform them. Trainees progress at their own rate.

The next stage of the program is the evaluation of the trainee by the Green Certificate assessors on the basis of his or her ability to perform specific skills. The testers are persons who are currently in the industry at a farming level and performs and supervises the same tasks routinely. And they are already involved in the program as a trainer. The certification test assessors evaluate students to ensure verification of reliability, validity, and uniformity of the testing and training. After the trainee is deemed competent in all the skills he or she will be awarded the appropriate level of the Green Certificate.

I have participated in one of the test days at the University of Saskatchewan at the dairy barn. It is very gratifying to see the enthusiasm of the young people who are taking the training and being tested. I want to acknowledge at this time the cooperation we are receiving from Mr. Dave Christensen of the animal and poultry science department and from Jim Rynn, dairy herdsman. Jim assists in organizing the test days as well as participating in

the testing, and has been a resource person for the program. The testers are very conscientious and are not afraid to mark a trainee as incomplete for a specific skill if they feel the trainee needs more training in that particular skill.

Certificates that are fully awarded are very valid, reliable certificates of a person's ability. The trainee also receives valuable feedback from the testers, perhaps suggesting another way to do things. So the test days really add to the training.

(1445)

My special thanks to Jim Birch who is coordinator of the program. Jim is another Saskatchewan boy who has come back home to live and work in Saskatchewan.

Congratulations to all of the graduates. I am pleased to say each one of the graduates of level 1 are moving on to level 2 for further training.

There is no cost to the trainee for the Green Certificate program. All resource materials and program coordination are provided by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. The resource materials provided to the trainees for self-study are excellent resources.

A dairy home study manual accompanies the material for level 1. And when the trainees move on to level 2, they are eligible to receive a cattle animal health manual and a cattle nutrition manual. There's no charge to the trainee under the pilot project. However, money is not provided for wage subsidization, etc. There is an investment of time required by the trainers. If you are wondering if the time investment is worthwhile, I would refer you to any one of the trainees or trainers who are in this program to ask them the question. Their opinion will mean more than anything that I could tell you.

The pilot project will be evaluated this month to determine if it will continue in Saskatchewan and if changes to the program are necessary.

Even the high schools are becoming involved in the Green Certificate program. The project at Fort Qu'Appelle at Bert Fox Composite High School got under way officially with registrations on the pilot project on Thursday, March 7 and Friday, March 8. Six students registered. They are between the ages of 15 and 18 years old. Most will work with relatives, while one young native lady will train with a cow-calf producer on the Peepeekisis Reserve. This will be written up in the "Farm and Food Report" soon.

At the same time registrations for cow-calf and crop certificates are increasing in the Cut Knife-Rockhaven area and the Biggar area.

Three test days have been held for the dairy trainees resulting in five dairy trainees receiving dairy technician level 1 certificates. They are all carrying on into level 2 and reporting it to be a big step up from the level 1.

The first cow-calf and hopefully the first feedlot test days will be held the week of April 15 to 19. The program is being

evaluated at the present time. A focus group meeting with the evaluators plus dairy trainers and trainees was held on March 5. The producers and trainees were very positive and only suggested fine-tuning. Another focus group meeting will be held with the evaluators and cow-calf and crop people on Wednesday, March 20 at Cut Knife.

In each of the agricultural areas, there are three levels of training. The first level is production technician training, which is on-the-job training focusing on the practical aspects of farming. These skills are essential for basic employment on a Saskatchewan farm.

The second level is production supervision management trainee, which includes a mixture of on-the-farm training and self-study with some written assignments and testing required. This set of job skills is relatively complex and requires a significant amount of decision-making ability, as well as a physical dexterity.

The third level is the farm business management and business plan training and is meant for individuals who will become major decision makers or owner-operators in a farming operation. This third level will involve class studies.

To summarize the program, participants receive a training curriculum representing the skills needed to obtain this Green Certificate. The trainee receives most of his or her knowledge through apprenticeship-like training under a competent trainer-farmer.

The farmer is responsible as well for the major assessment of the trainee's proficiency in farming skills. Trainees must understand why a skill is performed and be able to demonstrate the skill with competent ability.

Once the trainer has completed the assessment in each performance objective, the skills are initialled, signifying they have been mastered and the trainee is able to perform. The trainees progress at their own rate. Trainers and trainees must secure their own employees or employers.

The next stage of the program is the evaluation of the trainee by the Green Certificate assessor on the basis of his or her own ability to perform specific skills. The assessor is the person who is currently in the industry at the farming level, and is already involved in the program as a trainer, as I mentioned before.

The certification test assessors evaluate students to ensure the verification and the uniformity of the testing and training. After the trainee is deemed competent in all skills, he or she will be awarded the appropriate level of the Green Certificate.

As I said, there is no cost to the trainer or the trainee of the Green Certificate program. All resource materials and program coordination are provided by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. However, money is not provided for wage subsidies. In addition, trainers and trainees are expected to find their own people.

As I personally played a role in the introduction of the Green Certificate program to the province of Saskatchewan and to the Saskatchewan farm scene, I am very positive about its success.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — I am extremely pleased that my government is making an all-out effort to hear from farmers and farm organizations. I refer of course not only to the meetings

throughout Saskatchewan but to our ag caucus committee that is prepared to meet with farmers and farm groups throughout the year. And I am pleased to second the motion by the member from the Battleford-Cut Knife which reads:

That this Assembly work with farmers and with farm organizations as well as government in designing a workable, fair and affordable approach to farm security.

I, like many, have spent a good portion of my life as an active farmer, having been raised on the family farm at Richard. Of course, like all farm family members, I was involved from the time that I was old enough to walk. In reality I started my farming career when I climbed on the tractor in the summer of 1959, and for the most part ended my active career with the farm when the tractor climbed on me in 1991. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to join in the debate again today regarding rural Saskatchewan and the farming community, being one of those people and have been involved in it all of my life.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of my comments I will be moving an amendment to this motion which will talk about this provincial government and its failure to support the farmers of the province through its actions in two ways, from the tearing up of thousands of GRIP contracts as well as breaking its word, its promise, in this House not to send out the bills.

Mr. Speaker, farmers indeed are leaders in our province and I certainly would like to recognize that today. Our farmers and the members opposite have talked about diversification. The farmers in this province are way ahead of the industry; they are way ahead of the government in their diversification efforts for many, many years.

Farmers, for years, have been diversifying simply to stay afloat because of the lack of a sustainable farm program in this province. Farmers have been moving toward value added products for years and years and we see many of those in place today. We see value added industries that have been started on the farms; whether it's preserves, preservatives, jellies, chocolates, jams, all those things, as well as some more major and substantial ones in processing plants through our registered seed growers and what have you.

As well, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems that we have in this problem . . . in this province is that transportation needs of the farmers have not kept up with them. The government, this government, has not supported a sustainable plan of transportation changes in this province and still refuses to come together with the agencies involved to set up a transportation system that we need in this province. We saw last week when the federal government announced substantial money coming to the province for road structure and yet the problem that we have in this province is that there is no plan to look at where we need a system of roads and railways to meet the needs of farmers and certainly the value added industries that we have.

In many communities, including my own, there are what the farmers have put together on their own, is marketing groups — people coming together, farmers coming together, to discuss strategies as to how they can get the biggest bang for their buck from their farm products. This has proved to be a group that can come together, talk about each other's needs and talk about how they can best market their crops and products.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talked about a long-term commitment. I guess that's a little like the pot calling the kettle black because they don't have a long-term commitment, as I talked about, for transportation. They certainly don't have one for the future of agriculture in this province.

And small wonder that farmers are sceptical about any program that governments have in light of what this government in particular has done and governments before them.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about the GRIP fiasco for a minute and how that has turned so many farmers against any program any government will ever bring back into the farming community. If we look back to the first year of this government in power in 1992 when farmers had binding contracts with the government regarding their production plans for the year, the government immediately came in, cancelled those contracts unilaterally. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, they introduced retroactive legislation to cancel the contracts with the farmers.

The government skips out scot-free whereas us farmers had to remain in the program and the only way that we could move out of the program would be on a buy-out phase which has turned out to be a major problem in this last fiasco of sending out the bills.

We moved from the cancelling of the contracts, Mr. Speaker, in 1992 to the next years when there were changes each and every year, to a point in March of 1995 when the Agriculture minister of the day in this House, on behalf of cabinet and the government opposite, made an announcement that they would indeed not be collecting the GRIP bills.

The fiasco continues, Mr. Speaker. We went on to have a balanced budget, which the government opposite is happy to talk about, balancing the budget on the backs of the farmers of this province when they took — or stole, I guess would be a better word — \$188 million of farmers' money out of the GRIP program to balance their budget.

Small wonder, Mr. Speaker, that crop sector programs are sceptical in the eyes of most farmers. Mr. Speaker, if I could, I would like to quote an article from a gentleman in Aneroid where he talks about the GRIP program. And the article is entitled "The Last Straw." And I quote:

Recently, when I picked up the mail, I got a surprise bill from the GRIP wind-up for the amount of 20,559. That was the last straw.

Mr. Speaker, I'm quoting the farmer from Aneroid.

Another article, Mr. Speaker, if I can, from the Leader-Star services by Murray Mandryk, where the headlines read, "Rural

youth vanishing breed." Small wonder that we can keep our youth in rural Saskatchewan on the farms when there is no sustainable, long-term plan to keep our farmers here on the farm.

Mr. Speaker, GRIP is just one example of why our farmers are sceptical of this government and that there is no long-term plan and commitment.

Another example is crop insurance, Mr. Speaker. As we look at our crop insurance program, as we have fewer and fewer farmers involved in the program, as the premiums rise higher and higher and our paybacks are lower and lower, small wonder that farmers are sceptical about joining the crop insurance program.

Mr. Speaker, if I could quote again from the Outlook paper where the headline reads, "Upshall slams door on Outlook Crop Insurance office." Just one of eight offices that were indeed cancelled, Mr. Speaker.

(1500)

If I can quote as well from an article that will be coming out in *The Western Producer* this Thursday, where they talk about the decline in program participation has been attributed to concerns about ongoing changes in program design and delivery and premium costs.

Mr. Speaker, that article can relate to all crop sector programs in this province, including GRIP, including the crop insurance, including the crop sector program that we're probably going to have in this province in the coming year that we're not so sure will be of any value to any farmers in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another article . . . We talked about, earlier on, about the scepticism. And another article in the paper is entitled, "Review of crop insurance." Now, Mr. Speaker, we went ahead, or the minister went ahead, laid off many employees, closed eight offices, gave notices to 154 crop insurance agents that the contracts which will come due by the end of July will not be renewed.

And then the article talks about review of crop insurance. Little wonder there's scepticism, Mr. Speaker, to this government's plan for any future farm safety programs when the minister makes wholesale changes to the program and then goes about on a perceived input from our farmers around the province. After he's already changed the program, made up his mind that it will not change for this year, he goes out on the pretence that he is going indeed to listen to the farmers of the province to see what crop insurance they need.

Another headline, Mr. Speaker, is: "Crop insurance reviewed as farmer participation drops." It's a little bit like closing a door after the horses are out. We review it after we've changed the program. Participation has dropped; farmers will not participate in the program any more which we so desperately need in this province — a small wonder that farmers are sceptical about what the government is doing.

As I mentioned a little earlier, Mr. Speaker, there is going to be

a crop sector program in this province this coming year as well as crop insurance. Both programs will be funded with money that was already previously spent once. There will be no new money in the programs from the provincial government for the farmers. And once again, likely at the end of this coming crop year, there will be money left again because the programs are virtually useless for the farmers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite again talked this afternoon about federal programs, as they continually like to blame the federal government now for everything that happens that's wrong in this province. They wore out the previous Conservative bashing, and now it's the federal Liberals.

I would like to point out that the NDP's brothers in Ottawa, who are the very people that supported a railway strike when our grain was sitting in the bins . . . we were not able to get it to port. The federal government was moving to get these people back to work, get the grain moving, which meant millions and millions of dollars from the farmers of this country. And yet the federal NDP voted to let the railway workers stay out on strike. It's a little bit ironic that they criticize the federal government when their own people there are bashing on the farmers as well.

They talk about the federal government, and I would just like to point out a few areas where the federal government kicks in billions and billions of dollars into this province. And I'm wondering what would happen if we didn't have those dollars coming in with the lack of commitment to the farming community that we have by this government, Mr. Speaker.

If I can raise the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) programs, Mr. Speaker, in three different areas and we start with the NISA basic program where in '94-95 there was about \$23 million injected into farmers in this province; '95 there'd be about 51; in 1996 another \$66 million.

We move on to the NISA enhanced program and in '94-95, Mr. Speaker, we had \$36 million. This year we'll have another \$42 million. NISA kick-start, once again last year 40 million; this year another \$60 million, Mr. Speaker. We have the crop sector companion programs where last year we had . . . or this year we will have 54 million injected, increasing to 104 million in the following year.

Agri-food innovation fund, Mr. Speaker, '95-96, 4 million; next year 20 million; the following year another \$40 million, Mr. Speaker. No small sum of money to help out the farmers in Saskatchewan.

Crop insurance, Mr. Speaker, the program that we were just talking about that are in such dire straits in this province. And last year 67 million; this year 68 million; next year an additional 74 million, Mr. Speaker. Millions and millions of dollars. And yet this government continually tends to call down the federal government and indicates at their lack of support for the province's farmers. I think the shoe's on the other foot, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it's this government that has a lack of commitment to the farmers of this province.

Interest on cash advances, Mr. Speaker, '94-95 some 8 million; this year another 8 million; next year could be as high as 12

million, 13 million, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on and on and on with the amount of money that the federal government is pumping into Saskatchewan to prop up the agriculture community, which this government fails to do.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that our intention is to work with farmers of the province, the very background that I have come from. And I will be talking to many, many farmers and I have done so already. Farmers continue to call me asking what support there is for them and why this government has a lack of respect for the farmers of this province. And I can tell you that farmers are very much upset out there and will be very sceptical when it comes to putting together any form of safety net programs in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers of the province indeed do not trust this government. As I indicated earlier we talked about the farm safety nets, the GRIP fiasco, the lack of commitment in the crop insurance program which we should have had a new program in place for this coming year, Mr. Speaker, when we don't have. We're once again going to be relying on a program that is outdated, that is in debt, that doesn't meet the needs of the producers, and yet there is no commitment to ensuring anything new for this year. We talked about 1997 and all we can hope, Mr. Speaker, is that by 1997 that this government does have the courage to come forward with a new plan that will mean something to the producers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, if I could, I would just like to say again that the reason that we moved the amendment to this motion is that the farmers do not trust this government and will not, and we will be working with them to try and come up with a sustainable plan that will meet the needs of the farmers.

So, Mr. Speaker, if I could I'd like to move this motion:

And that all words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following words substituted therefor:

Condemns the provincial government for failing to work in the best interest of Saskatchewan farmers by: (1) unilaterally tearing up thousands of gross revenue insurance program contracts without having an alternate effective farm support program in place; and (2) breaking its word by sending GRIP overpayment bills after it expressly promised in the legislature not to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I do move, seconded by the member from Saltcoats.

The Speaker: — The amendment is moved by the hon. member for Arm River, and because the Speaker has not had a chance to peruse the amendment earlier, I'd just like to take a moment to ensure that it's in order.

I find the amendment in order.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Murrell's resolution in part reads fair and . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now I have to remind the hon. member that it's out of order to refer to other hon. members by

their proper names but only in their roles of constituencies, and I'll simply ask the member to proceed without that reference.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Mr. Speaker, the mover's resolution reads, in part, "fair and affordable approach to farm security" and I would agree with that — if it were so. But I have many reservations if that will really happen.

Mr. Speaker, the premiums have to be reflected in the coverage. At present, the premiums are far too high for the little bit of coverage that farmers do receive. Mr. Speaker, we do not want to repeat the mistakes that were made by the provincial government with the GRIP program. A lot of those mistakes included the unilateral decision by the NDP provincial government to change the terms of the GRIP contracts in '92 which resulted in the breaking of written contracts with farmers that signed in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, it will take a long time and lots of consultation with grain farmers if we want to regain their faith and confidence in the ability of government to administer a farm income security program after the breaking of these contracts.

Also with GRIP, we want to never, ever repeat the disaster of the manner in which Saskatchewan GRIP program was wound up, and as my colleague has mentioned, calling in for bills to be repaid that were promised would never be recalled.

On March 31, '95, the former minister of Agriculture, Darrel Cunningham, stated in the legislature that the government would not attempt to collect GRIP overpayments. The exact quotation is, "Governments should keep their promises." When the minister of Agriculture promises farmers that the GRIP overpayments will not be collected, farmers rely on the word of the minister and make financial arrangements accordingly. It's simply not fair for the new Minister of Agriculture to come back and change his mind and say, in effect, oh, we were only kidding; now you'll have to pay back the overpayments you received.

An Hon. Member: — We were only campaigning.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Campaigning. Yes, that's part of it.

Crop insurance, Mr. Speaker, at present is too expensive and is also far too complicated. In designing a new farm income security program we won't want to repeat the mistakes of the Saskatchewan crop insurance program. The record of saying one thing and then doing another thing is disgraceful.

Undertaking an expensive internal re-engineering program in '94 called the strategic plan, Vision 2000, which talked in glowing terms about shared values, consultations with users and employees, then commissioned Ernst & Young to write an internal report on the reorganization of the crop insurance program — at a cost, I might add, of \$85,000 — which ultimately recommended the closure of 8 of the 29 customer service offices. Absolutely nothing was said in the strategic plan, Vision 2000, about shutting down customer service offices.

Here again we have to regain the trust and confidence before

we can persuade farmers to join in the creation of a new farm income security program, whether that be ordinary crop insurance or income insurance.

On February 19, 1996 the Minister of Agriculture announced the closure of eight customer service offices. He also announced the elimination of the Crop Insurance Corporation's network of marketing agents effective July 31, 1996, Mr. Speaker. From now on crop insurance will not be purchased at the farm gate but only in government offices.

The very next day, February 20, the minister had the nerve to invite the public then to participate in public consultations about improvements to the crop insurance program. After the fact, Mr. Speaker.

This review is supposed to deal with the coverage levels, premium costs and program debt. Town hall meetings were announced for 10 communities running from March 4 to 8. It's difficult to have any faith in these consultations when the government has just finished shutting down eight offices without any consultation with the users about the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to touch briefly on the NISA and the enhanced NISA, which in my estimation are two very good programs that are going to help in bad years and they are going to also be a form of a retirement program for farmers. I would hope, in the wisdom of the people and the powers to be in this government, that when they bring in new safety nets, for goodness sake do not change these programs for the sake of saving a buck to bring us in a new safety net.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, a new crop insurance should take more into account such things as input costs of fuel, fertilizer, chemicals and pesticides, because our input costs have increased drastically, our coverage has gone down and our premiums have gone up. And therefore this program has become useless.

Mr. Speaker, the agriculture program is getting smaller. It's been downsized. Crop coverage is very low. And the minister has said crop insurance cuts will save \$5 million. At the same time, being very hypocritical, the government has grown. The cabinet has got bigger; ministerial assistants have been hired; a deputy minister has been hired; for roughly a figure of two and a half million dollars. Well there goes half the cost we saved by shutting all our crop insurance offices and laying off the rural people in rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1515)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the number of farmers covered by crop insurance is also deceiving. Mr. Speaker, many farmers list a crop that they do not seed just to keep their contract open. These numbers are counted.

Mr. Speaker, the banks insist that farmers sign over crop insurance in many cases to receive an operating loan. So in

other words they are blackmailed. Many of these people wouldn't touch crop insurance because it's far too expensive.

All of these issues, Mr. Speaker, have to be addressed in the new plan. And for that reason I will be supporting the amendment put forth by my colleague.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I stand here today with great excitement and somewhat concerned, with a farmer's background myself, thinking of the challenges and changes facing farmers.

Farmers are facing challenges with the elimination of the Crow benefit, deregulation of the rail transportation, the influence of international trade and agreements. We need to work with farmers, farm organizations, industry and government, to design a workable and affordable farm security program.

Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the opposition speak on this government, that they weren't supporting farm input costs. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, annually, last year we spent 117 million on fuel tax rebate; PST (provincial sales tax) exemptions for machinery and repairs, 59 million; other inputs, 53 million; and value of reduced interest under feeder-breeder program, 2 million.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan government spends \$425.50 per capita — the highest in all of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — But, Mr. Speaker, the federal government, at the same time that we are helping the farmers with the input costs, they are generating input costs for them. The Crow benefit is being eliminated with a loss to the farmers of \$300 million annually.

I think we want to tell the members opposite that they need to talk to their federal counterparts. The key here is to diversify, Mr. Speaker — value added production in agriculture biotechnology and marketing.

Mr. Speaker, farmers have diversified in my area. They are growing peas, seed potatoes, game farming, and berries, just to mention a few. Farmers in the Choiceland area, Mr. Speaker, are growing about 500 acres of seed potatoes, working together with industry. This processing plant, Mr. Speaker, generates 11 full-time jobs and this industry is looking at expanding to 5,000 acres of seeded potatoes. There are also other areas that they are seeding potatoes in my constituency for seed, Mr. Speaker.

Also some of the farmers have diversified into elk. Mr. Speaker, elk has generated a great lot of revenue for the farmers. There are farmers in the Smeaton area, White Star, and Samburg that are raising elk. Farmers are also raising bison, and also a number of our first nations reserves. We have the Sturgeon Lake Reserve and the Wahpeton Reserve, and farmers in the Spruce Home and White Fox area are also raising bison.

Mr. Speaker, farmers are diversifying, and industry is reacting

in many areas. There are almost 300 processing companies in the province. This helps in two ways. Over 6,000 long-term jobs, but even more so, Mr. Speaker, processing plants are being built closer to the farmers and allowing for more affordable transportation for them. Mr. Speaker, rural-based companies account for 57 per cent of processing. The balance of 30 per cent is located in Regina and Saskatoon, and 13 per cent in urban centres.

With that, Mr. Speaker, farm organizations, farmers, industries and government, are working together. With that, I will be supporting the motion and not supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased that we have the opportunity today to address the issues involving farmers, farm organizations, and farm security in the House today.

As you are aware, agriculture is a vital part of my constituency's economy and of the province's economy as a whole. It deserves time and attention from all of us. Mr. Speaker, I've spoken with many of my constituents, and I feel it is my responsibility to bring some of their concerns to the House today, concerns that need an answer from this government.

Mr. Speaker, my background is in farming. I was raised on a farm and I brought my children up on a farm. And we were involved in the hog industry. The hog industry is something that has been addressed in the government's newest document, their *Partnership for Growth*, and I was delighted to see that and yet at the same time surprised when I realized that out of all the provinces in Canada, there's only two that actually had a decline in hog numbers in the last year. And Saskatchewan. . . B.C. (British Columbia) was one of them, and that was because most of that area had been cemented over that was used in the hog industry, and Saskatchewan's growth numbers have actually gone down as well.

Our producers are struggling under the unfair taxes of the PST that Alberta does not have, and Manitoba's taxes are considerably lower. One producer has told me that his operation has an increase of \$300 a month in the utility rates, and this is going to amount to about \$3,600 this year or about a quarter of his bottom line.

How is this a commitment to helping farmers gain financial security? In the member's motion, she mentions a workable, fair, and equitable approach to farm security. Something affordable from this government would be a nice change.

This government's policies have been anything but affordable for the farmers; their high taxes, their high utility rates, and the bureaucratic road blocks have discouraged expansion. They've made it harder and harder for our farmers to create their own opportunities.

We have people in this province who are willing to set up further processing industries in grain, cattle, hogs, and poultry. We have manufacturers in rural Saskatchewan who want to grow and flourish.

I work with people in businesses who are committed to agriculture through manufacturing and process: Del-Air industries in Humboldt that sell a lot of ventilation equipment not only across Canada but in the United States and as far away as Japan; Bourgault Industries who sells equipment right around the world as well, and their newest plant expansion is not in Saskatchewan; Schulte Industries who sell right across Canada, and one of . . . the CEO (chief executive officer) there told me the other day that unless profit stops being a swear word in the vocabulary of this province, we're going to be in big trouble. These people are looking for good news from this government, and I think it's about time they found it.

Mr. Speaker, I also have to point out the irony when this government talks about fair approaches and then holds the unfair regulations of the farm fuel tax rebate. Farmers in the same households are eligible unless they are husband and wife or common law couples. It's time this government started recognizing that all farmers, whether they are male or female or whether they are married or singles, are farmers. Farm security should be available to everyone, not just a selective, male-dominated process here.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude I would like to make one last point to this Assembly. If this government truly believes that agriculture is the backbone of the economy, then why do they continue to heap problems upon our farmers: the GRIP bills, utility rate increases, the poor roads, and the hospital closure? If this government truly wants to work with farmers and farm organizations, why is there really no grand strategy for rural Saskatchewan?

Farm security means an opportunity to ensure that there is a bright future for tomorrow for our children. Farmers are gamblers, Mr. Speaker, by their nature. They have to gamble on the weather. They have to gamble on prices. They have to gamble on interest rates and they have to gamble on the whims of markets. What farmers don't need, Mr. Speaker, is to have to gamble that the government is on their side as well.

I'm all for the underlying principle behind the member's motion, but I can't support it. It's time for a lot less talk and a lot more action. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm not sure if it's a pleasure to rise today or not, to talk about the destruction of farming in Saskatchewan, but I think this is the place where it should be discussed and where some of the solutions to the problems in farming today should be coming from.

But unfortunately the government opposite are not the people to be presenting the viable options for farmers of Saskatchewan. I think back to the promises that were brought forward by the Premier when he was in opposition, prior to '91; how he was going to do things so much better. He was going to get more money out of Ottawa.

Well there was a little trip that the Premier took to Ottawa,

along with a number of friends of the NDP Party — and perhaps even the member from Wood River attended on that trip — where they went down to Ottawa to beg the prime minister of the day for more money. And what did they come back with, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I think it's very clear to every farmer in this province what they came back with. They came back with a bill for Saskatchewan farmers of \$120,000 for the airplane ride to Ottawa and back, and that was it. There was no additional support garnered by the member from Riversdale for the farmers of this province.

The member from Cut Knife, in her opening remarks, stated that GRIP was the shortest-existing long-term program for farmers in this province. And I agree with her; it indeed was. Because it came into place in 1991 and as soon as the members opposite were elected to government, they set about destroying the program. They set about destroying the program, a program which the Premier had said he was going to make bigger and better and spend more money on.

But unfortunately he appointed as an Agriculture minister the member from Rosetown, who only believes in tearing things down. When he was appointed the minister of Highways he wanted to turn them all into gravel roads. So when he had the opportunity in Agriculture, what did he do? He tore up the GRIP contracts. He killed the GRIP program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the corpse was still there.

So we move on a little time to the current Minister of Agriculture who claimed in his days in opposition that he was going to make things better for farmers in Saskatchewan. And what did he do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? He buried GRIP. The minister from Rosetown killed it and the member from Watrous buried it. And that's why we had the shortest-lived long-term farm program in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, but before . . . after they killed it and before they buried it, we had another Agriculture minister in Saskatchewan, the member for Canora, Darrel Cunningham. And Mr. Cunningham got a little desperate during the election campaign that he wasn't going to win his seat. So he promised that the GRIP overpayments from 1991, which occurred because of the changes the member from Rosetown had made and changed the program, the member from Canora, Mr. Cunningham, who is no longer in this seat . . . The current member for Canora thought I was casting aspersions upon her, which was not the case.

(1530)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the previous member for Canora, Mr. Cunningham . . .

An Hon. Member: — Are you casting aspirations?

Mr. D'Autremont: — No, I don't; not up there.

Said that, to try and win his seat, that he would forgive the GRIP program overpayments. And he was backed up by his Premier because of the chances of losing not only that individual's seat but a number of seats in the area. The Premier backed him up on that particular promise, that the GRIP overpayments would be forgiven.

So what happens? The government opposite is re-elected. The current Minister of Agriculture takes over the portfolio and deep sixes that promise — another broken NDP promise. That's what you hear falling in this province, is NDP campaign promises.

So, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Dan, you're hurting my feelings.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Unfortunately the member from Watrous has a thin skin today.

So they buried that program, Mr. Speaker, and sent out 12,000 farmers' bills, of which a number have been returned.

But even on that issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to overpayments the government opposite certainly seems to be willing to collect them but somewhat more reluctant to pay them, particularly when it comes out of their own pocket rather than some unknown farmer across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, where do the GRIP overpayments come from? The GRIP overpayments came because the member from Rosetown changed the rules. In Manitoba those rules didn't change. The farmers there collected \$20,000 more than the farmers in Saskatchewan collected. The price of grain . . . it didn't matter whether you grew it in Carberry, Manitoba, or Nipawin or Shaunavon or Alida. It didn't matter where it was grown, the price of wheat was the same thing across western Canada.

The only thing that changed was the support programs. In Alberta the farmers there collected almost \$10,000 more than what the farmers in Saskatchewan collected. Again the prices were the same; only the programs were different.

And farmers out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are not happy about the changes implemented by the member from Rosetown when he was the Agriculture minister; Darrel Cunningham when he was the member for Canora — and ultimately cost him his defeat — or the member from Watrous when he sent out the GRIP bills.

I have a letter from a farmer that was sent to the Premier, and I think expresses the anger that farmers feel over their betrayal — their betrayal by the broken campaign promises of the members opposite. And I would like to read this letter into the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that all the people in Saskatchewan at some point in time, when they have a chance to review the records of this Assembly, can understand and feel the anger that farmers feel towards this particular government.

And it wasn't just the Premier that received this letter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I was glad to see the member from Redberry Lake up and speaking earlier because he received one of these letters. In fact his name is second on the list after the Premier's name. Other members who received it was the current Minister of Health from Saskatoon; the Minister of Agriculture, the member for Watrous; the member for Melville, the Leader of the Official Opposition; and the Leader of the Third Party.

And unfortunately some of the members are complaining that they didn't receive a copy. Well I think that I'm more than prepared to give this to the Clerk's office and they can photocopy one for the current member for Canora . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Kelvington-Wadena.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will read this letter:

I am extremely disappointed in your government's handling of the gross revenue insurance plan while it was in effect and especially the way your government cancelled GRIP.

Since my vote in the last election got you back in as Premier of Saskatchewan, and during the provincial election campaign last spring you and Agriculture minister Cunningham said farmers would not have to repay overpayments we received in 1993, could you kindly pay the amount owing to Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation of \$534.19 on my behalf.

I really wonder whether the Premier has provided that money. He's unwilling to give up his 4,400. I'm sure that this poor farmer is still waiting for the Premier to pay this bill for him. Carry on:

This statement really hurts me, (I have to edit certain words out of here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the farmer was fairly forceful in his comments) especially when you and your NDP constituency were campaigning last spring saying farmers would not have to repay the overpayment received in 1993. Then once elected you and your Agriculture minister from Watrous changed your tune. Furthermore, when the Tories released a leaked document January 11, 1996, saying the bills were going out, the minister responded by saying the information was incomplete and distorted.

Those were the current Minister of Agriculture's words.

The minister is full of it. He knew what was happening. It is these kinds of actions — integrity and the credibility of the minister and the Premier — that are in question. Who do you believe and when do you believe them?

We joined the gross revenue insurance plan to subsidize our income due to low grain prices and high input costs. Today the grain prices are up. We are trying to get ahead of the game. With input costs rising at the same rate, we do not have the \$534.19 to hand to the government. Also it seems to be very timely that the western grain transition payments are being made and your government decides to send these bills to repay the 1993 overpayments.

I am sure we are not the only farmers in Saskatchewan in this situation. Not having these funds, just remember who elected you into power in this province in the last election.

I think that letter explains what a good many farmers in Saskatchewan feel. And I think it also has a veiled threat to it, to remember for those members of the government just who did

elect them. And unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their actions already prove that they have little or no consideration for the people who actually vote for them and place them in their seats.

What happened with the GRIP money that was already in the program, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because there was a significant amount of money there. Money that had been allocated by the federal government, the provincial government, and the farmers. Money that had been allocated by . . . not by but for agriculture. And I'm glad to hear that the member from Rosetown has a few comments to make. Unfortunately there aren't any gravel roads . . . highways left that aren't gravelled in this province.

What happened with the money from the GRIP program? Well there was \$782 million of surplus in Saskatchewan's GRIP program. And the provincial government opposite, who are now claiming that the federal government is downloading on them, isn't giving them any money, turned around and gave the federal government back \$326 million.

Now the people of Saskatchewan certainly could have used \$326 million. But no, we got to send it back to Ottawa. And what happened to the rest of it? I mean there was 782 million in there.

Well the provincial government took out \$188 million to balance their budget last year. That's how they balanced the budget. It wasn't the Finance minister who through some magic wand balanced the budget. It wasn't through cuts on her staff or cuts to the government. It was from taking it out of farmers' pockets. And the member from Saskatoon Haultain is waving his pay slip around to show that he got his share of the \$188 million.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he's the one of those that should be turning his \$4,400 back in because the farmers had to pay their overpayment back, and the members opposite should do the same thing if they had the integrity to do it.

Well when farmers look at the rest of the money that was into there, the government said that they were putting some into agriculture programs. Well it sounds good. I mean the money was already supposed to have been allocated for agriculture. But we're going to put more money into agriculture. But what they didn't tell the people of Saskatchewan is when they put in the 65 to \$70 million into agriculture, they sucked the same amount out at another spot so that there was no net increase to agriculture in Saskatchewan.

The fact is if you look at the numbers, there was four hundred and thirty-some million dollars in the budget of 1991 for agriculture. The budget for '95 from the Minister of Finance here was \$306 million, a decrease of \$130 million. And that's after — after, Mr. Deputy Speaker — they pulled the \$188 million out of the GRIP program. They couldn't even give that back to the farmers. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government opposite does not have the credibility with farmers to even consider putting in a new program.

So the GRIP program . . . squeaks the member from Rosetown,

the man who broke the contracts, who broke the contracts. The contract said that you had to have any changes in place in the farmers' hands by March 15. So what happened? Well the minister comes up on March 18 and says, we have a new plan here, and by golly, I'm deeming this to have happened on March 15. I think it is only him and God that have the ability to deem. But he did it. And because the farmers did not have the financial wherewithal, because their money had been taken from them, could not launch the court challenge.

There were others in this province that did have the financial wherewithal to challenge this government when they deemed things to have happened, and that was the Federated Co-op system. They took the government to court and won. But the farmers didn't have the financial wherewithal to do it because the government had taken their money. And the government in Saskatchewan pocketed the differences, Mr. Speaker.

And now we're talking about 13,000 grain cars that producers would like to purchase. Well the farmers in Manitoba have \$20,000 each in their pocket that they can go out and help pay for these hopper cars; the farmers in Alberta have \$10,000 each that they can go out and help pay for those hopper cars; and what do the farmers in Saskatchewan have? They have a GRIP bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is because of this government that the farmers in this province are going to have a great deal of difficulty being able to participate in paying for those hopper cars, because the government opposite took their money.

So what happened when the GRIP debate was on, Mr. Speaker? Well the opposition of the day, the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party, rang the bells to let people across this province know what the issues were. Eighteen days, and the Speaker changed the rules and put an end to it. That's what happened, and the GRIP Bill passed.

And the farmers were a little upset about this happening. They had a rally on the lawn of the legislature and it was a fairly good-sized rally. There was 800-or-so people out there. And it was interesting that the member from Rosetown, the Agriculture minister, he came out and talked. They hung him in effigy, but he was out there and talked to them. And then they had to redistribute his seat, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were a little concerned he was going to lose his seat, so they redistributed it. They stuck in some good NDP territory up in Biggar so that they could win that seat. But unfortunately that meant they had to do something with the then member from Biggar, so they parachuted him into Saskatoon.

You know they have to protect their own; they do a very good job of that. They circle the wagons and point out. So the members opposite, during the GRIP debate, when the farmers were rallying on the doorstep of the legislature, each and every one of them went outside and tried to buttonhole somebody to convince them that this GRIP program, this new, improved GRIP program, was going to be their salvation.

And indeed even the member from Shaunavon, of the day, the current member from Wood River when he was the NDP member, was out there lobbying on behalf of the GRIP changes.

He thought it was a heck of a good idea. The fact is he even had a bigger plan, but he couldn't convince his colleagues of it.

So as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture spending in Saskatchewan under the current administration has dropped from about 420 million to 306.

(1545)

An Hon. Member: — And the farmers make money on their own.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And the member claims the farmers are making money on their own.

Well it would be nice, it would be nice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that was indeed the case. What happened with grain prices? Well wheat prices have gone up indeed, and transportation costs have gone up equally. Fertilizer prices have gone up, machinery prices have gone up, and why has that happened? Well telephone bills have gone up, power bills have gone up, fuel taxes have gone up, fertilizer taxes have gone up. It's all . . . the only person who's making more money out of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the government members.

But they are going to keep their \$4,400. Don't take a chance on that; we're not giving that up. They're taking the money out of the farmers' pockets, but they got it safely tucked away in hip national . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the member from Wood River is a little concerned that perhaps the farmers are hearing about his support for the GRIP changes.

Crop insurance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The government wants to make some changes to crop insurance. Well they have made some changes to crop insurance. In 1994 they put in place the whole farm safety net program. So you couldn't cover just specific crops that you were producing; you had to cover the whole gamut. A lot farmers were unhappy about that, Mr. Speaker. They believed that they were good at growing one particular crop but were a little shaky on something else perhaps, something new that they wanted to try out. But they have to cover everything now.

And these changes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, made a lot of the crop insurance programs unaffordable. And because they're unaffordable, because they don't provide the adequate protections that are needed, a large number of farmers dropped out of the program, and indeed they continue to do so.

And one of the areas where crop insurance was changed that we're seeing a dramatic impact this winter is on wildlife depredation. The government changed the program so that anybody who suffered any wildlife depredation could not receive any compensation. In Manitoba they cover 75 per cent of any losses to just over \$7,000. In Alberta they cover up to 80 per cent of the loss to over \$10,000. But in Saskatchewan, under our enlightened agricultural-based government, we have no protection. And this is from the people who believe that they have credibility to design a new program that will work.

The next thing they did is they eliminated 60 full-time positions throughout Crop Insurance around Saskatchewan. They

terminated over 150 crop insurance agents. Again, people that were dealing hands on with the farmers out in the field. Now they have to go down to, perhaps even down to the Crop Insurance office in Melville to find anybody who's actually working there any more.

And who benefited from these savings that — the cuts to over 200 people — Crop Insurance is going to make? Who benefited from this over \$5 million? The farmers pay for the crop insurance program along with the federal and provincial government. The farmers have a share in that. But it's the government that benefits for this. It's the government that benefits for this.

And then we come down to the next hit that farmers and farm programs face in this province, and that is our roads or lack thereof in this province. And the member from Rosetown is the member who wanted to turn them all into gravel roads. Well, Mr. Minister, you may have had a decent idea there considering you are not fixing any of the roads. They might have been a lot better off having had gravel than the holes that the current Minister for Highways leaves in there, where people fall in and damage their cars.

The member wants to talk about the debt. This will be interesting. The current member for Regina . . . he used to be the member for Regina Dewdney; I'm not sure what seat he represents now because he's generally in school. But when he was the deputy premier, he stood in here and said that there was indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a debt held by the province of Saskatchewan prior to the election in 1982. This was a great revelation to the members opposite, but it certainly wasn't a revelation to the people on this side . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No it wasn't \$15 billion; it was approximately 8 billion, approximately 8 billion.

And when you take 24 per cent interest rates on \$8 billion, Mr. Member from Rosetown, it does add up fast. Ask all the farmers that had to face it themselves because of the programs that were not in place and were put in place by the previous administration — programs that were not in place when your previous government was defeated in 1982. You had programs then that didn't pay farmers when they needed it, and that's what kind of programs you're trying to design today. That's the kind of program you left in place with GRIP.

So we have a program happening here, Mr. Speaker, of not building the roads, not building the roads after the Crow has been killed by the official opposition's cousins in Ottawa. This is going to have a very traumatic impact on the road structure in this province, and we in Saskatchewan have approximately 25 per cent of all the roads in Canada. So more traffic on our roads, based on a million population, is going to have a very traumatic impact on the quality of our roads.

And so the government opposite has to start dedicating some of the monies that they are collecting from the massive tax increases they have implemented to providing some infrastructure support throughout Saskatchewan. And that means spending some money on some of the roads. The Highways' budgets have gone from \$207 million in '91 to 168 last year.

And we have faced some inflation in that time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Costs have gone up. The power rate to the Department of Highways has gone up. The telephone cost to the Department of Highways has gone up. All this time they're sucking more and more money out of the budgets of each department, and less and less is going to maintenance and to construction. In fact virtually nothing is going to construction.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's very difficult to believe that this government opposite are able to bring forward a credible farm support program, especially when I take a look at this Saskatchewan New Democratic news release dated February 26, 1991. I would like to read parts of two paragraphs. It says, and these are in quotation marks:

"In a prepared news statement today, PC MLA John Britton said that should . . . (the member from Riversdale) become Premier he would 'tear up the agreement that created GRIP and NISA.' That's a lie, and the Devine PC government knows it, (the current member for Watrous) . . . charged.

"(The member from Riversdale's) . . . position, which has been stated in the news media many times, is that a New Democratic government would ensure farmers 'deal-plus.'"

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have GRIP paying out a large amount of money. We have a GRIP program where the government turned around and sent \$782 million back to the contributors, and this is going to be deal plus? Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite have no credibility in dealing with these issues.

What the farmers of Saskatchewan want, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a realistic hope that the government will leave agriculture in this province alone. Because every time the NDP intervene, it's to the detriment of Saskatchewan's agriculture.

So my message is, please, no more NDP-style health from the city slicker lawyer from Riversdale. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, this afternoon on the motion that we have before us that this Assembly work with farmers and with farm organizations and the government to design a fair and workable approach to farm security, and then the following amendment which comments basically on the gross revenue insurance program and the premiums that were required to be paid by farmers and people not wanting those premiums to be paid.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to comment a little bit about the GRIP, the gross revenue insurance program, to indicate to the members opposite exactly what this program is. If anyone thinks that it was a program of genius design, they should take and analyse it because what it was, was basically crop insurance with a different price for the crop — a price that was greater than what we can get in the market. So it made perfect sense to do everything possible not to grow anything and take all your money from the program.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was a very simple program when you broke it down into a mathematical equation, exactly the same as crop insurance. Mind you, the only variation is the price. Crop insurance is the price that crop . . . the market value of crop times 70 per cent times the yield.

The GRIP program was IMAP (indexed moving average price) as the price times the yield times 70 per cent. And anyone that has any mathematical understanding at all realizes that although that is in a different order, it is identically the same. The only thing different about it was that the IMAP price did not reflect what could actually be obtained in the market. And therefore it became very clearly a program that could be manipulated and used. And used it was.

Now the members opposite may want to have a program like that, a program that teaches individuals to go to the government for money and to manipulate a program and to take revenue that has no connection at all to producing a crop. It isn't the type of program that you want if you want to have a sound agricultural sector in the province of Saskatchewan. And the agricultural sector in the province of Saskatchewan is 10 per cent of the economy of the province of Saskatchewan.

So if you start fooling around with it and generating a situation where it becomes non-productive, you are fooling with a fairly large chunk of the economy of this province — five times what it is in a lot of other provinces, four times as much as it is in the province of Alberta.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite may feel that the loss of this program was a loss that they could not afford. But, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. What happened is that in those areas and those farmers that were prepared to utilize different cropping techniques and to grow different things, the agricultural sector actually advanced much faster than what you'd find in the other provinces. And if anything could be said, it's that the government didn't push the other ones more. You could possibly make that particular point. But the point that you make with GRIP is not there to be made.

Mr. Speaker, I have other things that I would like to say on this particular debate, but I beg leave to adjourn for a later date.

Leave not granted.

The Deputy Speaker: — The motion is defeated, the debate will continue and the Speaker has already spoken once and we will . . . the member may continue.

(1600)

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I am being given directions as to what to do from the side, from the peanut gallery, and I'm finding that I should take my advice from myself.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan in agriculture is facing a number of changes that have been occurring in the last while. The changes that are facing the south-western part of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is that they're being requested to grow more than one type of crop and to do it more

often than every second year, as the member from Shaunavon would like to know one of the things that's being asked and the changes that are being asked in the province this year.

Mr. Speaker, in the biotech area, there has been a large number of changes occurring that allow for things to happen in the growing of crops in the province of Saskatchewan. One of the changes that's occurring is that the canola is being changed so that it will probably be able to be grown on a system of about a hundred miles further south in the province of Saskatchewan because it is becoming more drought tolerant, and that would increase the area that could be seeded to this particular crop. Mr. Speaker, increased production of specialty crops in 1995 resulted in Saskatchewan farmers receiving \$371 million from the market, more than the value of wheat that was grown, when you combine all of the specialty crops together.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to build in this province on the strengths that are there, the strengths that we have in land area, in ingenuity of the farmers that are farming that land, and in the ability to turn the products grown into marketable items.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave some time for some other people to speak so I am going to sit down now and let others carry on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am really pleased to have the opportunity to address the motion made by the hon. member from Battleford-Cut Knife. Like the other members of our caucus, I feel that I must address this important issue today on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of all Saskatchewan farmers that this government has ignored.

The member from Battleford-Cut Knife has talked about a fair and affordable approach to farm security. It is obvious that she is not a cabinet member because the NDP cabinet members don't talk about meaningful support to agriculture at all. They only speak when it is time to announce another cut or another broken promise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, a commitment to agriculture is long overdue. Forgive me for being sceptical, but this government's action in the past leave me a little bit suspicious. The GRIP fiasco has left all farmers in total distrust of this government. The member from Battleford-Cut Knife mentions crop insurance. Well yes we do need a revamped crop insurance program for the one we have has been completely unaffordable. The NDP know this, but they have done nothing to assist farmers with lower premium rates.

This government speaks of joint federal-provincial initiatives to assist agriculture. They know the federal government contributes a large portion of the funds for these ag programs but refuse to acknowledge or appreciate the federal government. They speak of this Assembly working with governments but refuse to give credit to the federal government when it most honourably keeps its commitment to the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if this government is so committed to agriculture and to caring about farmers' security, why then have they continued to ignore the rural situation? Poverty is increasing in rural Saskatchewan. We continue to hear daily from our rural families who are not able to make ends meet. They are anxious, and they are afraid.

Mr. Speaker, the use of food banks in rural areas like Unity and Carlyle has sky-rocketed in the past five years. It's not easy for these people, people who want so desperately to make their own living, to have to rely on a food bank to feed their families. They are proud, and it is a staggering blow knowing that they cannot support themselves.

This trend will continue as long as the NDP government continues to dismantle rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, in the government's first document on the economy, *Partnership for Renewal*, they promised to close the gap between farmers' income and the income of people working in non-farming jobs, yet recent statistics show that urban income is still 30 per cent above rural income. There's only one explanation for this, Mr. Speaker, and that is this government's real lack of commitment to rural Saskatchewan and to agriculture.

Jobs, Mr. Speaker, are not being created in rural Saskatchewan. Farmers need extra jobs to supplement low farm income. People are living in poverty. Does this sound like a government committed to farm security? Mr. Speaker, my constituents are also getting frustrated because this government has turned its back completely on all members of rural Saskatchewan.

Let me talk about Bourgault Industries for a moment. Bourgault Industries manufactures farm machinery. They create jobs for farmers and rural people — about 500 jobs at the present time. These people must supplement their farm income to feed their families. Bourgault has not asked government for grants, so they have saved taxpayers money and also contributed greatly to the rural economy. All they ask is a decent No. 368 Highway to transport goods on and provide safe passage for their employees, school buses, and ambulance service to their plant and community.

In this case, there is great economic activity and a great economic benefit to all of Saskatchewan. All they ask is a decent road, but this government seems unable to understand or to care. Nothing this government has done in the past has led me to believe they even recognize rural Saskatchewan, let alone care about it. They haven't listened. They haven't listened to farmers who complain about the state of rural highways in disrepair. Apparently according to this government, if a road doesn't lead to a city, it's not a road worth taking.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that rural Saskatchewan is worth it. That is why this government needs to make some very real, very effective efforts to keep agriculture alive. Farmers are and will always be an essential part of Saskatchewan's economy. It breaks my heart to see young people having to leave the farm because they just can't afford to raise their family there. Farm security is synonymous with rural development, and rural development complements and assists urban development. We need to hear the voice of farmers and ensure that their voices

are included before programs are developed.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that Saskatchewan needs a workable, fair, and affordable approach to farm security, but it needs to be done by a government that is committed to a long-term future for farming and farm families. And this government is not.

But we as the official opposition are committed to farming and the importance of agriculture in our province, and we will continue to fight to keep rural Saskatchewan alive. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regards to the motion from the member from Battleford-Cut Knife, with farm organizations and with government in designing a workable fair and affordable program that'll benefit Saskatchewan farmers and their families, I welcome this opportunity to say a few words in support of this motion.

The economic blueprint for job creation as set out in *Partnership For Growth* identifies and builds upon the strengths of this great province. Mr. Speaker, one of the main strengths is agriculture and biotechnology. In order to achieve and maintain our growth in agriculture, it will require that we all pull together so that we can adjust successfully to the demands of the global market-place. And we can do this the Saskatchewan way: through partnership and cooperation.

Rural families and communities face unique pressures thanks to a large extent because of the policies or lack thereof of the federal Liberals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The elimination of the Crow benefit, where were the cries of condemnation from our members opposite? We didn't hear them. Deregulation of rail transportation, Mr. Speaker — I am positive that within a very short while, because of this policy, it'll lead to such an abandonment of rail lines that two main lines will survive: the privatized CNR (Canadian National Railway Company) in the North and the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) in the South. The demands on rural Saskatchewan and this government to build and maintain roads will be a great challenge.

Suddenly the federal government becomes greatly concerned and announces a grant of \$20 million to fix 60,000 miles of rural roads. Thank you very much. First it takes away the Crow; slashes, gouges, and removes \$320 million, and then returns a mere pittance. We should be thankful.

Mr. Speaker, another hurdle to overcome is the ongoing debate over our marketing institutions. Controversy about the Canadian Wheat Board and hog producers has raised a lot of serious debate. The western grain marketing panel meetings were well attended and the overwhelming majority of farmers who attended these meetings indicated they are in favour of the CWB maintaining its monopoly status.

And we of course strongly support that; 81 per cent of the farmers in our poll said that they support the WCB as it

currently operates, and this is consistent with previous surveys.

Our survey indicates that if people are confronted with a simple question about choice, the dual market, then they like the concept of choice. But if choice threatens the board as it currently operates, then producers want a strong wheat board that can exercise market power through a single desk.

We must and we will find ways to build effective marketing mechanisms that will allow producers to receive maximum revenue and at the same time serve our customers well. An independent study by Kraft and Furtan indicates that the CWB has been worth as much as 667 million per year to western Canadian farmers. For a farmer growing 1,000 acres of wheat, this represented a net benefit of more than \$33,000 per year from 1985 to '94.

The authors found that the CWB, through its single-desk marketing, was able to extract a premium for western Canadian wheat among many customers. This premium was worth an average of 265 million per year, which comes to \$13.35 per tonne between 1980-81 and '93-94.

So these are significant issues facing not only rural areas, not only Saskatchewan, but the whole nation. And while we sit complacently, the very fabric of the Canadian identity, which makes this the greatest place in the world to live, is being shredded apart by a federal government which has no vision, no plans for a strong, united Canada, and is letting everything go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1615)

Mr. Wall: — The federal government remains committed to reducing the CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer) transfers for health, education, and welfare programs for the upcoming year. Reductions to cash transfers will comprise 73 per cent of all the federal operating expenditure reductions. The federal operating expenditures will decline by 11.1 per cent while the cash transfers will decline by over 35 per cent.

Our concern with cuts to the CHST is shared not only by all Canadians but also by Finance ministers across the country, and yet Ottawa has not received the message. I wonder if our friends across the way have received the message.

The budget is simply a move by the federal government to engage in deficit reduction on the backs of the poor, the sick, and the young. That Ottawa has made no move to address the inequities and unfairness of the current tax system lets us know exactly where they stand. They have a budget without a vision or a plan for the future. Federal offloading next year alone: \$50 million in health, 25 million in post-secondary education, and another 25 million in social services — of course we are concerned.

Together though, we can find solutions to these challenges. Although these may seem as huge hurdles, we the people of Saskatchewan will overcome these issues. In agriculture our approach will be twofold: one, to protect the policies and institutions that serve the best interests of our farmers — a good

example of course is the CWB — and to provide equal opportunity for farmers to access markets, to distribute returns achieved from all markets through price pooling, and to provide a competitive advantage for Canadian farmers by increasing returns through single-desk selling. Our other approach will of course, will be to work with agriculture and with the communities to adapt to the change.

The overall blueprint on agriculture is set out in our document *Agriculture 2000*. This document is a result of public consultation with the people of Saskatchewan, asking the rural residents how we could best help them to adjust successfully to the changing environment. The keys are diversification, value added production, agriculture biotechnology, successful marketing not only of our products but also of our expertise.

Just a few words on diversification. More than \$200 million will be available through various funds to encourage further research, development, and diversification. Significant increase in acres being seeded to durum, canola, flax, peas, lentils, beans, mustard, sunflowers, safflower — along with this production of special crops has come the expansion of special crop primary processing industry: the cleaning, the bagging, and the marketing of it.

The value added production, the value added processing companies were springing up. At last count, Saskatchewan had 296 food processing companies, employing nearly 6,000 people. A new opportunity for them.

The Saskatchewan food processing sector continues to grow, creating jobs and diversification opportunities for Saskatchewan's agriculture and food industry. Saskatchewan has an abundance of raw resources, raw materials, land, and good people with high work ethic. We have all the things it takes to make a successful company and a strong industry. And we are doing that.

The report also states that the rural-based companies account for 57 per cent of the total number of food processors in Saskatchewan. And more than half of Saskatchewan food processors who export are companies with less than 10 employees. This is a confirmation of our policy that states that small business is playing a major role in export market development.

The 90 million Canada-Saskatchewan agri-food innovation fund has identified food processing as a strategic area for funding. And so we have other programs.

Just a word on biotechnology and agriculture. Biotechnology has been a part of agriculture since farmers first chose seeds from the best plants, hoping to produce better crops, and since prime animals were selected as breeding stocks to improve the herd. That was biotechnology. Today the methods may be more sophisticated but the goal is still the same — to improve the industry.

Agriculture biotechnology is a modern tool in the old science of plant and animal improvement. It involves many things, and I'm not going to take the time to go through all of them.

Ag biotechnology is not new, but it has been developed beyond the imagination of our ancestors and Saskatchewan is leading the way in the field of agriculture and biotechnology.

Saskatoon's Ag-West Biotech Incorporated, funded through Saskatchewan Agriculture and Foods' Agriculture Development Fund, puts Saskatchewan out ahead in the development of research and industry networks nationally.

Agriculture biotechnology is an important and exciting Saskatchewan industry and is ready to move this province into the technologically advanced century ahead. Just today we received a bulletin in the mail with regards to the conference which is going to be held in Saskatoon in June of this year, an international forum with regards to biotechnology and ag biotechnology. We are a leader not only in Canada but in the world. Internationally we are known.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — By the year 2000, ag biotechnology is expected to generate over \$200 million a year in sales and provide hundreds of new, high skill jobs. We are working that way.

The machine industry has also grown up with regards to the innovative farmers which we find in Saskatchewan. We have high quality equipment that has been developed to produce and harvest those crops and raise those livestock. Farm equipment managers, led by the most advanced dry land farming technology in the world, is becoming a major force in the Saskatchewan industrial development. Sales reached more than 420 million in 1994, with export sales accounting for over 100 million of the total.

The Saskatchewan farm and machinery industry also employs more than 5,000 people. An example of this is companies like Flexi-coil in Saskatoon who employs around 1,200 people and ships its products all over the world.

Bourgault Industries in St. Brieux; Morris Industries in Yorkton; and on the home level, small manufacturing places like REM Manufacturing which manufactures agriculture equipment. Fabro, which manufactures small seeders that are used on the experimental plots in universities in western Canada and the western United States. A great market for these things because of Saskatchewan people.

The Saskatchewan manufacturing companies either saw an opportunity to improve upon existing machinery, or they had a concept for a new machine, and it was a need on the prairie farms and they developed it. An example of this type of development can be seen in the manufacturing of air seeders. Saskatchewan is considered a world leader. So we have all kinds of things going on in the agricultural field.

I'm not going to touch on the livestock. The member from Saskatoon north talked a lot about these, and so I will continue with something else.

Safety nets. We've heard a little bit of talk about safety nets. We've heard a lot about the GRIP program, which is over and done with. Let's forget it. Let's get on to the future because the

future is now, and let's take a look at what we can do. We must renew our national policy to maintain the provisions of a basic risk management package for farmers. Uniform national standards must be developed, for the safety net programs are essential.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to commit to the agriculture sector, agri-food, and expenditures were about \$425 per capita while the federals spent a grand total of \$91 per capita.

Saskatchewan supports moving to national-based safety net program. All Agriculture ministers have agreed to a safety net framework that would consist of: crop insurance to provide protection against production losses, a whole farm safety net program to provide income protection, and companion programs to address province-specific needs.

Saskatchewan's interim program which is in effect for '96-97 is consistent with the framework. Decisions on the make-up of our future safety net package will be made once further consultations have been completed. Saskatchewan's crop insurance program is under review. Changes will not be made until the 1997 crop year after consultation with the producers.

The industry will continue to face change and will have to adapt. By working together with farmers, business, and government, we can work to ensure a sustainable future. And so it is with great pleasure that I will support the motion that this Assembly work with farmers, with farm organizations and with government in designing a workable, fair and affordable program that will benefit Saskatchewan farmers and their families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a few moments to raise a few points and enter this debate. I would suggest the reason that we have this motion before us this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is because this government has to do everything in its power to try and tell the people how well they govern in view of the fact that they have done so much to destroy so much in this province, especially in rural Saskatchewan. And I think when we look at agriculture, it's one area that I certainly hear a lot about in my constituency, about the number of the problems that the farm community are facing.

And I find it very interesting as I listen to members in the Assembly as they are debating this motion in front of us, about the fact that the government is now talking about working together with farm . . . farmers, farm organizations, to design a workable, fair and affordable approach to farm security.

Well I certainly agree that something has to be done to design a workable, fair and affordable approach to farm security in view of the fact that what we have has been totally decimated and we really have nothing in place.

The unfortunate part — and the member from Swift Current just alluded to the fact — that there will not be a new program in place for the farm community of this province until the next

crop production year, 1997. And I say unfortunate because, Mr. Speaker, while we have seen substantive increases in prices for our commodities the last crop year was anything but rosy for most farm . . . or farm families in this province. Right.

It doesn't matter where you go, from one corner of this province to the other, there are little pockets where producers had excellent yields and excellent crops and good quality crops, but many producers across this province are facing a year when they had a very low production factor. And in fact some of the crop out in my area continues to lay in the fields and if the wildlife hasn't totally damaged that crop already, there might be something left to harvest this spring. And under the crop insurance program, those farmers are going to still have to go out and put that — what's left — through a combine in order to claim if they have anything left to claim under the crop insurance program.

And I would suggest that certainly we need to look at addressing long-term farm security in view of the fact that crop insurance really doesn't offer anything to the families in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that this government would stand up and tell us and brag about what they have done for farm communities and for farm families in view of the fact that we haven't seen anything to date other than a lot of rhetoric and a lot of talk — nothing that farmers can put their hope and put their trust in and farm families can really rely on.

I also find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that just previous, or even last spring when we tried to get some answers about the programs that were in effect and what would happen with regards to the GRIP bills that we were warning people that were going to be coming, especially if there was an election called and this party was re-elected to form government of the province — that there would be bills going out — and I remember the debate that took place in this Assembly where the former minister of Agriculture, even in question period, said that there wouldn't be any bills going out; that there would be cheques going out to producers and there wouldn't be any bills.

We also know what took place during the election, Mr. Speaker, where we again had raised the issue. And it's just as recently as a week or so ago the media even acknowledged the fact that we had warned people that there would be bills, that bills would have to be sent out because there were people that had been overpaid. And the Premier even stood up during the election campaign and said no, we would never do that; there will be money going out to producers.

And the reality is today, Mr. Speaker, yes, there were cheques went out to some 35 . . . or 39,000 producers, but 12,000 producers received bills in their mailbox. And the unfortunate part about that, Mr. Speaker, is that many of the producers who received notices of bills in their mailboxes didn't receive one cent from the GRIP program.

And you may ask, well how did that happen? Well that happened because there were young people who entered the agricultural . . . or entered farming in the years '92-93, just when the GRIP program was changed, and because in many

cases they had taken over land that had been under contract to GRIP, were told by Crop Insurance that you must maintain or carry or enter the GRIP program. They entered the GRIP program and as a result, Mr. Speaker, they're ending up — in some cases, producers in my area — with bills of up to \$3,500 and they never received a cheque from them.

So, Mr. Speaker, many people have been hurt by the actions of this government, by the actions of this current Agriculture minister, and certainly former Agriculture ministers.

(1630)

I also find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, going back even to 1991, and I notice an NDP document, Saskatchewan New Democrat's news release where they were telling us that the Conservatives were wrong; in fact they were lying to the people of this province by suggesting that the New Democrats would destroy the GRIP program. And the current minister, at that time the agricultural critic, said that the Conservatives were lying and that the Devine PC government knows that they are not being truthful to the people of this province.

And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that while we warned people of what was going to happen, unfortunately they voted the NDP into power and watched them decimate the only program that offered some protection on the monetary side of the farm income. Crop insurance offers some protection on the basis of crop production, but there was nothing to address low commodity prices.

I find it interesting as well in this same article, and this is the current Minister of Agriculture, at that time the critic in the NDP Party, said, and I'm quoting:

"We say the Devine PC government didn't have to raise taxes to pay for GRIP and NISA. We have identified more than one hundred million dollars a year in cuts to government waste and mismanagement, which could have paid for GRIP and NISA without a general tax increase," Upshall said. (I'm quoting.)

"If the Devine government truly supported the rural economy it would have cut waste instead of imposing new taxes on the families of rural as well as urban Saskatchewan," . . .

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I read this and as I look back over the last four years I ask myself, well what happened to all the commitments to cut government waste? And what happened to all the commitments to not increase taxes?

And we have the Minister of Finance standing up today and telling us, well we didn't increase taxes. Well you talk to anybody who has had to pay their power bill or their telephone bills or their energy bills, or any of the other increases . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And we just have a member just indicating now, well that isn't a tax. Well what is a tax? Everyone has to pay it. It comes directly out of your pocket. Not only that — increases to your utility rates — but as well a tax increase on these utility rate increases.

Who raised the provincial sales tax in this province? They told us in 1991 that they wouldn't be raising the taxes. But what have we seen? We have gone from 7 per cent to 9 per cent. And on top of that, they've added to all of our utilities.

Mr. Speaker, if this government was really interested and would go back to some of the promises they made, even back in 1991, and if they wanted to cut out some of the waste and mismanagement, maybe they need to take a look at where they start.

Number one, why did the Premier increase his cabinet to 19? Why didn't the Premier take a lesson from some of the comments he made before the 1991 election when he suggested 12 to 14 members was enough as far as the size of cabinet? But here he is, up at 19, while he asks people all across this province — here in the city of Regina and right across rural Saskatchewan — to take less, while they cut here and they cut there.

And then, as we've seen over the last few days, the government members have been willing to stand in this Assembly while they decimate programs to farm families and to families right across this province, from the urban to the rural, and they've been willing to stand here and say well, you know, it really isn't an increase because we haven't had an increase in pay over the past number of years, so therefore this one-time cash injection that we're going to get, it's justified and we're going to take it.

Well maybe the ministers . . . the Minister of Highways should lead by example. And I know Highways has nothing to do with this motion, but certainly for rural people, highways is of a very major concern to the rural economy of this province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly a number of concerns that have been raised by this motion. I would trust, Mr. Speaker, that at the end of the day, after all the rhetoric that this government is giving us and after all the suggestions and the motions they're bringing forward, I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that we are indeed able to arrive at a workable and fair, an affordable approach to farm security. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope we're able to do it without just totally decimating everything that's out there right now, but probably building on what we have had in the past, in some cases, and adding to it to build a better farm security program.

But as I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that we need to stand here in this Assembly today and just adding some more as far as talk and conversation to this whole program. Let's get down to business. And I hope the government gets down to business to indeed address this issue, rather than telling people how well they've done while they have pulled the rug right out from under their feet.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have asked for cooperation between this House, government and farm organizations, in developing a fair and

affordable approach to farm security. I'm sure all members of this House would admit that cooperation is a laudable goal. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I believe the government, with the steadfast support of the members opposite, has done much to poison this atmosphere that's needed for cooperation within our rural community.

Sure, Mr. Speaker, the farmers want a good, reliable, and workable farm security system from their government. Unfortunately they don't believe such a thing is possible. It's a pipe dream. It's as much of a fantasy as this government actually achieving its targets for job creation.

Mr. Speaker, this government has poisoned the atmosphere needed to make cooperation work in many ways. For starters, Mr. Speaker, over the last four years rural people have pretty well been the number one target of this government. According to the Provincial Auditor's fall report, spending on agriculture has gone from over 1.1 billion in 1992 to 554 million in 1995. Today members opposite are implying that this might be cut even more.

Well, Mr. Speaker, while this government cut the agricultural budget in half it felt that rural Saskatchewan still had it too good. Alleging that they could save money, Mr. Speaker, this government went on to cut 52 rural hospitals. They reneged on the GRIP contracts in 1992 as well. They threatened to turn our rural highways into gravel and by doing these things the members opposite have poisoned the atmosphere of cooperation that they so much desire to restore with the farming community.

This atmosphere, Mr. Speaker, will not be restored, at least not so long as this government is in office, because rural people in this province just cannot trust them. Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry to say that the trust needed to make this motion work doesn't exist because the members opposite further damaged the trust and confidence of rural residents by yet even more actions.

Mr. Speaker, aside from closing hospitals, they've closed our rural SaskPower offices. They let SaskPower take away the rural underground program that replaced unsafe above ground electrical systems with buried cable.

Mr. Speaker, with hospital closures and cuts to programs like this, how can the members opposite expect the people of rural Saskatchewan to cooperate with them. Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite should ask themselves whether they would cooperate with someone who puts the almighty dollar ahead of their lives and their safety. I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for the members opposite to do that though because I don't think they would be able to or else they wouldn't be able to sleep at night if they really asked themselves those questions.

Mr. Speaker, this government poisoned the atmosphere of cooperation suggested in this motion in yet other ways. Recently rural people were hit with a shameful 12 per cent power rate increase. This included the highest reconstruction charge for any class of customer. To make matters worse, this government has jacked up the STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) fares as well. We all know that this only hurts the students and the senior citizens in rural areas, who must rely on the bus to take them into the cities.

Next week, Mr. Speaker, we'll be sitting in this House listening to the Finance minister deliver her budget address. This, Mr. Speaker, will only confirm to rural people that this government can't be trusted. If there's no trust, there won't be any of the cooperation that these members opposite so desperately seek today.

We hear that this government will be making further cuts to highways. This government, Mr. Speaker, intends to introduce the idea of cooperation on another level — for our education system and our municipalities. Only this time, cooperation simply will be a disguise for amalgamations and cuts to rural services.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have a motion before us which is doing just as I describe. They're asking for cooperation from rural people even though that's not really their aim. What is their aim, Mr. Speaker? Well I believe that the aim of the members opposite is to support this government in introducing another crop insurance program that is a shadow of its former program. Basically they want rural people to cooperate with them so they can just go cut more services to our farming community.

Mr. Speaker, this government knows it just can't cut a program. It knows that the easiest way of getting away with gutting something is to redesign it, repackage it, and simply pass that off as an improvement.

Mr. Speaker, they want to do the same thing with farm security programs as they did with health care. Pretty soon, Mr. Speaker, I imagine we will be hearing about how they intend to repackage education in our rural areas. Cuts won't be called cuts or amalgamation. The members opposite will call them streamlining or modernizing. If rural people don't buy that line, which they are far too smart to buy, the members opposite will say they are just making choices to bring rural Saskatchewan into the 21st century. The truth be known, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite could care less about what happens to rural Saskatchewan, and they know it.

Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite ask for cooperation from rural Saskatchewan, this government recently showed why it doesn't deserve that trust. Before starting its consultations with rural people about the farm security system, this government decided it had to close Crop Insurance offices, slash services, and some 214 jobs. Why didn't they let this be decided in consultation? Why not ask rural people if they want these services or if they could afford the loss of jobs in their communities?

Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite just went ahead and cut these offices without getting a consensus from the rural community because they didn't want to cooperate. They could care less about rural Saskatchewan. That, Mr. Speaker, is the sorry irony of today's debate. Here we have members of this House asking for cooperation from farmers when they are the very people who have rammed cut after cut down the throats of rural people without even a single care for the principle of cooperation. They cut and they cut, and they add insult to injury by breaking promises and then taking money from agriculture

and using it to balance their budget.

Mr. Speaker, if the people of rural Saskatchewan needed another reason to see why these people can't be trusted, I could give them another one. Mr. Speaker, last year this government balanced their budget. While it is positive, they did it by taking \$188 million that they had slotted to spend in agriculture and they used it to balance their budget.

While they did this, however, they chose not to take \$60 million in dividends from the Crown corporations. They also decided it was okay to take 50 million less than they had budgeted from VLT (video lottery terminal) and liquor revenues.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, how in all seriousness can the members opposite expect anyone in rural Saskatchewan to cooperate with them when they give Crown corporations and video lottery terminals a higher priority than our rural families?

It's simple, Mr. Speaker. They just cannot expect anyone to cooperate with them because they can't be trusted.

Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite ask for the cooperation of rural people in this motion before them today, farmers aren't holding their breath in anticipation of what this government might change. They expect to pay more and more while getting fewer and fewer services from this government. They expect this government to dump millions more on trade trips, casinos, and TV addresses while they cut rural programs in the name of austerity.

Because rural people believe this, they've taken matters into their own hands. The best farm security is good farm management and cautious and calculated diversification.

Farmers in this province are diversifying into new crops, adding livestock — and often exotic livestock — to their operations. They're using better technologies, diversifying into spices and horticulture. Others are trying to get more by marketing their own products or by taking advantage of tourism opportunities. Others have begun small scale manufacturing.

If it weren't for these efforts and strong rural grain prices, where would this government be financially? Thanks to our strong farm economy and good resource prices, provincial revenues remain buoyant, and buoyant enough to make up for the fact that the NDP economic recovery has been a jobless recovery.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, this government is treating rural Saskatchewan true to form. Rural people have saved our economy from completely grinding to a jobless standstill, and what have they got for it? They pay more, and get less and less for services.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that farmers aren't waiting for farm security programs from this government. If however that members opposite really want the cooperation they're asking for, Mr. Speaker, I make a suggestion to help them out a bit. If they want cooperation, it's simple. Quit wasting taxpayers'

money on casinos, trade trips, and expanding the size of government while you cut rural programs and rural services.

If the members can see their way to do that and honestly, if they focus their efforts on creating this environment where the mom and pop businesses around rural Saskatchewan can afford to create some jobs again, then I think there is some hope. Rural people want their children to stay and this government has been making that very difficult.

Mr. Speaker, this government wants cooperation but we've seen today that they don't deserve it. For that reason I'd urge the members opposite to take a new course if they want to try and earn the trust of rural people.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Arm River.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to support the motion from the member of Battleford:

That this Assembly work with farmers, with farm organizations and with the government in designing a workable, fair, and affordable approach to farm security.

With the short time that I have here to speak this afternoon, I just want to say on the messages that I've been hearing from the opposition parties, their messages of doom and gloom being provided from the opposition parties, which just aren't true.

In just the last few weeks I've been out in my constituency, I have seen farmers coming together to review with the crop insurance program that's being there. They're not speaking of doom and gloom. They're speaking of fair programing. They want to see some changes, and they're glad that they have the opportunity for some input in that.

I also see . . . today I just attended the announcement of a REDA (regional economic development authorities) for our area, for south-east Saskatchewan. I didn't hear any doom and gloom. I heard optimism. I heard optimism about regional economic development in the rural area. I heard good messages. People that are ready to consult, want to be consulted with, and looking at the kind of changes that we're facing in rural Saskatchewan.

Yesterday I rode on a small bus line because a number of communities that work together to provide a bus line that they could see that would help meet the needs of those communities. I didn't hear doom and gloom; I heard optimism.

Agriculture is facing a number of challenges — challenges a lot from the changes in federal funding to the Crow rate that's facing our province right now. And I think it's very interesting yesterday when it came up in the legislature that the federal government's providing \$20 million for roads — \$20 million for 150 kilometres of roads. We have over 60,000 kilometres of roads in this province, over a \$300 million withdrawal of funds to our transportation system in this province, and they see this as some kind of a solution, some kind of support.

The Minister of Highways announced that our government supports 13,000 grain hopper fleet cars being sold to a producer group. That's because we listen to the farmers and the producers in this province. I'm not so sure that the federal government has heard that message.

In anticipation of the federal government selling its grain hopper car fleet, the province commissioned a report which does support the ownership by the farm producer group. The recent federal budget increased maximum freight rates by 75 cents per tonne. Does this mean that the federal government is raising the rates to provide room for the railways to buy the cars?

This province spends more money per capita on farm programs than any other province or the federal government in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — We do support agriculture in this province. Yes, some of the programs have to change, and the farmers are willing to work with those kind of changes that meet those challenges. I do not hear the doom and gloom scenario that I'm hearing from the opposition.

There's other issues right now that the provincial government, with the Wheat Board marketing agencies that are working also on listening with farmers; our ag biotech, diversification projects; \$200 million going into ag development and technology. These are all indications of the support of this provincial government for the farm and the farm sector in this province.

The farmers in this province should be credited for their ability to adapt to change. They also want to work with a provincial government that will provide and help with those changes that they need to meet, whether it be in health care changes, education changes, transportation changes, agriculture changes — our rural communities have a lot of support for our government. They recognize that there are many challenges that they're facing, and they see this as an opportunity for change and to help meet in partnership through community-based programming.

I am very pleased to be able to support this motion today. I have a lot more faith in our agriculture sector than is obviously the faith that the opposition parties have across the hall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In view of the hour and the many things that could be said on this another day, I move to adjourn the debate.
Debate adjourned.

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

Mr. McPherson: — A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What is the point of order?

Mr. McPherson: — The point of order is that we were going to vote on the amendment to the motion.

The Speaker: — I've listened to the member's point of order. The debate on the motion which is the standard procedure in the House is the debate on the amendment and the motion occurs concurrently. So when I asked if the House is ready to adjourn debate, it adjourns debate on both the amendment and the motion simultaneously. So by passing the motion to adjourn debate, it brings to a conclusion consideration of the amendment as well as the main motion. The member's point of order is not well taken.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

