

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan with respect to the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. The prayer reads:

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

The names on the petition are from, besides being in Regina, Punnichy, Lestock, and many other smaller communities throughout Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to present petitions of names throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

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 are from Moose Jaw, Kronau, Weyburn, Yorkton, and Regina, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Carnduff, Oxbow, Alameda, and Regina. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present petitions of names from people in 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.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Pelly and Arran, two communities in my constituency, as well as Kamsack and a few from Regina. I so present.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of 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.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Indian Head.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of 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 Regina, they're from Sturgis, Weyburn, Lumsden, Waldheim, and Atwater.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again as well to present petitions from the people of southern Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents from Regina, of course, as well as the communities of Wolseley, Kennedy, and Grenfell.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present petitions of names of people 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.

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from, in my own constituency, from the community of Pense, as well as Balgonie, Zehner, Gray, Pilot Butte, and a number of them from the city of Regina.

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

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

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, they're from Central Butte, they're from Broadview, they're from Kisbey, they're from Yorkton, they're from Indian Head, they're from Langenburg, Moosomin, Fort Qu'Appelle, from Regina — from all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues today and the citizens of the province of Saskatchewan to present a petition on behalf of 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 this petition are mainly from Moose Jaw. I see a number from out of province — Brandon, Kelowna — actually several from out of province, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you today and to my colleagues in the Assembly, students from grade 8 attending the St. Henry's School in Melville, Saskatchewan. I'm very pleased that they are here today sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

They are accompanied by teachers Mr. Garth Gleisinger and Mr. Kenton Hicke; and also accompanied by Jackie Boak and Mr. Wayne Kolenberg.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be meeting with these students after they've been through a tour of our beautiful building, and I ask all my colleagues to welcome them to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Assembly on behalf of our colleague, the member from Regina Dewdney, 26 grade 5 students seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are from Henry Braun School here in Regina.

They're accompanied by their teacher, Sharon Schmidt, and their chaperons, Mr. Liberret, Mr. Osberg, Mrs. Yung, Mrs. Sather, Mr. Waugh, and Mrs. Godwin.

They are here to spend some time watching proceedings in the Assembly after which they'll have a tour of the building. And I certainly look forward on behalf of my colleague to meeting with them later on this afternoon. So please join me in extending to these students a warm welcome. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — If other members have completed their

introductions, the Speaker would like to introduce guests from my own constituency who are visiting with us here today. And seated in the Speaker's gallery are five students from Central Collegiate in Moose Jaw who are members of the Government Club.

The Government Club are high school students from Central Collegiate who come together on their own time to talk about political issues of the day, and it's become part of their annual tradition to pay a visit to us at the Legislative Assembly.

They're accompanied today by their instructor, Mr. Brian Swanson, and with the assistance of the Deputy Speaker as well as the Deputy Chair of Committees, I look forward to an opportunity to meet them at 2:30 for a photo and for a visit. And I expect the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow will be able to join us for that as well.

Would you please extend a warm welcome to these visiting students. By the way, if I can just point out, one of the students is a Rotary exchange student from Japan, Akiko Suzuki, and would you extend a welcome to all of them with a special welcome to Ms. Suzuki.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

University of Saskatchewan Students' Union New Executive

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the recent election of a new executive for the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union. The new USSU president is Cory Exner; Adrienne Batra has been chosen as the vice-president, academic; Jeff Aikman was selected as the vice-president in charge of administration; Anna Vasquez is the new vice-president, internal; and Natasha Stinka, a student from the village of Buchanan in my constituency, has been elected as the vice-president, external.

Mr. Speaker, as MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) we know the challenges these five young men and women will encounter in their duties as elected officials. They represent a group of students facing many pressures and difficulties in today's society. However, the University of Saskatchewan is a first-class institution which continues to turn out the best and brightest that Canada has to offer. I am confident that this group can handle the tough and demanding jobs before them.

As official opposition critic for Post-Secondary Education, I have already met with a number of the new USSU executives, and I look forward to continued consultations with them in the future. I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in offering our heartiest congratulations and best wishes to this group of young men and women.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tourism Saskatchewan

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of the new jobs in my riding and in fact throughout the province will be

created either directly from tourism or its spin-offs in the next decade. Currently tourism employs some 42,000 people in Saskatchewan, and by the year 2010 that number is expected to grow to 70 or 80,000. Tourism can be referred to as an emerging giant of the global economy and a new organization in Saskatchewan will help us tap into its vast potential.

The Saskatchewan Tourism Authority, the Tourism Industry Association of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council have joined forces to become Tourism Saskatchewan. This unique partnership in the tourism industry is the first of its kind in Canada and is part of the economic sector that has been identified in the *Partnership for Growth* strategy. Not only does this merger make sense, Mr. Speaker, as far as the strategy is concerned, but it also saves money.

By joining forces, it is expected that \$300,000 will be saved annually through this amalgamation. This new organization will serve as a model for other provinces, and as such I want to congratulate the staff and management of these three groups who have merged together to form Tourism Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Recognition of Farm Boy's Manufacturing

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize two Prud'homme area farmers, Wayne and Dale Sopotyk. The Sopotyks have invented a pre-moulded polyethylene carrying case to fit elevator-type moisture testers.

The Harvest Helper carrying case protects the grain-testing equipment both in storage and in transport. Farm Boy's Manufacturing's new product provides a long-term solution to portability, providing farmers the opportunity to do their own testing on the field while drying grain or checking bins. This product gives farmers independence at a time when elevators are closing, while the need for grain testing remains a necessary and essential requirement.

Congratulations to Wayne and Dale Sopotyk of Farm Boy's Manufacturing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cargill Plant to Open in Clavet

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are many examples of economic activity increasing in Saskatchewan, and my constituency is no exception.

Cargill is now purchasing canola for its crushing plant at Clavet. The economic potential and spin-off from this \$53 million plant is enormous: 300 construction jobs have been created. When the plant begins operation next month, another 50 direct operating jobs will be added to the list as well as 90 indirect jobs.

When this plant is up and running, it will process 2,000 tonnes of canola a day and approximately 600,000 tonnes a year. About 25 per cent of the total Saskatchewan canola production

will be used by the plant.

Mr. Speaker, this project will be employing Saskatchewan people, using a Saskatchewan-grown product, and creating economic spin-off for the people in the constituency of Watrous and throughout the province.

Saskatchewan contractors are also benefiting from construction of the plant. They have won \$30 million worth of contracts.

There is great potential in marketing canola as the world demand increases. I look forward to the start-up of production at this plant, along with all the other people in the community. Thank you very much.

Davidson Player Enters National Hockey League

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would today like to extend my congratulations to a young chap that's grown up in Davidson, in the constituency of Arm River, who is breaking into the National Hockey League.

Chad Allen from Davidson has just capped up a very successful four seasons with the Saskatoon Blades by signing a contract with the Vancouver Canucks.

The solid, young defenceman has also proven himself to be an offensive threat from the blue line, Mr. Speaker. He scored eight goals and had 38 assists in 57 games with the Blades this season. Chad also was a two-time member of Canadian junior gold medal teams.

Mr. Speaker, I know his family and all the residents of the community of Davidson are proud of Chad's accomplishments, and I'd like to extend my best wishes and congratulations to him today and ask the rest of the Assembly to join me in doing the same.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Trans-Canada Trail

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last October the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association announced its intention to develop the Saskatchewan portion of the Trans-Canada Trail. The trail will be used for hiking, cycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiles, and will be enjoyed by Saskatchewan residents and by tourists who visit our province.

It will be designed, built, and managed by groups and communities along the trail according to local wishes. The Paradise Hill and District Historical Society in my constituency has suggested that the old Carlton Trail become part of the new Trans-Canada Trail in Saskatchewan. The Carlton Trail was once the highway that connected St. Paul, Minnesota with Fort Garry, Manitoba, and crossed the Canadian plains past Yorkton, Batoche, Battleford, north to Fort Edmonton, and on to Fort Vancouver.

For more than 100 years, it was the road west and was used by thousands of adventurers, explorers, settlers, first nations

people, and anyone else who wanted to cross the continent. The Carlton Trail is alive and well in the Paradise Hill area today. The remains of the fort pit are nearby and visitors can check out a large Red River cart and enjoy the community's Carlton Trail display.

The Carlton Trail winds its way across our province and through our history. It also weaves through a rich tapestry of cultures and a vast, varied landscape. It has tremendous recreation and tourist potential as it offers an opportunity for residents and visitors alike to experience history and to appreciate the vastness of the North American continent. I'd like to commend Paradise Hill and District Historical Society for their initiative and look forward to more news about the development of this great Canadian trail.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Job Numbers Down From Last Year

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The most recent Saskatchewan labour force survey provided by Statistics Canada indicated the number of people working across Saskatchewan dropped by .5 per cent from last year. This represents more than just a number. It represents real suffering for too many Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the regional breakdown of these job losses across the province shows a picture not very well-known to many Saskatchewan people. The south-western area of the province, including Moose Jaw and Swift Current, is suffering the most job losses of any region in Saskatchewan. The number of people working in this region dropped by 5.8 per cent over last year, or some 5,000 jobs. Regina, by comparison, experienced job growth.

Mr. Speaker, given the frightening loss of jobs in this region, I urge the Minister of Social Services to reconsider his senseless decision to move eight community living jobs in his department to Regina.

In a similar light, this government must take action to make up for job losses thanks to Health, Ag Credit, and Highway cuts to this region of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan Express

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've already heard about the impact tourism is having in Saskatchewan. Well there's a group of entertainers in Saskatchewan celebrating their 15th anniversary and they've performed for local residents as well as people across the country and internationally. Saskatchewan Express is celebrating its 15th season as musical ambassadors for the province. Since 1980, Saskatchewan Express, using home-grown talent, has been committed to the development of Saskatchewan talent.

The 15th anniversary tour, entitled "Been There — Sung That", will be performed at fairs, exhibitions and celebrations in towns and cities across the province. Saskatchewan Express will be

featured at the Regina Buffalo Days Exhibition, Saskatoon Prairieland Exhibition, and at six provincial parks during Parks Week July 15 to 21.

Saskatchewan Express has developed a national reputation as an outstanding group of accomplished performers who embody the spirit of our province. I join with all members of the Assembly in congratulating these Saskatchewan singers, dancers, and musicians, as well as training personnel and arts administration personnel, who make up Saskatchewan Express. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Education Funding

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, since session began I have been trying to get a clear answer from you about whether or not education is a priority to your government. Instead of answering the concerns of students and parents, you have instead hidden behind jeers at the federal government. The people of this province are still waiting to hear the facts, and they are growing more and more frustrated by your smoke and mirrors approach to answering questions.

Madam Minister, will you stand in this House today and explain if education is indeed a priority of your government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the federal government did to this province in the last budget, where they reduced \$114 million to this province for health, social services, and education, our government — one of four provinces in Canada — announced a funding increase for K to 12 system.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at what other jurisdictions are doing in this country, all we have to do is look to Newfoundland and Labrador — Liberal government — 7.1 per cent cut to K to 12; Nova Scotia, 1.7 per cent cut to K to 12; and of course in good old Tory Ontario, a 5.3 per cent cut; British Columbia and Saskatchewan, two New Democrat governments, increased funding to K to 12 in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again my question is for the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, you have just told the Assembly your government is committed to education. You have said that you are back-filling federal cuts. Madam Minister, I am curious. If this is true and you are completely back-filling any offloading by the federal government, why then are school boards being asked to contribute an additional \$14 million to keep our education system alive?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, our funding formula for

our K to 12 system, our operating grant, a large component in that grant is based on enrolments. And as the member may know, there are certain parts of Saskatchewan that have received reductions in funding as a result of enrolment decline.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this morning we announced a major public consultation process for parents, ratepayers, school divisions, all across the province where we are looking at four options for structuring public education to take us into the next century, Mr. Speaker. We anticipate that we will have a major public consultation process over the next six months, and parents, ratepayers, school division trustees, teachers, and support staff, will have an opportunity to come to those public meetings and give the government direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I don't believe the Minister of Education has any idea of how much fear her education cuts are creating in rural Saskatchewan. Every member of our caucus has talked to constituents who are afraid that schools in their communities may be forced to close. I'm sure there are members on the opposite side of the floor who have heard similar concerns, but who either refuse or are being muzzled from speaking on behalf of their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, my contacts within the education system inform me that between 35 and 50 schools will be forced to close in the next few years because of this government's continual funding attack on education. There remains an overriding concern that funding and not common sense may influence these decisions. Can the minister explain how many viable schools will be closed because of this government's funding decisions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I wish that member would spend as much time talking to his federal counterparts in Ottawa as he does complaining in the Saskatchewan legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government is cutting \$114 million to this province in 1996-97. We have back-filled every single solitary dime for health, social services, and education. Have we heard one word from these members opposite about those funding reductions? The answer is no, and next year, Mr. Speaker, a further 75 to \$80 million will . . .

The Chair: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Order, order. Order. It's highly inappropriate the members will be shouting across the floor while either a question is being asked or being answered. I will give the Minister of Education an opportunity to complete her remarks.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — And further, Mr. Speaker, an extra \$85 million will be taken out of this province in 1997-98. Now if those members would spend as much time talking to their federal Liberal cousins in Ottawa, maybe we wouldn't have to deal with some of the issues we're dealing with in this province.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, if you go back in this province's history, there have been school closures year after year after year in this province. And as that member knows, because he is former president of the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), that is up to individual school boards to decide, not the Department of Education and not this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Long-term Care in Melfort

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Friday we brought to the attention of this House, the fact that it had been bad-news week for the sick, the elderly, and anyone truly concerned about the health care of this province.

Today we find that this week will be no better. The people of Melfort were informed today that Nirvana Pioneer Villa will be closed. As many as 45 jobs will be terminated, and 30 long-term care beds have been axed. All because of this government's decision not to properly fund the health care system. Will the minister explain to Melfort residents why their worst fears are being realized?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, funding in health has been maintained at the same level this year as it was last year. There have been some adjustments based upon migration of population as between the districts. But the member knows that it's the responsibility of the local health district to assess its needs in terms of long-term care and acute care services and to decide which facilities the district needs to meet those needs. And I have every confidence that the North Central Health District will make the right decisions in consultation with the public.

The member referred a few weeks ago to a public meeting held in Melfort, I believe. One of the things the district has done very well is to consult the public about its plan. The district is proceeding with its plan. And I have every confidence that the local people will make the appropriate decisions, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, what this government has demonstrated again today is they have absolutely no commitment to the sick and the elderly in this province. This government has shut down long-term facilities and beds throughout the north-east. Many of these people, thrown out of their homes, look to Melfort as a community that was going to be able to accept them in their time of need.

Melfort has always been a regional centre for long-term care. Now because of your funding cuts to the North Central Health District, you have destroyed the home that many of these people saw as their future. Will the minister intervene and commit to properly fund the needs of the regional care in Melfort?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to say to the member and to the House, Mr. Speaker, that the member and his colleagues like to get up day after day and imply there's some kind of crisis in the health care system.

But I want to say to that member and to the other members and to the House that it is not the case, as implied by the members opposite, that people are taken out of nursing homes and put out on the street. That does not happen, Mr. Speaker. If a facility is decided to be closed by the local health district, alternative arrangements will be made in consultation with the families of those individuals, and we have a commitment to take care of people, Mr. Speaker.

And it seems to me that the crisis that the member is trying to take attention away from is not a crisis in health care. It's a crisis within the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker. And the member is trying to divert attention away from what is actually happening in the political scene in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — The minister hides behind a bunch of bureaucratic terms like needs-based assessment while they gut health care delivery to the very people that built this province. The minister doesn't have the guts to come to Melfort to do it himself, his own dirty work, and tell the seniors that he is throwing them out of their homes, that he's going to do it personally.

You've told these people you'd look after them. Minister, you've lied to these people. You've . . .

The Speaker: — Order! Order, order. Order. Now the hon. member appreciates very clearly that he is not permitted, according to the rules of the Assembly, of accusing another member of the Assembly of lying. I will ask him now to immediately . . . Order! I will ask him now to immediately withdraw that remark and apologize to the House and then put his question. Order!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, these people . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order, order. Order! I will give the hon. member an opportunity to simply withdraw his remark — Order! — to apologize to the House.

Order. Order, order. I will ask the Opposition House Leader to come to order. Now the hon. member knows what the penalty is for refusing to withdraw an unparliamentary remark at the request of the Speaker, and I will give the hon. member the opportunity to withdraw his unparliamentary remark and to apologize to the House.

Mr. Gantefoer: — No, Mr. Speaker, I will not withdraw that.

The Speaker: — Order. Order! Order. I will give the hon. member from Melfort one last opportunity to withdraw his unparliamentary remark and to apologize to the House.

Order! All members will come to order when the Speaker is on his feet.

Then pursuant to rule 28(3), Mr. Gantefoer, I hereby name you for disregarding the authority of the Chair. I will ask you to remove yourself from the Assembly.

Order! Next question.

Health Care Complaints Procedure

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions as well are to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, I've sent over a copy of a letter I received regarding Lester Snustead, a senior who is being released from his local hospital because of lack of funding for hospital beds.

Mr. Snustead has bone cancer that has spread throughout his body, which has deteriorated his strength and mobility a great deal. He is a diabetic and in need of insulin shots twice a day, and as well has cataracts which makes it unable for him to measure his own insulin each day. This gentleman has been informed that he will receive one meal a day through home care and a nurse can check on him twice a week. Mr. Minister, that's not enough for this individual in this circumstance.

I received many letters and phone calls from people in similar situations; I'm sure you do too. You have stated that we're not to bring specific cases in to this House and address concerns in this way. Mr. Minister, what is the proper forum? Where do people go when they feel they have been treated improperly by the health care system? And who do they talk to with their specific complaints and concerns, and for immediate help to address such situations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and also for sending me a copy of the letter. I actually had read the letter already, and I want to say that my understanding is that this individual has not been discharged from the hospital. And in fact the health district . . . well my officials have been in contact with the Midwest Health District and the situation is being handled at the local level.

A meeting is being held later this week with the individual, his family, and members of the Midwest District Health Board management to determine the most appropriate care in the most appropriate setting. So the situation is far from resolved. There was a suggestion that this individual would be discharged. A meeting is going to be held to determine what the appropriate care setting for this individual would be.

It may not be a hospital; it may be a long-term care bed. But I'm confident that the people at the local level will be very compassionate and reasonable with respect to this man's needs and that they will make the right decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Minister, I thank you for having had your officials look into and come up with what may meet a specific need at this time.

However, Mr. Minister, there are many other people that face needs along the same lines. And I would like to offer as a suggestion, a forum whereby individuals who feel that they are not being heard at their local areas and their local districts, a suggestion that has been brought forward by the Touchwood Qu'Appelle Health District of appointing an ombudsman that people could turn to to address specific needs, whether at the district level or whether at the provincial level.

However, Mr. Minister, I would think it would be more appropriate for the Department of Health to establish this ombudsman rather than asking the districts to take finances out of their tight budgets. And, Mr. Minister, would you indeed appoint or look into appointing a provincial ombudsman so that the costs of each individual district is not . . . or the funds from districts is not taken away to provide this service? Would you do that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I'll certainly take the member's suggestions under advisement, Mr. Speaker. But I want to say to the member that some of the districts have appointed client-service representatives who are in effect patient ombudspersons. And I know Saskatoon has one. I'm not sure how many other districts, but I think it's a good suggestion, either at the district level or the provincial level. And I'm hopeful that we do move in this direction that the member's talking about, because I think there should be somebody, I think preferably at the local level, that people can go to with this kind of concern so that they can be dealt with as soon as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — One further question, a short question to the minister. Mr. Minister, the unfortunate part, while you feel that it may be appropriate for the local district to appoint their, basically, ombudsman, who pays for that? Districts are being challenged on a daily basis regarding funding and the cuts that are coming to their districts, and if they're supposed to provide an additional service, where do they find the funds? That's why I think it's appropriate that it comes from your department. Would you do that?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well no, I can't give that commitment, Mr. Speaker. As the member knows, what we do with the health care budget, which is about one and a half billion dollars, is we take a billion dollars and give it to the districts, because the idea is to deliver services to the people at the local level.

So we provide the funding to the districts to meet the health care needs in the community. And I think that can be done in this area as well. There's no reason why this has to be done out of the city of Regina. I think it could better be done at the local level, and I think the district funding takes that into account, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Education Restructuring

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, we've had a chance to look at your consultation process on the

restructuring of education. My question is, why is it necessary? You already have a report from the SSTA on restructuring educational governance. They have a plan for reducing the number of school divisions in the province, and it's a plan that's driven from the local level. Why is it necessary for you to reinvent the wheel?

Madam Minister, you do have that SSTA report. You know the direction that local school boards wish to take. Why do you need to go through this elaborate public relations exercise, especially in springtime when half the people are seeding and can't attend anyways?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as members know, earlier this morning our government announced a major consultation process with the public regarding restructuring education for the 21st century. In that document, which has been made available to the public, we are examining four possible options for the future. One of those options, Mr. Speaker, is the status quo where school divisions could determine on their own whether or not they wish to restructure with other school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, we have not arrived at any conclusion. We want to go through the public consultation process that occurs in May, June, July, August, September, and October. And at the end of that process we'll be in a better position to determine which direction our province should take.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Madam Minister, we've seen this particular movie before. The last time we saw this movie, it was called health reform, and it didn't have a very happy ending.

Madam Minister, the fact that you won't accept the SSTA's plan suggests to me that you want to ensure that you control the changes in the educational system, not the public, instead of letting that process be driven at the local level.

Madam Minister, I believe you missed the 9 o'clock bell this morning. Many school divisions are already working with one another to save money and improve the quality of education. So why is it necessary for you to get involved? Haven't you learned anything from the Minister of Municipal Government, who's been forced to back off by SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities)?

Madam Minister, why won't you let the change be driven at the local level? Is it because you have ready a plan for forced amalgamation and school closures just like you did with the hospitals?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatchewan school trustees underwent their consultation process, that consultation process, as I understand it, involved school trustees and local school trustees.

We want to ensure that the public, including parents of children

in school as well as ratepayers, along with other stakeholders in education such as teachers, support staff, trustees, directors of education, the business community — we want to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to have input into the process so we know at the end of the day which direction the public wants us to go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Unfunded Pension Liabilities

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning's meeting of the Public Accounts Committee provided a fine example of how members of different parties can work together in the best interests of Saskatchewan residents. After listening carefully to the presentation made by the Provincial Auditor's office on the debts in the province's pensions, the committee recommended that, and I quote:

The government should establish a pension commission to study the many issues related to its pension plans.

Last week, the Minister of Finance told the people of Saskatchewan there was no need for such a committee. Today her colleagues in the back benches joined with the opposition calling on the minister to set up such a committee. Will the minister admit she erred last week and quickly set up an independent pension committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker. First of all I thank the member opposite for the question. There is absolutely nothing new here, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue that goes back to the 1960s when the then Liberal government was not properly funding pensions. We have said, of course we're concerned. But we also have said that we want to reassure the people of Saskatchewan that this issue is being managed and their pensions are secure.

We've also said that the key thing is that in 1978, the then NDP (New Democratic Party) government changed the pension scheme to ensure that it was fully funded and affordable. So I mean there must be a shortage of news today because there is no issue here that has not been discussed in this legislature before.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, in the same Public Accounts Committee meeting, the Provincial Comptroller in the minister's own department acknowledged that the cost to the government of meeting its annual pension obligations is already having a significant impact on the government's spending decisions.

Given this, Mr. Speaker, before the government is forced by large pension debts into making cuts to other programs, will the minister finally get her head out of the sand and admit these pension debts are causing a problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, he's developing a bit of reputation for — as one major corporation in this province said — reckless comments, reckless comments. Now what we have said about the pension issue, and there's nothing new today, is it is a concern. We plan to deal with it. Is a concern that becomes more prominent in the next century, and that we want to reassure the people of this province that we are in good financial shape and we will continue to meet our pension obligations.

But I mean, the members opposite should understand there is no news here. And they should become more responsible in the kinds of suggestions they make. They do not need to unnecessarily alarm the pensioners of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Highways

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Northern Affairs or to the Minister of Highways. Mr. Minister, the North's only links to the outside world is through its highways. There were many promises made through many elections for improvements and the construction of a road to Garson Lake of 30 kilometres, improvements to the road to Patuanak of 80 kilometres, improvements to the road of Dillon of 60 kilometres, and to Turnor Lake of 30 kilometres, that have never been fulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, these are only less than 200 kilometres of northern roads that affect 3,200 residents of northern Saskatchewan people. These people are often stranded due to the poor conditions of the roads, Mr. Speaker. This is totally unacceptable, especially at times in medical emergencies. Will the minister commit to replacing these trails called roads and follow through on promises made?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, we probably would be building many roads in northern Saskatchewan if it were not for the Liberal cuts of \$114 million. We had to replace absolutely everything in regards to the Liberal cuts, even in northern education, northern health, and northern social services — absolutely no concern, you know, by the federal Liberals.

When I look at the highways issue, I would say that in regards to the person's own constituency, we have Athabasca road, you know, going into the north country. We also have the roads that we are fixing in regards to the area of Canoe Narrows, in regards to the forestry industry. We're also doing the road towards Garson Lake. We started 5 kilometres of road of it and 20 people are working.

What the member should be doing is congratulating those 20 people that are being trained in heavy equipment and road building who will get jobs elsewhere, etc., and building 5 kilometres of road. And also complaining to the Liberal government and saying, yes, these are great people who are working hard to build our own roads in northern Saskatchewan

in cooperation with the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Announcement of a Public Consultation Process on the Future of Public Education in Saskatchewan

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to address an issue of fundamental importance to everyone in Saskatchewan — the future of public education in our province.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I announced a public consultation process to seek input on how we can all work together to structure education to meet the needs of our students for the next century. As hon. members are aware, demographic, economic, and social changes are challenging school divisions, especially rural and northern school divisions, to continue to provide excellent programming.

Mr. Speaker, we want to hear what Saskatchewan people have to say about the future structure of our public education system. I invite and encourage the participation of all members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly in this consultation process. I have made copies of a discussion paper, which outlines four options for consideration, available to all members. I emphasize that any other options presented by the public or other education stakeholders will also be considered.

Mr. Speaker, the public consultation process begins immediately and will continue throughout the fall. Our objective is to offer the best possible education for every Saskatchewan student. The key question is, what is the best way to structure our public education system to meet the needs of our students?

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to get involved in this important public consultation process and to encourage their constituents to participate when public meetings take place in their area. There will be an opportunity to hear the views of everyone who wishes to be heard and to consider the issues.

Mr. Speaker, these public consultations will help determine the future structure of our public education system. I welcome the opportunity to work with everyone to ensure quality education for Saskatchewan students well into the next century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Madam Minister, for your comments, and thank you for the early release of your ministerial statement. I appreciate the short time I've had to take a look at it.

After reviewing the document this morning, Madam Minister, I look forward to the fact, Mr. Speaker, that there will be public consultation. It's an expanded public consultation and I know the people of Saskatchewan look forward to actually having input.

The previous groups that have already been identified in this House, Mr. Speaker, like the Saskatchewan School Trustees, which represents the boards of education . . . The government has its own study that was commissioned a long time ago under the Scharf-Langlois report, and we know that directors and superintendents have already contributed through a LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents) study that has already been done on this topic.

So there have been many issues. I know the minister has raised a concern around regional authorities, an expanded regional authority, and one of those options that are presented are listed.

I would trust that the involvement that she hopes for from the public will be there. I know there will be input, and I would suggest to the minister, and of course to the department, that indeed they take a good hard look at it.

I note that in her statement, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has indicated that this will continue through the fall. And I'm wondering whether or not fall has a certain finite period, whether or not it's the end of a particular month, and what will be the outcome. Will the minister then be bringing together leaders from across the province to actually take part in a symposium? So those are questions.

The final statement that is made in the release, and I think it is the key, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, the Minister of Education, myself as the opposition critic, the third party critic, we're here to represent and to bring forward what is of greatest concern to the students of our province.

The objective is to offer the best possible education for students in the province. And when we look at scenarios, whether or not they're special interest group scenarios that are very small groups, or whether or not they are supported by a vast majority of this province, that is the key, is what is in the best interests of the students. And we look forward to encouraging others as well as my colleagues to take part in the consultation process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Heppner: — I too would like to thank the minister for their early presentation of this particular statement. And I think the key question that you indicated when you made your statement is a very valid one, that we need to look at what the future holds for education, what it holds for the kids in our communities.

I do think though that we're selling short some of the other groups that have already made presentations, that have looked at changes in education, whether it's the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) or the SSTA or LEADS or these sorts of things. I think if we look at the number of people that are involved in those particular bodies, we'll find that there are probably more people involved in all of those bodies and that you will hear from in your consultation process. So I think if you're looking for members, you probably already have those.

The other concern I have, and it's mentioned in your statement, is the demographic changes that are suppose to be addressed by the changes that we are going to make. And I have a concern that what will happen here is the same thing that's happening

with possibly Municipal Affairs and with Health as well, that when we try to address these demographic changes in new policies, what we in fact do, is we increase the rapidity of change in the demographic change.

What I'm saying is essentially we very often make small schools in rural Saskatchewan less desirable places to be because of the large organizations we put in place causing that demographic change to accelerate. And that's one of my underlying concerns of any change that we make. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Emergency Preparedness Projects

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to announce yesterday and to tell the House today, of funding approval for four emergency preparedness projects in Saskatchewan. These projects have been approved under the joint emergency preparedness program. This program enables the provincial, municipal, and federal governments to work cooperatively to ensure a reasonably uniform level of emergency response and preparedness.

This announcement on National Emergency Preparedness Week is particularly timely. This is the first year a special time has been set aside to raise public awareness about the emergency planning services that exist in Canada and indeed in Saskatchewan. We know at the community, provincial, and national levels there are skilled emergency response personnel, career and volunteer, whose job it is to meet the needs of people in troubled times. As elsewhere, we in Saskatchewan have had to cope with numerous disasters — floods, forest fires, and hazardous material spills, for example, which without the benefit of proper planning and positive responses would have had far worse consequences. Municipal officials should be commended, Mr. Speaker, for their dedicated work in this regard.

We have ably demonstrated that not only are we prepared to respond appropriately in the event of emergencies, but we are able to respond in a timely way as well. This does not happen by accident but by design. This province prides itself on maintaining the planning and training programs that are required to provide a high level of emergency preparedness to safeguard our people in times of disaster.

Mr. Speaker, it is through a partnership involving the federal, municipal, and provincial governments that the necessary level of preparedness can be maintained. The three levels of government have committed a total of \$321,512 in the current fiscal year for joint emergency preparedness projects and programs.

The largest share of this amount — almost half — will be for enhanced training and education programs offered by Saskatchewan Emergency Planning to municipal and provincial officials. The remaining funds will be used by municipalities to purchase special equipment.

The best protection in an emergency is to have highly trained personnel who can coordinate the appropriate resources to deal with all kinds of disasters. I would ask members of this

Assembly and the people of the province to join with me in continuous support of those individuals and organizations dedicated to serving the well-being of our families, neighbours, and friends, in times of emergency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank the minister for the notification given with respect to her ministerial statement.

Mr. Speaker, I have been involved and know and appreciate greatly the importance of planned coordination through cooperation of all levels of administration. With a prepared plan, the volunteers and the citizens rally around to protect their communities in a timely fashion from unexpected disasters.

I congratulate all those who are charged with and freely accept the responsibility for this extremely important occasion in state of emergencies, and I am very pleased of the fact that it is in fact a federal, municipal, and provincial agreement. Working together is what it's all about in order to prepare for those things that we have no future control over.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also thank you for the early release of that particular statement.

As a person who's been involved in municipal government, I think the moves that have happened in Saskatchewan over the last number of years to prepare for emergencies, the kinds of things we'd rather not think about, but when they happen it's good to have those bodies in place, I think is very valid. I think it gives a sense of security and well-being to every person in Saskatchewan. I commend you on that and also for this particular week.

I think, as we look at all the things that need to be taken care of as far as emergencies and critical situations in Saskatchewan, we also need to keep in mind the rural revenge that's happening in Saskatchewan, that that also needs to be addressed.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Haverstock: — With leave, to comment on the ministerial statement, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to hear of the initiatives that have been undertaken by the federal, provincial, and municipal governments on this particular issue of being able to ensure that we are prepared for emergencies.

And I feel strongly about this because I was one of the individuals who did tour, as I'm sure other members did, parts of our province that were devastated by a tornado when it went

through Saskatchewan.

And I think that we do feel a certain sense of distance when we watch on the news, things happening in other parts of the world and other parts of our country. But we often don't think it's going to happen to us.

It's a terrific thing that has been done. I want to commend the minister, and hope that in fact things on other issues of joint importance like this can come to a conclusion in this same way, and hope that all of us here can do our part as well in facilitating such things.

Mr. Speaker, just to close on this, if I may, one of the most rewarding experiences, after observing what had transpired in Saskatchewan with the tornado, was the work done by people who came together, like the Mennonite Central Committee. I want to, at this point, acknowledge publicly the work that they did in helping in that emergency situation.

So I wish to extend once again my thanks to the minister for including me in receiving her remarks, and congratulate the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 84 — An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Wascana Centre 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. 85 — An Act to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that a Bill to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority 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

PRIVATE BILLS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 01 — An Act Respecting St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon

Preamble agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

The Chair: — Order. I invite hon. members, to the extent that you may wish to have a conversation, to please do so behind the bar. It is very difficult, very difficult, to conduct the business of the Chair with the level of noise there is right now. I thank all hon. members for their cooperation in this matter.

Bill No. 02 — An Act Respecting Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan

Preamble agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 03 — An Act to Amend The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Act

Preamble agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 04 — An Act to Amend An Act incorporating Luther College, Regina

Preamble agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 01 — An Act Respecting St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 01, An Act Respecting St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 02 — An Act Respecting Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 02, An Act Respecting Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate

the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

(1445)

Bill No. 03 — An Act to Amend The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Act

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 03, An Act to Amend The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Act be read now a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 04 — An Act to Amend An Act incorporating Luther College, Regina

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now move that Bill No. 04, An Act to Amend An Act incorporating Luther College, Regina be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 7 — International Business Contacts

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks, I'm going to move the following motion:

That this Assembly support the efforts of the Saskatchewan businesses who are attempting to establish international business contacts through many efforts, including that of the recent trade mission to the Pacific Rim, which will improve the province's economy and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan has a very transparent economy. And what I mean by a transparent economy is one where the wealth of this province flows across the borders very easily. Anyone practically in the world can sell into this province, and from the rest of Canada they sell an extreme amount of goods into the province.

You can start with items like automobiles, trucks, move on to farm equipment that comes out of the United States and comes here with very little opposition in the way of tariffs or trade deals. Household goods, Mr. Speaker, such as rugs, linoleum, stoves, fridges, washing machines and dryers — all of these items come into the province of Saskatchewan without any difficulty.

This transparency of our economy forces us into being world traders, and we have been over most of the period of the province of Saskatchewan. We've traded out of this province, starting first of all with grain. And carrying that particular

commodity on, we're still trading in grain or field crops, Mr. Speaker.

Later after that, we moved in to trading and selling other agricultural products out of the province of Saskatchewan — meat being just one to mention. But, Mr. Speaker, the days when the agricultural community of the province of Saskatchewan have been able to maintain the economics of the province of Saskatchewan are gone, and we now have about 20 per cent of the economy given to us by selling agricultural products and buying.

Mr. Speaker, the economy has expanded in a number of different directions. We are now into mining and manufacturing and the selling of some very minor items maybe on the world market into niche markets, what are called niche markets, in the sense of elk antlers and items of that nature. But all of these combined will make up an economy for the province of Saskatchewan.

It is therefore, Mr. Speaker, we as a province must become prepared to trade with the rest of the world. And we should recognize the business community and those people who are out there to do that particular trading. Because we need to be able to return wealth to this province by marketing items.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things that have affected us more seriously in the last few years — free trade, technology, the global village, the communications in the global village — are also, as they impacted on us negatively, we can also use all of those particular items to move forward and generate the positive events from the use of those particular things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just comment specifically on a few items that have occurred in the recent trade trip that was made by the Minister of Agriculture and Food of this province. This mission generated potentially a large amount of new . . . or opened a large number of new doors for businesses in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have here one item which says that a Hong Kong company has expressed interest in setting up a plant to process elk antler velvet in Canada and sell it then in the Pacific Rim. Mr. Speaker, at the price that you can receive for processed elk antler, this will amount probably to a \$2 million a year business in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have another news release here that indicates somewhat of the same thing that has occurred, where one of the businessmen in the city of Yorkton went along and was selling skid-steerloaders; Leon-Ram Enterprises of Yorkton was selling skid-steerloaders. And these loaders have been recognized by the people in Korea as being very well put together and machines that are worth their while in purchasing to fill their needs.

Mr. Speaker, it is these types of business approaches to the rest of the world that will generate and maintain a good economy in the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to also point out that we have some things that have been around for a long period of time which are also beneficial

to us in trade. The officials from the Japanese Food Agency made it clear that they believed that the current threat to the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly for wheat and barley could endanger their long-standing relationship with Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the agency board members say that they place a high value on the Canadian Wheat Board's quality assurance program and the board's ability to guarantee a reliable supply of grain. And when you move products of this particular nature throughout the world, this is one of the things that gives you a sale time and time again, is that when people can feel that they can get the product and the product will be what you said it was when you sold it to them to ship it.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this particular motion will be accepted by all members of this House. And I say that because of some of the remarks that members opposite have given in the past few weeks. I have here a copy of the remarks of April 4, where the member from . . . I believe it's . . . let me just look here, and I'll check it out, so we'll get it correct. The member from Melfort-Tisdale said that:

I would like to wish both ministers and Mr. Thomson (that's the Mr. Thomson of Thomson Meats) all the best in their international trade mission. It's this kind of cooperation and partnership that can help turn (the Saskatchewan economy around).

So I expect that this particular motion, Mr. Speaker, will receive the support of all members of this House, unless the opposition have changed their mind over the last few days.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would like to move . . . Mr. Speaker, with those words, I would like to move, seconded by the member from Swift Current:

That this Assembly support the efforts of the Saskatchewan businesses who are attempting to establish international business contacts through many efforts, including that of the recent trade mission to the Pacific Rim, which will improve the province's economy and create jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the indulgence of the Chair and the members in this House, I would like to talk a little bit about the economic development and then take a look at the way that it relates to the Pacific Rim countries.

I appreciate this opportunity to make a few comments with regard to economic development and the growth in this great province. Our policy, as outlined in *Partnership for Growth*, makes a great deal of sense.

The word "partnership" appears quite often these days. And frankly it only makes common sense to include all sectors and facets of society plus the various nations with which we do a lot of trade. And with partnership will result in decision-making process and by working together we will build on the strengths of the citizens in Saskatchewan.

That's how we will create economic activity, new opportunities,

and a positive business climate — by forging partnerships. *Partnership for Growth* will help the economy prosper and create meaningful jobs.

As we all know, it is small business who will create the new jobs. And one of the major complaints of small business, when surveyed recently, cited the government debt as being one of their major concerns.

Well, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the opposition, this government was the first province to eliminate the deficit and has taken giant strides to deal with the debt, without slashing the education, health, and social programs as the federal government is prone to do.

And the people of Saskatchewan, including small-business owners, appreciate this as was evidenced by the election victory — the largest majority for a second-term government ever in Saskatchewan. And I would like to remind the members opposite of this fact.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we did not slaughter the social program but brought a great deal of financial stability and confidence to the business community. Heavens above, even Dale Botting lauded the government's initiatives. Mr. Speaker, the gloom and doom from the members opposite is out of sync with the realities.

Mr. Speaker, another concern of the small business was the amount of government red tape. Our government is committed to reduce the number of regulations which impact small businesses. We will present a plan with which to review all government regulations, thus reducing the regulatory burden.

Just recently the *Saskatchewan Economic News*, published in April 1996, gave an indicator of some of the activities which are occurring in this province. Farm cash receipts, for instance, went from 5,068.8 million to 5,206.1 million — a great increase of 2.7 per cent.

Manufacturing shipments, which of course are recorded in foods — there were increases in that area. PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.) first quarter earnings were up from 51.5 million in the first quarter of 1995 to 63.7 million in 1996.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — We have a strong food processing industry which has over 296 food processing companies and employ over 6,000 people and generate more than 1 billion in sales. Saferco's expansion, which of course ties in very nicely with the Pacific Rim countries, a hundred construction jobs and will inject about 15 million into the provincial economy in payments for equipment, parts, services, labour, and taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that agriculture is and remains the mainstay of the Saskatchewan economy and is a source of optimism for the future. Mr. Speaker, more than 200 million will be made available over the next four years through the

agri-food innovation, Agriculture Development, and agri-food equity funds to encourage research, development, and delivery and diversification in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers of Saskatchewan have adapted to change and have diversified in various areas. Although wheat remains the main crop, many acres are being seeded to durum, canola, flax, and other special crops, such as lentil, peas, mustard, canaryseed, and sunflower. Along with this diversification has come the expansion of special crop processing industry. Mr. Speaker, farmers are very flexible and willing to change, as evidenced by all of the changes which are occurring in Saskatchewan today.

Mr. Speaker, there are some pressures continuing to concern agriculture. There are the rail abandonments. There are the trade regulations. There are the Canadian Wheat Board arguments and so forth. And these all play an important part on the trade which we have with the Pacific Rim countries.

Mr. Speaker, our government will protect the policies and institutions that serve the best interests of our producers while working with the industry. Mr. Speaker, this government will work to achieve a strong, national safety net and fight to maintain national standards and appropriate levels of funding. It's kind of a far cry from the federals who abolished the Crow and saved \$320 million and then magnanimously allocate \$20 million back for roads. Which 150 kilometres should we fix?

With regards to the Pacific Rim countries then and why I've been talking about the agriculture, is because this is one of our major markets. Saskatchewan exported approximately 381 million in oilseeds to Japan last year. It's Canada's most important export customer for canola. And the reason why they deal with Canada is because they realize that Canada has the ability to supply a regular and consistent supply for what their needs are.

Another release . . . Japan is a very important trading partner with the Canadian Wheat Board and has demonstrated a willingness to pay a premium price for the wheat and barley, and so that they realize that the Canadian Wheat Board is able to ensure high quality and even though they may have to pay a premium price for it.

With regards to Taiwan, where our minister went, it imports a wide range of products, such as canola, feed barley, dehy alfalfa and livestock genetics, and it was very surprised that Saskatchewan exports all of these products and more. And so because of this trip, again we were opening up a new market.

And the last one we take a look at is with regards to South Korea. In 1995 South Korea purchased more than 37.6 million worth of agricultural good from Saskatchewan. They believe that the sales of pork to South Korea could double in 1996 from the 14.2 million realized last year. And as the previous speaker mentioned, that our minister dealt with one of Asia's largest pharmaceutical companies to look at processing elk antler velvet. Saskatchewan has 180 elk farmers who produce about 10 tonnes of antler velvet which is worth more than \$2 million a year.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to second the motion that this Assembly affirm its support . . . whoops:

That this Assembly support the efforts of the Saskatchewan businesses who are attempting to establish international business contacts through many efforts, including that of the recent trade mission to the Pacific Rim, which will improve the province's economy and create jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to enter into this debate on the motion put forward by the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood, and I'm sure the member and his colleagues will be pleased also to know that I do support the motion. I do support Saskatchewan businesses who are attempting to establish international contacts, and I believe that contacts may lead to improved Saskatchewan economy and may ultimately create jobs. In fact businesses involved in manufacturing, processing, tourism, and agriculture are only too aware that entry into the global economy is the bright light for increased, sustainable jobs.

The most important thing that the members opposite must be aware of is the fact that it is businesses who create jobs. Government cannot legislate job creation for businesses. I've said this time and time again, and I will continue to do so until I think this government has got the inkling about how jobs are really created.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at our provincial economy and think about what is hindering economic growth, I am forced to point the finger across the floor of the Assembly at this NDP government. This is not something I want to do, but they've left me very little choice. They accuse me and my colleagues of preaching gloom and doom, but in fact we are speaking about reality. What they have to realize and what they have failed to realize is that things are nowhere as rosy as the Minister of Economic Development has attempted to portray. Many businesses are growing rapidly and are economically strong. I'm delighted when I hear this sort of news. But unfortunately there is another side to the coin. I have asked the Minister of Economic Development to take off the rose-coloured glasses for just a few moments and perhaps he may finally see that many in our business sector are indeed facing some very significant problems.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss some of these problems for just a few moments. The first problem is job creation. Jobs are the absolute backbone to the health of any capitalistic economy. When people are employed, they spend money; when people spend money, businesses prosper; and when businesses prosper, the economy grows stronger and stronger. Job creation is the result of healthy businesses.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of the smoke and mirror act that the Minister of Economic Development has so carefully crafted, job creation in Saskatchewan is totally non-existent. The minister claims that there have been 10,000 jobs created in Saskatchewan since 1992. I have asked the minister to provide me with a breakdown of these jobs and show me where they

are. Where are these sustainable jobs? And he hasn't been able to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the members opposite even know what a sustainable job is. A sustainable job is one that contributes to the overall health of the economy. It is a job that business has a need for. Sustainable jobs will provide a future for our young people. They will attract people to our province and they will no longer have to see our professionals migrating to provinces like Alberta who created 88,000 jobs in 1995.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about job creation, it is misleading to talk about jobs that are here today and gone tomorrow. We need to create an environment such that businesses have the opportunity to expand and to diversify. If businesses are able to do this, they will need skilled employees to be successful. As a result, they will create long-term, sustainable jobs that will benefit every person in this province.

Mr. Speaker, sustainable jobs are what the people of Saskatchewan want; and sustainable jobs are what will lead our province to economic well-being. Unfortunately the NDP government has failed miserably in its attempts. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot and will not justify his job numbers. He has read the writing on the wall and he knows they have failed. The problem is he refuses to admit it.

Mr. Speaker, the public doesn't buy the minister's rhetoric. They are the ones who ultimately gain or suffer the effects from the government's actions or lack of action. The minister can say what he wants and manipulate the number any way they wish, but the truth of the matter is the people of this province aren't convinced. They know better.

This NDP government conducted a public opinion poll which clearly stated that 75 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan disapprove of the government efforts to reduce unemployment. The minister can fool the NDP back-benchers, but they can't fool the rest of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP government took power in 1991, there were roughly 44,058 people working in this province. One year later there were 4,500 people working in this province. The minister doesn't like to discuss this issue but instead would rather attempt to pull the wool over everyone's eyes.

Unfortunately for the hard-working people in this province, he has not succeeded in his attempt. A recent *Leader-Post* article said, and I quote: "Given the silly manipulation we've seen from this NDP government on job numbers, such cynicism is well placed."

Mr. Minister, the gig is up. It is time to start focusing attention where it belongs — creating an environment conducive to economic growth, and then and only then will the people of Saskatchewan truly realize any benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the next issue that needs to be discussed is the overall economic picture in Saskatchewan. Businesses are faced with a tremendous amount of restrictive legislation. The minister obviously agreed, because in his most recent glossy document, the *Partnership For Growth*, he made a commitment

to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden on businesses by 25 per cent over the next 10 years to help them become more competitive.

This is a positive step and a very, very slow process, but it still is a positive step. However there are two major problems with this initiative. The first is that many regulatory burdens will eat up many businesses well before the 10 years are up. For businesses that have just started up or are in the set-up stage, these oppressive regulations will be a very severe obstacle that unfortunately many will not be successful in overcoming.

The second problem with his initiative is, where was it four years ago? If the minister would have recognized this problem four years ago, we'd already be halfway there. The minister speaks glowingly of his *Partnership for Growth* document. He said it is the mission statement for the government, the very foundation on which the next four years will be built.

I would ask the members opposite: how many of you have actually read the document from cover to cover? I would guess not very many of them have taken the time to fully examine this document. They would rather accept the minister's word than actually think for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, if they had read the document — and I do encourage you to do so — the first thing that would fly up in their face would be the first six objectives. These six objectives deal with the first two years of your mandate.

They say things like, by March 1997 we will analyse Saskatchewan business economy. By September of 1996 they will implement a plan to work with educational institutions and organizations. In 1997-98 they will begin to form partnerships with trucking and rail companies.

These objectives use terminologies like: begin to work with, set out, and establish. Mr. Speaker, what has this government actually been doing for five years? These sort of things should have been happening five years ago.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very worried about the threat of the proposed occupational health regulations that will impose a further paper burden on businesses. Does this government really believe that employers are not responsible? Does the government really believe we don't care about our employees? It's not true, you know.

Mr. Speaker, taxation in Saskatchewan is devastating our economic growth. This NDP government, led by the Minister of Finance, balanced the books on the backs of taxpayers.

In February 1995, *Maclean's* magazine examined Saskatchewan's approach to the balanced budget. The article clearly shows that between 1991-92 and 1996-97 Saskatchewan's revenues increased by 25 per cent while total spending decreased by 3 per cent. Mr. Speaker, this is in light of closing 53 rural hospitals and dramatically offloading onto various third parties.

But without a doubt the most alarming part of the article was

the graphic entitled "The shifting tax burden". This chart sadly shows the effects of the NDP philosophy. In 1990, the average farm income was just over \$48,000, and the tax burden was \$9,623 or 19.8 per cent. In 1994, after three years of NDP rule, the average family income was still just \$48,000. But the tax burden has risen dramatically to \$12,668 or 26 per cent. That's an increase of 6 per cent. Mr. Speaker, this tax rate excludes any federal taxes but accounts for all provincial and municipal taxes. Yet the Minister of Finance continues to claim that they haven't increased taxes. I would ask the minister if this isn't increased taxation, then please tell me what is it?

Perhaps a simpler question for the minister would be, what was the PST (provincial sales tax) when you formed government, and what is it now? Please tell me again how this NDP government hasn't increased taxes.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to oppressive regulations and stifling taxation, there is another beast that the NDP government has given birth to and mothered to become a major barrier to economic growth. This is indirect taxation, the increased utility rates, the unfair tendering policies, and the workers' compensation fees. These things have a colossal effect on economic growth.

Businesses were up in arms when this government attempted to increase workers' compensation rates by as much as 565 per cent. The workers' compensation in Saskatchewan was and still is a complete mess.

The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement has had a severe effect on construction workers and construction firms. Saskatchewan firms have boycotted bidding on Crown projects solely because of the unfair tendering policy.

Mr. Speaker, I conducted a survey on businesses across the province — about 200 in number — to find out what they feel are the biggest problems facing their company, what their major impediment to growth was, and to seek suggestions for changes in government legislation. I asked businesses, what is the single biggest problem facing your company today? Some of the responses were: government interference; retaining enough after-tax profit to maintain existing operations and still allow for growth; developing new products and services fast enough to replace those that have become obsolete; competition and regulation in industry; increasing input costs; lacking consumer confidence; increase in employee benefits; job stability concerns; and the economy.

The next question I asked them was, what was your major impediment to growth? And they responded with, capital after-tax money to finance growth, market demand, access to markets and diversification, high taxes, declining rural population and the poor economy in rural Saskatchewan, unloading of cost by government, Saskatchewan labour legislation, and the rural infrastructure, notably the roads.

And the other question I asked them was what change would they make to government legislation. And they said, no tax on product inputs, especially those relying on exports; removing E & H (education and health) tax on building materials used in hog barns; reduce taxation costs and employee costs; graded

taxation for property reassessment; teaching entrepreneurship; reducing the size of government; and decrease governmental involvement in business. And also they have to expand small-business deductions to \$500,000 from the current \$200,000 limit.

Mr. Speaker, this is what the business people of Saskatchewan believe. The business people are the ones who know what's best for them. They are the ones who should be deciding what course Saskatchewan's economy should be on. After all, Mr. Speaker, it is businesses that are the job creators.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn the attention to international business and trade missions. I am very much aware Saskatchewan needs to establish itself as a major competitor in the international market-place. Many opportunities exist for Saskatchewan businesses out of province and out of our country. If Saskatchewan is going to truly experience sustainable economic growth to a large . . . it will be due to a large extent on our ability to compete internationally.

In Saskatchewan we have some of the richest natural resources in the world, and without a doubt we have the best farmers and agricultural industry in the world. As a result, our success relies heavily on exporting, and ultimately on our presence in international market-places.

Mr. Speaker, we need to establish international business contacts. That is why I was somewhat bewildered when our Premier refused to participate in the "Team Canada" trade mission. That was a national effort to further promote our country and ultimately our province in the international market-place.

The Premier's counterpart to the east, Mr. Filmon, was asked if Saskatchewan and Alberta companies could lose business as a result of skipping the trade mission. He said and I quote, "I don't think there's any question about that." And then he said:

We have been hearing from companies that are on the mission both from Alberta and Saskatchewan that they're tremendously disappointed. They felt that it was an opportunity lost.

Mr. Speaker, it is very confusing for us. Why would our Premier refuse to participate in a trade mission that would allow Saskatchewan's businesses and taxpayers to reap the benefits? Then one of his back-benchers, the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood, wants the Assembly to support the international trade missions because they will improve the province's economy and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, what is this NDP government's position? Do they support international business or don't they? Do they want economic growth? Do they want job creation? It's time for them to take a position on these very crucial issues.

Mr. Speaker, I can't say I blame the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood. It seems like several of the back-benchers are confused about the government action or lack of action. I would like to believe that he wants to support economic growth, but I have a hard time believing it because

he, like the rest of the back-benchers, continue to sit behind a cabinet and refuse to take a stand on behalf of taxpayers and business people.

Last week we heard the member from Regina South encourage Saskatchewan businesses, workers, and communities to work with government. Obviously he too was just a little misguided. Saskatchewan people have been working for years to build the economic framework of this province in spite of the government — like the one opposite who have repeatedly mounted vicious attacks, attempting to tear it down.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to mention a few words about the business community in Saskatchewan. The business community in our province is made up of men and women who have faced major setbacks, yet continue to survive. The recession in the 1980s, coupled with the financially irresponsible Tory government, destroyed several businesses along its gruesome course of devastation. Several more have been destroyed by the tax regime and over-regulation of our current NDP government. In spite of this, Mr. Speaker, the business people in Saskatchewan have done remarkably well.

In order to ensure that they will be able to survive into the future and to ensure new businesses have a chance to succeed, we need to drastically lower the cost of doing business in this province. The end result will be a significant economic growth, a healthy economy, and sustainable jobs for our residents. It will allow this province to become part of the global economy. It will mean a bright future for our children. And I ask the members opposite for their input to allow businesses to grow, so we can build a valuable place in our Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had not initially planned on participating in the debate, but I'm fascinated by the comments from the members opposite.

I was particularly entertained by the member for Kelvington and her long explanation about sustainable jobs. And I have to take some heed of what she says. I think she, if anybody, would understand about the lack of sustainable jobs, if only because her job as a member of the official opposition is not sustainable either. Very soon she will be joining the ranks of the third party, sitting there in the little rump over on the side, if she's fortunate enough to get re-elected.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me return this debate to the substance of the motion put forward by my colleague from Shellbrook-Spiritwood. I think it's important that we understand the importance of export to our economy. And there was a long diatribe by the previous member about CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) and a variety of other things that really — I think at one point she was talking about health districts — that really didn't fit into the export issues.

I would encourage her to read the *Partnership for Growth* document, specifically point 18 regarding developing Saskatchewan's export potential. It says that by June 1996, we

would establish the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc. to provide exporting firms with research, with programs, intelligence services, training on export products, and export financing.

But it doesn't stop there. But it doesn't stop there. It goes on to say that we will:

... re-focus our efforts to encourage Saskatchewan companies to become export ready through the adoption of quality assurance principles and practices.

Very practical. Very practical. This is what the motion is about. The motion is about exports. The motion is about partnerships. The motion is about job creation. These are the sort of things that people should be talking about.

Now what we need to take a look at is partnerships, and the importance here. Let me just remind the member opposite, in case she's not aware, of the importance of our international merchandise trade.

Now the member for Thunder Creek likes to selectively quote out of a publication called *Sask Trends Monitor*. And I want to take a look at what this article says from a February 1996 issue. It says:

Preliminary 1995 data shows international merchandise exports at \$8.9 billion ... Compared with 1994, exports are up 16% ...

Exports are up 16 per cent under this government in one year alone. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is very positive and speaks well to the success of our initial document, *Partnership for Renewal*, and now our subsequent document, *Partnership for Growth*. And I'd say it goes further than that because we can see that our balance of trade has increased by a billion dollars over that one year alone — a 21 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, we can also see from what is stated here in *Sask Trends Monitor* of February, where it says that both the market destination and the commodity mix are clearly becoming more diversified ... In fact it's interesting to note that roughly half of our exports are to the U.S. (United States) while the other half of our international exports obviously go elsewhere in the world.

The importance of south-east Asia in particular to our economy, I think is growing. And it speaks well of the vision of many of the people throughout our province and many of the people in our research sector in particular, and in agriculture. *The Globe and Mail* on April 15 of this year put out a story under the title, "The Export Market: Success in Saskatchewan." And I think that the members would be well advised to take a read of the article if they get a chance.

The first paragraph simply says, and I quote:

When a farmer in Southeast Asia brings in the local veterinarian to inoculate his herd of cattle against infectious disease, he's completing the last step in the University of Saskatchewan's drive to sell its products to

the export market.

Here's a clear case where Saskatchewan people, our Saskatchewan institutions, our Saskatchewan-government-funded institutions, are providing real economic export and job opportunities.

The company at reference here in *The Globe and Mail* article is one that I'm quite familiar with — it's called biotech . . . or sorry, Biostar, and Biostar is a subsidiary of the Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization, or VIDO, which is sponsored up at the University of Saskatchewan out of its research park.

Now this is a clear example of where the government — and not just this government, but previous governments — have had the foresight to move forward. Now VIDO was established back in 1975 for this very purpose of moving technology from the microscope to the market-place. It's a good example of how we've been advancing this over the past 20 years.

(1530)

The biggest export market for VIDO is not only the U.S. and Europe but south-east Asia, and I think this speaks very importantly to the issues of why it's important to have our Minister of Agriculture over in south-east Asia promoting trade and export.

And I appreciated listening to the member for Kelvington-Wadena say that she'd be supporting the motion. I'm sure she'll stand in her place to do so later. But other Liberal members, I think, are also coming to finally understand the importance of this government's economic development initiatives.

I look here at a statement made to this Assembly only early last month by — I was going to call him the hon. member — by the member for Melfort before he shamed himself in this House today, and he goes on to say about Thomson Meats, that the president of Thomson Meats, quote, says:

The presence of both Agriculture ministers is extremely important because of the scare concerning mad cow disease.

He says that he can give potential international investors many assurances, but it really helps to have government officials reaffirming that Canadian beef has not been exposed to the devastating disease.

The member for Melfort goes on to say:

I would like to wish both ministers, and Mr. Thomson, all the best in their international trade mission. It's this kind of cooperation and partnership that can help turn around Saskatchewan's economy.

Now I don't know what happens in that opposition caucus because on the one hand, when they stand up to talk about what's happening in their riding, they recognize the strength of the partnerships that this government is promoting. When they stand in their constituency to talk about job growth they like to

take credit for it, and yet they know that a keen part of that is the *Partnership for Growth* document.

Yet they come into this House and they launch attacks on this government. They launch attacks on our programs. They launch attacks on our ministers. I guess it's simply duplicitous, simplistic politics. It simply reeks of hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker, we saw today what I think was a shameful event that all of us should be quite embarrassed for the member of Melfort of. In what many of us were initially led to believe was a spontaneous outburst of emotion and passion, he comes forward and says some very unparliamentary things in this House, shames himself, and is removed. Well it turns out later on, as we're looking at it, that as he's walking out of the House, as he's walking out of the House, lo and behold, his press officials are handing out statements saying exactly what had happened not 30 seconds before.

This sort of cynical system is just awful. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just think this is such an offence. I know many members will not have had this, so I'd like to lay this on the Table so that people can just see what level these Liberals will stoop to. If I may have a page I'll simply . . . Mr. Speaker, this is the sort of duplicity that we see coming forward.

The members opposite . . . and I look at the speech by the member from Kelvington-Wadena today who puts forward a . . . starts out by saying she'll be supporting the government and then proceeds through the remainder of her comments to attack the government.

I don't know what exactly this is except for some sort of duplicitousness on the part of the members opposite. They talk about partnerships, and yet when you take a look at where they stand, I read here about how they should . . . they lecture us at great length about how we should be forming real partnerships with business. Partnerships require us to talk with business. So my question is: where was the member for Thunder Creek?

I'm reading a *Leader-Post* article from the third month, 18th day, saying: "Crown Life slams Liberals":

In his letter released Monday, (it goes to say) Johnson (namely the CEO of Crown Life) accuses . . . (the member for Thunder Creek) of making "reckless comments" that have had a negative impact on Crown Life's business. The Crown Life president also says that . . . (that member's) continuing refusal to meet with him and other company officials "shows a wilful disregard for the interests of Crown Life, the people of Saskatchewan and . . . over 1,000 Crown Life employees who are Saskatchewan taxpayers."

Is that how the Liberals opposite would build partnerships? Is that how they would propose that they carry out business? By attacking businesses, by attacking working people, by ignoring them, by refusing to meet with them?

That may be the Liberal plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that is certainly not our plan. We have put forward a solid plan, in writing, as to how we'll build the partnerships. And here, as I

constantly see growing before me, hundreds of pages of good-news stories about job creation, hundreds of stories about economic development, hundreds of stories about businesses growing and becoming profitable and more sustainable in our province.

This trade mission that the Minister of Agriculture recently went on is a good example of this. Let me just read to you what the *Leader-Post* says:

Saskatchewan Agriculture minister is in Hong Kong where he met with officials of Tung Fong Hung, one of Asia's pharmaceuticals companies. The Hong Kong companies expressed an interest in setting up a plant to process elk antler velvet in Canada. And the minister pitched Saskatchewan as the location.

This is potentially a \$2 million opportunity for our province. Are the members opposite supportive? No. Are the members opposite encouraging the minister? No.

Mr. Speaker, it's not simply elk that's of interest. There is markets over there that we can tap in other ways. Let's look at South Korea. The Minister of Agriculture went over to deal with the South Korean government specifically on the issue of feed peas. As it turns out, Korea has some very prohibitive trade barriers and tariffs that are preventing us from selling our trade peas.

The minister's direct intervention is helping to bring the South Korean government with a better understanding of what the importance of this industry is, not only to Saskatchewan but what its potential benefits are to South Korea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I say, there are hundreds of pages of this, hundreds of examples of where this government's partnership approach is taking this province and how it is helping to create jobs, how it is helping to create export opportunities, and how it is helping to build business.

And the members opposite to wilfully ignore this, I think is shameful. It's shameful that the partisan tactics that they carried out today in this Assembly during question period . . . I think it also speaks to their contempt of the business community and their contempt for the cooperative spirit we're attempting to bring forward in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll take my seat by saying, I very strongly support the motion put forward by the member for Shellbrook-Spiritwood. I encourage all members to join with us in voting for it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives me pleasure to also rise this afternoon to speak a little bit on the . . . to enter this debate on trade and its importance to our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact it is fast becoming apparent that export trade is a Saskatchewan success story which now totals up to \$11 billion in annual income to the province, Mr. Speaker. Exports to the rest of Canada and international markets account for 50 per cent of the total gross

domestic product of our province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan now produces more products than it can consume. For that reason we're dependent on trade and to keep our economy going. Export markets are a necessary outlook for our grains, oilseeds, potash, crude oil, uranium, and our manufactured goods.

Saskatchewan's exports have diversified in recent years through increased trade in non-traditional areas, that is value added plants which now could total 27 per cent of our total exports. These products, Mr. Deputy Speaker, claimed 11 per cent of total exports just 10 years ago — a very significant increase.

In recent years, Saskatchewan exports have been subject to a variety of negative factors ranging from poor weather and unfair competition in certain markets . . . During the 1980s, international grain subsidy wars, Mr. Deputy Speaker, caused price reductions for cereal grains and fierce competition amongst exporting nations. At the same time, resource prices fell. These factors, combined with a high Canadian dollar, restrained our growth in exports.

In the last few years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, agricultural export subsidies have been scaled back and demand has increased. Demands and prices for other raw resources are also up. Accounting for inflation, Saskatchewan's exports have increased 46 per cent between 1984 and 1994.

The Saskatchewan Economic Development department, Mr. Speaker, has been proactive in promoting non-traditional products and developing export markets. Regions such as Africa, South America, and Oceania increased their overall consumption of Saskatchewan products during the 1990s.

Other regions such as eastern Europe and the Middle East have also changed their buying patterns to include more non-traditional exports. Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is committed to building a stronger export trade sector, both interprovincially and internationally.

Saskatchewan supports the Agreement on Internal Trade that was implemented by the provinces in 1995. The Agreement for Internal Trade is expected to reduce internal trade barriers within Canada and expand potential markets for Saskatchewan products. About 15 per cent of Saskatchewan's GDP (gross domestic product) is generated by exports to these other provinces.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan intends to take advantage of any opportunities under the North American Free Trade Agreement to secure markets for our products in North America. Saskatchewan exports to Mexico increased dramatically to 172 million in 1994. In the last seven years the value of Saskatchewan exports to the U.S. has doubled from 1.9 billion to over 3.8 billion. Overall Saskatchewan exports rose 30 per cent.

However, while North America remains Saskatchewan's largest market, the province continues to seek new opportunities for traditional and non-traditional exports to the rest of the world. The recently completed Uruguay round of multilateral trade

negotiations resulted in the World Trade Organization, which will replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade as the key international agreement governing international trade. The World Trade Organization holds the potential for key, significant improvements in trading conditions for Saskatchewan's agricultural producers.

Stronger rules against agricultural subsidies and higher prices for commodities are creating a more favourable business climate for our exporters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, trade missions such as the one undertaken by the Minister of Agriculture and Food and Saskatchewan businesses can only enhance and improve this ever growing sector of our economy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 3:43 p.m. until 3:44 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 25

Van Mulligen	Wiens	Shillington
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Upshall
Pringle	Koenker	Trew
Bradley	Cline	Stanger
Hamilton	Murray	Langford
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	Murrell	Thomson
Draude	Belanger	Bjornerud
Krawetz		

Nays — nil

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the vote was taken, the member for Rosetown-Biggar did not vote from his seat. In fact he voted from the seat of the Minister of Finance, and therefore I would submit that his vote should not be recorded.

The Deputy Speaker: — The point of order is well taken and the member's vote will be stricken from the record.

**Motion No. 2 — Northern Community
and Economic Development**

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to move the following motion:

That this Legislative Assembly condemn the government for neglecting northern Saskatchewan and, furthermore, for failing to provide any substantial initiatives and objectives to stimulate community and economic development in the northern regions of Saskatchewan.

The motion will be seconded by the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Speaker, what we classify as northern Saskatchewan

actually includes one-half of the land mass of Saskatchewan but only 3 per cent of the population. That's right — only 3 per cent of the population of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's a total of 34,000 people.

I know that that seems like an insignificant amount. Obviously the members opposite consider it an insignificant amount, judging by their lack of commitment to the people living there. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the members opposite that there is absolutely nothing insignificant about northern Saskatchewan people.

I want to tell the members opposite that their priorities are misplaced and that people in the North both need and deserve respect and a true commitment from this government. I know my words will be ignored today and I know that members opposite may heckle and they will spend so much time wrapped in political games that they will ignore what I have to say. Still I firmly believe that what I have to say is important and that it needs to be discussed in this legislature.

The members opposite can continue to ignore the issue, but it will be coming back. Because the people of the North are strong and their potential is absolutely unlimited. A strong government, a smart government, a different government may channel the time and resources into our North and help it grow and prosper.

Mr. Speaker, we have no choice but to throw up our arms in despair over what this government has done. They have yet to encourage economic growth on any front. Why should we expect them to be any different when it comes to the North? But, Mr. Speaker, we do expect them to be different. We expect them to work on behalf of Saskatchewan people — all Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

Because whether they realize it or not, they are elected to represent the concerns of their constituents. They are not sitting in those seats to show the utter lack of concern outlined in the NDP government policies. This government has lost touch with the people, and I think at least some of the members opposite know that. And I encourage them to take a stand. Talk to the Premier. Tell him that your constituents want a voice in how the province is run. That's your job.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that the voice of the people is lost in government bureaucracy, and nowhere is this more evident than in the communities of the North. You know what the saddest part is about this? The saddest part is that the government is ignoring input that could help our province flourish now and well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that only 3 per cent of the population lives in northern Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, what I didn't mention is that the demographics are changing. In the North, the population is growing by 5.5 per cent. Compare this to an overall provincial decline of 2 per cent. Times are changing, Mr. Speaker, and if this government continues to ignore northern Saskatchewan, they will pay for it in the long run.

Most of the members in the House can't begin to imagine the obstacles northern residents must overcome. We can't imagine

the widespread degree of poverty. Mr. Speaker, in the House a few weeks ago, I listened to the member from Athabasca talk about health care facilities in La Loche and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Mr. Speaker, I can't even begin to imagine the conditions of the La Loche hospital — ATCO trailers pushed together with leaking roofs, faulty wiring, the front door falling off.

Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite have any compassion whatsoever, the description of that hospital should have tugged at their heartstrings and at their very consciences. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder where the NDP government's conscience is. Do they even have one? I would like to think so, but with their lack of commitment to the North, I just can't say for sure.

Mr. Speaker, the saddest part of this government's inaction is that the children are the ones who will suffer the most. Fifty per cent of northern residents are under 20 years of age — 50 per cent of all northern people are under 20 years of age; 44 per cent are under the age of 15. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that every time the government ignores the North, they are ignoring the young people who need help the most. After all, it is our youth who will build our future. Don't they deserve more from the government?

Of course this government doesn't seem to have its priorities straight. That's become painfully obvious in the latest round of education cuts.

Today the Minister of Education announced their latest plan to structure our education system for the future. She announced the province-wide consultation process that will let the people have a say in how education is run. Forgive me for being cynical, but this government's history of consultation does not bode well for our children. Like the overhaul of our health system and like the utility rate increases, consultation on education could be sounding the death-knell.

Mr. Speaker, in the document released today by the minister, I note that she has indicated that this government has a commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of education of our young people, wherever they live in this province. That statement, Mr. Speaker, I think says it all for both northern and rural Saskatchewan.

When we look at the North, tremendously large area, a lot of difficulties as far as delivering a quality education program. And when we talk about changes, when we talk about restructuring, I'm not sure that we can be looking at of course amalgamation when we talk about the three school divisions that are in the North. The description given for the consultation document by the Minister of Education is this, and I quote. It says:

The purpose of this public consultation is to determine how we can best work together to structure our education system for the future, particularly in rural and northern Saskatchewan.

When we take into account a statement like that, Mr. Speaker, we note that of course all students require a quality education. It doesn't matter where they live. If they live in the North or if they live in rural Saskatchewan or if they live in our two largest

cities of Regina or Saskatoon, quality education must be maintained and in fact enhanced.

The document also goes on to state that:

Students in rural and northern divisions require the same full range of programs that are available in urban centres, particularly at the high school level.

That is a statement that is in the document that was released this morning, Mr. Speaker.

Minister has stated that there are options. But the underlying message of her announcement was that things would have to change no matter what people say. In other words, the government believes that fiscal restraint is more important than our children. Money is more important than our children. What kind of mixed up priority is that, Mr. Speaker? Our education is being carelessly shredded by a thoughtless, callous government, and education in the North is not escaping the vicious hacking of the NDP cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite may not realize that there are three K to 12 systems in the North. The provincial system runs 29 schools in northern communities and the federal system has 17 band-controlled schools. Mr. Speaker, of these 46 schools, only 14 offer grade 12 programing. There are communities that do not offer a complete kindergarten to grade 12 system.

And this is not the only fact that I find distressing. Mr. Speaker, the average high school completion rate for the North is 24 per cent. Over one-third of the entire northern population is considered functionally illiterate. That means they have an education level of less than grade 9.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the members opposite can explain to me what kind of government sits back and lets these numbers roll off their backs. What kind of government will stand up in this Assembly, day after day, and insist they are committed to education in the face of these facts? What kind of government can do this?

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that it is only an irresponsible, unfeeling government that can put political power over the well-being of the people. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what this government has done. With its drastic cuts to school boards, particularly in rural areas, this government has chosen politics over children. And I can't tell you how deeply these cuts will hurt our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members opposite know what kind of effect the lack of commitment to education has on northern communities. Education is one step in a cycle of poverty that is devastating northern Saskatchewan. Without education, young people are unable to find or to create meaningful work. This not only sinks them into the throes of economic poverty; they could also suffer irreparable damage to their self-esteem.

From this cycle of poverty and low self-esteem comes abuse, crime, violence, and poor health.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can pretend that education problems are an individual issue that they are dealing with properly. But I can assure them it is not a separate issue. Lack of education is merely one symptom of the government's overall scorn towards northern problems.

The cycle has to be looked at as an immense, deeply serious problem that must be addressed. The longer the government goes on pretending that the situation in the North is nothing but sunshine and roses, the deeper the cycle will get. Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the government to take action now.

(1600)

There are so many positive things that could and should be happening in the North. There's so much untapped potential that this government could and should capitalize on. Think about it. If this government would funnel the time, energy, and resources into northern education, they would be giving northern people a valuable tool to end the cycle of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe Northerners don't want to live off of government money. I think they want to build a lifestyle based on their own values and funded by their own economy. What they need from the NDP government are the basic tools to make this happen. It's time the government realized that quick fix solutions to patch up the holes are not good enough. The need to start building a solid structure from the ground up.

And there is no better place to start building than with the children. Mr. Speaker, I cannot impress enough how important education is, not only in northern Saskatchewan but throughout the province. I am completely appalled that this government doesn't feel the same way. And I cannot believe that they are not willing to invest in our children, in our future.

Mr. Speaker, school boards will start to feel the earth-shaking impact of government cuts to education over the next few years and they will have no choice but to cut back themselves. We have already started to see what the future of education holds if this government continues hell-bent on their proposed courses.

Schools are eliminating programs. Staff are being laid off. School weeks are being shortened. And the government likes to pretend that these are positive things.

Mr. Speaker, I don't see it that way. These are things that will negatively affect our children. I don't know whether the government deliberately put blinders on so that they could pretend nothing bad will come of their poorly laid plan. Maybe they don't want to see that far into the future. Maybe they hope that things will work out despite their bad choices. And maybe they just don't care.

Mr. Speaker, for all of the reasons I've just talked about, for all of the things the government is not doing for education in the North, for all the times the government has ignored needs of northern people, I must stand today and move that motion.

I encourage the members of this Assembly to vote from their consciences today and not from the standpoint of their political party. Don't listen to a government that continues to alienate

northern and rural Saskatchewan. Listen to the people you represent because I believe if the members opposite were to truly listen to those people, they would hear what we have been hearing all along. People matter. And when we celebrate the spirit of this province, we celebrate the successes of the people — all people, including those in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this legislature join me in condemning the government for failing to stimulate community and economic development for the people in the Saskatchewan's North. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I second the motion:

That this Assembly condemn the government for neglecting northern Saskatchewan and, furthermore, for failing to provide any substantial initiatives and objectives to stimulate community and economic development in the northern regions of Saskatchewan.

It's great that we finally have an opportunity to debate the neglect and low priority that this government has inflicted on northern Saskatchewan. When I travelled through these northern communities, I talked to hundreds and hundreds of people, and they tell me they are largely being ignored. Why, I ask? Because there's no direct funding for things like cultural development, local social development, or economic development.

Of all the government dollars that are controlled in northern Saskatchewan, the questions we have — what portion is under government control; what portion is under local control. Why is it that this government can find only \$4 million for northern development but it can find half a billion dollars for social services for the whole province. Really, I believe it's a question of priorities. Right now in northern Saskatchewan, this government's system of disincentive is terrible.

If you decide to get a job, you have to make at least 17 to \$18 an hour to make it pay. The cost of gas, the cost of utilities, the cost of food, the cost of clothing, and other essential services make it very expensive to live in northern Saskatchewan. Perhaps this government does not realize that there are about five main factors working against northern people besides their isolation. We're thinking of communities like Camsell Portage, Uranium City, Fond-du-Lac, Stony, Patuanak, Pinehouse, Black Lake, and so on and so forth.

But some of the systems in the North that really work against northern people, Mr. Speaker, is number one, the system of disincentives northern people have. Take for example the housing situation. The housing situation does not encourage people to go to work. Take for example some of the costs of living in northern Saskatchewan. It does not encourage people to continue to work. So really that's the number one priority in northern Saskatchewan is the system of disincentives that exist.

Number two, is northern people have little or no control over northern land and resources. Some of the problems we have is

we have no influence one mile past our municipal boundaries.

Number three, the Metis people of north-west Saskatchewan who are pretty well most of the population aside from the treaty people, are not respected constitutionally by both the federal and provincial governments.

Number four, this government is not making any effort to look at the community development scenario.

And finally, number five, northern people have not been allowed to develop the capacity to self-govern. These are some of the few restrictions, Mr. Speaker, that the people face.

In addition, the business community in northern Saskatchewan, they have many challenges on their own. The business community is basically non-existent. The training, management, and skill development of business and expertise are not coordinated. The problems facing northern Saskatchewan are multidimensional. To tackle these problems, this government must also take a multidimensional approach to help foster community development.

When I speak about community development, I want the government to examine the dynamics of each and every single community of northern Saskatchewan. This government must carefully look at the housing demands and how the lack of housing affects the economy; of how the costs of social housing, this affects the economy. This government must also consider the welfare situation and how that affects the creation of a local economy as well. The lack of training dollars and the ad hoc approach to training, negatively impacts on the skill level of local people and therefore the economy as a whole.

Northern Saskatchewan does not need different consideration from southern Saskatchewan. In southern Saskatchewan, the population is ageing which requires different health and transportation needs, etc. It is the exact opposite in the North, where there's a tremendous amount of young people. In fact, 55 to 60 per cent of the population in northern Saskatchewan is under the age of 24. These are dynamic, energetic youth who want to contribute to their community and to their own lives.

Because northern Saskatchewan is such a young demographic area, the planning at the local level in northern Saskatchewan must provide stimulating development, which is in dire need right now. In fact, there was a need 10, 15, 20 years ago. If this does not happen soon, we'll begin to see an increase in the amount of social problems, such as alcohol and drug abuse, family breakdown, violence, and the list goes on and on. The government has a role to play in combating this type of abuse.

I ask every member of this House in the government, to contemplate very, very carefully what type of impact will there be if northern Saskatchewan continues to be ignored and these issues continue to be not addressed. The neglect of northern Saskatchewan has gone on long enough. Now it is time to start initiating a very comprehensive economic and social development strategy for each and every community in northern Saskatchewan. We will save a generation if we act now.

I have said time and time again that while government and

corporations continue to reap northern resources for profit, not very many of those dollars are reinvested in northern communities. You and I can start now to reverse this trend. I ask you to look at the conditions in the North that will continue if we don't work with the whole community — the people, the governments, and the corporations.

Mr. Speaker, all these people want is more local input and control over their program dollars currently spent by the province in northern communities. For example, we look at the various community . . . La Loche, for example, there's a study done many years ago that says the government invests or pumps in 16 to \$8 million per year into that community. That money is used for social services and for housing, for health and education. Now if you take at least 10 to 15 years that this has been going on, that adds up to maybe 180 to \$210 million pumped into this particular community.

Why is it then, can't this community of 3,000 people develop a prospering economy? Why is it this same community continues to have problems time after time — and every single community, Mr. Speaker. Northern Saskatchewan communities are tired of the negative image that they portray to the rest of this province. We are all asking the simple question, is why doesn't the government take time to answer and take time to consult and take time to sit down with us so they can together plan a better way?

The simple fact is that this government is making no effort whatsoever to look at the community development scenario. The government is not showing these people how they can control and access this revenue to develop their own future. I have heard from several government members that this government's agenda is to prepare for the 21st century.

It's high time that this government sincerely implement new ways to include northern Saskatchewan in its plans for the future of this province. Northern Saskatchewan and its people are part of Saskatchewan so let's start treating them as part of Saskatchewan.

Right now most northern communities are in limbo. Many of their residents are aboriginal, as well as non-aboriginal. And basically they get very little recognition for where they live, but they are considered more for what type of funding category that they qualify for.

If we look at the millions and millions of dollars that some people complain the government is wasting on Social Services and Justice, we can surmise that the system is not working as best as it should. It's time for the government again to examine the current community development model. We all must make a conscious effort to work towards a model needed for the 21st century to redesign the whole system, if you will. If we don't, Mr. Speaker, we'll have another lost generation of young Northerners that will look to us and at you with suspicion and regret.

Some of the examples, Mr. Speaker, of how northern Saskatchewan can indeed rise to the challenge is a small community of 40 people in the far North area. It's a community called Camsell Portage. Again, Camsell Portage has a

population of 40 people and they have something like \$170,000 in savings from over the years as a small municipal government. And each year, Mr. Speaker, they get a grand total of \$40,000 — an operating budget of \$40,000 — and these guys have saved this type of money for year after year after year.

This is, of course, an incredible amount of money for a community of that size. And my point again is that they are obviously able to handle money well.

But what is the next step? Can they reinvest that money to something stimulating that will generate more revenue and more opportunity for that community to fit their needs. The fact of the matter is, no there isn't. There isn't any effort. There isn't any super plan. There is no grand strategy for northern Saskatchewan. And it's time that we all realized that, and time that we realized that if we don't have a grand strategy, problems will continue on and on and on and on.

(1615)

The fact of the matter is we need more communities like Camsell Portage that are able to manage their money. But let's go to the next level of community development. Let's look at the whole picture. And again I go back to the point, unless and until we develop a plan — a super scenario in which all the communities can participate equally in — problems will continue to persist.

Look at a number of other communities like Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Beauval. They have no way of raising any extra revenues except through its tax base. The town council has a limited role. The question we have is why is that? Why haven't these communities been recognized for their extra challenges that they have in developing an economy. Many people feel that the provincial government is limiting northern Saskatchewan people's abilities and their potential by not having anything to design in cooperation with them, so they can come to the next step of developing their own economies and looking after social issues.

Saskatchewan could lead the way with a very exciting provincial program that could be applied right across the province. In fact this could be applied right across the country. This scenario would involve community development; would involve recycling current welfare dollars; and would involve drafting up a plan over time.

Northern people are not asking for huge amounts of money but rather fair access to resources, fair treatment, and above all else, respect. They want fair dollars normally committed to a certain region to allow the communities to do what they can for themselves.

Many northern Indian bands have proven they are able to do things for themselves, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's time that we extend that opportunity to many of the smaller communities who consist primarily of Metis people. And I think if you allow the opportunity for northern people to prove what they can do, you will see that they can indeed deliver. And Camsell Portage — again I'm going back to that point — is another fine example.

A lot of the programs that have been discussed for northern Saskatchewan over the years have been ignored. Take for example revenue sharing. La Roche's hospital — if the government can find millions of dollars to maintain Crown Life jobs or to poach jobs from Intercon meat packing plant, why does this government only provide \$4 million for northern development fund for all communities in northern Saskatchewan? We talk about 32,000 people — \$4 million, Mr. Speaker, this does not do anything. I think \$4 million is what one community needs to develop the infrastructure and the capacity to really become part of this province.

I feel it is because this government does not have the commitment to northern Saskatchewan. The government does not have a desire to see northern communities create their own economy so that they can become self-sufficient. We don't want to come running back to the government every time I need something, Mr. Speaker. We want to be able to design our own future, and all we ask is for control and fair access to northern resources that are in our backyards.

There has to be a concerted effort by this government to begin to base development of the northern economy on the renewable resource industries, not just the non, which of course are mining for uranium, gold, and diamonds. These things are mined out after 40 or 50 years. And are we to be left behind with big empty holes and no promise?

The northern people are asking for a simple thing of revenue sharing so that we can develop industries that we are familiar with such as forestry, fishing, tourism, communication, agriculture, transportation, and the list goes on and on and on.

I cannot do justice to the amount of ideas and the intelligence that northern people have when it comes to economies of this nature, so I won't elaborate any further. But these are just a few of the examples, Mr. Speaker, of what the northern people can do to help themselves.

This economy must be community based, community designed, and community driven, and the people tell us this over and over and over.

Again for the community development plan to be successful, the government must also look at regional development. It must consider transferring over control of social services, of housing, of justice, of many things to northern communities. It must look at direct funding for local, sustainable development agencies.

It must look at development of communities' infrastructure; basic things like roads; basic things like natural gas; like medical service. We haven't got those opportunities or those services available to us, Mr. Speaker. The big thing is that northern Saskatchewan people don't have that control.

As well we look at outside the municipal boundaries which many Metis communities operate under, the municipal structure. It does not have legislative co-management ability on the land and the resources of forestry and fishing and so on, so forth. So really we must start to be getting serious when we look at co-management of land and all the resources. This

multidimensional approach to the complex problems facing northern communities would hopefully promote self-sufficiency.

And again I go back to the municipal model, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the old situation over the last 10, 15, 20 years, the municipalities in northern Saskatchewan, such as Camsell Portage, have proven that they are able to manage money in a good way; and secondly, that they are able to operate within systems that government put upon them as long as they have control and as long as they have decision-making ability.

The government must really begin to start developing these small northern communities. They must start defending these small northern communities, and they must start promoting these small northern communities. Above all else, Mr. Speaker, the government must initiate a new community development process for all people of all the region to have a say. Our young people need to be challenged; they deserve no less. And I think as long as we continue to ignore them, we are asking for many, many problems.

This government has always and has most recently been boasting about its consultation. Why then are we seeing reoccurring problems happening in northern Saskatchewan? The statistics everybody is aware of in this House. We talk about the crime rate. We talk about the unemployment rate. We talk about the social problem rate. These facts have been consistent for many, many years — the health problems and the housing problems and the road problems. These things have not surfaced overnight; they've been going on for 10, 15, 20 years.

And yet when we talk about these things, they say well, we've consulted. Basically most of the consultations that they have taken or have been under way at this time and in the past are being taken for government's purposes. But it's not really meant to gather input and consultation and true participation from northern people.

Up until now, sincere and valuable consultations had not taken place. The government is not listening to these people's ideas relating to community development or developing a capacity for these communities to take over their social services system, their housing, and the proper medical services. Mr. Speaker, the government does not want to listen to plans that will allow northern communities to train their people at their own will. This government has never had any of that type of valuable consultation. This agenda must stop. We must go back, and we must listen to what the northern communities have been saying to us for years and years and years.

The people in the North are their own answers. The Indian bands throughout northern Saskatchewan and some in my very constituency have done very well. They've done very well basically because they have helped themselves. They were given control over their resources, control over their system, and they've done well, not because of this particular government's support but because they have the drive and the initiative to do so.

On the flip side in northern Saskatchewan, we have

communities . . . a community of Metis people and a community of non-aboriginal people. They would like the same opportunity. And again, I go back to the Metis situation. They're being kicked back and forth between the federal and provincial governments when we talk about whose constitutional obligation are the Metis people. So in the meantime life continues as we go along. These northern communities have not changed over time.

Mr. Speaker, northern Saskatchewan is just entering a brand-new era. When this government talks about its consultation with northern people, it's simply talking about the development of our northern resources without our involvement and with very limited benefit nor control to us.

Government should be talking about community development in its very fine sense. This is a provincial jurisdiction; this is a provincial matter; these are provincial Saskatchewan people; these are provincial Saskatchewan communities. So if you don't want to deal with it on a Metis agenda, then at the very least get your compassion going and start dealing with it on a community development sense. Because there and only there can we really say that we're committed to northern Saskatchewan.

So we can start seeing some of the social problems decrease. We can start seeing the unemployment rate decrease. We can start seeing the housing demand problems decrease. We can start seeing the medical problems and medical services decreased, and the list goes on and on. We cannot continue to sustain the madness that's happening in northern Saskatchewan.

In closing, the government could improve on its dismal record in the North by starting to take up some of the initiatives I've outlined. This will only help northern Saskatchewan people make northern Saskatchewan a better place to live and grow for future generations.

I don't say it for my grandfather, I don't say it for my father, and I don't say it for myself, Mr. Speaker; I say it for my children and the many other children that walk the streets of La Loche or Buffalo Narrows, of Dillon, of Camsell Portage, and the many people that have childhood dreams that may never be realized if we don't start this process now.

So I urge the government to stop ignoring northern Saskatchewan and start building northern Saskatchewan alongside the people. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I listened to the member from Canora-Pelly and the member from Athabasca, I think nothing could be further from the truth. And I will be moving an amendment, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks that — and I will just read it for you — that will go as follows:

delete all the words after "Assembly" and in its place insert the following words:

affirm its support for the people of northern Saskatchewan who, together with the government, have been working to

create new opportunities for job creation and community development.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to . . . or Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should say, I'd like to refer to a . . . I could go on here for probably two or three hours with all the things that we have done, but I'd like to refer to a number of the things that we have done, only highlighting on a few.

I'll begin by referring to the La Ronge Health care centre that was opened not too long ago, I believe, in the . . . several weeks ago, and it was a culmination of years of effort, Mr. Speaker, by many people. The grand opening was attended by chiefs and mayors from across the North. It had local sponsors and volunteers. There were corporate sponsors and certainly the La Ronge and area residents — truly a full community effort.

The La Ronge Health Centre will offer a wide range of integrated services including home care, Mr. Speaker, public health, health education, mental health counselling, alcohol and drug recovery, speech and language pathology, dental health, early childhood intervention, a resource centre, a holistic healing room, as well as acute care and long-term care.

The Health Centre's holistic healing room recognizes the uniqueness, Mr. Speaker, of the region and an approach to health that focuses on the healing body . . . on healing the body, mind, and spirit. This is a \$14 million project, Mr. Speaker, including 9 million from the provincial government. I think this is very good news for northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The Komis gold mine project is going to create northern jobs. It's owned by the Golden Rule Resources Ltd. of Calgary and is located 170 kilometres north of La Ronge near Brabant Lake. The mine will be operated by Waddy Lake Resources Incorporated, a wholly owned subsidiary of Golden Rule. When operational the mine and processing mill will employ about 100 Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, many of them northern people. As a result of the agreements Northerners will receive every possible opportunity for employment on the project, including training if needed.

Mr. Speaker, estimated capital expenditures for the project are \$8.5 million with estimated annual operating expenses of 15.6 million. A monthly payroll for direct and contract employees is expected to be about \$440,000, Mr. Speaker. That's a phenomenal amount of money being put into northern Saskatchewan.

The mining industry, which employees currently 5,600 people and generates millions in dollars of revenue annually, has been identified under the province's economic development strategy, the *Partnership For Growth* paper, and it is one of the keys to sustaining economic growth. The Komis mine demonstrates our government's commitment to capitalize on the opportunities outlined in that *Partnership For Growth* paper.

And again, Mr. Speaker, this is another clear indication, an example, of how our government is working in partnership with industry to create jobs in northern Saskatchewan.

I referred to as well, Mr. Speaker, the implementation of the

province-wide 911 system. This will ensure that all residents, including — and maybe I should say more especially, most especially — Northerners, will have a common access to emergency and protective services. This Bill is an important step in the process to secure 911 services throughout the province by providing an opportunity for municipalities and emergency service providers to work together in the delivery of the 911 service. It seems to me that where distances are great and the population is sparse, this 911 service makes a whole lot of sense and will aid northern Saskatchewan immensely.

(1630)

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the aboriginal tourism strategy. Saskatchewan's *Partnership for Growth* economic strategy identified aboriginal tourism as a key target for growth within our tourism sector. This aboriginal tourism development strategy is an extremely good starting point. It contains an extensive inventory of new or expanded tourism attractions and products, highlighting aboriginal culture and offering exciting opportunities for aboriginal economic development and certainly for job creation.

The opportunity for Northerners include development of parks and heritage sites, museums and galleries, crafts, the performing arts, guided hunting and fishing trips, and certainly many wilderness tours. And I know, Mr. Speaker. I've spent a lot of time personally up in that area, having grown up in there and certainly even further north, travelling and trapping with my father along the Waterhen River and canoeing further into the North along the Churchill River. And it is phenomenal country, I should say, to see and to appreciate and enjoy.

And further, the Saskatchewan's aboriginal people will be able to use this study that I referred to earlier to develop specific plans for the tourism projects that they'd like to start or expand. And we the government will work with them to help implement those plans.

There is growing interest in aboriginal tourism especially among people from Germany and the United Kingdom and from France. Developing our aboriginal tourism industry will increase the number of visitors who come to, especially, northern Saskatchewan.

There will also be spin-off benefits for the rest of the province's tourism industry and for our economy as a whole, Mr. Speaker. I think this is great news for northern Saskatchewan, and still more proof that this government is committed to development in the North, Mr. Speaker.

Closer to my home, Mr. Speaker, the province and village of Green Lake signed a wood supply agreement which guarantees a long-term wood supply for the Green Lake saw mill. Under the terms of the wood supply agreement, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management guarantees to the Green Lake saw mill an annual wood allocation of 30,000 cubic metres for the next 20 years, renewable every 5 years.

This supply will be made available from the NorSask and Weyerhaeuser Forest Management Licensing Agreement areas and other Crown lands. And if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, I

do believe that I heard the member from Athabasca in a private members' statement even alluding to this and complimenting all of the people from the area about the good work that they had done. So it's a bit ironic that he now stands up and chastises our government.

Further, Mr. Speaker, in regards to this agreement, what it does is provides a secure wood supply and that is very good news, not only for those who are making their living directly from the mill's activities but certainly for the community as a whole.

The mayor of Green Lake, Fred McCallum, says that this agreement brings us closer to our shared goals of local economic opportunities and a healthy forest. The harvesting and saw mill operations of the Green Lake saw mill together contribute about 50 jobs, Mr. Speaker, 50 jobs to the local economy.

I don't know why we would want to condemn our government for wanting to help create jobs in northern Saskatchewan up where I live, Mr. Speaker. And here's another one, Mr. Speaker. It refers to the remote housing program. You know, Mr. Speaker, that often — and again the member from Athabasca referred to this — often Northerners live in dwellings that are severely overcrowded and lack basic services such as water and sewer. The province was therefore pleased to work with the federal government and the community to develop the remote housing program.

In this pilot project, clients, families, and friends work together to build homes. This is proof that Northerners are taking a leadership role in developing solutions to community concerns. Northerners have little opportunity to address their housing needs as there is a severe shortage of housing and virtually no private market.

Saskatchewan Municipal Government housing division is cost-sharing the remote housing program delivery on a 75/25 per cent federal-provincial basis. The province is responsible for coordination and supervision of the entire project. Yet another clear sign that our government is committed to working with communities in northern Saskatchewan.

And still closer to home, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to the joint venture agreement that was signed with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. It was announced that the signing . . . The Meadow Lake Tribal Council, I should say, announced the signing of a joint venture agreement between the tribal council and the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua.

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council is made up of nine first nation bands from throughout the north part of the province. And I think the tribal council speaks to the concerns of the majority of first nations people, certainly within that tribal council and that organization.

The agreement is a commitment to study the feasibility of developing joint venture opportunities involving forestry, mining and minerals, oil and natural gas. This is the first international agreement for a Saskatchewan first nations organization. Again, Mr. Speaker, wonderfully good news for northern Saskatchewan, and a real opportunity for yet more job

creation in the North.

The tribal council is a major shareholder in NorSask Forest Products and is a major employer in that industry as well as in other areas in our community. And it is in that vein that I want to refer to a book that has just been published. I circulated it around to many of the caucus members. And I just want to speak briefly about that, if I could. And it ties in with the amendment and the motion that's here before the House today.

And I want to quote briefly from that story. It's called *The NorSask Forest Story*. I think it's very apt . . . I think the quote very aptly summarizes what is the focus of the book — the communities and people working in harmony with each other and the entire ecosystem.

And in the introduction, Mr. Speaker, there is . . . It starts like this. It says, "The Cree word from which our word 'Saskatchewan' comes means swift-flowing water."

This is a good description of our province since Saskatchewan contains about 13,725 square miles of fresh water — more than any other province in Canada. Over half of Saskatchewan is forest, and most of the lakes, rivers, and streams lie within its northern forest boundaries, Mr. Speaker.

The subject of the story is an area of about 3 million hectares of Crown land located in north-western Saskatchewan. From its location, the area takes the name of NorSask. For approximately 8,000 years the forest has been a great source of fish, fur, and game for northern people. It is only in most recent times that the northern forest has been valued as a source of goods for trade and sale. Today it is also valued as a source of timber, and currently the forest is being explored for oil and gas.

But forest is more than trees, Mr. Speaker, more than a listing of things. For an understanding of the NorSask forest and the kind of forest management the first nations and Metis people want, we turn to the words of the elders . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McPherson: — Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — What is your point of order?

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, some time ago there was a ruling by yourself in the House about members reading directly from material such as books. And I'd like your ruling on the member; for some time he's been reading directly from printed material which is not a speech, but in fact a book. And I would like your ruling on that member's actions.

The Deputy Speaker: — I have noticed that the member has been reading, but has not been reading for that long a time, and I do not . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Order, order. I don't think that the member has been reading from the book for that long a time and I will let him continue with caution.

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to quote. I do want to take one quote from out of here that, as I referred to

earlier, the first nations and Metis people . . . and it's the words of the elders. It goes like this: "The way of the people is respect for the wonder of creation." And these words I think, Mr. Speaker, invite all people who have made the North for their homeland to respect creation and to respect each other. And one other quote that I do want to take out of the text here that I think summarizes everything that I wanted to say, it says that "All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful, the Creator made them all."

And it is in that vein, Mr. Speaker, that I read from this . . . that I quote from this text, I should say . . . and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, as I said earlier when I was referring to this text, this summarizes what they are trying to do in working with northern people.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, the people in the North are really genuinely moving ahead, perhaps quicker than some people in this Assembly know, or perhaps quicker than some people in the province even want them to move ahead.

And I think it's a sure sign of success when you see an organization like the tribal council from Meadow Lake and creating jobs on their own. And they certainly have to be commended for that, Mr. Speaker. They have truly been very progressive. And I think that this story is a testament to the pride of the tribal council and the partners in NorSask and Mistik Management.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I have just several more issues that I want refer to that will highlight some of the things that have actually taken place in northern Saskatchewan.

This government certainly continues to place a strong emphasis on both the community and the economic development in northern Saskatchewan, and we are providing the necessary infrastructure which in turn provides solid foundation for economic growth in the North. We have established a long-term agreement with Cameco Corporation and COGEMA Resources Incorporated for them to make 10 to \$25 million in a safety and efficiency improvements to Highways 102 and 905 between La Ronge and points north over the next number of years as new mining developments occur. Communities benefit along with the mining companies, not to mention Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Further reflecting this government's emphasis on partnership approaches as the way to go, construction on schedule for a new . . . construction is on schedule, I should say, for a new \$6 million bridge at Cumberland House, which I know the member from Cumberland is very proud, to be funded equally by the province, the federal government and the local Cumberland House Development Corporation. This new bridge, to be completed in September 1996, is already providing construction jobs for local residents through a \$400,000 contract with the local development corporation for development of associated roads and approaches and will provide a year-round link for 1,350 residents, Mr. Speaker, of the isolated community, when completed.

As well, and still on the subject of partnership approach, agreement has been reached with federal agencies and the Prince Albert Grand Council on a cost-shared construction of a

new \$8 million seasonal road to link and to provide access to the Athabasca communities of Black Lake, Stony Rapids, and Fond-du-Lac. The Prince Albert Grand Council is in the process of establishing a road maintenance corporation that would be able to deliver road maintenance contracts related to this, and possibly other similar projects, Mr. Speaker.

The list of recent infrastructure investments supporting strength and economic development in the North certainly continues. Fond-du-Lac airstrip improvements in 1995, Mr. Speaker, are worth 550,000. The long-term upgrading of Highway 965 between Beauval and Cole Bay under the NorSask Forest Management Licensing Agreement also commenced in 1995.

Here are many, many other projects and developments that this government has worked on and worked with in harmony with people and communities in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I could go on at some length. But I will now officially move, seconded by the member from Lloydminster, the amendment. And I will read the amendment into the record, Mr. Speaker. The amendment is as follows:

That all the words be deleted after the word "Assembly" and substitute the following therewith:

"affirm its support for the people of northern Saskatchewan who, together with the government, have been working to create new opportunities for job creation and community development."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1645)

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I would also like to speak on the motion put forward by the member from Canora-Pelly.

Like my colleagues, I feel that the issues facing northern people are too serious to be casually dismissed by this NDP government or for the members opposite to try to camouflage by quoting poetry from a book.

As elected representatives for all people in Saskatchewan, it is our responsibility to speak up and encourage meaningful discussion to facilitate changes. This is particularly important when talking about our northern residents whose voice in this House is limited by the government's neglect of northern and rural issues.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have already touched on some of the countless challenges facing northern Saskatchewan, and they have talked about a lack of commitment to northern people by this NDP government. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the term "lack of commitment" even begins to cover this government's attitude towards northern people. Apathy might be a better term. If this government really cares about people living in northern communities, why have they turned away from the profound problems facing these communities?

Mr. Speaker, maybe the members opposite can tell me why the unemployment rate in the North remains three times as high as the provincial rate and why male workers earn only 53 per cent

of their southern counterparts. There is no doubt that the unemployment in this province is high throughout the province. And with this government's lacklustre record of job creation, we know that unemployment is a problem in the South too. But, Mr. Speaker, the facts show that it is even worse in the North.

The Minister of Economic Development, the Premier, and the Minister of Northern Affairs have done virtually nothing to help. In fact when we look at the endless number of problems facing the North, we can only conclude that none of the ministers in this government nor the Premier have taken assertive steps towards helping the North. Yes, we will see them stand up in this House and protest this, and we will hear them declaring a burning commitment to help change things in the North. But actions, Mr. Speaker, speak louder than words. And in this case of this government, inaction has spoken — has spoken volumes.

This government's inaction has perpetuated the poorest-of-the-poor syndrome in the North. Mr. Speaker, the member from Canora-Pelly touched on the cycle of poverty that has gripped so many northern residents. This cycle of poverty has created a ripple effect that has engulfed entire communities.

Instead of feigning ignorance and making half-hearted promises, this government should create viable plans that will help Northerners fight to escape this cycle. These people want freedom, freedom from their struggle so that they are able to use their talents to build their communities.

Perhaps the members opposite are not fully aware of what this means and what this struggle is about. Do they know, for instance, that the rate of homicides in the North is four times higher than the general population rate? Do they know that the suicide-death rate for Northerners aged 15 to 34 is twice the provincial rate? Do they realize that alcohol- and drug-related abuse is rated five times higher there than in the province as a whole? And, Mr. Speaker, these kind of statistics are just the tip of the iceberg.

If we look at the indicators of social health, we see that the government's apathy has caused the problems to grow. We are now seeing second and third generations coping with the same problems that have continued to plague the North for years.

For example, let's look at emotional and mental health. People in northern communities rank mental illness, along with alcohol and drug abuse, as the leading health problems. And these people also show higher rates of anxiety and depression. But, Mr. Speaker, they have the lowest use of provincial mental health clinics. This does not mean those are avoiding health. What it means is that this government has not provided adequate facilities for these people to receive care.

Sadly though, this government refuses to take any responsibility. They refuse to look at the problem realistically and to provide valid and workable solutions. And what about problems like the rates of teenage pregnancies that are three times as high as in the South? What about the high number of single mothers living in poverty? In Saskatchewan in total 11 per cent of families are single-parent families. But in the North, this figure jumps to 22 per cent. When we take into account a

recent estimate that 65 per cent of children living in poverty are from single-parent families, this number becomes even more alarming. Obviously the government's solutions are not working.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite may consider the discussion paper on redesigning social services to be a viable answer, but the proposals outlined in this paper are like throwing a glass of water on a raging forest fire. It's the right thought, but what does it really accomplish? Mr. Speaker, I applaud the government's effort to address issues facing people living in poverty. Unfortunately I can't applaud the results. Not only does the discussion paper ignore the facts that northern people face unique challenges; it ignores the fact that the welfare roles are higher. Education levels are lower, and facilities are sadly lacking in northern Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, if they haven't adequately addressed the problem, how can they find a solution? Mr. Speaker, in 1987 when the NDP was in opposition, they also advocated for the expansion of preventative services in the North. At that time, they insisted that social assistance allowances should take into account the higher cost of living. Well it's almost 10 years later, and I find it hard to believe that the members opposite are from that same party. I guess compassion died when the present government decided to take a right-wing, anti-socialist path.

I wonder how many of the members sitting opposite me today still have the roots of compassion in their hearts. I wonder how many of them would like to speak out but are afraid of feeling the wrath of the Premier and his cabinet. Mr. Speaker, I am not advocating the same policies . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The Speaker is having some problems hearing the speech. Now would the members come to order.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I am not advocating the same policies that the NDP government of the past talked about. I just wanted to point out how this government has failed to hold true to its word. And believe me, this comes as no surprise to anyone. The government strategy is to make as many promises to as many people as they can without really caring if those promises can be kept or not.

A perfect case in point is the Premier's statement last week. The Premier admitted that his 1991 election campaign included a promise to eliminate child poverty. Then, in speaking with the media, he said that was a promise he made but he did not know if it could be kept. I guess this is what the NDP considers a promise. The rest of the world considers it political arrogance. So now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised that this government had no qualms about reneging on its words.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the answer to the problems in the North reaches far beyond this government's limited vision. They are looking at solutions slapped together with a minimum of thought and energy. They are not looking to the root of the problem, and that is exactly where they will find the answers.

Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues pointed out, the answer is to end the poverty and to create an environment for economic

opportunity in northern communities. And that means comprehensive, realistic plans that come from and will work for northern residents.

It is my understanding that the people of the North don't want the government's pity, and they most certainly don't want to be patronized. They want systems put in place that will help them start building on the roots of their culture and of their unique heritage. That is what the government should be looking for.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the government wants to ignore what my colleagues and I have been saying today. But by ignoring this, they are ignoring a vast problem that is continuing to grow. We brought this motion forward, Mr. Speaker, because it is a problem that hits deep at the heart of our province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are compassionate. They care about each other, and they care about the future of all members of our province. Our very culture has been built on cooperation and caring. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to see that destroyed by a careless government so intensely focused on its own priorities that it forgets to put people first. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to support the motion proposed by the member from Canora-Pelly, and I would encourage all members to carefully consider how important northern Saskatchewan is to all of us and offer their support as well. Thank you.

Amendment agreed to on division.

Motion as amended agreed to on division.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:56 p.m.