The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about 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 the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The names on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Vibank, Kronau, and Montmartre. Thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of names of concerned citizens from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre closure. 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 names on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Yellow Grass and Regina. I so present.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are from Pelly, Gravelbourg, Grenfell, Redvers, Ogema, and a number from Regina.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. The petition reads:

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

The signatures on the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from 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 that have signed this petition are all from Regina.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today as well to present a petition from the people of southern 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 the decision to close the Plains Health Centre.

This petition is signed by the residents of Regina Beach, and as well from the city of Regina.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present petitions of names 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 centres such White City, Balgonie, Edenwold. We have Pilot Butte on here, Odessa, Kipling, as well as a number from the city of Regina. I so present.

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

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

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina. They're from Biggar. They're from Abbey. They're from all throughout Saskatchewan. I so present. Thank you.

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.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

> To the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation, provide a list of the following: (1) all Crown projects contracted pursuant to the terms of the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement in the past year, and the cost of each contract; (2) all Crown projects contracted outside the terms of the Crown Construction Tendering

Agreement in the past year, and the cost of each contract.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 56 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat regarding the employment of first nations people in the public sector: (1) how many first nations people are employed by the Government of Saskatchewan; (2) could you please provide a breakdown of the department, sectors, and Crown corporations in which these people work?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and to the other members of the Assembly, 54 grade 5 students from McLurg School in the constituency of Regina Sherwood. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Carol Grant and Verna Taylor. They'll be here in question period until 2 o'clock and then going for a tour of the building, after which time I'll be joining them for a question and answer period. And I'd like you to join with me to welcome them all here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members, a group of 52 students who are seated in your gallery. These students are in grades 4 and 5 at St. Augustine School in the constituency of Regina Victoria.

They are accompanied here today by their teachers, Mr. Doug Devernichuk and Mrs. Edith Seiferling. And I can tell you from a recent visit to the school and meeting with these students and judging from their good information about the legislative process and their excellent questions, Saskatchewan's future is in good hands. And I look forward to meeting with them later. I would ask all the members to join with me to welcome these students here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Child Care Week

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to offer recognition of this week's designation as Child Care Week in Saskatchewan.

The importance of child care workers in our society cannot be overlooked because they are helping to mould Saskatchewan's future. Thousands of Saskatchewan mothers and fathers go to work every day, leaving their children in the hands of care-givers. These child care workers are trusted to keep the children safe, to encourage and enhance the personal growth of each child in meaningful ways.

Many Saskatchewan child care associations are seeking support in their efforts to establish accessible yet affordable child care. We salute their efforts for the job that they do every day when they provide care for Saskatchewan's children. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the week of May 12 to the 18 has been proclaimed Child Care Week in Saskatchewan. As part of that week, Tuesday, today, May 14, has been proclaimed Care-giver Appreciation Day.

Affordable, high quality, and reliable child care is a critical necessity today for most parents including both of my daughters. Some parents choose day care for their children believing the presence of motivated and trained child care staff to be beneficial to their child's well-being. Others prefer the more home-like atmosphere of licensed day care homes or private babysitters.

Because we recognize a very important role played by trained and knowledgeable, front-line staff, we allocated $500,000 in the recent budget to improve wages for child day care workers across the province. Subsidies are available to qualifying working or student parents who place their children in licensed day care homes or day care centres.

Because quality child care is so important, I encourage parents throughout the province to take a few moments on Care-giver Appreciation Day or at some point during Child Care Week to express their appreciation to those who care for their children. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Endeavour Archery Club

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have recognized many sporting groups during the past few months. Today I would like to recognize the Endeavour School Archery Club. It successfully competed in their first Saskatchewan Junior Olympic Provincial Tournament in Martensville.

This club was formed in January, 1996 by Rod Steciuk, principal of Endeavour School. These enthusiastic archers met Tuesday and Thursday after school to practice.

Craig Galiz took first place in a competition in junior bowmen; while fellow teammates Evan Steppan took fourth place, and Jonathan Belesky took sixth, and Kyla Dolton was seventh. Selene Dolton placed seventh in the yeoman class.

In the class of bowmen 12 and over, Gordon Steppan came in second and Derrick Palagian came in fourth. Clinton Belesky competed in the Olympian class.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the members of the archery club and their coach for their success at the Saskatchewan Junior Olympic Provincial Tournament.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Care-givers

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the other members of this Assembly who have

recognized Child Care Week and certainly extend a hand on behalf of our caucus to each and every one who offers care, whether it's through a day care program, a government-subsidized program or private care program.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, there's one group in our society that we continually neglect to recognize and that's the mothers, and the parents and the families who choose to remain at home and offer that day care, that personal day care, and personal service.

So while we acknowledge the work and the fact that there are people in our society that have to look to other people to look after their children while they're providing for themselves, let's not forget that a segment of our society who has made that choice as well, because they're able to, to provide that care on their own, personally. And I extend my hat and hands off and congratulations to all the care-givers, especially the mothers of our society.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Business for Regina

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity Friday last to cut the ribbon officially opening a new business in Regina. Scott's Concrete Garden is located on Victoria Avenue East. It's the fruit of many years of labour for Daniel Scott, a young entrepreneur from Southey, Saskatchewan.

Daniel is an immigrant from Alberta and tells me after two and a half years of looking for a job there, he tells me now the place to be is in Saskatchewan; that's where everything is happening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Scott's garden ornaments are just that — garden ornaments. But they're made of solid concrete, and his business is a family effort. Daniel and his father Donald make the forms and pour the cement, while his mother Millie does most of the painting. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Daniel and the entire Scott family, and to wish Daniel and all the family the very best in their new ventures here in Regina. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

WestJet Service

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The travelling public in Regina and southern Saskatchewan got some good news the other day. The news applies to those increasing numbers coming to Regina. WestJet Airlines has announced that it will begin service to Regina on June 13 with daily, non-stop flights between here and Edmonton.

WestJet is a no-frills discount courier, and its announced one-way fare to Edmonton will be approximately $69. I have not yet checked the schedule, but for those planning to attend the Roughrider-Eskimo game this fall, this is good news indeed. As a matter of fact, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy has her green and white sweatsuit packed already. Other flights will be available to Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, and Kelowna, and more destinations are being considered.

Mr. Speaker, any new venture, especially one in a very competitive passenger business, faces stiff challenges before it succeeds. This will be true for WestJet. But two things are worth noting. First, since it began operating out of Calgary this February, WestJet has carried more than 100,000 passengers, an indication that it does have a solid business plan. Second, the confidence WestJet is showing in Saskatchewan by establishing itself is further evidence that here is a place to come rather than to pass over. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan German Language Contest Winners

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, six winners were selected at the Saskatchewan German language contest held recently at Aden Bowman Collegiate in Saskatoon.

Of the 40 German language students who entered the competition in one of two categories — students from German-speaking homes and students from non-German-speaking homes — 12 made it to the Saskatoon finals, one of whom I'm proud to say was my son, Jay.

The students demonstrated their written and spoken German in an interview, an essay, and a set of multiple-choice questions focusing on grammar and vocabulary. The winners of the non-German-speaking home category were Chad Sieverson, Susan Nase, and Mary Davies, all of Saskatoon; while the winners of the German-speaking home category were Natallie Kossmann of Lumsden, Marcus Reinkens of White City, and Petra Benson of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, der deutsche Sprachwettbewerb wird jährlich abwechselnd in Saskatoon and Regina von dem Verband Deutscher Sprachlehrer in Saskatchewan veranstaltet. Der Sprachwettbewerb steht den Schülern aller High Schools und Samstagsschulen offen.

The language contest was organized by Jeff Black and Sigrid Hansen, German teachers at Aden Bowman and Walter Murray collegiates, under the sponsorship of the Saskatchewan German Council.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Nurses' Collective Bargaining

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan nurses' union is at the bargaining table today seeking a new contract on behalf of 6,700 employees. As the Minister of Health is aware, safe patient care is one of the priority issues SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) has taken to the negotiating table. Nurses' union president Judy Junor says this is because, and I quote:

Safe care is being jeopardized every day by too few nurses,

> no nurses on call to cover emergencies, and nurses are not being replaced if they are ill. Combine this with more cuts and we've got a health care system in crisis.

Will the minister explain how his government plans on addressing these concerns at the bargaining table?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Leader of the Opposition is aware that the government will not be at the bargaining table. The bargaining will be between the union of nurses and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations.

And some comments are being made in the context of the collective bargaining between the nurses and their employer organization, and I'm confident that the safety of patients and health care workers is a major consideration for those parties, as indeed it is for the government.

And I'm also quite confident, Mr. Speaker, that those parties will come up with an appropriate resolution to any differences they may have in their bargaining. And the bargaining table is the place where these issues should properly be addressed, and I know that the member will respect that process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do respect that process. It's just a matter of who does control the purse-strings. Mr. Speaker, the government's chief negotiators indicated that any salary increases arising from these contract talks will come out of district health board operating budgets.

As a result, health districts, many of which have already received a reduction in funding from this NDP (New Democratic Party) government, are poised to cut and slash even more services and staff to meet their bottom line. In Weyburn yesterday nurses protested to bring this fact to the attention of this government, which appears to be totally ignorant of the severity of this issue.

Will the minister explain what has to happen before his government acknowledges there is a serious problem and begins addressing it? Hopefully, it does not take a loss of life to underline this serious crisis.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I would say that we have some challenges in the health care system. I would not describe them as crises. If we wanted to look at a crisis, Mr. Speaker, we would look at what's happening at the moment in the Liberal Party. But the member talks about funding for health care.

I want to remind the member, Mr. Speaker, that the party with which the member has associated himself, namely the Liberal Party, has cut back on health care spending in this province by approximately $50 million this year. But for every dollar that the Liberals have taken out of health care, we have put a dollar back in, Mr. Speaker, because the New Democrats are committed to our public medicare system.

And I want to say that I think it was put rather well in a recent edition of a publication called *Prairie Voice* which is put out by the Voice of People with Disabilities. But in that publication a Michael Huck writes:

> Reduced federal financial commitment for human services under the CHST block-funding arrangement translates into increased provincial government financial responsibilities and a greater competition for resources.

The problem comes from Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Information Network

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health was questioned in this House recently about the development of a health information network. When asked about the cost of this network the minister indicated that $70 million will be spent to develop and implement this system over a four-year period — all of this to eventually save about $5 million annually.

Will the minister explain how he can justify this cost, given the fact that it will be 14 years before an outdated system can be paid off?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member the last time he raised, I think, essentially the same question, there has been no decision arrived at as to the Saskatchewan Health Information Network. This is a matter that the provincial government, the Department of Health, is exploring in conjunction with the health districts and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations),the organization that represents the health districts. Anything that is done will be done in conjunction with those parties. It will not be done by the government alone.

But I want to say to the member that he should bear in mind that there will not only be savings from an enhanced information system, but the health districts presently spend money on information management, Mr. Speaker, and part of that money would be saved if indeed there was a different system.

But in any event, all of the parties will be involved in that process, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, this health information network will take a minimum of $70 million to develop and implement, yet the minister continues to skirt the real issue here. And when he's questioned about the obvious fiscal concerns related to this project, he dances around this very issue.

There's only so many dollars in the health care system, and as my colleagues have pointed out regularly in this House — with

a great deal of evidence, I might add — the NDP government has left gigantic cracks which our sick and our elderly continue to fall through.

Will the minister indicate where the funds for this network will come from and what the impact will be on health district funding, given the tight financial rope that many of these people are walking?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I know one thing for sure, Mr. Speaker, the money for health care certainly isn't going to come from Ottawa and it certainly isn't going to come from the Liberal Party.

But I want to say to the member that, if a decision is made to make a better health information system, a province-wide health information system for the people of the province and especially the rural people, Mr. Speaker, it will be done in conjunction with the health districts themselves. It will not be a unilateral decision made by the province, Mr. Speaker.

And one of the challenges we have is surely to have an information system that allows us to have somebody in rural Saskatchewan get assessed fairly quickly by somebody in another centre, perhaps a specialist, who may want to have information about that person, which would be a great benefit to some of the people that the member represents, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Service Districts Act

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the less than positive view that rural communities have about this NDP government is very evident at a conference taking place this week involving RM (rural municipality) administrators. Besides the issue of offloading by this government, they continue to be wary of the proposed legislation which could force them into amalgamation.

The minister is charge of Municipal Government has indicated to this group that such legislation, and I quote: "is on the back burner, and I've suggested to my cabinet colleagues that it should stay there."

Madam Minister, I couldn't agree more. Will you make then that commitment, in this House today, to withdraw The Service Districts Act and provide local governments with time to arrive at their own decisions regarding amalgamation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do is to consult with the municipal organizations and individual municipalities to explain to them the intention of the Act.

And as long as we keep having misleading headlines and misleading media reports which says that The Service Districts Act is about amalgamation . . . The Service Districts Act, for anyone who would care to read it, is about everything but amalgamation. We are trying to make sure, before we pass the legislation, that municipalities have the correct information about what the legislation is designed to do for them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Minister, we now have a copy of the leaked document your officials prepared for you, advising you against the union-preference tendering policy. And it's amazing how you ignore the facts when they're staring you right in the face. You keep saying this policy doesn't drive up the costs, even though you know that's not the truth.

The chamber of commerce says the union preference tendering drives up costs. The Saskatchewan Construction Association says union preference tendering drives up costs. Even your own officials say that union preference tendering drives up costs. And yet you stand in here and deny it.

Mr. Minister, with so much evidence staring you in the face, how can you refuse to admit that union preference tendering drives the cost of Crown construction projects up?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the members have uncovered a document that most of the world discovered yesterday. This is an amazing piece of research that the members opposite have done.

And I thought one of their members was quoting from it yesterday, and I thought we had answered the question yesterday. And I think the members opposite understood what we described yesterday, that in the process of government decision making, officials within our departments write things to inform ministers before we make decisions.

At the end of the day, we debate issues and come to conclusions and accept that some information is more relevant than others. And I can tell members that in this case the information they are suggesting is true has been proven by experience not to be true. And I would suggest to the members opposite they stop trying to create division between successful industry and labour in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact we discovered this document on Friday and we're bringing it up again today because of your nonsense answers yesterday. The fact is no one believes your figures, Mr. Minister. And why should they, because they change every day. On March 18 you said that there was $15 million worth of projects tendered under the union preference policy and yet yesterday the Minister for Economic Development said there was $30 million. You seem to be pulling numbers out of the air.

Mr. Minister, nobody believes you when you say this policy isn't driving up costs. The construction association has

examples proving that this policy is more expensive, but you refuse to listen. We simply can't believe your figures or the figures of the Economic Development minister because they have more to do with politics than they do with reality and truth.

Mr. Minister, will you commission an independent audit of the projects tendered last year under the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement)? Will you allow an independent auditor to look at the figures and tell this Assembly how much costs were driven up by your union preference policy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, before the members opposite can believe figures they need to stop long enough to listen, to understand what the figures are. It was clearly reported to this House that in the first construction season the Crown Tendering Agreement . . . under the Crown Tendering Agreement, $15 million worth of contracts were done. And that's true. And by the time the members asked another question in the House, then the Humboldt-Wakaw pipeline had been tendered, and that was another $15 million. And that makes $30 million.

Now I know the members opposite aren't very good at math, but I will go through it again for them if they want to ask the question again.

Now what I want to say to the members opposite is that they who created a relationship of animosity and discord in the construction industry in Saskatchewan, disrespecting the basic rights of workers that are recognized in every country of the world under the United Nations agreement, they who created that circumstance surely ought not to complain when a government comes into power that wants to try and re-establish a sound relationship and a sound working relationship between workers and business.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well one thing we do know is when we're being overcharged, which is what's happening under this policy.

In fact this leaked document contains CIC's (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) communications strategy for the union preference policy. And as part of that communications strategy, CIC is directed to prepare an article on the union preference policy for *The Commonwealth*, the NDP's party newspaper. And I have a copy of that article right here, Mr. Speaker, as it appeared in the April '95 C*ommonwealth*.

Mr. Speaker, CIC is supposed to be working on behalf of all people in Saskatchewan, not just NDP partisans.

My question is for the Premier, the leader of this government and the Leader of the NDP. Mr. Premier, do you think it's appropriate that CIC, a government Crown, is doing communications work for the NDP? How many other government departments and Crowns use taxpayers' dollars to prepare communications items specifically for the NDP, and will you put a stop to this partisan practice immediately?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat to the member opposite that the nature of the policy, which they insist on trying to undermine, is a policy that's meant to work cooperatively with the working people of the province and the construction trades.

I want to say to the members opposite who questioned this policy yesterday and are questioning it again today, that as was said a week ago and as will be said today and will be said again in the future, that we have undertaken the review of the policy. We have heard many comments from many people. We are going to be meeting with the construction association in a couple of . . . in another week, and we will take the comments under advisement about the policy and discuss it with the partners to the agreement.

I can say that last year the construction association was unwilling to participate in the discussions, and I want to congratulate the construction association for saying they're willing to sit down with us and talk to us about it. We're going to try and work for a cooperative solution.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Independent Prosecutor's Report

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, in April of last year, just prior to the election, your department secretly referred the Dean Mattison SaskTrust case to an independent prosecutor in Alberta. As we all know, Mr. Mattison is the former law partner of the Premier and the former minister of Justice.

Mr. Minister, we have now learned that taxpayers paid over $43,000 for this independent review which you are refusing to release. Mr. Minister, this case has caused a lot of controversy, particularly in Saskatoon, and taxpayers have paid a lot of money for this secret prosecutor's report. Don't you think they have a right to see the results of this report? Mr. Minister, will you release this report today?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question. This matter relates to public prosecutions. And there are many situations where matters are investigated and no charges are laid. Our policy is not to release that information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Well a follow-up question, Mr. Speaker. The minister has just said that reports of this nature are not usually released. Well, Mr. Minister, that is simply not accurate.

You released the Milgaard report. You released the Phoenix Advertising report. You released the report on the former minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, why won't you clear the air

and release this report? What are you trying to hide?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd like to thank the member for the further question. The policy in the department is that when matters are investigated, we do not normally release the information. In this particular case the matter had some other aspects so we sought some outside advice. And in that situation it's been decided that we would not release the report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Prostitution

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, is also for the Minister of Justice.

On April 23, I raised some grave concerns in this House about the child prostitution problem in Saskatchewan. The minister assured me that he recognized there is a problem, and that the Health, Justice, and Social Services departments were working with community groups on the child prostitution problem.

Mr. Speaker, I have received copies of correspondence and proposals sent to me by the Egadz street outreach program in Saskatoon. The same correspondence was sent to the Justice minister, Social Service minister, and the Premier, requesting a meeting with someone in government.

These requests have been going on throughout the last year. Mr. Speaker, Egadz workers talk to and assist troubled young people on the streets every night. This group has developed a proposal to help child prostitutes off the streets and into transition shelters. The government received initial correspondence one year ago and has neglected to take further action on these requests.

How can the Minister of Justice say he is working to fight child prostitution if he won't even listen to detailed proposals from groups who work with street youth every night?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question, which is a follow-up from what was discussed in April. There are a number of groups that are working in the area of child prostitution. I met in Regina with the group that's involved with the Children Off The Streets program. We are looking at some of the issues there.

I have had discussions, and I know members of the department have had discussions, with the people in Saskatoon who are reviewing all of the recommendations that came from the report that was presented to the city council in Saskatoon. The Egadz group are part of all of these discussions, and there have been some discussions that relate to some of the proposals that the Egadz group has.

We are working on this area. It's a very difficult problem. It involves many aspects of the Justice system, the Social Services system, the Health system, and all of these things are being looked at very carefully.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the outreach workers helping Saskatoon's street youth with Egadz are trying to get these kids off the streets now. As their letters inform the minister, they want a better system put in place to shelter these youths until Social Services and the Justice officials can deal with their cases. Ignoring the issue won't make it go away. These young people are our future, and we cannot in good conscience minimize the impact of our actions or lack of action on their lives.

Will the minister commit to meeting with the people from Egadz so that some of the problems facing street youth and child prostitutes get immediate attention?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the further question. The people in the Egadz group are part of the overall discussion in Saskatoon, and if they aren't, they should be. But I know that they are. What is happening here is that we are trying to deal with an overall problem, and we're dealing with it with the community where they identify the concerns.

One of our great difficulties obviously is that we have fewer dollars this year to deal with some of these problems because of what's happened with the federal government withdrawing from many of the social areas that they should be involved in. And we think that there may be some very positive things that the members opposite could do by encouraging some of the people in the federal government to recognize that they need to respond to the community in the same way that we do here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have met with Regina's Steering Committee on Child Prostitution and Egadz in Saskatoon, who are both proposing the establishment of transitional safe houses for child prostitutes. They tell me that they have not met with government officials yet, even though they have made many requests.

Calgary already has such a transitional safe house, and the Alberta government now is setting up a task force to study child the prostitution issue. Saskatchewan groups lack coordination on this issue. They are looking to this government to take the leadership role. Child prostitution is a complex problem that involves communities and the government.

When will this government take the leadership role on this issue and bring all the stakeholders together to construct a plan to keep our young people from selling their bodies and their souls on the streets?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to that by saying that our department, along with officials from Social Services, have been taking a leadership role on this issue, both through the membership in the Saskatoon task force on child prostitution where we have one of the members from the

Department of Justice, and also we've been funding a research project on child prostitution in Regina.

Both of these endeavours have resulted in a number of recommendations being made concerning community and government responses. There's a need for further discussion with the community, because it's in the community that these problems are going to be solved.

I invite the member opposite to be involved with that process, and we will work with them as well as others. Their role that would be very helpful, would be to seek further federal involvement from their confrères in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Housing

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, my first question is for the Minister of Northern Affairs. Mr. Minister, you have seen firsthand how desperate the housing situation is in northern Saskatchewan. I'm sure you, like I, have visited many elders who are forced to spend their golden years in overcrowded or run-down housing. Many elders don't even have water or sewage, which many in the South may find inconceivable.

And the thing is, Mr. Speaker, we owe our elders much more. They deserve decent and safe housing, but this government has no program in place to help ensure housing standards are met.

Mr. Minister, will you tell this Assembly what your government is doing to make sure that northern seniors, and seniors across the province, have a safe, warm, decent place to live?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca again should be directing his question to, not only the minister in charge of CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) housing in Ottawa, but also the Minister of Indian Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, what the federal government has done is this. They have completely cut 100 per cent funding in regards to housing. The last 15 houses in northern Saskatchewan were cost-shared this past year in Cumberland House and also in La Loche. The housing, which was mostly built . . . 60 per cent of the housing in northern Saskatchewan was a 60/40 cost-shared program over the years from the 1970s to now. It was now gone from the federal Liberals.

What we're saying is that indeed the Liberal government should be coming out with a new program to be helping out in regards to the needs, not only with the seniors in the North, but the children of northern Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, instead of coming up with a long-term solution for your constituents and people across this province, and especially in northern Saskatchewan, you react by attacking the federal government.

Well, Mr. Minister, it's time for the provincial government to dig deep down and to find some compassion. Whether its health care, whether it's roads, or whether it's housing for children or for seniors, it's time for a made-in-Saskatchewan solution.

Mr. Minister, will you promise the people of the North that you will lobby your government to develop a long-term plan for northern housing that will meet the needs of families, single people, and especially elders — that you'll persist until they've addressed this very, very serious issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate. Prior to the last election, the federal Liberals were dancing up a jig in a storm in northern Saskatchewan saying they will help people in the North. What we saw was devastating cuts in regards to $114 million in education, health, and social services. We saw housing cuts — off-reserve housing in that regard, absolutely nothing.

And when you're seeing the member — the MP (Member of Parliament) from Churchill, Prince Albert-Churchill, Mr. Kirkby — that person made all kinds of promises. The Liberals make all kinds of promises when they're opposition, but they never keep them when they're in government, Mr. Speaker. We put in on government in our four years in regards to sewer and water, $20 million in our term this past time, Mr. Speaker. Nothing from the Liberals. And I would say this is what the NDP government stands for, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like to table, pursuant to section 222 (1) of The Elections Act, a report respecting annual fiscal returns of registered political parties for the fiscal year 1995, as provided by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, a person who is no stranger to this place. I'm pleased to introduce Mayor Don Cody from the city of Prince Albert. Mr. Cody was a member of the legislature until 1982, at which time the people of Saskatchewan called for his retirement.

They changed their minds and asked him to come back and serve as the mayor of Prince Albert. He's been doing a great job for us up there and I'd like to have all members give Don a very warm welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Bill C-68

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my debate I will be presenting the following motion:

> That this Assembly urge the government to confirm its commitment to retain provincial control of the enforcement of federal Bill C-68 and its regulations, to administer these laws and regulations in the interests of Saskatchewan people, and to act on behalf of responsible firearm owners by acting singly or participating with other provinces in a court challenge of federal firearms laws and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, we've been involved in this debate now for approximately two years. And in that time, there have been a significant amount of work done by the people of Saskatchewan, by the legislature of Saskatchewan, to present our point of view in dealing with this particular piece of legislation. And there has been general unanimity amongst the people of Saskatchewan and in this legislature in our opposition to federal Bill C-68, the Firearms Act.

In fact this House has twice sent members to Ottawa to make presentations. The first time was to the House of Commons committee when the Bill was moving through the House of Commons. And at that time, Mr. Speaker, as a participant of that delegation that went to Ottawa, I was particularly offended by the actions of the Liberal members of that committee who personally attacked the credibility and the integrity of those people that made presentations there. They attacked them to try and discredit their points of view, to validate and support their own position on Bill C-68. And I believe that is a totally wrong-headed, pig-headed way to run a committee, Mr. Speaker, where you are simply there defending your point of view rather than listening to what any presenter may be giving to you as information and as ideas from the general public.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, once that committee held its deliberations, there were very, very minor amendments made to the Bill, and that was all. The Liberals rammed it through the House, and it moved on to the Senate, Mr. Speaker.

Now it was interesting when Bill C-68 hit the Senate. The senators there were much more willing to listen to what people had to say in regards to Bill C-68 and to the impact it was going to have on the lives of people across Canada, not just those people who live in major metropolitan areas such as Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. But they were prepared to listen and hear what people had to say from northern Canada, from Saskatchewan, from Newfoundland, from all parts of Canada.

And in fact again I had the opportunity to participate in a delegation that made a presentation to the Senate committee along with the Minister of Justice. At that committee, the members of the committee asked us valid questions as to what our points of view were, why we supported that particular point of view.

Although I must say that one particular Liberal senator was particularly offensive in that he accused all five of the attorney generals of western Canada — from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, and Northwest Territories — of being incompetent because they failed to support Bill C-68.

An Hon. Member: — He was from Quebec.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That particular senator, as my colleague points out, was from Quebec. Indeed, Senator De Bané was his name. And he was particularly rude and offensive to the point where the chairman of the committee demanded he apologize. When he refused, the chairman apologized on his behalf and on the committee's behalf for his actions while we were there making our presentation.

Once the committee reported to the House of Commons and it went to a vote, unfortunately the results were not such that we would like to see. In fact the senators from Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I found to be particularly attentive to the needs and concerns of Saskatchewan. They were wholeheartedly in support of the presentations made by this legislature to that committee. It didn't matter whether they were Liberal or Conservative; they were all in opposition to Bill C-68 and voted accordingly.

But when the vote came to the Senate, Mr. Speaker, those in opposition or those who favoured amendments to Bill C-68 lost that vote 47 to 53 because seven Conservative members — five of which were from Quebec, one from New Brunswick, and one from Manitoba — sided with the Liberals in support of that Bill.

Four of the Liberal senators, including Senator Herb Sparrow from Saskatchewan, voted for the amendments on Bill C-68. And I would publicly like to thank all of the Saskatchewan senators for their support on that issue.

But where did that leave us today? We have seen the regulations that have been presented by Allan Rock and Jean Chrétien when it comes to dealing with this particular piece of legislation, and I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that those regulations are totally unworkable — totally unworkable when you look at all of the alternatives that were presented by reasonable people from across Saskatchewan, including the members of this legislature.

Allan Rock and the Liberals simply ignored all of those recommendations and bowled ahead and passed the legislation as they had originally presented it. They wrote the regulations to be even more onerous than what the Bill had outlined. They were virtually impossible to administer, Mr. Speaker, if not totally impossible to administer.

I won't get into all of the small details of the Bills, but simply to say that in a rural area it would be totally impractical to deal with the regulations. If you're out on the trap line and your home is a tent, how can you possibly carry a specific storage unit for storing your firearms overnight? It simply is not

practical and would not work, Mr. Speaker.

So anyone out on a trap line with a firearm, and most trappers carry a firearm with them, would be criminals the day they left home to go out on their trap line. And I don't believe that any government in Canada should simply be making a citizen of this country a criminal in carrying out their legitimate occupation, and an occupation which the government sanctions, Mr. Speaker. There was no compromise and no accommodations coming from the federal government and the federal minister on Bill C-68.

When you look at northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, people borrow and lend firearms back and forth. Not everyone in the community may have a firearm, but virtually everyone in a community is a hunter. When they wish to go hunting, they simply go and borrow a firearm from a relative or a neighbour and proceed out to do their hunting.

Under Bill C-68, Mr. Speaker, that would be illegal. Each and every one of those people who wish to go hunting would have had to have passed all of the hoops, jump through all of the legalities, the tests, the written tests, the demonstrations, everything pertaining to this regulation, and, Mr. Speaker, it's simply not practical. A large number of these people who hunt, particularly across northern Saskatchewan, do not read and write English and would have a great deal of difficulty in passing those written tests, Mr. Speaker.

In rural Saskatchewan also, it's not practical. Fact is most farmers keep a firearm on hand for the control of predators. This spring on my own farm our dog got tangled up with a rabid skunk and my wife had to call a neighbour over to deal with the skunk because I wasn't available to assist her on that matter; and my wife is a city girl and has never had the opportunity to learn how to deal with firearms.

My children, because I wasn't there, are not allowed to deal with a firearm . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member from across the floor hollers that some city girls do know how to use firearms, and I agree with you — they do. My particular wife does not though, however. But I'm working on that. I'm working on that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan the regulations, as outlined by Allan Rock initially, would not work.

Storage is another problem. It doesn't matter whether or not you're in rural or urban Saskatchewan because the regulations say that you have to store a firearm in a specific room designed for the storage of firearms or a specific container designed for the storage of firearms.

A bank vault, Mr. Speaker, would not qualify. It may have a foot-thick steel wall and a combination that only Houdini could break, but it wouldn't qualify because it wasn't built specifically for firearms. And I think that's wrong, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we have seen in this particular Act is a total lack of common sense. There has been no attempt to inject any common sense into this particular Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, this motion calls on the provincial government to reaffirm its commitment to a court challenge, to stake out the ground of Saskatchewan in regards to Bill C-68.

And I believe it's very important that we do so because we're talking about the cultural heritage of Saskatchewan, something that . . . Firearms have long been a part of Saskatchewan that we have learned to work with and deal with, and it's as unique a part of Saskatchewan culture as French language is for Quebec. And yet we see in the Quebec situation a number of specific exemptions put in place or rules changed to accommodate the cultural heritage of Quebec. And I believe that we need the same sort of considerations in Bill C-68 for Saskatchewan.

Another reason for a court challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to defend our native treaty entitlements and rights. These entitlements and rights are being abridged by Bill C-68, and in fact I believe that they may very well be able to gain some benefits out of challenging Bill C-68 under those grounds. I believe the province should participate in an intervener status on that kind of a challenge.

It also infringes on our provincial jurisdiction under section 92 of the constitution, property rights, that clearly lays out that the registration, regulations, and fees regarding property are a provincial jurisdiction and not a federal jurisdiction, and we need to push and reaffirm our jurisdiction in that area. It's an area that we have failed to protect adequately and I believe that we need to move ahead and do exactly that.

Now a number of the groups around Saskatchewan are saying that we should opt out, that we shouldn't participate in the administrations of this Act. And I would like to point out that the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) is a federal police force. The Court of Queen's Bench is a federal court. So these are federal agents that are already active within the province of Saskatchewan, and the federal government has the ability to appoint a chief provincial firearms officer if we fail to do that.

So I would ask the minister not to behave like Pontius Pilate and to wash his hands of this issue, but rather to reaffirm his commitment to a court challenge and to the administration of this Bill.

This Bill can be administered provincially for the benefit of Saskatchewan people. We have seen in the past that the Chief Provincial Firearms Officer has mitigated the law on behalf of Saskatchewan people, and I believe that is a positive role for the Minister of Justice to play in this area.

The idea of opting out, Mr. Speaker, from the administration, I believe should only be considered as an absolute last resort when everything else has failed, when the federal government has simply refused to make any accommodations or give any considerations to Saskatchewan's needs and our particular circumstances.

So in final . . . in closing, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's extremely important that the province carry ahead with a court challenge to protect Saskatchewan's rights, property rights, native entitlements. Also, that we must continue to administer the Act to protect Saskatchewan people from the most onerous parts of the regulations, and that only as a last resort should we opt out of any administration of that Act.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the member from Rosthern:

> That this Assembly urges the government to confirm its commitment to retain provincial control of the enforcement of federal Bill C-68 and its regulations, to administer these laws and the regulations in the interest of Saskatchewan people, and to act on behalf of responsible Saskatchewan firearms owners by acting singly or participating with other provinces in a court challenge of federal firearms laws and regulations.

I so submit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I consider it a privilege to be able to speak on this behalf. I know it's an issue that is very important to the majority of people in Saskatchewan, urban and rural. And especially in my constituency, I know this is a very critical issue.

We have come many miles down this road since the federal government began discussing firearm regulations approximately two years ago. But if we look at the regulations that were recently issued by the federal government, it's understandable that they really haven't heard anything that was said in Saskatchewan about the concerns that are raised by the people of this particular province.

The member from Cannington, the mover of the motion, reviewed the legal background of these particular matters. I would like to review some of the facts and opinions on gun control in general, which the federal Liberal government seems to have been intent on ignoring and has ignored in their regulations.

Gun owners are a very easy target for public frustration with crime problems in urban areas. They are also a very easy target because they tend not to have organized themselves in the past. They've seen themselves as people with an individual sport and have done things on an individual basis with their friends and their families. And so they haven't been . . . had a collective voice as such and has made them a very easy target for the federal government to go after.

However to go ahead and decide that just because you can try and pass some regulations that are going to ban firearms — and I think the regulations indicate that with some of the things they have in there that by about the year 2001 there will be no new applications allowed for ownership of firearms — that that is going to indeed end any kinds of tragedies with firearms, that is totally a ridiculous way of going about it.

It makes about as much sense as having banned, in the past, Oldsmobiles from Regina just because we had a group that thought stealing Oldsmobiles was a thing to do. It would have been an illogical kind of a thing to do, and yet the federal government is going down that same road.

Another analogy might be saying, well we have people that steal grain from grain bins so maybe farmers, if they didn't grow any grain, there wouldn't be any problem with grain theft. Sounds utterly asinine. It is. And so is the federal gun control regulations that they're putting in place. It makes no more sense than that does. I don't think the ears of Saskatchewan people have to be pointed in order to understand the lack of logic in what they're doing.

The federal government knows well that the causes for crime go a whole lot deeper than access to weapons. It comes from a breakdown in the values of society. It comes from a breakdown of resources that individuals and families need to survive. And it's the cause of that frustration that often causes some other things to happen.

Recently someone smuggled a crossbow in to a dinner where the Prime Minister was speaking. Crossbows are not small things. To be able to smuggle that into that sort of a situation indicates how totally impossible it's going to be to control that. Which means that only those people that have some evil intent in mind and intention of harming individuals, will be the ones that have any access to gun control.

Incidentally, machine guns have been a prohibited firearm in Canada for years, and many people think, well that's a very sophisticated weapon. A machine gun can be made from as little as four parts and a magazine; that's all it takes to make a machine gun. They can be made in any basement. They can be made very easily. So the access to guns will only be there for the criminal element if this legislation goes through.

The federal government is ignoring the real roots of crime, as I said earlier on, which are things like poverty, abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling that leads to desperate measures — and then people look for some tool to carry on those desperate measures. Instead they have chosen to play cheap politics against the law-abiding citizens. The parts of that particular Bill that deal with extra punishment for those people who use firearms to commit crimes, we support. But most of that legislation is to create new criminals out of present law-abiding citizens.

As members from all parties have affirmed on numerous previous occasions . . . and I think that's the exciting part of this, of this legislation, and what's happened is that people in Saskatchewan have worked together, regardless of party affiliation, to go ahead and oppose this, and I think it's exciting to work in that kind of an area.

The real reasons for crime are the issues of poverty and social problems. Instead of developing real policies to deal with these problems, the federal government has just chosen to find a scapegoat, and I said a scapegoat that is not very well organized.

Guns are not the main problem of violent crime. More violent crimes involve knives than guns. Recently, a year or two ago, *Star-Phoenix* on the front page, every time there was a murder committed, had a picture of a handgun. And I, as a handgun owner, rather objected to that, so I phoned the city police in

Saskatoon. And I said, I want to know what weapon was used in the last five murders that happened that year in Saskatoon. Interestingly enough, not one had involved a firearm. They were knives and clubs and all kinds of weapons that people had found easily at hand. I contacted the *Star-Phoenix,* and they've been moderately polite on this and at least pictured weapons that were used in crimes since then.

Out of 54 firearms-related accidents last year, only three were homicides or manslaughter that involved firearms. The federal government is swatting a fly with a baseball bat in this, and I'm afraid we're getting hit, and the flies are being missed.

It would perhaps be more useful to review other, positive ways that firearms are used in Saskatchewan to see that we aren't just concerned about the crime, that firearms also have a positive aspect in Saskatchewan.

Having grown up with firearms in my home and have firearms in my home at present, and all members of my family are very adept at handling them, I realize some of the positive aspects that develop from that. Just like any other sport when people do things together, build relationships together, that happens with a lot of the firearms sports as well.

Hunting is an important part of Saskatchewan way of life, an important contributor to both internal and external tourism economy. If that legislation goes through, that whole aspect will be taken away from people of Saskatchewan. It destroys that opportunity for fellowship that can be created. It also will create a lot of difficulties in the area of tourism, wildlife management, and these sorts of things.

The incident of the rabid skunk was just mentioned a couple of minutes ago. Saskatchewan, when it has an overpopulation of some animals, has the kinds of things that are involved, things like mange attacking the coyotes. We can choose to let those animals run around and starve to death, which is a very cruel way of doing it, or dispatching them in a very humane way with the use of firearms. All this is removed from us with this legislation.

Gun shows, an important part of the Saskatchewan economy. You go to any of the gun shows — and I've been a displayer at some of those — there are people from all over western Canada and the northern United States come together, and it's quite an industry in the Saskatchewan situation.

Many Canadian sport pistol shooters have won distinction at the Olympics. The new legislation puts some very serious crimps on some of the firearms that have traditionally been used in those sorts of activities. And as a pistol shooter myself, I object to having someone say that the sport that I'm participating in, and I would participate in very safely, is something that they want to ban.

The federal legislation is driven by an urban bias. And I think we've talked about that. It seems to originate in eastern Canada with some of the large cities. And in spite of his fine words about consulting with rural gun owners, the federal Justice minister, Allan Rock, is still ultimately a Toronto lawyer and he carries that bias with him.

The problems of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver are going to lead to legislation that negatively affects the rest of this country. And one of the things that is unique about Canada is that we are a regional country, and I think the uniquenesses of those regions need to be recognized, and maintaining the gun legislation in an acceptable format is important to that regional bias that exists in Canada.

What's happening is the federal government is in fact pitting country against the city. It is important to remind members that the previous round of firearms restrictions brought in by Kim Campbell have not proven to be effective. So to go ahead and do more of the same will create more of the same — non-effective legislation.

The previous provincial minister of Justice once noted in relation to the last round of regulation that as far as Saskatchewan was concerned, it was just a pain and really accomplished very little of any importance. And I think that explains what this legislation does — and that is nothing, except create a lot of hassle, and it is a pain.

The Auditor General of Canada himself contends that no one has done any serious assessment of the effectiveness of this legislation or of the cost of this legislation. And so we're going to have some legislation that is very expensive and accomplishes very little.

Any objective study of firearm legislation would conclude that the previous round of gun laws was more than adequate to protect the public interest of safety. If we want to . . . if we're dealing with safety, I think an issue that was mentioned from across the floor a minute or two ago was very important. We in Saskatchewan have one of the best . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time has expired.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member for Saskatoon Southeast, an urban riding —or primarily urban — it gives me great pleasure to join in in the debate, because as the member from Rosthern so very eloquently pointed out, this debate has unfortunately been played out and been seen to be an urban and women's issue versus a rural and men's issue. So as an urban woman — and an urban woman who considers herself a feminist — it gives me a great deal of pleasure to join in in this debate and to commend our provincial government and all parties in this House for the very clear stand they have been taking for the Saskatchewan people, the Saskatchewan lifestyle, and Saskatchewan livelihood.

This is not only an urban issue or a rural issue, and we should not allow it to descend into that kind of divisive politics. And it's not an issue that really ought to pit men against women. Unfortunately far too many people have tried to characterize Bill C-68 as some sort of a panacea that will somehow magically, overnight, as soon as the regulations are in place and every evil person registers their evil little guns, then we will have an end to all domestic violence in this society.

Well we know that that simply isn't true. That's pie-in-the-sky dreaming. It diverts attention away from the real issues — as

the member from Rosthern pointed out — the real issues of poverty, family breakdown, alcoholism, and all the other woes that are attendant upon the issues of poverty in this society. So we have to be very clear, as a government and as opposition members as well in this House, in what we are saying to Justice minister Allan Rock. I believe our Justice minister in Saskatchewan has been very clear about that, and he has clearly indicated to gun owners and to the attorneys general of Canada that this provincial government will not stand by idly and watch Bill C-68, with all its attendant costs and offensive regulations, simply come in easily. We need to continue fighting it even though it has passed the House of Parliament.

This is Battered Women's Week, Mr. Speaker, and it would be very easy for me to simply be quiet on this Bill and to assume, as unfortunately many people do, that gun control will automatically equate to fist control or violence control.

Now it is very sad that 1 in 4 women in this country report domestic violence. At the same time, we need to recognize that only 5 per cent of those — unfortunately way, way too high — incidents of domestic violence actually involve firearms. What is even more unfortunate though, Mr. Speaker, is that the proposed solution, Bill C-68, and all its attendant regulations, address only 5 per cent of the problem of domestic violence. And they do it in an indirect way that simply will end up being very ineffective and will not work.

(1445)

It would be much better, as the member from Rosthern has pointed out, if we were actually dealing with the reality of domestic violence, rather than some myth. We need to have direct solutions to the problem of domestic violence, and a universal registration system is not a direct solution to that.

I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, that this government pioneered legislation, The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, that do give an initial response to this very difficult issue of violence against women and children. I hope and I expect as a government we will be introducing more measures that will deal effectively with the issue. But the measures that Allan Rock has introduced, the Bill C-68, will not deal effectively with it.

It seems to me that what he has done is taken a problem, the high-publicity issue of some shootings and the high-publicity issue of many, many firearms being smuggled into this country and being used in criminal activity, he's blended those two issues and brought in a Bill that is extremely offensive to many, many Canadians, particularly western Canadians.

He wants to deal with smuggling. I applaud him on that. I think that if he would actually deal directly with the smuggling issue, we would see much of the criminal use of firearms totally stopped in this country. Instead, what he seems to be doing is loading the costs of an anti-smuggling program, which needs to occur, onto the backs of responsible, safe, individual firearms owners.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — I am very concerned because when he initially talked about this registration process, he was talking about perhaps it would be $10 a gun and why should anybody be concerned about that. Well as time goes on, typical Liberal math, the numbers seem to be getting higher and higher. They're expanding exponentially, and now there's an indication that it could cost as much as $60 per firearm. Some of my members on this side of the House indicate that they've heard that it could even be as high as $75 per firearm.

What an irresponsible use of resources, to ask people — people who make their living as trappers, hunters, outfitters — to ask them to take their money . . . to take money away from food for their children and instead spend it on propping up a federal bureaucracy that will do nothing effective to stop the smuggling of firearms into this country.

Now I realize that it is desperate times for the federal government right now. But that is absolutely no justification, Mr. Speaker, for them acting like desperadoes. In the Maritimes, if any of you read *The Globe and Mail* yesterday, you will see that there's a report that the federal government is now going to extend itself into even the registration of row boats. They figure that they can get some money from the registration of row boats. In the Prairies, they want to register rifles.

What's next? Maybe some day they'll waken up in Ottawa, and they'll start levying fees on themselves for their rhetoric. Because clearly what they are doing now is not going to be a responsible use of financial resources, is not going to result in a cessation of violence against women and children, is not going to result in a cessation of smuggling of firearms into this province.

I would think that we should all be very concerned about the regulations because it seems to me what they are doing is extending, in a tentacle-like fashion, the federal government involvement — their legitimate involvement in criminal justice — into matters that are more properly provincial matters. And it seems to me there is where the basis for a constitutional challenge could indeed occur.

The regulations, the few regulations that we've seen . . . because admittedly we don't know what the regulations might possibly be, dealing with the aboriginal situation or with the fees. We've only seen a part of the regulations. But those regulations regulate even the conduct of gun shows.

Now tell me how anyone could possibly consider that a gun show is criminal activity. And yet this is the basis that the federal government is using, by saying they are legitimately involved in enforcement of the Criminal Code of Canada. This is the basis that they are using to extend their tentacles into the Saskatchewan lifestyle, into enforcing that everyone who dares to own a firearm and who conducts themselves responsibly and safely, that they will now potentially be a criminal if they fail to register their firearms.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this legislation, Bill C-68, is almost Fascistic in its nature. And I agree that we need to continue the fight against Bill C-68 . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly glad to add my voice to this very important debate. And I'm glad as well our friends in the Conservative Party are here this late in the day.

Mr. Speaker, the debate over gun control has certainly become heated in this province in the last couple of years. The advent of the first — Kim Campbell's — gun control legislation, then the coming of Bill C-68, has caused much division in our country.

Let me begin today by stating clearly, that as a one-time police officer in this country, I know the good that effective gun control can have. A gun policy that is based on effectiveness can in fact save lives. One need only look at our neighbours to the South to see what the lack of effective gun control can do to a society.

However, Mr. Speaker, the gun control legislation that has been passed into law by our national parliament, in my view, is seriously flawed. Like much of the legislation we see passed by the NDP government in this province, I believe the crafters of Bill C-68 want to appear they are doing more than they really are. I don't want to go into all the specifics. The other members of the House here have done a lot of that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we can lose sight of the fact that there are some good things in this Bill as well. Good things such as tougher penalties against those who illegally import guns into our country. Tougher penalties against those who commit crimes using firearms. I don't think anyone could argue against those provisions.

As all members of this House have probably come to know by now, I believe we have to get tougher with all criminals. This business of letting them free after serving one-sixth of their sentence is absolutely unacceptable. I don't care if you're a white collar criminal or otherwise. As the old saying goes: you do the crime, you do the time.

Unfortunately our justice system has gotten far astray from that point of view of late. Criminals are back on the street before you know it — in one door and out the other. This type of lax latitude towards crime is an insult to all law-abiding citizens in our country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, obviously the most contentious portion of Bill C-68 is the registration clause. This has caused considerable upset throughout the province and right across Canada. Because like too many cases, this aspect does not penalize criminals. It goes after those who follow the law, and those people are mad — and they have every right to be — because let's face it, Mr. Speaker, registration will do nothing to curb crime in our country. And right here in Saskatchewan it will do less than nothing.

So far in this grand debate I have not heard one logical argument for registration that has told me how in fact it will curb crime. It just won't. The criminals are not going to be lined up to register their weapons. I'd be willing to wage a dollar or perhaps two on that. And if a stolen gun is used in the commission of a crime, that won't help police find the perpetrator of that offence — not any faster.

All this clause will mean is an increased expense for the government, the law enforcement officials, and for legitimate gun owners. That's all. And until someone tells me how gun registration will cut down on crime, I'll remain opposed to this aspect.

So why was this registration added to the Bill? Well, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen in this House daily, governments often craft legislation without talking to the real people it will affect. In this case, the federal government appears to have talked to too many people in downtown Toronto and Montreal, but didn't get to Melville or Yellow Grass or Shaunavon, or anywhere else outside of our major urban centres, to ask the people in these communities what they thought. It sounds kinds of familiar, doesn't it?

The people in our large, mostly eastern cities have been fooled into thinking that gun registration will do something to protect them. I don't blame them for supporting the Bill. If they think it will help protect them and their families, that's fine. Who wouldn't support that kind of legislation? But, Mr. Speaker, much of this support is born out of sheer emotionalism with logic swept aside. Mr. Speaker, in this type of very important debate, one would hope that logic will always prevail.

The prairie provinces have done a good job in trying to get our government to see the light. I was pretty proud to be part of an all-party committee from Saskatchewan which travelled to Ottawa to speak against gun registration. We were joined by representatives from Alberta, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories. We had what I felt to be a productive session in Ottawa. Then last November, senators held hearings here in this very building. Again I felt some valuable input was added.

Mr. Speaker, what our friends in other parts of the country must realize is this country is not a uniform monolith from sea to shining sea. There are differences as you travel across Canada. Those differences are no better spelled out than with Bill C-68 because, Mr. Speaker, what is perfectly acceptable in downtown Toronto is not necessarily acceptable in Saskatchewan.

While guns are seen as nothing but weapons of destruction in larger urban centres where crime is more of a problem . . . our farms in Saskatchewan, guns are a necessary tool. And used responsibly, guns do not have to be something to be feared. Responsible firearms users, owners, and collectors in Saskatchewan should not have to pay the high price for crime committed on Yonge Street, and that's precisely what this aspect of Bill C-68 does.

Mr. Speaker, because we share the same party name with our federal counterparts, other parties in this province have tried to paint the official opposition here as supporters of this Bill. We're getting kind of used to paying for the sins of the federal government, so that's all right. We accept that. But I think it's also important to note that this Bill also had to be passed by the Senate. And like I said, Mr. Speaker, last fall many of us appeared before a Senate committee in this building to discuss

the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, that committee of course was made up of Conservative senators. And, Mr. Speaker, if memory serves, the Tories still had a majority in the Senate when this Bill came up for a vote. And, Mr. Speaker, if memory also serves, when those Tory senators had a chance to block or amend Bill C-68, they chose not to. It was all a matter of choices.

So, Mr. Speaker, if the 10 of us in this opposition have to answer for our federal counterparts, let the Tories also answer for their federal counterparts.

Of course at this point I'd also like to say something about the federal New Democrats, except of course there are no federal New Democrats, or very few anyway. So they're safe there.

Mr. Speaker, seriously however, I'd hoped the federal government would have listened to Saskatchewan residents in their opposition to this Bill, but unfortunately that did not happen.

Mr. Speaker, I think the feds have got to be made to realize that these laws must be enforced differently in different provinces. That's the only way this law is going to be acceptable to all of Canada, not just those special interests in Montreal and Toronto.

Just before I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this — this opposition has asked the provincial government to stop insulting the people of this province, and the greatest insult is to break election promises.
(1500)

Since this government was elected, it has broken one promise after the other. It's to the point where people don't even expect them to honour their word any longer. But, Mr. Speaker, if they did carry through on all their promises, we would have no need for this discussion here today.

Because, Mr. Speaker, this provincial government and in particular the former minister of Justice promised they would do everything in their power to challenge the validity of this gun law and especially gun registration. And, Mr. Speaker, we should expect them to honour that promise as we should expect them to honour all of their election promises.

So for that reason alone, we would support this motion because we are just asking the government to do what they said they were going to do. That, along with the other reasons I've listed here, causes our caucus to support this motion.

Thank you. And I'd also like to thank those senators from Saskatchewan who did in fact join in expressing their concerns about that aspect of this legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, the gun law that came out of the federal government, in my mind is a law that was conceived in a very quick hurry, probably in the dark as the member opposite indicates. But it was conceived in order to meet the large, urban-centred fear of crime and of not feeling comfortable in their own neighbourhood or feeling that they would be under a case where they would be victims of one type of abuse or another.

This law then was passed on the heels of a law that came in under the previous government before the impact of the previous government's laws on what was really taking place in the society were felt or would be able to be felt.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has always interested me is to take a look not at the opinions that people hold about what is going on but rather to go and dig up the statistics and take a look at exactly what the case is. And one of the things that it shows . . . if you take and look at the *Juristats*, you can look at the public perception of crime, volume 15, no. 1, and go through that. And you will see that the perception is in the public that the crime rate is going up. Where if you look at the stats related to the crime rate, they indicate that they are either holding very level or actually going down.

So, Mr. Speaker, you have in this instance the reality versus what people perceive to be the case. And this particular law is aimed at perception. And because it was aimed at perception and not based on what was actually taking place, it aims its solutions out into the wind where it will not in any way succeed in achieving what is wanted.

You can take a look at what's coming up in the papers by individuals who have written about it. And under the headlines, the answer to gun control is, don't license the deranged. And that's the situation. We have a licensing system in place for the individual that has the gun or wants to have the gun, and we have not been using this particular piece of legislation to limit access of guns to individuals who might at some future date or very quickly thereafter, use them to create a disaster. And if you want to look at that, you can find most of the major incidents of homicide that has occurred in large numbers, you will find that these individuals have acquired all the legal registration and that, that they needed in order to purchase the guns when it was fully understood and known why they shouldn't be given a weapon.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that in this particular regard, in saying that the federal government in putting forward this Act and trying to establish this law . . . have indicated that they were doing it not for what is actually taking place but in order to try and get out in front of a perceived problem, is how they reacted when they brought in the regulations.

I have in my hand here some documents from *The Globe and Mail*. And they show that on May 3 the Justice minister, Allan Rock, put some flesh on the gun control law by tabling regulations regarding the license and use of firearms.

Mr. Speaker, these regulations, which will be analysed, as it says there, by the Commons Justice Committee for 30 days, deal with licensing of gun owners, storage, display and transportation of firearms, the purchase of ammunition. And Mr. Rock said he would be open for comments and recommendations before the changes to the firearm Act came into effect.

But what becomes more interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that six

days later, in *The Globe and Mail* — that's on May 9 — it says:

> Justice Minister Allan Rock has scrapped a first set of draft regulations dealing with his controversial gun control law. The new set of regulations will be presented soon, said a statement from Rock's office yesterday. Mr. Rock was unavailable for comment.

Indicating to me that when the regulations came forward, and because they were written to meet the perceived problems in the society and not written to meet what is actually the case, and somebody started to pin down the minister about this, the Justice minister, about the things on it, it became rapidly very apparent to him that he was standing out over the water on a very narrow plank and there was nowhere to go but down. And that's why the minister withdrew the draft regulations. And I believe that if he continues to look at the regulations, that there may be a federal government reviewing the legislation that they put in on their own in order to come up with something that more or less meets what is really the problem in our society.

Mr. Speaker, as has been indicated by members who have spoke on this side of the House, that the reality is is that there are other things that have more to do with what is taking place in the society than whether or not someone owns a gun. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to volume 15, no. 11, *Homicides in Canada, 1994*, and it's the last one that I could get a hold of, just to indicate some of the strange things that remain, I think, very consistent over a number of years.

One of these is the number of people who are . . . the number of people per million homicide rate for a province. For the province of Saskatchewan, where more than half of the people in the province of Saskatchewan live in homes where firearms are available, the province has a rate of homicides of about 2.72 as compared to the Canadian average of 2.42. That's not very far from the norm. In fact it's very close.

But if you take a look at places like Alberta, British Columbia, where the percentage of firearm ownership . . . homes that have ownership of firearms, they both have a larger average number of people where homicide is committed in that particular province — 2.73 and 3.23.

Mr. Speaker, this indicates that if you're looking at why people are being murdered in Canada, there's got to be other reasons than just simply the ownership of guns. In fact that shows up very clearly if you take a look at spousal homicides, as they compare to female or male.

In New Brunswick and Quebec, the ratio of wives as victims per husband as victim is 6.5 in Quebec . . . no, 6.4 in Quebec, 6.5 in New Brunswick. But, Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at Saskatchewan, it's 1.7. Or you can take a look at the Northwest Territories, which has a large number of guns available, it's 1.7. Newfoundland at 1.8; Nova Scotia at 2.3. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the only place that is even close to the over six wives . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member's time has expired.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly my pleasure to enter into this debate. And as has been the case for the last couple of years, it's very curious that all three parties are on the same wavelength on this — opposed to Bill C-68.

And many of the comments opposite were very appropriate, except for the official Leader of the Opposition in his comments about us not doing our job. Your comments up until that point were very valid and we certainly still are committed to fighting this Bill with everything that we possibly can.

The problem again, Mr. Speaker, is the federal government has pulled the regulations off the table again, gone back to the drawing board. So obviously they were having trouble convincing themselves that this Bill is going to be of any use to anyone.

On a personal basis, Mr. Speaker, I grew up on a farm. I grew up with guns. Guns were a tool, as was an axe and a hammer, on the farm. And I used to hunt when I had time and trap and we grew up with firearms on the farm like many rural Saskatchewan people have done over the years.

I was one of the first graduates of a firearm safety course back in 1963. The course was first offered in 1961. And both my children, who are now teenagers, have also completed the firearm safety course. The firearm safety course was instituted because we endorsed the responsible use and safe use of firearms. And this course was introduced in 1961, and in that year there was over 100 firearm accidents in the province.

And since that time we've graduated over a hundred thousand students through the firearm safety course. And last year, with the similar number of hunters afield, our firearm accidents was reduced to less than 10. So we believe in doing programs through education which will produce positive results, not through fearmongering and such like.

Firearms are important in a wildlife management perspective. We don't need to tell too many people that we have a very high deer population in the province. Even though we harvested 52,000 deer last year, there were many cases where deer were causing problems, which is unfortunate.

But we need firearms for hunting, and not only to control wildlife populations and manage them, but as also as a revenue generator. Hunting itself has generated over $50 million annually for the last several years, with around 77,000 licences sold that year. Last year a lot of people within the province as well as visitors to the province come here to hunt. And of course there's all the spin-off values — hotel rooms and the purchases in stores and so on and so forth.

What we really need, Mr. Speaker, is crime control. That is what people want. And some people, who may not ever see a gun except on the late night news with another 7 Eleven store held up, figure that guns are the problem. Well people are the problem and until we address the issues, it's going to continue to be a problem.

And the real issue is crime control, not eliminating every gun in the country. It simply will not work. What we have seen in Saskatchewan as a result of this Bill is about two years of rallies across western Canada at least — fund-raisers to generate funds

to fight this legislation; hearings both in Ottawa, as the member opposite indicated, as well as here on the Prairies; petitions and so on and so forth.

(1515)

Well we wish to inform Mr. Rock that the feelings and resentment and the opposition to this Bill has not reduced one bit in the last two years. People are still vehemently opposed to it and will continue to be so. And as I referenced earlier, Mr. Speaker, the federal government itself does not seem to know what they're doing as they have recently pulled the regulations off the table again.

More recently, the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the two territories — the Yukon and the Northwest Territories — are firmly entrenched opposed to this legislation and are looking at all options to oppose it and will continue to do so as a united front.

The gun control potential . . . the national registry associated with the firearms control, gun control, is going to cost tens of millions of dollars to the Saskatchewan taxpayers. It's going to be very destructive in that many gun collections, firearm collections, antiques, collectible items, are destined to be melted down and this investment made by collectors will be lost.

The red tape and restrictions that will discourage new firearm owners, new hunters coming into the field, is going to be detrimental in us controlling and . . . and work against us in controlling big game numbers and wildlife populations. Young people will also find it very difficult to acquire firearms and simply become discouraged and not participate in hunting.

Dealers are losing business, and some of them have already gone out of business. Gun shows, which have generated a lot of money to local communities, will be also severely impacted to the point where people will give up. And even our Olympic shooters who consistently win medals in the Olympics will also be discouraged or basically phased out of the sport.

At the same time, the infringement and inconvenience and cost to law-abiding people will do nothing to reduce crime. This is the sad and tragic part of this legislation. The simple fact is that criminals will not line up to register their guns. And whether the gun is registered or not, somebody intent on committing a crime, the gun will still shoot whether it is registered or not.

We need to get back to the root of the problem, Mr. Speaker, which is the social and education aspect of it, as our hunter safety program has proved over the years. There can be positive results. But what we see is our federal government making cuts to these programs — health, and education, and social programs — at the same time wanting to spend tens of million dollars to register everybody's guns. It's totally non-productive and contrary to what could produce positive results.

Again people want crime control, and the aspects of the Bill which deal with stiffer penalties certainly we agree with totally. We do agree with crime controls and prosecuting criminals. Whether they commit a crime with a club or a knife or a gun, a crime is a crime and people should be dealt with accordingly.

So we need to get back to the root of the crime, and as I said, which is often related to lack of education possibilities and social programs.

It is extremely unsettling, as I said, to see that the federal government chooses to cut funding in important areas like education and social programs, when at the same time, come up with tens of millions of dollars to spend on a useless registry which will simply impact law-abiding citizens. What many people have called upon, including ourselves, is an evaluation of our gun laws. We have among the strictest gun laws in the world and there's no evidence that gun registration, gun control, has reduced crime or will reduce crime. And we are thoroughly convinced that Bill C-68 will do nothing to reduce crime and we are certainly committed to fighting this Bill C-68 with everything that we have.

We have recently convened a committee to work with the Minister of Justice and provide input on this issue and will continue to do so. And we are looking at all of our options, including court action, and we'll be working in consultation with other provinces as well.

So after two years of rigorous debate, there is still no evidence that a costly gun registry and restriction on law-abiding people will do anything to reduce crime.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I certainly confirm that we are opposed to Bill C-68. We will continue to work with the Minister of Justice and our colleagues across the way as well on this important issue, as well as the people of Saskatchewan, as we try to bring some sense to this bizarre piece of legislation and deal with the real issues at hand.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to add my thoughts also to this debate. I myself have never been a gun owner and actually I was raised on a farm in Saskatchewan in which we never did have a gun. But our farm was located close to a marsh in a small lake which a lot of gun enthusiasts used. We had hunters there. We also had bird-watchers there and we also had good farm land there. And we saw all those interests not in conflict. We saw it as a balance.

And balance is what is important. Gun legislation must balance — recognize the seriousness of the issue relating to violence in our society with the need and responsible use of firearms. Legitimate, responsible gun owners are the first to promote safety and the proper use and handling . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The 65 minutes for the debate — Order — has expired and we'll now proceed to 10 minutes of questions and comments by members.

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Melville. I was quite interested to listen to his

comments. And obviously with his own personal experience, both running in federal and provincial elections, I'm wondering whether he advocates us pursing this issue at the ballot box when the federal election comes in 1996-97, and if so, how should we go about pursuing that?

Mr. Osika: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; the last part of the question kind of tapered off. I didn't get it. Would you mind . . . could I ask you to repeat it if you can remember it, please?

Mr. Thomson: — My apologies. I didn't mean to mumble, Mr. Speaker. But my question to the member from Melville was that as a candidate both in federal and provincial elections he understands, no doubt, the power of the ballot box. And given the importance of this issue in some areas of the province, I'm wondering whether he thinks this is an issue we should be promoting when the federal election comes around in '96 or '97 — at the ballot box as an issue to bring home to federal candidates? And if so, how does he propose that we should do so?

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that there will be no need for concern if the government of the day lives up to its promise and challenges that very Bill. That should have been initiated some time ago. We wouldn't be having this discussion. That question wouldn't even need to be asked.

Mr. Thomson: — I'm not sure I completely understand the answer that the member from Melville is giving me. This is clearly a federal issue. The province is committed to undertaking what it has to through the courts, but this is really an issue that the federal legislators need to deal with.

Does he think that perhaps there's a better mechanism to go after this, by having this Bill repealed through the federal House in the case their court challenge fails? And if so, which party do you think is best able to do that federally?

Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, in response to that, once again I'll just have to say if in fact the government lives up to its promise, that is the first step to take. We'll cross that other bridge when we get to it. But I would suggest at this point in time there should be some commitment to keep the promise that was made to challenge what's happening.

We went on . . . Perhaps the member doesn't remember that there was an all-party delegation. We all stood together on this. And I'm not sure whether perhaps he's changed his mind or not.

But the first step is to keep the promise, initiate the challenge at this point. The next step we'll come to later on.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes, I have a question for the member from Saskatoon; I'm not sure of her riding.

An Hon. Member: — Southeast.

Mr. Belanger: — Southeast. She mentioned something about the gun law and the violence and the whole bit. Certainly in northern Saskatchewan, in reference to the gun law, you know, we're opposed to it as it is because many people in the North do indeed borrow guns off their relations, and it's just not practical in northern Saskatchewan.

However, I think the Bill is more appropriate in the larger centres, in terms of the Torontos and the Quebec City and the Vancouver where violence is rampant. And I wanted to ask her how she felt about the larger centres where gang violence and guns are a fact of life and if she feels that this gun law is not going to curb that certain problem.

Again, there is some differences here. The gun law does not work as proposed for northern Saskatchewan but it may work for Toronto and for the larger centres. So how does she feel about that?

Ms. Lorje: — I totally agree with the member from Athabasca that the proposed gun regulation system, registering long guns, simply will not work for northern Saskatchewan. I take issue though when he says that perhaps it will work for even southern Saskatchewan or urban areas. I do not think it will. It will not work at all.

And I would say with respect to your concern about the larger urban centres, the Torontos, the Montreals, the Vancouvers of this country, that we have had handgun registration in this country for 60 years. That has not stopped criminal activity and criminals using handguns.

Primarily, those handguns, Mr. Member, are smuggled handguns. They come in from the States and they are used illicitly. And that is why I say we have to deal with the issue of smuggling and not have . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Next question or comment. But before doing so, I want to remind all members that the rules of the Assembly do require that you direct debate through the Chair, and I want to ask for the cooperation of all members in doing that. Next question or comment.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, my question is directed through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Melville. The question is in regards to his experience in the police and the idea of registration. The analogy is in relation to registration, you know, of vehicles and also on the registration of guns, you know, as a comparative view.

In the registration of vehicles, whether you drive on northern Saskatchewan roads or whether you drive in the city or you drive in the rural area, a vehicle is registered, but it still does not prevent criminal activity — drunken driving — in northern Saskatchewan, in the rural area, or in a city.

So the question is, on your experience, is that the same type of experience that you've seen in regards to registration. When you said that the gun law registration was flawed, was it flawed in this regard?

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opposition is that the registration will not solve what the root of the problem is — the concerns as far as preventing criminal activity. The registration of the firearm will not prevent that, and that's the point that we're making.

I'm not sure what the hon. member is suggesting, or the analogy between the vehicle and the gun. The vehicles are a provincial responsibility. So in that respect, the point made . . . registering a firearm will not prevent that firearm from being involved in the commission of a serious offence.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I would like to ask a question of the member from Cannington. The member from Cannington stated in his remarks to the House that he wants to see us retain provincial control of the enforcement of federal Bill C-68 and its regulations.

My question is, since we have seen the province having had offloaded onto it many of the costs of administering the Kim Campbell Bill, which was brought in after the Marc Lepine massacre, and we still have not seen adequate compensation for the costs of administration of that Bill by the federal government, I would like to know why he would want to have provincial control of the regulations of Bill C-68, and why he would not see that the better option is, as the provincial Justice minister has already said, to simply opt out of the administration of Bill C-68 regulations?

(1530)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the monetary side, the federal RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) already enforces the law within Saskatchewan, and we pay provincially 73 per cent of that cost. And that cost will not change to the province if we do not administer this Act. We will still maintain our 73 per cent cost. And so that will continue no matter whether we're opting in or out of the administration of this Act.

I believe that if we do maintain the administration of the Act, we can better mitigate on behalf of Saskatchewan residents. I look at the actions taken in the past by our chief provincial firearms officers in their interpretations of the Act and the regulation . . . have been to the benefit of Saskatchewan people. I look at that happening in other jurisdictions, and those benefits have not accrued to the people of those provinces. And I believe that we can do that within Saskatchewan.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the member from Melville this question: what have you done to convey your displeasure of Bill C-68 to your federal cousins in Ottawa?

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Evidently the member opposite has not been aware of our all-party participation in making representation to the Senate committee hearings in Ottawa and making presentations here in this building. I mean what more would the member expect us to do other than to join with the other parties in this province in presenting our views on that particular legislation? I don't know what else we could do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, in asking the member from Melville in what he is able to show that he has done in getting this issue across to his federal counterparts, a couple of suggestions would be: has he written the member . . . the Justice minister, Allan Rock, a letter indicating his absolute disagreement with it? Has he asked his association, the Saskatchewan Liberal Association, to put forward a motion . . .

An Hon. Member: — What's so special about the Liberal association?

Mr. Johnson: — Well they could hold it . . . I understand that they could hold it very quickly in a small location.

But if they had asked to put forward a resolution opposing this legislation, or something of that particular nature, would be two examples. And I ask the member whether he's given any consideration to that.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer that. I'm not sure what more people can do other than commit to the presentations before senators — live people — to the member opposite.

What the biggest problem here is, is that the government will not live up to its promise to challenge that legislation, which we agreed we would support. I'm not sure what more they want us to do.

The Speaker: — The time for the seventy-five minute debate has expired. Order. Order.

Order. The Speaker is pleased to see that members have enthusiasm for debate. And there will be another opportunity for a seventy-five minute debate in two weeks.

Order. We will now proceed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 9 — Commitment to Young People in Saskatchewan

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, that was a lively debate and I do hope that this motion brings forward some debate also.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring forward the following motion, seconded by the member from Athabasca:

> That this Assembly condemn the government for its lack of commitment to the young people of this province for failing to provide and properly fund adequate youth rehabilitation facilities that are in drastic need due to increasing social problems facing the young people of Saskatchewan.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, I am asking all members of this Assembly to stand up and to fight for our young people. I am asking them to take a serious look at the problems facing our youth, and to make meaningful commitments to providing the tools they need to build the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this government's lack of commitment to youth is painfully obvious. It is manifested in some disturbing figures. The teen pregnancy rate in Saskatchewan is 36 per cent higher than the national average. Child prostitution is becoming more prevalent. And our young offenders' facilities are crowded with

kids who desperately need help; ongoing, comprehensive help that deals with their needs, with those needs that are lacking in their lives; physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychological needs — help that this government seems not to understand and thus has not even given consideration to.

Mr. Speaker, I find the various statistics associated with youth's social problems particularly troubling, given the words of this government when they were in opposition. Premier Romanow, who was the opposition leader in . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I think the hon. member recognizes that she's not permitted to use proper names of current sitting members of the Assembly. And I'll simply remind her of that and ask her to proceed without violating that rule of the House.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for that. The Premier, who was the opposition leader in 1989, said:

> The real measure of our province is the quality of life that we provide to our people, and especially the quality of life of those least fortunate and the opportunities that we provide for those youth who seek to live meaningful lives — to contribute, to foster and to develop; to expand and to progress in this struggle of building society, of building values based on independence and dignity and human worth and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, those are strong and powerful words. It's just too bad that our Premier has reneged on his commitment to children and to this province, and that his policies are falling far short of meeting the needs of our youth. Our young people could have benefited from a Premier who believed in them, and who had more to offer than hollow words.

The Premier said what he thinks people want to hear at election time. He doesn't seem to care if he can keep his promises. He believes that as long as he acknowledges a problem, he has done his job.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you this job is far from done. Our young people need solutions, and until the government realizes this, they have no right to pretend that their work is done.

Mr. Speaker, I brought forward this motion because I feel that it is time for someone to hold the government accountable for the lack of facilities available for youth in our province. And the actions of this government in the past five years have given me no hope that things will improve.

The closing of the Whitespruce Youth Treatment Centre is only one example, but it is an example that clearly underlines how little concern this government has for young people.

The Whitespruce centre was established in 1986 and began admitting clients two years later. Since that time, the centre has helped over 1,500 children. That's 1,500 people who will shape the future of this province. But the government obviously doesn't think that they matter because last month they announced that this vital institution would be shut down.

Mr. Speaker, how could this government ignore the protests of people who are so deeply concerned about this facility? But they did ignore those protests, and with no thought for the young people. They stubbornly carried out their poorly planned decision.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read a portion of a letter printed in the *Leader-Post* on April 26, 1996, written by a member of the citizens' steering committee to come up with a recommendation for the use of the Whitespruce centre. The author, Wally Austman, writes:

> I feel doubly betrayed by the government's decision to move this successful program to Calder Centre. It is nothing more, or less, than a politically expedient decision taken at a point in this government's tenure that will reflect the least adverse effect on the next election results. This decision is being taken by a government that has never been too pleased to see a program initiated by the Tories become even halfway successful.
>
> I speak as an ex-long-time CCF/NDP supporter, and I make no apologies about still believing in most of the social principles espoused by the party. But, sadly, I have come to the conclusion that this government has lost touch with a lot of the principles that Tommy Douglas and his peers worked hard to develop and initiate.

Mr. Speaker, not only is this government disappointing the youth of this province, they are also disappointing long-term party supporters, many who believe in our young people. According to Mr. Austman, and to the many people who have contacted my colleagues and me, the decision to close Whitespruce was both impetuous and poorly executed by the government.

For example, staff were not even told the facility was closing until they heard it on the media. Is this the kind of respect the government has for the people? Do the members opposite think that this is an acceptable way to tell workers that their jobs are either disappearing or being relocated — on the media?

Mr. Speaker, it is not acceptable, and I hope the members in this House today will tell the Health minister that his actions completely lack in compassion and consideration.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not only the former employees of the Whitespruce centre who were treated poorly by this government. It is the kids who relied on this centre that are losing the most. Mr. Speaker, this government's answer is to ship them off to the Calder Centre in Saskatoon. Ironically, Calder Centre is in the Premier's riding, so I guess we know why the decision was made to close Whitespruce and to keep Calder open. According to reports, Whitespruce was in better condition, had far more room, and far more amenities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that that move should have happened either. I believe that the youth should have a facility that is separate from the adult facility. By moving the youth to the Calder Centre, the government has chosen to put troubled youth in the same facility as troubled adults.

Mr. Speaker, adolescents have very different problems than adults, and they need very different approaches to treatment. This is something the government should have considered before they decided to shut the doors of Whitespruce, a $10 million facility strategically positioned in an environment conducive to safety and security and trust — basic needs for healing. Then again, this government has continually failed to understand this concept. It's a simple concept, if only they could grasp it.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Whitespruce Youth Treatment Centre is not the only facility placed in jeopardy by this government's indifference. I have had several meetings with administrators from youth facilities throughout the province, and I have visited those facilities on different occasions.

For example, a few months ago I visited the North Battleford youth centre. For the members of the Assembly who are unfamiliar with the facility, it is a minimum security institution for troubled teens. Unfortunately since it's opened in 1985, it has had many troubled moments, often chaotic moments — so much so that Marion Jackson was commissioned to investigate, and she issued a report. With the report, she put forward some recommendations. The question is, were those recommendations met? There continues to be an inordinate number of staff on stress leave at this institution. There continues to be a grave problem at this institution, problems that are not addressed by this government.

When I visited the North Battleford youth centre, it reminded me of a dungeon-like facility, archaic and very cold. I had to ask myself the question, how can healing take place in a place like this? I talked with some of the young people there, and they had hopes, when being released from that facility, of going back and getting their education. Unfortunately, after the one particular person I talked to was released, he said that he could not get an education in Saskatchewan; no one would have him. So he talked about going on to Alberta to look for work.

Many of the youth that leave this facility, because there is no ongoing treatment for them after they leave, end up returning to an environment that is detrimental to their well-being. And so what happens? They get in trouble again, often returning over and over again. Mr. Speaker, kids in our province are crying out for help, but this government is refusing to listen.

Let's look at some statistics about community and custody programs. As of September last year, 55 kids were in temporary detentions; 131 kids were in open custody; 168 kids were in secure custody; 434 court reports were in progress; 1,633 youth were under probation orders; 476 were under community alternative dispositions; 112 were under intensive supervision; and there are only 21 group home spaces for children.

Mr. Speaker, these are shocking statistics, and still this government sits back and pretends that all is well. Well if all is well, why are so many of our children in trouble? Why is child prostitution seen as a form of income for some? Why is our teen pregnancy rate over one-third higher than the national average? Doesn't this government care?

Mr. Speaker, in question period today I raised some concerns about Egadz, a program designed to help young people living on the street in Saskatoon — high-risk children. Maybe the government wants to pretend that it isn't a problem. Maybe they think that our cities are not big cities like Vancouver, Toronto, or Calgary, and so we cannot have problems that are as big as those ones at Vancouver, Toronto, or Calgary.

But, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there are young people who believe they have no other options but to live on the street. And I don't have to tell the members opposite that this means they trade in the innocence of childhood for a hard existence filled with pain and fear. These children are more susceptible to drug abuse and to being dragged into prostitution. They are more prone to abuse, to violence, and to suffering from low self-esteem. In other words, Mr. Speaker, kids as young as 10 or 11 are selling their bodies to support a substance addiction or an addiction of their pimps.

It is sickening and tragic and heart-wrenching, but it's also preventable. Mr. Speaker, Egadz is only one group that is trying to prevent children from becoming tangled in a web of poverty and abuse, but the government has cut off some of the vital funding to these places. They are not at all funded adequately for what the need is out there.

(1545)

When I addressed these concerns in question period today, they were in response to some of the concerns given me by the outreach workers from Egadz. These workers have said that every month last year they tried to get in touch with different representatives from this government, either the Premier, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Social Services. And basically their plea was tossed around in government from one department to the next department. And here we are, one year later, and we still have no response from any one of our ministers that they will in fact sit down and discuss some of the proposals put forward.

The proposals are quite simple. They ask for safe houses. Edmonton has done this. Edmonton, the city sold the houses for $1 to government. Governments must maintain them to a certain degree. But none the less, with a problem this magnitude, we need to do these kind of things and take into consideration fully the proposals put forward by these concerned groups.

Mr. Speaker, the programs that we need are crucial. Someone has to help our youth. The problems that we are looking at here are horrific, and they need to be addressed. This government can't keep pretending that their deep cuts and their lack of appropriate funding choices won't affect young people in this province. It's time they open their eyes and they open their minds and their hearts and started to create realistic, long-term solutions.

Mr. Speaker, those long-term solutions start with a strong economy and with education, both of which are under the control of this provincial government. With education, kids can be taught skills they need to live productive and healthy lives. I'm not only talking about specific subjects like math or science. I am talking about communication skills and coping

skills, self-confidence, self-respect, self-worth, and self-esteem, because a lack of these values and skills are at the root of so many problems in our society.

Unfortunately many young people are living in family situations that are unhealthy, abusive, or unbearable. Living in these conditions can chip away at self-esteem. If children are not taught coping skills, they may feel a pressure to drop out of school and to find a place where they are not abnormal. We must work to keep them in school, and we must provide schools with the support they need to help young people develop into healthy, well-adjusted adults.

Mr. Speaker, education is not the complete answer. When our youth graduate from school, they need options. Unfortunately this government has been unable to stimulate the economy, so our young people are faced with unemployment, and this is a crisis. Young people need jobs. They need to feed themselves, clothe themselves, and house themselves just like anyone. But what they are seeing right now is a bleak future. Statistics in February show that unemployment rates for young Canadians was 17.1 per cent or twice the national average.

Mr. Speaker, citizens of this province must be aware and do their part. The provincial government needs to do its part. It needs to take a good, long, hard look at the problem and to start taking steps towards finding a solution. They must take a leadership role. Our young people deserve no less.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to deflect blame back to the federal government, and they will continue to deflect blame as long as they think someone is listening and that someone actually believes them. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's an excuse that has long since worn thin.

Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberal government has recognized that our young people need help, and they are taking positive steps. For example, they have established a ministerial task force on youth to help young Canadians build a better future. The task force will be looking at ways that government can help with the transition from school to work. This task force will be in Saskatoon this week, inviting all to participate.

Besides looking at real and perceived barriers to employment, they will study the special circumstances surrounding disadvantaged youth, drop-outs, and aboriginal youth. If the provincial government truly wanted to honour its commitment to youth, it would support this task force in any way possible.

But the NDP government must do more. It must take responsibility for the youth living in this, our province. How many times have we seen statistics that show our young people are leaving this province in droves. Many of them want to stay, but see that there is no future for them here. Instead of listening to their concerns and making a serious attempt to change this, the provincial government watches them go and waves goodbye.

Well the mass exodus of our young people is just one more indication of how indifferent this government is to our youth. Mr. Speaker, I could go on. I could talk about the other facilities in this province which are trying to help youth overcome the obstacles despite the government's lack of commitment. I could talk about specific examples of youth who have fallen into the cracks widened by this government's callous disregard as to the magnitude of problems of our youth at risk.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if it will do any good. The government must have realized by now that these deep chasms do exist in our society. I can only hope that this government will reconsider its position on facilities for our youth. And I can only hope that the members in this House today make a commitment to our young people and help them build a future that we can all be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm seconding the motion that it's condemning the government for its lack of commitment to young people for failing to provide and properly fund adequate youth rehabilitation services and facilities in northern Saskatchewan.

To begin my statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is there is a lack of service centres in northern Saskatchewan that's specifically addressed for the youth. The rehab of the youth that are in trouble in northern Saskatchewan is very, very much needed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When we look at the various centres that exist in northern Saskatchewan, look right across the board, and compared to the rest of the province there are very few, if one that I'm aware of in my particular area that is specifically dealing with the youth of northern Saskatchewan, and I think that's the Alex Bishop home care centre in Green Lake.

And aside from that centre in Green Lake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no other service that I'm aware of — whether it's in Buffalo Narrows, La Loche or Uranium City or Stony Rapids, there are no centres that specifically deal with the youth of northern Saskatchewan. And what kind of centres, might you ask, in terms of dealing with the youth? It could be anything from drug and alcohol abuse; it could be anything from family abuse; it could be anything from lack of opportunity.

And really, there is a lack of funding in general for northern Saskatchewan, as we have been for many, many years. And if you look at the dynamics of these northern communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see that the youth are indeed falling through the cracks. There's no economic opportunity for them. The educational level and educational challenges are very . . . are there. And you've got family breakdown, and as a result you have a lot of social problems.

And not to say that the northern Saskatchewan people are a hopeless people. They are full of hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And where they're severely lacking is attention to this particular problem and this particular matter.

The family is under a great amount of stress because you have larger families in the North and you have young children, with teenagers in the same house. And the teenagers are bored out of their minds with nothing to do, and no program, no services, no

support system in place. And obviously that's just a recipe for problems.

So you look at the whole family structure; it's under attack when you're not directly dealing with the youth. And the youth of course, of today, are the leaders of tomorrow. And in northern Saskatchewan this thing will only simply snowball into a major problem because the youth of today have got to be shown that they are responsible people; that they are a good people and they are a worthy people. And so far we haven't seen any effort of that nature being undertaken anywhere, and especially in northern Saskatchewan.

I further alluded to the fact that several days ago, that in northern Saskatchewan there's a huge amount of our population that are under the age of 24 — a tremendous amount. And you look at the school system. You look at the family structure. You look at the lack of opportunity.

And again you look at all them factors, and it shows that the youth of the North and especially youth of the province have got to be respected. If you do not respect your youth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then you're in deep, deep trouble, not only as a northern part of Saskatchewan, but as a country and as a province and as a person.

The youth need our respect and they need our support. Because much like us, at one time . . . it's hard to believe some of us were 15 or 16. And you know, at that time many of us enjoyed strong family ties. Many of us enjoyed recreational facilities. Many of us enjoyed opportunity. And we certainly had a lot of strong parenting skills, you know, available to us. And not to say that there isn't today. Every parent in the world with a teenager knows that it is a challenge raising children.

But the thing is that the economic opportunities and the economic situation that many communities find them in, obviously social problems are going to happen. And then when you have family breakdown, the ones that generally react to this are the young teenagers and the youth.

I guess in La Ronge they do have an alcohol and drug treatment centre. It's still far away from the north-west part of our province. And having one centre in La Ronge is certainly not going to solve the problems of northern Saskatchewan.

I think we need to have more role models in northern Saskatchewan. We need to have more aboriginal case workers to help youth get through the court system, to understand the impacts of law, and to understand the impacts of charges against them. And many of these youths go to the court system. They get sentenced, and they're off to jail. And really there is no effort to stop them from going to jail.

And you look at the average cost to corrections Canada, and housing a criminal, an adult criminal, is roughly $58,000 per year. Now if we were to put one-tenth of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 5,800 into a youth today to teach him, to help them, to support them in some kind of initiative at the community level, be it recreational or social or economic opportunity, then that's money invested into the youth.

And I go back to our point. You've got to respect these youth because if you don't, if you think you're there every day for your own purpose and that they will behave themselves, we don't pay attention to them, then we're all dead wrong.

And in northern Saskatchewan having the high, high percentage of young people that we do have, it's asking for more costs in your justice system. It's asking for more costs in your social services system. It's asking for more costs in your social housing program services. It's all going to add up to more and more costs. That train must stop.

Northern Saskatchewan people do not want to be a dependent people. We want to be an independent people. And the only way we are able to accomplish that, if we have educated, motivated, but above all else, disciplined young people that can take over for some older guys.

I guess in northern Saskatchewan the small effort that is being taken is . . . what you're seeing is caseworkers are so overworked in the North to handle many of these youth problems is that they are fast reaching a level where they just can't take it any more.

Where do these care-givers or where do these people that help out the youth, where do they turn for help? Many of the people that work in this field also have families. Some of them may have teenagers. They've got families at home, they've got problems at home, they've got problems at work — just a non-stop cycle of problems.

So really, if there are going to be any efforts, look at the caseworkers as well. These are the people that are front-line people; they're the ones that see the problems every day. We don't see it in the House every day. But certainly the people that are out there, the people that care about the communities, the people that deal with the youth — they're the ones that we should be appreciating and they're the ones that we should also be supporting.

(1600)

I guess in essence you look at Indian, Child and Family Services Agreement that has been signed between the government and the Saskatoon Tribal Council. Certainly we support every effort to involve the native community in designing new ways of helping their youth and the young people. And it is good news for the province. It's good news certainly for the youth of the area.

But we need to expand that certainly to other regions, into other areas as well. And northern Saskatchewan is again calling for the government to do something with the youth, do something phenomenal, something exciting, something innovative with their youth, because we cannot continue to ignore them.

Just for some of your stats sakes, 56 per cent of the inmates in the Saskatchewan penitentiary and 72 per cent of the inmates in provincial jails are aboriginal. But then the aboriginal people only represent 10 to 15 per cent of the Saskatchewan population, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And what does that say to everybody here? Obviously that is where the problem areas are. And the things that they've been saying for many years is watch what you do in northern Saskatchewan when it comes to their youth. Make sure that you are able to service what their needs are, to listen to what they have to offer, and above all else, respect them and do something about it.

So again, you look at the situation with the stats I've just mentioned, and what we see is all of a sudden the aboriginal people do become one of the largest employers in Saskatchewan. We look at Social Services workers, you look at guards at the jail, you look at the social workers, you look at all the different service industries that do service, you know, the aboriginal people. We see that many of the people that work in that field are not aboriginal. So we're certainly creating jobs but certainly not for the aboriginal people themselves.

So again, there needs to be emphasis on developing native caseworkers, native social workers, and native programs for the youth of the North.

Again the stats that we're giving to you are stats that we picked out of many magazines. The government is aware of these stats. If they say they're not, then obviously they're misleading the House. But certainly the national unemployment rate, 70 per cent of aboriginals living on reserve and 50 per cent of the aboriginals living in urban reserves. So what that says to me is that half the people of some of the . . . the Saskatchewan Indian people are having a severe problem with unemployment. And there's been other work being done to try and increase this employment.

So if you have people that are competing for jobs, and many of these people may be older, more experienced, family people, then obviously you're going to see that the youth are being forgotten. You're obviously going to take somebody that has more experience, somebody that has a family over a youth that's trying to break into the market.

So if you have the astounding facts of a 70 per cent unemployment rate on the reserve, and 50 per cent of the urban reserves, then obviously you're going to see that the aboriginal youth will be severely underemployed.

Again the social assistance rates I mentioned amongst the aboriginal people should not be as high as they should be. They should certainly try and look at a better use of that dollar to try and generate and stimulate an economy that does not penalize the working people, an economy that respects the family structure, and an economy that involves the young people.

And many young people that come out of our school system, they tend to want to work, but then you have to have experience before you work. The big question to ask is how in the heck do you gain experience when nobody ever hires you?

So the workforce out there want experienced people, but how do these young people get experience. They get experience by getting employment. And really again you go back to the point, is there are a lot of troubled youth in the North and throughout the whole province, but the one thing we have to do is we have to have dialogue with them and you have to go to the table with respect. If you don't go to the table with respect, they know that, they sense that, and you have to really start to adjust for that.

La Loche, for example, it's one of the largest communities in the North; they have severe problems in terms of the need for a new approach when it comes to their youth. When you have 3,000 people crammed in one small community with a high unemployment rate and the other problems we speak about, then again you look at, it's a recipe for major problems.

Their hospital is a wreck. There is no respect in that essence. So when a youth goes to the hospital there, he doesn't feel all that great about something that he's done. And if he's not going to the hospital then he's obviously, you know, he's probably going to be going to the RCMP because many . . . the violence results in a visit to the hospital or a visit to the RCMP. And the hospital there should not be something that we're all proud of, it's something that we should be embarrassed of.

Again you go back to the desperate need for more social workers in that community. We see a brand-new state-of-the-art liquor board store, and a brand-new jail, but no new social program services for the youth. And what does that say to me? That says that unless and until we do something that specifically deals with that problem, we're going to let the problem continue to fester. We're going to let the youth for the next five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten years continue to disrespect us and we'll disrespect them, and they'll continue breaking the law and continue making major problems.

So unless and until you are able to show the people of the North that you really do indeed respect them, and unless and until you really plan on getting aggressive when it comes to the youth services and youth support and youth respect, then the problems will persist.

Again you look at the northern situation. It makes up half the land mass of this province — half the land mass. And in that population, we only have 3 per cent of the entire provincial population, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 3 per cent. But of that 3 per cent and half the land mass of Saskatchewan, at least 60 to 65 per cent of them are under the age of 25 years old.

So if anything, the North needs specific programs and specific projects that will really address this problem. Because I'm really getting tired, and many of my constituents are getting tired of all the negative issues that are being placed in the media. And any media we get from the North is always negative.

But much like you and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the members of this House, the families of these young people have dreams and aspirations for their young people. Young people are prone to making mistakes. I've made many, many mistakes in my life, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I know that we had systems in place then to help overcome these problems.

And nowadays we see all the necessary cut-backs that all levels of government are doing, but again we're missing the point. We must invest in the youth. And in northern Saskatchewan, you've

got to treat these people the same because these are Saskatchewan youth as well. Northern Saskatchewan isn't different from us. It's part of this province.

Again many of the stats are not flattering to the northern Saskatchewan people. We look at the problems that the lack of education poses, and the fact that many people feel powerless to change things because they don't control the systems. And the youth basically get in trouble because they have no one to turn to and then they end up into facilities like your penitentiary or your correctional centres. And without proper funding in these centres, and without proper support, we will see again that these problems will persist.

In the Athabasca constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is roughly 15,093 aboriginal people. And the northern communities are expected to increase in terms of population over the next 30 years. We see in northern Saskatchewan we've had a population increase of 5.5 per cent compared to a provincial decrease of 2 per cent. So really in northern Saskatchewan the population is growing.

But again do we, in spite of the revenues that are derived out of the North, do we put anything back for youth services where the problems are? Do we look at what we can do differently for the youth in northern Saskatchewan? Do we consider the La Loches and the Stony Rapids and Ile-a-la-Crosses and the Pinehouses with their tremendous population of youth when we talk about new programs and new ideas and innovation?

No, we don't. We tend to forget about them — out of sight and out of mind. But again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these problems will persist, and in 10, 15 years from now if you don't think you have problems in northern Saskatchewan, then you'll see that the major problems will come then.

I guess the aboriginal population again expected to increase over the next 30 years. And that's the message . . . is that there are many young people that are now becoming family members and would have to be . . . they have to take care of their children. So that the children now we look at . . . when you start seeing the fact that these young people are starting to have children, the important thing we need to do is to emphasize at a greater extent, and I go back to the point that we talk about.

In northern Saskatchewan, volleyball must compete with drugs. In northern Saskatchewan, hockey must compete with alcohol. In northern Saskatchewan, good solid programs must compete with crime and vandalism. That, Mr. Speaker, is what northern Saskatchewan is all about. We've got to put alternatives in place for these young people, so they don't become lost and stuck in a system that is costly to you and I and to the rest of the Saskatchewan population. Let's put an ounce of prevention into the system as opposed to funding a pound of cure for the creation of jobs in other areas besides northern Saskatchewan.

Again we look at the increasing amount spent on social services in northern Saskatchewan. And I look at the unemployment stats, and what does that say . . . is a lot of people are really feeling bad about how things are working. We look at the fact that for economic development in northern Saskatchewan, half the land mass, and we have 34,000 people. We put in 4 million — $4 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker — nothing about social programs, nothing about the new and innovative exciting ways to do things.

But the northern development fund they say, you have to have an industry or a business that the northern industry of mining or forestry can use in their, you know, for their needs.

Well it's high time we take a different approach because again, you go back to the point I raised earlier . . . is you must have direct funding for social development agencies and economic development groups. Unless and until you direct fund these communities, the problems will persist. The costs will rise. And then with vandalism and unemployment, nothing changes in 10, 15 years. We as residents of Saskatchewan and as members of this Assembly can only look to ourselves because certainly as MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Athabasca, I'm going to be consistently raising this issue over my term, so people here cannot say that the northern youth problems were not heard.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the big problem the people of the North have when you look at the whole challenges facing the youth is that we require long-term planning. We don't require a band-aid. We don't require a quick-fix solution. We don't require government coming to these communities and saying, this best for you.

The key thing that we want to point out is we all know what needs to be done as residents of this province, and certainly as the leaders of the northern communities know what needs to get done. Leave the "how" to them, but simply support them with the financial means and give them the technical and the expertise that they require, and they will come up with their own solutions.

There's some very, very exciting plans that they have out there. They have a lot of aspirations for their youth. But again, the point to be raised is that we don't tell them what to do. We don't give them restrictive guidelines. We don't give them a quick-fix solution. We don't tell them this is what we want to put in place for you.

We say, can we help in financing and developing your plan, so you are in charge, and you ultimately come up with the ideas, and you ultimately refine these ideas and come back one year or two years from now and see how things are going out. The thing is quick fixes are not going to work.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in quick summary here, northern Saskatchewan youth are in trouble. Many of them are in trouble with the law. Many of them are in trouble with alcohol and drug abuse. Many of them are in trouble with family violence, and these are problems and symptoms of a larger problem in northern Saskatchewan. There's a lack of jobs, a lack of continuing education, a lack of social programs, a lack of extracurricular activities in school, a lack of drug and sex education, a lack of hope for the future.

Now you tie all those things in; there's not one single youth in this province that will succeed if he's facing these seven or eight or nine challenges. And in northern Saskatchewan, these

challenges are faced on a daily basis by many of our youth — every day. Even a grown man would not be able to make the challenge of meeting every day if he had to face these problems. And the youth of northern Saskatchewan and many youth throughout this province are facing these particular challenges. I understand that and respect that.

The big thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that I have a strong belief that in every single individual there is a God-given gift or talent that you have. And I've been involved with about seven or eight different sports, and I know my God-given talent is not in the sports field.

(1615)

But when you look at the youth, one particular youth is really excellent at music. One's good at education. One's good in sports. One is good in entertainment. Each one of them have a special gift, and it's very important that we nurture that gift and raise the self-esteem of some of these youths. And this is the whole thing is that if you do that, if you assist in the breakdown of these barriers for the youth, they will not turn to drugs to escape the reality of everyday pressures. Criminal activity and problems with the youth directly is a result of the lack of respect and the lack of attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government would get moving and provide the environment for sustainable jobs and provide an environment to foster continuing education and social programs, then maybe some of our youths would not be in trouble that they are in today and continue having problems five, ten years from now. We need to aggressively work now to find solutions to these problems before it is too late. The youth need facilities and programs in northern Saskatchewan and the rest of the province now, not five, ten years from now.

And the excuse that, well, Ottawa cut us back is not good enough. I mentioned earlier today we need a Saskatchewan solution. We're in charge. Or 58 of us here can make laws, can put services and programs in place that could invest in our youth.

And the only way that we're going to defuse the future problems is if we invest in the population, in the young population of the North now. Places like the North Battleford youth centre have major problems when dealing with the youth of aboriginal ancestry. There are no programs in place for native inmates. Ninety per cent of the inmates at the Battleford youth centre are native, yet there's a low ratio of native to non-native staff members working in North Battleford youth centre. There's all kinds of problems with abuse in the centre.

And again, we talk about the people in the North that need to be empowered to help themselves. First nations have looked into taking and running the North Battleford youth centre, and I sincerely hope that there is some effort to support that because they're the ones that have most of these people, in terms of the aboriginal population, in these places. We want to get them out. We want them to become productive. We want them to become self-confident and disciplined people because, if we don't have that as native people, then really we don't have a future. The youth clearly are our future, and we recognize that we have to make major investment in that particular area.

I feel the government is failing in its attempt to make this North Battleford centre a place where youths who are in trouble with the law can rehabilitate and become functioning members of the society.

Again we talk about social health being a large picture of health care. We talk about cultural awareness. We talk about role models. We talk about self-esteem. We talk about spiritual needs and its holistic approach that many of these northern communities want to incorporate in their approach to the youth. And this is what many centres in the South are simply not picking up as well as they should.

Certainly funding, by whatever department, is needed. And we can see that Social Services is involved. We can see that health care is involved. We can see that Northern Affairs is involved. There's all kinds of different departments. And really there is no comprehensive plan to make these departments work in conjunction with each other and to streamline operations so that we can maximize the dollar right directly to where the problem is, which is of course with the youth.

Other youth facilities, such as Whitespruce and Ranch Ehrlo, work with youth and educate them about the world in which they live. And the northern youths are just simply saying the same thing . . . is we need the same type of facilities. We cannot ignore these problems because they just won't go away.

In fact, in 1987, this NDP party recommended that, and I quote:

> The provincial government put a high priority on the expansion of preventative services in northern communities.

And that:

> The long-term objective of the Department of Social Services should be to make all its services as accessible in northern Saskatchewan as they are in the remainder of this province.

This was a report on Social Services in Saskatchewan in 1987. And the question we ask is, what has this government done with these recommendations, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Nothing. These recommendations, like so many of the government's promises to northern Saskatchewan, have been quickly forgotten. There is a drastic need for preventative services in the North. The question is, where are these services?

I'm not going to sit here and argue all day with the members across the House about these services. The fact of the matter is the facts speak louder than anything else. And I challenge them. Check your facts. We can sit here all day and argue about philosophical differences between the government in power and myself, but the facts are the ones that will speak from now and for all eternity.

Again we talk about La Ronge, you know. I appreciate the fact that they worked hard for their hospital. They got their services, great. You know, I think it's a very positive move for the

community. But how about the western half? How about the small communities? How about all the far northern communities that need this type of service? They're the ones that need it, and they continue putting these services and facilities in areas that probably don't need it. So really you got to start reaching out to the smaller communities and the other communities in northern Saskatchewan that don't have any access. We're basically forgetting them and leaving them where they are in an isolated, quiet community.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly as an aboriginal person, I've mentioned time and time again in this House that I've been through the ropes. I've lived in the North for most of my life. I was educated in the North, and my family and friends and my heart's in the North, and I'll continue living in the North till the day I go to see, you know, the main guy upstairs. But the main thing is I've quickly realized is that we need to make our children our number one choice. Our children have to be the priority in our life.

And I've got three young daughters of mine as well as a godchild that's staying with us, and the thing I tell them every day is, have confidence in yourself. Every day I tell them, we're here to support you. Every day we tell them, get educated. Every day we tell them, look after yourself, brush your teeth, and do the whole bit. Right till the time that they're 18 years of age, I hope to do that.

And the big problem is many of us do that already. But many times, Mr. Deputy Chair, there are other families and other children and other youth that don't have that support system. And I will work very hard to continue to provide that support to them. So the key thing here is that the same opportunity that we are allowing our children . . . And the northern people are learning. We must remember that other people don't have the same opportunity. Other people don't have the same benefits that many of us enjoy. Always remember.

I'll ask this government to commit to working with northern communities in order to come up with programs and facilities that will be beneficial to the youths at risk in the northern part of the province. I ask them to do it now, do it immediately, and do something about it, so we can come back a year from now and saying, yes I applaud the government's action in terms of addressing the youth problems of northern Saskatchewan. And I challenge every minister of the House to do that — a year from now.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I second the motion:

> That this Assembly condemn the government for its lack of commitment to the young people of this province for failing to provide and properly fund adequate youth rehabilitation facilities that are in drastic need due to increasing social problems facing many of our youth and young people of Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be voting against this motion put forth by the member from Humboldt and seconded by the member from Athabasca.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — I'm actually shocked when I listened to the member from Humboldt. I mean, inexperience and not having the knowledge can only go so far. She has been elected nearly a year now and I expect a better analysis of what we have been doing as a government than I have received in this speech today.

Never once has this government said that our work is done. Our social problems were not created in the past four years, and they won't be solved in the next four years. Only through cooperation, compassion, and targeted funding will we slowly and steadily cope with our social problems.

Does the member from Humboldt or the member from Athabasca think that they have the corner on caring and compassion? I taught children for 23 years. Do you think that I would be a part of a government that was not progressing to help youth in this province? That would be a direct insult to me and my philosophy as a person who cared for people. Not only my own children, not only the hundreds of children that I have taught, but all the people that I know and whose children I know.

We are committed to Saskatchewan youth. For instance, this . . . We are committed to drug and alcohol treatment services that they need. This motion was so far-ranging, I didn't know exactly what they were getting at, but I'll try to address each of the areas.

No one that requires these services in Saskatchewan will go without treatment. Saskatchewan Health is working directly with district health boards and community referral groups to ensure adolescents and their families receive necessary services during the transition period.

And to condemn facilities that are already operating and trying their best . . . for instance, alternative in-patient programs such as the Thorpe Centre in Lloydminster, where I live — an excellent program; an excellent service. Can be expanded? Yes, we could always use more facilities like the Thorpe Centre. But to condemn the people that are already working and trying their best is not a positive way to approach the youths' problems in this province.

The Pine Lodge in Indian Head, the Angus Campbell Centre in Moose Jaw, and the Metis Addiction Council centres in Prince Albert or Regina — these people are trying their best, working with us and with people in the community to provide the services that the youth in this province need. If in-patient services are required, cases will be managed by the Whitespruce admissions counsellor in cooperation with the community referral agent.

And we are combining the services into the Calder Centre, the goal of the renewed health system in providing the best possible combination of community-based and institutional programs. We are looking at efficiencies in all of our health programs for

many months, and the case of Whitespruce and Calder much longer than that.

The consolidation allows for an interdisciplinary approach to recovery as well as the significant sharing of staff resources and expertise, both within Calder Centre and within the allotted health community. This is consistent with looking at efficiencies in all of the provincial health programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A 1994 review of residential treatment programs indicated that consolidation of Whitespruce and Calder and strong community-based support would result in enhanced treatment services. The consolidation of adult and adolescent programing at Calder Centre allows for greater access to specialized adolescent psychiatric services in Saskatoon. It creates more opportunities for adolescents to access community-based resources and recreation and education as opposed to all programing done in a segregated institutional setting. As well, the facility design of Calder allows for decreased operating costs while still maintaining a separate youth program.

Saskatchewan Health, the Public Service Commission, and the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union, the union which represents Whitespruce and Calder employees, are working together to minimize any impact the consolidation will have on employees. We have to look to new solutions. After all — and I will be addressing some of the funding cuts that we have received and the huge debt that we carry — this is realism.

I mean you can hide your head in the sand and just promise the world to people, or you can face your problems and dig in and do the best that you can with what you've got. And that's what we're doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — We're committed to the Saskatchewan action plan, and it is the children's action plan, and it is in its third year. Working in partnership with communities over the past three years, government has provided support to many innovative projects across the province.

As I said in my introduction, targeted money for help to youth and children in this province, because that is what we can do right now. Despite the . . .

An Hon. Member: — And where did the Liberals stand on that? They voted against it.

Ms. Stanger: — At first they voted against it.

Despite challenging fiscal times, the government has maintained its commitment to children, youth, and families. And as I said before, nobody on that side of the House has a corner on caring and compassion. Most of us that were elected on this side of the House wouldn't be here if we didn't care about the people that we represent and the youth that we represent.

Every year since its inception, funding has increased for programs and services under the children's action plan. This government . . . this year government funding of 6.3 million will rise to more than 10.5 million. And what have the Liberal provinces and the Tory provinces, what have they done to programs like this?

(1630)

The action plan is a provincial strategy to enhance the well-being of children, youth, and families. The collaborative process, beginning in 1993 with the release of a public discussion paper and consultation with various groups, individuals, and organizations, has a common approach to . . . a common sense approach to children's issues, and were developed, and significant provincial and community actions were followed.

Many of these developments are summarized — and I would suggest that the member from Humboldt read this — many of these developments were summarized in the second public report released in July of 1994. It's called *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children; One Year Later*.

What about 1996-97? Again, a budget that is balanced. We've held . . . we've been . . . had to hold the line because of cut-backs from the Liberal federal government. What are we doing in 1996-97? Community schools and the IMED (Indian and Metis educational development) program expansion, $2.35 million put into that program this year. Because of the success of the community schools . . . and I have visited them with the Minister of Education last year. They are successful. And the Indian and Metis educational development programs at meeting the social and learning needs of the at-risk children, these programs will be enhanced by $2.35 million.

Increased support to students with special needs — $1 million in education. The amount of a million has been directed to targeted behaviour recognition. Enhanced measles immunization program — $124,000 from Health. Saskatchewan Health will be contributing 124,000 towards an enhanced immunization program. How about child care initiatives — 500,000 to Social Services.

What about teen parents using teen infant toddler centres — $105,000 to Social Services. And I can tell you that I visited a school where teen mothers had their children in Saskatoon where they were able to stay in school and further their education, where they were encouraged through planning not to have more children than they could take care of. I can tell you, talking to those teen mothers, they told me that if that program was not in place they would have gone . . . had to quit school and take care of their children instead of continuing on. And they were very grateful. And they weren't saying that in front of their teachers. We met with them separately.

There are programs and we will be doing as much as we can. Post-adoption programs — $60,000. Successful mothers' support program — Saskatchewan Health provided $320,000 in the 1995-96 to health districts for successful mothers' support program.

Saskatchewan Social Services dedicated in-kind resources to support the development and implementation of this new,

collaborative initiative in 10 areas of the province.

Treatment services for adolescent offenders. Saskatchewan Health provided $108,000 in 1995-96 to two health districts for treatment services for adolescent sex offenders. Saskatchewan Social Services redirected resources to develop and implement this collaborative, three-year pilot project in two communities — a rural project in the Yorkton area and an urban project in the Saskatoon area of the province.

And addressing family violence. A number of community-based agencies have joined together with Saskatchewan Justice to help children deal with the effects of domestic violence. The Regina YWCA, Prince Albert Catholic family services, the Saskatoon family service, and Catholic family service bureaux hold sessions to provide children and young teenagers with information and coping tools that help them avoid becoming victims or predators of domestic violence. Sessions are also provided to give custodial parents information and support on the effects of witnessing abuse, appropriate discipline, and parenting skills.

Assessing child victims and their family. Saskatchewan Justice has helped introduce a number of community-based victim service programs that operate in conjunction with police agencies across this province. They use trained volunteers to help child victims of crime and their families by providing case information and supporting them through the court process and referring them to additional sources of support.

Remote housing development. Saskatchewan Municipal Government participated in a one-time initiative called the remote housing program. Designed to meet urgent housing needs in remote communities, the program was cost-shared with the federal government.

So working with partners, together in communities, the federal government, the provincial government, we are trying to do what we can to help the youth of this province. Is it enough? No, it's not enough. Can it be done in a year or two? No, it can't be done in a year or two.

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

Mr. Flavel: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I see seated in your gallery today some acquaintances from the Craven area. They lived out in Strasbourg for a while, close to Bulyea — Glen and Elaine Samuelson and their son, Michael. And I would like to ask everyone to make them feel welcome here today. And we're glad to see them here and I hope they enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 9 — Commitment to Young People in Saskatchewan (continued)

Ms. Stanger: — I just want to turn to another area and that's the cuts that we've received from the federal government. And the thing is this. They had to deal with their budget and their deficits in the same way as we had to. That, I can't blame the federal government for; what I do, is the way that they did it.

We, when we were doing cuts in the first few years, we cut 8 per cent totally to the health, education, and social services, and we cut 25 per cent to the rest of government from '91 to '95.

The federal government did exactly the opposite. They cut 8 per cent to the rest of their government and 25 per cent to the areas that people in this province value the most — education, health, and social services.

I'm sorry that was their decision. And not only that — after all the pain that they have caused all of the provinces, guess what? They haven't balanced their budget and they don't intend to balance their budget for another three, four years after all of this pain.

So I'm saying to you, yes, I understand that they had to make adjustments with the debt that they are having and producing every year, but it's the way that's the priorities and the way that you use it.

You don't have to take my word for it. Read the analysis from other people. We have done it the compassionate, caring way. And I don't appreciate people saying that we have no feeling for the youth of this province when we do. We have not cut social services one dime since we got elected. But the Liberals have, and they will.

You know it's funny, when they're in opposition they talk like New Democrats, but when they're in government, they govern like Tories. My dad told me that 35 years ago and it's absolutely the truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — The federal government is eliminating CAP — that's the Canada Assistance Plan — at the end of '95-96 and replacing it with the new CHST. The CHST will combine federal transfer payments for health, social services, and education. The federal government has stated that the CHST will give provinces more flexibility in designing social assistance program. But actually what it does is give us a hundred million less this year.

And yes, they do have some flexibility across Canada to design programs. But I'm sorry — the health and social services and the education and the quality of it is the glue that has kept Canada together and has made us different from our American cousins. And guess what? When everyone is doing their own thing, do you think we are going to have the high standards in every province or consistent standards? No, I don't think so.

Those are the things that have made Canada different and those are the things that make me so sad. Even though we have to

adjust; we can't just blame. That's right — we have to adjust. But it makes me sad to see the things that have held us together as Canadians being eroded slowly, slowly over the last five years. This is just one of them.

So when I sit there and I listen to this poor, ill-conceived motion based on ignorance, it made me angry this afternoon.

An Hon. Member: — Sounds like it.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, member from Meadow Lake.

Here's another program that we are working at. It's called intensive community-based services for youth. Intensive community-based services for youth and the youth offender program will provide additional support structure and supervision to certain high-risk youth, while taking into account, for instance — some of the things that the member from Athabasca are talking about — the normal adolescence need for some structure, guidance, and supervision; the need for youth to be held accountable for their behaviour; and the issue of community safety.

Intensive community-based services provide the youth court with a realistic option in the community for youth who are otherwise likely to receive a custody disposition, remain in custody, reoffend, or fail to comply with the order of the youth court.

Services will also be provided to youth who are on probation in lieu of custody, have been released to probation from custody as a result of a court review; are on a temporary release from custody; or are referred to a youth worker who believes a youth is likely to commit further offences or receive a custody disposition.

So I guess what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker — and I have many more notes but I know the member from Regina South would like to say a few words, and I'd like to give him some time to do that — what I'd like to say is that have we done as much as possible? Maybe no. Have we made some mistakes? Maybe yes. But are we trying hard and are our priorities on education, health, and social services? Definitely yes. And as a private member I'm committed to work towards these things.

I'm concerned with, for instance, with counselling services. In the rural areas I would like to see more counselling services. I'm working with the . . . right now talking very often with the CEO (chief executive officer) of the Twin Rivers Health District and the CEO of Lloydminster. We're going to be working towards these things.

Has every dream that I ever had in 1991 been realized? No. It is a difficult time to be in government because of the debt that we have to carry. What we could do with $850 million every year. It's just amazing when you stop and think about it.

It's also changing times, and times are changing very rapidly. And also we have to deal with not only the things that are happening to us provincially, we're dealing of course with the federal cuts.

So all of these things combined doesn't make it an easy time, but you know what? It makes it a challenging time. And I believe that people who are optimistic, people who have a common philosophy, can work together to make this a better place to live in. And it's going to be, and remain, the best place in the world to live in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in joining in this debate brought forward by my hon. colleague from Humboldt, I'd like to just focus on some of the detrimental effects, in broad terms, that crime has on our society, which includes our youth crimes.

It doesn't matter who commits those crimes, and regardless of the fact that there's some arrogance and disdain from members opposite with respect to the motion, Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is that people have the perception that our province is not as safe as it once was. They no longer feel secure, even in their own homes. And heinous crimes once thought to be confined to the city are moving into our once peaceful rural communities. Just down the road from where I reside in the Qu'Appelle Valley, there have been some crimes committed that have shocked and horrified the entire province.

Is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that people no longer feel safe? Now the issue of crime committed by youths and the penalties they should pay for committing those crimes is a very tough one to consider, and this in the whole scheme of things of programs and punishments.

We as a society must find the right balance in responding to our youth who commit crimes and at the same time show them the proper path to follow. It's simply not good enough to give them a light punishment and hope they straighten up. Nor is it good enough to simply give up on these young people.

(1645)

While there are many schools of thought when it comes to rehabilitation of convicted criminals, if there are any people who can be rehabilitated — I have to believe, and I want to believe — it is our youth. These are the people with their lives ahead of them. Too often I've seen kids in their early teens or perhaps a little bit older ruin their lives through their actions.

But, Mr. Speaker, I believe, if treated properly, most of our young offenders can turn their lives around and become productive contributors to our society. So then how do we do this? I don't think any of us have the right and true answer, but collectively we, as legislators, along with citizens of the province and country have to work together to ensure we find that answer so more of these young lives can be saved.

I have seen young offenders — juvenile delinquents as they used to be called — who have gotten off on the wrong path and have straightened up. But so too have I unfortunately seen the opposite side — young criminals who have not been shown any other way, young criminals who spend their teen years in youth facilities. As unbelievable as it may seem to many of us sitting here today, for some of these young people, their goal when

they become adults is to move up to provincial jails and to penitentiaries.

I don't think there's anything more tragic than a young person who has given up on life unless it is a society that has given up on its youth. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what we have to steer away from. We simply cannot give up on them so easily.

Now before members accuse me of being soft on crime — believe me — nothing would be further from the truth. I think youth criminals, like all criminals, should be treated fairly but harshly if necessary. Everyone must or at least should pay the price for their crimes. That includes our youth. A slap on the wrist sometimes does more harm than good with young offenders because they do not learn the consequences of their actions.

Punishment must always fit the crime. And speaking of crime in general, I don't think that's often the case anymore in Saskatchewan as we see criminals released earlier and earlier from prison without having any regard for the consequences of their action. I think that's wrong, and I also think that that's harmful. But, Mr. Speaker, that's perhaps a topic for debate on another day.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to save our youths from themselves or from uncaring and unfeeling families that put them on the road to crime, we have to ensure we have adequate facilities and programs in our province that help our kids. We have to make sure they receive proper education, proper counselling, proper life skills training. I can't think of any greater investment our government, our society, could make. As is often said, our youth is our future. That, Mr. Speaker, includes all of our youth. Every young person we can put on the right path will help our province as a whole.

I realize incarcerating these youths is an expensive proposition. I'm informed it costs upwards of $40,000 to keep one youth in a provincial facility for one year. Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of money. But I think when we consider costs, we have to also consider the costs of not doing anything.

How much will it cost us years down the line when this youth becomes an adult and continues breaking the law? Because that's what happens when they aren't taught a lesson, given some opportunity for help. And I think without adequate funding for youth facilities in our province, that lesson will not be taught, and we'll all be the poorer for it.

Mr. Speaker, in my area, the youth facility near Yorkton has been cut. As my colleague from Humboldt can tell us, there are problems in the facility in North Battleford. In the North, as my deputy leader can attest to, there are just not adequate facilities to detain our youths, to help them, so they can be put on the straight and narrow.

Mr. Speaker, at almost every turn this government tells us how poor financially they are. They tell us there is no money for hospitals. There is no money for schools. There is no money for local governments. Yet the government finds money for union-preference policies. Yet the government finds the money for increased staff. Yet the government finds the money for any number of other things the people of Saskatchewan would not list as priorities . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. Order. The hon. members all understand it's not appropriate to be shouting comments across the floor — order — nor to be commenting when the Speaker is on his feet.

I'll ask all members to give the hon. member for Melville the courtesy of listening to his remarks.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Belanger: — Ask for leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to the Assembly today a friend of mine who was a deputy mayor of Ile a-la-Crosse for one term. And he's a great hockey player as well. And he's here doing some work.

I'll ask the Assembly to join me in welcoming Mr. William Caisse, who is in the visitor's gallery, to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 9 — Commitment to Young People in Saskatchewan (continued)

Mr. Osika: — Priorities, Mr. Speaker, is what I was talking about, and that's what it is all about. You have to target the dollars to where they are most needed. We all wish there were more dollars to work with, and there would be if it were not for Grant Devine bankrupting the province and Brian Mulroney bankrupting the country with their extravagance, dishonesty, and downright stupidity.

But that is the reality, Mr. Speaker. It just doesn't matter who's to blame. All that matters is that we do have to have money, to spend the money, that we do it in the wisest possible fashion. And I can't think of a better place to start than with our youth.

Mr. Speaker, crime statistics are easy to digest. They are numbers on paper, intangible figures without any real meaning for any of us. But until you're one of the people, the one arresting a young man or woman, knowing their life is probably ruined, you don't see the reality that is youth crime. And it is real, Mr. Speaker. The men and women who abide and respect the law can only tell you too well.

And, Mr. Speaker, without providing adequate rehabilitation centres for youths, we are not only failing them; we are failing everyone in the province. A small investment now can pay big dividends in the future. Yes, make sure these kids are punished, harshly if necessary, tough love perhaps, for their actions, but also make darn sure they are given all the tools necessary to

rebuild their life. Make sure they have a future filled with a bright outlook on life and hope and opportunity.

To do anything less, Mr. Speaker, we are failing everyone. To simply look at today's needs or today's balance sheet is simply not adequate. We have to remember always to govern our province with an eye towards the future. What will make our society a better place for our kids and grand kids? What can we do to make this a better place for future generations? These are the questions cabinet ministers on that side of the House should be asking themselves with every decision they make.

But I don't think the future is always kept in mind when the government makes it's decisions. Oh yes, they talk a great deal about moving the province into the 21st century, but, Mr. Speaker, their actions . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I'm going to ask the members on government side to restrain themselves. It's clearly out of order to be shouting across the floor, and I'm going to ask for cooperation of all members of the House to allow the hon. member from Melville to put his remarks.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Minister of Health continues to tell us about the future, and in the next breath he holds up a 30-year-old newspaper clipping to justify his actions, actions that I might say are not moving the province to the better future but rather condemning much of Saskatchewan to a less secure and less safe future. But again, Mr. Speaker, that is a topic for debate on another day, and it is a debate we will continue having with this government, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you of that.

Mr. Speaker, in closing today, I want to say I will support the motion made by my colleague from Humboldt because in moving such a motion, I want to impress on the government that to solve the problems of our province, it takes more than lip service and photo opportunities, something the members opposite have thrived on since 1991 and probably long before.

Mr. Speaker, our youth population is not a political issue. It is an issue that directly affects every man, woman, and especially child in Saskatchewan. If we fail to address these issues with a wise and well thought out plan with the future always in mind, we are failing future generations.

I urge the government to do everything in its power to make sure we leave our world, at least our province, a better place than when we found it. Then we know we have done our job as honourable members of this Assembly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:56 p.m.