

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of parents and employees affected by the changes to the regulations of The Labour Standards Act.

The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to recognize the hardship which this failure to inform affected parents and employees has caused and immediately develop a program to compensate all affected by this mistake.

The petition has been signed by citizens of the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition as well. The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That Saskatchewan taxpayers face an unreasonable high overall tax burden;

That Saskatchewan's 9 per cent PST (provincial sales tax) continues to hurt consumers and impose a major barrier to business growth and job creation in our province;

And that the 9 per cent PST was a major reason for only 1,000 new jobs being created in Saskatchewan last year compared to 40,000 jobs being created in PST-free Alberta.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reduce the PST by two points to 7 per cent in the 1997 budget and table a long-term plan for further reductions in the PST in years ahead.

And in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions have been coming in from all over the province. This one in particular is from the Preeceville, Endeavour areas of Saskatchewan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Hon. Assembly of Saskatchewan in legislature assembled: the petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That the provincial government is imposing an \$11 tax on Saskatchewan hunters to cover all costs of big game crop damage;

That the government and all Saskatchewan residents benefit from the millions of dollars brought into our

province through hunting-related activities, approximately 38 million annually from American tourists visiting Saskatchewan alone; therefore it is extremely unfair to impose this tax grab solely on hunters.

And further, that adding the big game damage fund licence tax on hunters on top of other increased costs to hunting in Saskatchewan will encourage hunters to hunt in other provinces, such as Manitoba, at roughly half the cost.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to force hunters to pay the entire cost of a big game damage in the province of Saskatchewan and instead once again offer big game damage coverage through Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation.

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

These petitions come also from across the province — Regina, Fort Qu'Appelle, Indian Head, Wadena, Esterhazy, Dubuc, Yorkton, Duff, Caron, Spalding, Edenwold, Dysart, Southey, Lumsden. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition and I read the following prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the municipal revenue-sharing reduction and commit to stable revenue levels for municipalities in order to protect the interests of property taxpayers.

And these are signed basically by the good people from Gainsborough. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in legislature assembled I present the following petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to recognize changes to The Labour Standards Act to have classified families who bring care-givers into their homes to look after loved ones as employers;

That as employers, families are forced to pay minimum wage, overtime, vacation pay, statutory holiday pay, parental bereavement, and other statutory leave, and pay in lieu of notice if wrongfully terminated;

That because of these changes to the Act, agreements between Saskatchewan families and their care-givers are considered illegal and are superseded by the Act;

That the result of this decision is causing a severe financial and emotional hardship on Saskatchewan families, seniors, and care-givers all across the province of Saskatchewan;

That the exorbitant costs required under the Act are forcing single parents to quit their jobs and instead rely on social

assistance, forcing one parent in two-income households to quit their job to make ends meet, parents and seniors to cease to employ care-givers and the like;

And that instead of helping Saskatchewan families, this law is harming families, increasing unemployment, and will in the long run mean additional cost to the Saskatchewan taxpayers;

Also to recognize the financial reality faced by Saskatchewan people and immediately follow the lead of other provinces and make an exemption under The Labour Standards Act for Saskatchewan parents and seniors . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order, order. Order. I remind the . . . order — I remind the hon. member that the only information to be presented with the petitions is the prayer itself, and as I listen, it is sounding to me as though this may be debate and not the prayer, although I'm not certain and — order, order, order — and I understand that the hon. member of Cypress Hills knows the rules and that he will continue if it's part of the prayer but if not, then he will recognize that debate is not allowed.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The prayer will wind up in one short sentence and that is:

. . . that best for the individual families and not have additional costs imposed on that agreement by the government.

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

I present this petition very happily this morning on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, the measures to combat child prostitution Act.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, the gambling addiction accountability Act.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, the regional telephone district Act.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, the education and health tax amendment Act, 1997.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members in the House some guests that are located in the opposition gallery as well as the Speaker's gallery.

I'd like to introduce the Leader of the Liberal Party of

Saskatchewan, Dr. Jim Melenchuk, the president of the Liberal Party, Anita Bergman, and a former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) who probably needs no introduction to most MLAs here.

And also in the gallery are some very special people to me. I'd like to introduce my daughter, Lindsay. And thank you very much for being with me for these last couple days, and I know you enjoyed missing the school.

I'd also like to introduce my wife's parents, my in-laws from Theodore, John and Eleanor Maleschuk. Would you please rise. There they are. And a very hard-working CA (constituency assistant), Jeff Hryhoriw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to rise and join with the Leader of the Official Opposition in welcoming to the Assembly the new Leader of the Liberal Party, Dr. Jim Melenchuk, and wish him as much success as I can, which he'll understand and I'm sure all members will understand is somewhat limited. But I do want to wish him all the best in a very demanding and difficult and important role, being a leader of a political party, as he is, in Saskatchewan.

I also want to introduce, Mr. Minister, to you and to the members of the House, three individuals. First I'd like to introduce to the House and ask all members to extend a very warm welcome, an individual who's contributed a great deal to the Canadian political life in this nation as leader of the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party and currently as the leader of the federal New Democratic Party, who is in Saskatchewan and visiting this weekend from Nova Scotia, Ms. Alexa McDonough over there in the west gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet also, begging your indulgence and that of the members of the House, I want to introduce two people who are a source of great pride for all Saskatchewan people — artistic and cultural contributors; one might even use the word leaders, nationally and internationally — who are seated in your gallery.

First of all, for his second Governor General's award-winning book, *The Englishman's Boy* — I want to underline that I'm not his agent — but *The Englishman's Boy*, a fantastic novel, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and his partner, who is an exceptional painter and artist in her own right, Margaret Vanderhaeghe, who are sitting in your gallery. These are people who tell things about Saskatchewan to Saskatchewan and describe Canada to Canadians and describe Canada to the world and seek eternal truths in their artistry. And I can tell you that they are really, in my judgement, world-class, as acknowledged by the awards they've taken here.

Mr. Speaker, would all members please welcome these two very distinguished Canadians.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join with the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier of Saskatchewan in welcoming Mr. Jim Melenchuk to the legislature, the current Leader of the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan. We look forward to the exchanges that I'm sure we'll be having over the next number of months leading into the next provincial election.

And we would also, Mr. Speaker, want to welcome the federal New Democratic leader, Alexa McDonough, here to Saskatchewan. I'm sure she's doing what she can to bolster the NDP's (New Democratic Party) fortunes here in the province, sagging fortunes as they are. But truly we'd want to welcome both those people to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce three gentlemen in your gallery this morning. One being a very hard worker from the south-east part of the province, both in the farming community, crop insurance, and now certainly on the right side of the issues in Saskatchewan's Liberal Party, Mr. Jeff Bartlam. As well too, a gentleman from my constituency and the community of Central Butte, the president of the Arm River Liberal Association, Mr. D'Arcy Berger; and a member of the executive, his cousin, Mr. Grant Berger. I'd ask the Assembly to please give him a warm welcome this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly nine . . . or seven grade 9 students from the Saskatoon Christian School and their chaperons, Debbie Black and Lynne Bawolin, and we will be meeting for some discussion and juice in a few minutes and I would invite all members to warmly welcome the students and their chaperons from the Saskatoon Christian School here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add the voice of my colleagues on behalf of the official opposition to also welcome the Leader of the federal New Democratic Party to this great province of ours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two very close friends of mine who happen to live next door, Celeste and Steve Tully from Maidstone. Not only that, Steve had just received an award — 20 years serving the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) — and both people are community people committed to Saskatchewan and I'd like them to stand. And please welcome Steve and Celeste to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, two people who found it very difficult to leave this great south-west and the

constituency of Swift Current, but they did come. And they are farmers out in the Success area and very active in the NDP Party in Swift Current.

I'd like to introduce Glen and Sharon Reimer. They're in your gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — I have two more guests I would like to introduce, and I don't know whether . . . I will be very quick with this. I would like to introduce a person who works in my office who is a very, very hard worker and does most of my work. Cyrstal, I'd like you to stand to be introduced.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And the other person who has meant so much to me in my life and has given me all this encouragement — and she won't speak to me for the next month — I'd like to introduce my wife, Gay. Gay.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — If all members have completed introductions, I would like to introduce visiting guests from my home constituency of Moose Jaw who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. We have 19 students with the Multicultural Council in Moose Jaw who are accompanied today by instructors Dean Kush and Monique England.

They'll be engaged in a tour of the building at 10:30 and will be looking forward to an MLA visit at about 11 o'clock. In the occasion of the members from Moose Jaw both being unable to join with them at 11 o'clock, the hon. member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley has kindly consented to meet with them.

And I would ask all hon. members to welcome these visitors from the Multicultural Council in Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Women's Day

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March 8 is International Women's Day, the day when we recognize women's achievements. A just and humane society requires the full participation of both men and women in public and private life, in business, politics, and all types of organizations.

The United Nations chose tomorrow as the day when we recognize that women are, and should be, full and equal citizens. Saskatchewan women have a long history of activism. They come together out of concerns for social causes, farms, families, and children. They have formed business and professional organizations to meet the challenges women face in business and in the world.

Farm women like the Saskatchewan Women's Agricultural Network work together to address rural concerns like the

farming economy and services for rural women. Women have made strides over the years but there is still many gains to be made on the road to full equality.

Women earn about 70 cents for every dollar that a man makes. Women are more likely than men to be found in low-paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement. Women have fought for what should be rightfully theirs.

Mr. Speaker, on March 8, the day to officially recognize women's accomplishments, our province should be leading the way in recognizing women's achievements every day by working steadily to achieve equality without question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise also today to bring to the attention of my colleagues a special day that celebrates the achievements and recognizes the challenges of women everywhere — International Women's Day.

Women's economic and social contributions to society are tremendous and deserve to be acknowledged and celebrated. In Saskatchewan women from a wide variety of backgrounds — rural and urban, first nations and Metis, immigrant, and disabled women — have worked together to make progress in many areas of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, as women we can be proud of how far we've come. In Saskatchewan, 60 per cent of women are in the paid labour force and almost one-third of self-employed persons are women. Women hold executive positions and are elected members of government, as is evident in this Assembly.

Yet along with the many advances women have made in Saskatchewan and around the world, many challenges remain. Women are still the primary care-givers of the family and this unpaid and often unrecognized work adds to the plight of women trying to attain economic and social equality.

Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day, which is tomorrow, March 8, provides an opportunity for everyone to reflect on where women are today but also to recognize that we must continue to travel together along the often difficult but challenging road to equality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Women's Curling Champions

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this moment to heap praise on the Canadian women's curling champions, a foursome who have, again, won our hearts and the Tournament of Hearts. The Saskatchewan team of skip Sandra Schmirler, third Jan Betker, second Joan McCusker, and lead Marcia Gudereit continue to make us proud of their curling accomplishments.

Three Canadian titles in four years and the only team to hold the title three times. And now the possibility of becoming an unprecedented three-time world champion is just a few weeks

away for Sandra and her team in Bern, Switzerland; and they have earned a berth in the play-downs to represent Canada at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Japan.

Congratulations, ladies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has become something of an annual tradition for me. I am happy also once again to congratulate the curling rink of Sandra Schmirler — my constituent, Sandra Schmirler, Mr. Speaker — and I have to say this just once: Schmirler the Curler.

Sandra and her rink of Jan Betker, Joan McCusker, and Marcia Gudereit are simply the best women's curling rink in Canada and soon the world. For any of us living under a rock last week and may have missed it, I am congratulating the Schmirler rink for winning the Scott Tournament of Hearts in Vancouver on Sunday. They won it for the third time.

For we in Saskatchewan the victory was even sweeter because they beat a rink from Ontario in the final — a common sense victory if there ever was one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, three Canadian women's rinks have won three Canadian championships. None have won three world's championships — not yet. I am confident though that I will be standing here again on April 21 to say this has occurred.

Until then I know all members will join me in wishing Sandra, Jan, Joan, and Marcia all the best as they carry our colours and hopes to Bern, Switzerland.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Pay Equity for Women

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we celebrate International Women's Day by reviewing the economic and social progress we have made and are yet to make, there are two points I would like to make. One is cautionary, and one is laudatory.

First, the price of freedom, as we are told, is eternal vigilance. What is gained can be taken away. So as we celebrate the incremental liberation of women, we should remember how recent it was, for instance, that we were not legally considered persons.

But much more positively, Mr. Speaker, is the progress we're making in Saskatchewan towards pay equity. Equality will be even closer to reality when in the workplace there is equal pay for work of equal value.

And in 1994 our cabinet decided that executive government and the Crowns would lead the way by implementing pay equity through the collective bargaining process and that wage

adjustments would begin after April 1 of 1997.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — We are proud to say that we have followed up on those commitments. As responsible employers the government has set standards to achieve the goal of equal pay for work of equal value. Wage adjustments are to be completed within a five-year time frame.

The first organization to implement this change will be the Workers' Compensation Board, to be followed by executive government, SaskEnergy, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), and SaskTel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — It is by such small, incremental steps as these that equality will one day be achieved; and by the virtue of the structural change — bargained collectively — the results maintained.

I am proud to announce these steps today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kinsmen Telemiracle

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to compliment the people who continue to make Kinsmen Telemiracle a success: the volunteers who work tirelessly, the citizens and businesses of this great province for their financial contributions. Twenty-one years and more than \$40 million raised is an accomplishment worth great praise. Congratulations for your years of caring and giving.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Economic Success in Maidstone

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to share with the other members of this Assembly an illustration of economic success that is occurring in the community of Maidstone. This community of less than a thousand people is proving that the economic agenda established for this province is working.

Stability and growth are key words when describing Maidstone's economy for 1996 and 1997; words that can be used to depict Saskatchewan's economy as well. The community experienced broad-based growth throughout its many industries and services — from the gas and oil and agricultural industries to services and retail industries.

In many ways, Mr. Speaker, Maidstone's economy is an example of our provincial economy and the broad-based growth it has been experiencing. The stats today show that 7,000 more people are working in February '97 than were working in February '96 in Saskatchewan.

The maintenance and expansion of existing businesses, as well

as the establishment of new ones, is not only an accomplishment for the community but also a reflection of the government's economic agenda.

Building permits illustrate that growth is occurring. Almost \$600,000 worth of permits were issued in 1996 and more are expected in 1997.

Maidstone is preparing for the future, Mr. Speaker. The community is determined to prosper. If 1996 and the beginning of 1997 are any example, they are definitely on the right track. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gas Price Hike

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be back in session and I wanted to bring to the attention of members a fairly important item that has happened here in Regina.

For those of us who watch the *X-Files* regularly on Sunday night, we're all well aware of the wide-ranging impact governments can have on our lives. And true to form, the federal Finance minister came to Regina on March 4, made a big speech, and sure enough, March 5 gas prices went up no more than nine cents a litre here in Regina. A coincidence, Mr. Speaker? I think not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Care Reform

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been a little over one year since the last spring session began in this legislature. And this one-year period has underlined one fact: that Saskatchewan's health care system is indeed in crisis.

Just as we did in the last session, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition once again bring forth the many and varied concerns that people across this province have with our health care system.

Today we are also establishing a health care hot-line, Mr. Speaker, through which people can share their experiences and ideas about the state of health care in this province. And rest assured, we will be bringing those issues and thoughts forward to this House.

Will the Minister of Health explain, Mr. Speaker, what comfort can he provide for those people who continue to fall victim, who continue to fall through the cracks in our health system, and re-ensure them that he will do something to fix the health system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, since the House last sat of course there's been an addition to the Liberal Party, the election

of the leader, the new Leader of the Liberal Party. And I want to tell the House that after he was selected as leader he went on record as saying that he's going to do away with the elected health boards in this province, Mr. Speaker, and he's going to go back to 450 health boards, Mr. Speaker, like we had before, made up of hand-picked people picked by the Leader of the Liberal Party.

And not only that, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Liberal Party has gone on record as saying that he's going to shut down most of the rural hospitals in this province because he's going to adopt the Australian model, Mr. Speaker, which says that there will be hospitals in communities of more than a hundred . . . or 10,000 people.

But most alarming, Mr. Speaker, contrary to what that member and that party said in the last session, which is that we should spend more on health care, the Leader of the Liberal Party says he's going to cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of our health care. And I'd like to know where that member stands on that issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really do appreciate the minister answering the question.

Let there be no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that health care is the most important issue among the people of this province. The latest polling provides that public support for this government's directions and changes to health care is falling dramatically. Three years ago 49 per cent of Saskatchewan people were satisfied with the reform. Two years ago, it slipped to 38 per cent. And the latest results show a mere 26 per cent, Mr. Speaker — one in four — one in four, Mr. Member.

Can the . . . Mr. Speaker, given the fact, given the fact, Mr. Speaker, that it's been five years since this government's faulty health care reform process began, the time has come for an independent evaluation, not a government study, not a government-run evaluation. The Saskatchewan residents deserve that, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister of Health today stand up in this House and give his commitment to the people of this province, the people that are suffering from lack of health care services, that he will introduce a group to study the effects of health care reform and where we haven't come from since 1991?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I want to remind anybody watching today what that member and the Leader of the Liberal Party have to say about health care in this province. We had that member in this House last year saying this: "If there are people that are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay."

And what he's talking about, Mr. Speaker, is replacing the single-tiered, public medicare system we have with a private medicare system. And this goes hand in hand, Mr. Speaker, with what the new Leader of the Liberal Party — who, by the way, is on the payroll of the Liberal caucus — has to say about

the issue, Mr. Speaker, because what he says, November 27, 1996 in the *Leader-Post* is — private clinics — "I don't have a problem with that."

That's what he says, Mr. Speaker. So at least there's some consistency between the member from Arm River and the Leader of the Liberal Party. They stand for private, for-profit medicine, Mr. Speaker. We stand for medicare. That's the difference between those members and these members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Youth Crime

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have been extremely disturbed this week. For the second consecutive day, Regina police were forced to fire shots to apprehend a vehicle taken by teenagers.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing now is not working. The people of Saskatchewan are demanding action. We have young offender laws to rehabilitate and to punish, but at present they appear to be doing neither. The administration of those laws is of course a provincial responsibility. Saskatchewan already has the highest percentage of youth incarceration of any jurisdiction in North America and yet youth programs are sorely lacking, and child poverty is the second highest in Canada.

Will the Minister of Justice explain what he is going to do to finally acknowledge the problem of youth crime, and to live up to his obligation to ensure safety in this province and redirect the lives of our problem youth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the new member from North Battleford for his question and I'd like to also welcome him here to the legislature. I look forward to many fruitful discussions.

The question that we have today is of great concern to our government and to me personally. We know that there's been a rash of reports of the various issues involving young offenders and young adults. We're concerned about that; we're concerned about the public. What we are doing is, we're taking this very seriously.

We are working to support the police forces, who are doing a good job in a tough situation. We're also working together with the Hot Cars program that is brought into the province with the assistance of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). We're also working on an integrated approach to deal with those offenders who have been identified as the people who are very much a problem.

What I would say today is that we have to remember very clearly that the Young Offenders Act is a federal Liberal responsibility and we would ask that you do everything you can to work with Mr. Rock and Mr. Chrétien.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Minister of Justice acknowledges that we do have a problem, even if he seems to be reluctant to acknowledge that the administration of our youth centres, the hiring of our youth workers, and youth programming, and the administration of the Young Offenders Act is a provincial responsibility.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Now that he has acknowledged that our youth programs are failing, I would like to ask the hon. minister if he will endorse my call at the conclusion of question period for an emergency debate into how we will handle the problems of disadvantaged youth in this province and the problems of youth crime.

Will the minister indicate if he considers the situation sufficiently grave to support my call for an emergency debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you again for the question. This situation in Regina and in Saskatchewan is something that we have been working very carefully with, with the police and with other people within the justice system. And it is something where we need to work together.

One of the clear messages, and one of the clear difficulties, is that when we went to Fredericton last week to the ministers of Justice meeting to talk about young offenders legislation and all of the ancillary services related to young offenders, it was clear that this was federal legislation that pushed a lot of costs onto the province. And the sharing from the federal government has not been the way that it should have been.

And we would very much appreciate assistance from our colleagues across the floor as they work with their federal counterparts to address a number of these issues. We in Saskatchewan will be working and continue to work with all of the people throughout Saskatchewan to solve these problems.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the latest employment figures which were released today are the first positive sign on the Saskatchewan job front for some time. And these are in spite of . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — And these are in spite of, not because of, the so-called job strategy of this government. Mr. Speaker, these numbers pale in comparison to what is happening in the other prairie provinces.

In the last month 18,000 new jobs were created in Manitoba and 31,000 new jobs were created in Alberta. When will the Minister of Economic Development realize that his government's failure to provide jobs and hope for our young people is a contributing factor to the youth crime epidemic

we're now experiencing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to respond to the member opposite and thank him for the question, seeing that the stats that came out from the federal . . . (inaudible) . . . show that there are 7,000 more people working in February of '97 than in '96. And I want to say to the member opposite that that is a good record for the business community in Saskatchewan given the kind of winter that we're enduring.

I'm also curious . . . and I expected this question from the member from Kindersley because the comparison with Conservative provinces stands in contrast to the Liberal provinces; that I would have expected this member to compare himself to, i.e., Newfoundland with an unemployment rate of 20.9 per cent; P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island) at 20 per cent; Nova Scotia, 14 per cent; and New Brunswick, an increase of 2 per cent over last year in Liberal New Brunswick.

So I say to the member opposite, the lowest unemployment in Canada isn't good enough. We're going to work even harder and we have said we're going to work harder. But for that member to say that their job numbers in Liberal provinces are anything to crow about needs to check the record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Youth Crime

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, it's time to take off the blinders. How can you possibly say that car theft is not a common occurrence and that it's being blown out of proportion by the media?

For the past year now, Regina has averaged over 10 car thefts a day. In the past couple of days over 70 vehicles were stolen. Shots were fired in two separate incidents. The public doesn't feel safe. The police do not feel safe. In fact the only people who don't seem to be afraid are the criminals who are out there stealing cars and taunting the police.

Mr. Minister, last week you met with Canada's Justice ministers from across the country and discussed the Young Offenders Act, and indeed it is an area of federal jurisdiction. But what specific recommendations did you bring to the table to deal with this growing epidemic of car thefts in Regina?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd like to thank the Leader of the Third Party for the question. The specific issues that relate to car theft are part of many offences that come under the Young Offenders Act. And one of the things that was discussed very clearly at the federal ministers' meeting related to the fact that the Young Offenders Act does not have the same kind of flexibility in dealing with offenders as some of the other Criminal Code provisions and some of the other sentencing provisions.

But I think the most important thing is to remember that in

Regina we have a chief of police, we have a mayor, we have a justice system that are very concerned about this issue, and we are working together with them to identify those people who are the source of many of the problems.

And I think you quite correctly identified that a big issue is fear in the communities. And clearly, one of the ways that we can deal with that is to all work together to resolve this problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, some of the minister's comments on this issue have been absolutely incredible. Yes we have a chief of police here in Regina and yes we have a mayor; what we don't have is a Minister of Justice prepared to do anything on the issue.

The minister says we should all park our cars in a safe place. Where's that, Mr. Minister? Moose Jaw?

The minister says we need more jobs for our young people. First of all, many of the people involved in these car thefts are 14 and 15 years old. They should be in school, Mr. Minister.

And secondly, there are a lot of people who don't have jobs but they don't go around stealing cars, necessarily. The minister says we should work with the police in the community. The police in the community are calling for tougher sentences, Mr. Minister, but he says — you say — that's not the answer.

Mr. Minister, why are you standing up for the criminals instead of standing up for the police and for the public here in Saskatchewan? There's only one group of people who would agree with your comments yesterday, and that's the car thieves.

Mr. Minister, everyone knows we need . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order, order. The hon. member is being rather lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask him to go immediately to his question.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, what we need to do is deal with this Young Offenders Act and make some recommendations to the federal minister, one that includes stricter . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'll ask the hon. member to go directly to his question now or I'll recognize another member; to go directly to the question.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, when are you going to start working toward the goal of reducing crimes in this province; reducing car theft in this province; putting forward recommendations like stricter sentences, restitution, and public identification of dangerous, repeat offenders? When are you going to do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd like to thank the member for what I think was a question. But practically, what we are doing in Saskatchewan is we are taking this matter very seriously. We are taking all matters related to youth crime very seriously.

And I think it's very telling that the federal committee that was working in the House of Commons did not come to Saskatchewan, even though we had been assured by the federal Liberals that they would come here to hear about our specific concerns as it related to youth crime in Saskatchewan.

And one of the difficulties for us then is that some of the ideas and concerns that we have, we've been able to insert them in other ways, but it didn't raise some of the public discussion that I'm sure that the Leader of the Third Party would have liked to have.

We take this matter very seriously. We are working on this problem and we appreciate any ideas and suggestions from that side of the floor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Investment in Guyana

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SaskPower.

Mr. Minister, you don't have enough money to cut the PST or to fix highways but you managed to find \$31 million of taxpayers' money to invest in the poorest country in South America. Mr. Minister, Guyana isn't the most stable country to start off with, and yesterday the president of Guyana died. And it's not a laughing matter, as the Liberals seem to indicate.

Mr. Minister, how will the president's death affect the political and economic stability of Guyana and the Saskatchewan taxpayers' \$31 million investment?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say, beginning and prefacing my remarks, that we all sympathize with the family of the president of Guyana and will, with the rest of the people of the world, mourn his death.

I want to say with respect to the Guyana project, it would require I guess, some understanding of the members of the opposition and others, who don't have a handle on the process that has taken place.

SaskPower was involved, as other companies around the world were, in a process whereby the Guyanese government asked for corporations to come in and put a proposal together with respect to the development of an electrical infrastructure. SaskPower Commercial — one of the companies that was involved in that process — after due diligence, SaskPower Commercial was chosen as the corporation to put forth a proposal in more detail to the government to determine whether or not a contract could be negotiated and an agreement signed.

Mr. Speaker, that process is taking place. Subsequent to that, it will come before the SaskPower board who will do due diligence with respect to the economic return, with respect to the possibility and the risk involved. Then a decision will be made and passed on . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the minister has a clue about Guyana's stability. The country is facing elections later this year and the leader of the governing party has just died. And the main opposition party was responsible for nationalizing a number of foreign companies in the 1970s, including a Canadian bauxite company. And who's to say it may not happen again.

The U.S. (United States) State Department and groups like Amnesty International continue to identify human rights violations in Guyana. There continues to be racial tensions. Guyana has the lowest per capita GDP (gross domestic product) in South America and has ongoing border disputes with Surinam and Venezuela. And on top of these problems, Mr. Speaker, they now have to deal with Jack Messer.

Mr. Minister, there's probably not a taxpayer in Saskatchewan who would invest their own money in Guyana. Why would you risk \$31 million of taxpayers' money in such an unstable country when it doesn't even create one job in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, first of all let me again state to the member that the 31 million has not been committed. There is a proposal that will come before the board of SaskPower who will do due diligence.

But let me say this, Mr. Minister. The Crown corporations of this province have been managed in a more responsible fashion since 1991 than was ever the case when the Conservative government in this province had the reins and the control of those corporations.

I can say to the members that the debt/equity ratio in the Crowns have been substantially better since we took power. I can say that they have been better managed and I can say that the people of this province have been served very well since 1991 by these corporations.

I would say to the members opposite that, goodness' sakes, we have a government in this province who does due diligence with respect to economic development initiatives, unlike that administration who squandered billions of dollars on behalf of the people of this province.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that's a situation that will never happen again in this province because we'll never see a Tory government, and for that matter a Liberal government, for a long, long time in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highway Maintenance

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our caucus recently established a pothole patrol hot line. And dozens of callers to this line have confirmed one thing. They don't find the sad state of our highway system to be merely an inconvenience. They believe that our highways are hazardous and pose a very real threat to motorists.

A perfect example is a 20-kilometre section of Highway 19 between Loreburn and Hawarden which has been virtually a sheet of ice this winter and the site of 10 separate roll-overs since December. There are so many potholes, so many heaves, road crews cannot scrape the ice off the highway.

Will the Minister of Highways explain how his government can stand by as Saskatchewan residents become victims of this and other hazardous routes which make up the highway system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — First of all I want to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank our Highways crews, because with the tough winter we've had, they've done just an exceptional job and deserve a lot of credit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — About the 1 800 Bump Line, Mr. Speaker, I do have some concerns. I guess some of the people might take the Liberals seriously, and you know that's a grave mistake, I believe. Some of their concerns might be very legitimate concerns, Mr. Speaker, and the department should look at those concerns. But if they're sitting on that member's desk for weeks and weeks, and we don't get that information, some of these people should at least know that the Liberal government, the only reason they have this line is to play politics with those concerns. So I would think that the member should at least have the courtesy to give either the Minister of Highways the locations of the concerns and/or to the department directly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, with no reference to the minister's health problems, I don't think his heart is in the job.

The level of spending on Highway 19 has seriously dropped since the NDP have taken government. In fiscal year '91-92, the maintenance spending on Highway 19 was close to \$800,000 each and every year. By '93-94 it had fallen to 500,000, and in '94-95 it was 625,000.

Mr. Speaker, this government is clearly underfunding the maintenance of Highway 19, and with the amount of accidents on this highway, and given the amount of calls that we have received on our pothole patrol hot line, it is clear that this road has become a serious public safety hazard.

Mr. Minister, what actions will you take today — today — to ensure no lives are threatened or lost on Highway 19?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you. To Mr. Speaker, is the member from Wood River . . . he's still here; he's way over at the end of the line; he's almost bumped — speaking of bumped — right off the floor of the House.

But I want to tell the member, I happened to be on a talk show with a member last week, Christina Cherneskey, on CJWW.

And the people that called in were very understandable about the financial situations of the province and that we in fact are doing a good deal of repair work on the roads with our limited resources and considering the number of roads that we have.

But what they couldn't understand, Mr. Speaker, is the federal Liberals downloading on the province, the federal Liberals preferring the railways to producers, allowing them to abandon rail lines.

Really what the line should be, Mr. Speaker, I think, is 1 800 Dump, and that would be to dump the federal Liberals from all these decisions that are actually affecting the roads and affecting the producers of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to obtain a ruling from the Speaker.

The Speaker: — I'll ask the Leader of the Opposition to put your point of order.

Mr. Krawetz: — Yesterday morning, the Lieutenant Governor delivered the prorogation speech ending the first session of the twenty-third legislature. As I listened to the summary of the issues and Bills that were debated and passed in this Assembly, I was shocked to hear about the passing of the district services Act. After reviewing *Hansard* this morning, I have confirmed that my ears did not deceive me.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read one paragraph:

You chose to implement The Service Districts Act which provides a new framework for intermunicipal co-operation in the delivery of local services. It gives municipalities the ability to form a service district to achieve efficiencies without restricting or reducing the autonomy or powers of individual municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the district services Act died on the order paper, and I would ask for your ruling as to whether the information presented is accurate.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not entirely sure what the correct approach to this is. The member is accurate that the portion of the comments which related to the health services district Act were not accurate. It may be useful, I think, for Mr. Speaker to simply correct the record, ask that the record be corrected. It will be done so. And then we'll get on with this session.

The Speaker: — Order, order.

The Leader of the Opposition has raised a point of order regarding the accuracy of the content of the prorogation speech presented by His Honour yesterday, and the Government House Leader has acknowledged that there was an error in the content

of it.

I think the wisest course of action is for the Chair to take notice, to take under advisement the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and the Government House Leader on this point of order. And I will commit to the House that I will bring a ruling from the Speaker at the next sitting of the legislature.

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

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to rule 46 on a matter of pressing urgency and necessity and ask leave of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Third Party has requested leave of the Assembly to present a motion under rule 46. I'll ask the Leader of the Third Party to very, very briefly advise the House as to why he feels this matter is a matter of urgent and pressing necessity and then to advise the House as to what is the nature of the motion he wishes to introduce, and then the House shall decide.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan farmers face challenges on what seems like a yearly basis, and most recently this one is tragic and very costly. Steps must be taken immediately to address the severe backlog in the grain handling system here in western Canada.

According to the Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, the delay will cost prairie farmers \$65 million; 15 million in demurrage costs alone. That number is increasing into the millions each day as more than 40 ships await grain shipments at our ports. As Paul Baxter, shipping agent in Vancouver, said recently, this is the worst we've seen. It's given this port a bad name and hence Canada a bad name.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that grain shipments are at least one month behind gives us a bad name, but more importantly, it hurts struggling Saskatchewan farmers with millions of dollars in costs they can't afford. Our farmers need help, Mr. Speaker, and they need it now.

(1100)

I ask leave of the Assembly to discuss immediate and appropriate steps that may be taken to address the crisis in the following motion:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government's mishandling the grain transportation system and demand that the federal government take steps to address the current backlog by immediately passing legislation to hold the railways and others responsible for the delay; monetarily responsible, including the demurrage charges, so that all costs incurred by prairie farmers will be reimbursed in full; and further, that this Assembly forward the transcripts of this debate to Prime Minister Chrétien and federal Minister of Agriculture Mr. Goodale.

Leave granted.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION UNDER RULE 46**Grain Transportation Delays**

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will make my remarks relatively brief so that my colleagues on both sides of the House can add their input into this issue. I realize that we are supposed to be hearing responses to the government's throne speech; however, it is imperative that we take the time today to make the federal government know how their mishandling of the grain transportation system in Canada is hurting Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Speaker, currently there are dozens of ships waiting to be loaded with Saskatchewan grain in western Canada while our precious grain is sitting in hopper cars on rail sidings and in grain elevators and in farmers' bins across this province. What's worse, Mr. Speaker, is that the federal Liberals have done absolutely nothing to deal with this problem. They've talked about transportation reform for two years, yet there has been no meaningful reforms put in place to deal with this situation.

It's one thing for a government to drag its feet, Mr. Speaker, and it's an entirely different matter that the foot-dragging is literally costing farmers — farmers, Mr. Speaker — millions and millions of dollars. Exactly how much are we talking about? The Canadian Wheat Board said that there will be about a \$65 million loss to farmers in the next crop year — \$65 million there. Apparently about \$15 million has been lost in demurrage costs alone.

And why, Mr. Speaker, should farmers who work hard to produce crops be stuck with the bill because problems have resulted with the transportation system? They simply should not be the ones paying the cost.

Farmers work hard, Mr. Speaker, they work hard to keep their farming operations afloat. They have to deal with floods, with drought, with grasshoppers, cutworms, early winters, cool summers, hail, and many others, things that are out of their control.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's fair and I don't think the farmers of this province feel it's fair that they have to pay the bill for the backlog in the grain transportation system when their part is done, Mr. Speaker, and their crops are ready to go to market. Farmers should not have to, once again, suck up the costs of millions of dollars while the federal government refuses to adequately address this situation.

It's not like the federal Liberals haven't received any input or any good ideas on the subject, Mr. Speaker. In fact it's just the opposite. Ralph Goodale has dragged his feet for the past two years while several proposals have been brought to him that would provide for a more efficient grain handling system. The latest, Mr. Speaker, was just a couple of weeks ago when the prairie farm coalition, commodity coalition, brought forward a comprehensive and informative plan that would address this very situation.

The coalition, Mr. Speaker, is made up of a group of 12 western Canadian commodity organizations representing almost every grain and oilseed and speciality crop grown in this prairie region.

Members of that group include the Saskatchewan Canola Growers Association, Western Barley Growers Association, Western Producer Car Group, Manitoba Canola Growers Association, Alberta Barley Commission, Alberta Canola Producers Association, Canadian Canola Growers Association, Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission, Flax Growers Of Western Canada, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, Alberta Marketing Choices Implementation Group, and the Oat Producers of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the objective of the coalition is to promote commercial business-like solutions to problems of grain handling and transportation and marketing. We're talking about a group of organizations, Mr. Speaker, that obviously know how to market commodities world-wide, a group that has a lot of buyable, innovative answers for grain transportation problems that are plaguing the farmers of this province right now. These people have handed, Mr. Speaker, they have handed Mr. Goodale some very good ideas that would help alleviate this problem on a long-term basis. And we've got a copy of this submission if anyone would care to look at it.

Mr. Speaker, the Prairie Farm Commodity Coalition presented their report to the federal Minister of Agriculture, Minister Goodale, who has done absolutely nothing with it. In fact, despite two years of talking about transportation reform, Mr. Goodale and the federal Liberal government have made no fundamental changes to the grain transportation system for the 1996-97 crop year.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, new initiatives are needed and they are needed now. So it's not for the federal Liberals . . . it's not that the federal Liberals haven't received any solutions to this problem, Mr. Speaker. They've just decided not to implement any solutions and it is at the expense of our farmers here in this province and our economy suffers as a result.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, farmers should be paid in full for their losses. The federal government should put a mechanism in place immediately to ensure prairie producers receive fair compensation for the federal government's mishandling of our grain transportation system.

Further, Mr. Speaker, it's time that the federal Minister of Agriculture, Minister Goodale, realize that he was elected in Saskatchewan and he was elected to do what's best for the farmers of our province and for the farmers of the other provinces here in Canada.

Mr. Goodale needs to be reminded of his roots and why he ran for politics in the first place. It's time he took viable, long-term steps to ensure that this situation does not happen again in Saskatchewan. Our country's reputation can't afford it, the federal government can't afford it, our economy can't afford it; but most of all, Mr. Speaker, the farmers of this province can't afford it.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all members of the Legislative Assembly will do their best for Saskatchewan farmers and support this motion. It is important that we deal with this matter, Mr. Speaker. The economy of this province . . . the farmers are suffering. You talk to any farmer in Saskatchewan these days and I don't think they feel that it is their responsibility any longer, once they load cars in this province, to have to pay for the backlog in the system that's going out to the west coast.

It is simply wrong Mr. Speaker. It is an area unquestionably a federal jurisdiction. Grain car movement, federal rail line regulation, is an area that the federal government has to take responsibility for.

Mr. Speaker, therefore I move, seconded by my colleague from Cannington:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government's mishandling the grain transportation system and demand that the federal government take steps to address the current backlog by immediately passing legislation to hold the railways and others responsible for the delay; monetarily responsible, including for demurrage charges, so that all costs incurred by prairie producers will be reimbursed in full; and further, that this Assembly forward the transcripts of this debate to Prime Minister Chrétien and federal Agriculture Minister Goodale.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected six years ago, I felt that I had been given a mandate to represent the views and the concerns and the needs of the rural people of Saskatchewan. And it's somehow appropriate, sadly appropriate, that my first speech in this session should be about rural needs.

Many of you will be familiar with the little line of alliteration of mine that has become a favourite of certain members of the media. And while I can't use the Premier's first name, it goes something like, the member from Riversdale's rural revenge. Indeed I can hardly think of another government that has done more harm to rural Saskatchewan and the agriculture sector than the current provincial NDP.

Nevertheless today we are faced with another piece of alliteration, Ralph's rural revenge. It's no secret that the rural areas of western Canada are not the strongest centres of support for the federal Liberals. We should hardly be surprised then that what we are now seeing, just how low a priority and well-being that agriculture is being given by this federal government. This low priority was set when Jean Chrétien appointed a lawyer as Agriculture minister instead of a farmer. Can you imagine the hue and cry that would have ensued from the lawyers had a farmer been appointed Justice minister?

My colleague, the member from Kindersley, has already gone over many of the startling facts regarding the current crisis in grain transportation — \$15 million in demurrage charges straight out of farmers' pockets, \$65 million in total losses to farmers according to Wheat Board estimates. And I'm sure everyone here has a connection to agriculture, who feels that

these numbers are like a punch in the gut from Mike Tyson.

But it isn't just the farmers who should be mad about this situation. With our provincial economy still largely dependent on agriculture, the multiplier effect from these losses is going to have grave financial implications on every man, woman, and child in this province.

As an example, Mr. Speaker, at the reception after the Speech from the Throne yesterday, a farmer told me that FCC (Farm Credit Corporation) is hounding them for their land payment. And she said they haven't got the money but their grain bins are full. They have the assets but the federal minister in charge of FCC, Farm Credit Corporation, also happens to be the federal minister in charge of Agriculture Canada, and grain movement. So on one hand he's demanding that farmers make their payments to FCC and on the other hand he's not allowing them to do so, Mr. Speaker.

This situation needs to be addressed immediately. Unfortunately immediately is not what we are getting from the federal government. In spite of having a workable plan in his hands to resolve the situation, Agriculture Minister Ralph Goodale has done nothing but drag his feet. Which is the usual speed Mr. Goodale reacts to things, except in delivering speeches, and even there, Mr. Speaker, he seems to be filibustering himself.

But all of this is just so much paper-shuffling and bureaucratic baffle-gab. All the talk in the world is not going to resolve the problem. What we need is action.

What makes the delay in resolving the shipping delays all the more noxious is the fact that this is a problem which has been plaguing farmers for years, if not decades. The entire concept of demurrage, as it is now structured, makes no sense. In a trade transaction, why should the party that has the least impact on how quickly the product gets to its destination be the one that is held financially responsible for the delays. Any reasonable assessment of market forces would lead one to the conclusion that you have to penalize the people who caused those delays. That is the only way that demurrage can have the intended economic effect of ensuring products get to port.

Today it appears to be the railroads themselves that are behind the delays. We have all heard more than enough anecdotes about train loads of automobiles that are making it swiftly to the lots in Ontario while our crops rot in the elevator.

(1115)

But we went through the same basic situation in years past with labour difficulties. In 1995, it was the west coast longshoremen. In September of 1994, it was the Grain Services Union. In January of 1994, it was the longshoremen again, and in 1991 it was the double-header from the public services alliance and the grain workers' union. As *Leader-Post* agricultural economist Darcee McMillan said back in 1995:

It seems to some that it's just one union after another doing what they can to undermine farmers.

And here again, I'm sure that we all remember the horror

stories: farmers forced into bankruptcy, while a \$60,000-a-year longshoreman squabbled over a few more dollars a month.

Also, I think we all remember in 1995 when the federal NDP sided with the Bloc Québécois in supporting those unions. Actually, now that I think of it, the provincial NDP were quite happy to let farmers pay the demurrage during the grain services strike. However, Mr. Speaker, that is all in the past.

What we as an Assembly must now do is put up a united front against any and all groups, either business or labour, that would try to cripple our provincial economy. In bringing forward this motion, our caucus wants to send a strong message that the province of Saskatchewan is drawing a line in the sand against all those who would put the knife to the throat of our farmers.

By taking the sensible course of placing demurrage and other costs on the back of those responsible, a federal government would not only be ensuring corporate good citizens on the part of the railways, they would also be encouraging labour peace by making the grain handling unions take responsibility for the damage they cause to people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, I have been greatly encouraged by the level of all-party support and cooperation that we seen on this issue, and I trust that on this occasion at least, the NDP government will see past its ideological blinders and support farmers instead of the union bosses for a change. Likewise I hope that our colleagues in the Liberal caucus will not let partisanship loyalty stop them from making a statement that is in the best interest of their rural constituents.

Mr. Speaker, farmers should not have to pay for the errors or actions of others. Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to vote in favour of this motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to rise and support this motion. I believe that the third party is a little behind in their complaints. I want to read to the Assembly a news release that I had given a while back:

Highways and Transportation Minister Andy Renaud today said Canada's grain handling and transportation system is failing Saskatchewan farmers.

"Saskatchewan grain is sitting in bins on the farm, in hopper cars parked on rail sidings, and in grain elevators. It is not moving to the port where empty ships wait, . . . "This is costing Saskatchewan farmers millions of dollars."

The federal government introduced new legislation in 1996 to cover grain handling and transportation. All the prairie provinces argued (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) at that time, that the new Canada Transportation Act favoured railways over shippers, (and) didn't promote competition in Canada's railways, (and) it wasn't responsive to the needs of shippers and that producers would suffer as a result of the legislation.

"Saskatchewan fears have come true. Our farmers are

being financially hurt due to the inability of the federal government to deal with the railways," Renaud said. "Under the CTA there is little room for the federal government to penalize the railways for their poor performance."

"Saskatchewan is calling on the federal government to compensate producers for added costs resulting from the delays," Renaud said. "The federal government and the railroads should be held accountable."

"The railways and the federal government are failing Saskatchewan farmers, while the railways are making record profits and downsizing their operations.

"The federal government is demonstrating its inability to manage the crisis in grain transportation that is facing Saskatchewan farmers," Renaud said.

The federal government is holding a grain industry meeting in Calgary on February 13 and the province is calling upon the federal minister of Agriculture to immediately address the needs of all grain producers, concluded Renaud.

This was dated February 12, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to let the third party know that we are on top of this and pushing very hard for improvements. We get little reaction, however, from the Liberals across the House, and for sure from the federal Liberals in Ottawa.

Saskatchewan producers are very important to our province — one of our major industries. The economy relies on agriculture. We have the most productive farmers in the country, in the world. They have a reputation with their global customers, people that we ship to, because of the high quality of the grain that we produce, the high quality of specialty crops that we produce, and the reliability of that supply.

Mr. Speaker, that reputation is being jeopardized by grain handling and the transportation system that is failing our producers, as I mentioned earlier. The failure of the railways to provide adequate service is preventing grain from reaching export position, and hurting Saskatchewan farmers.

Over 1.5 million tonnes of grain sat on the Prairies, unable to be delivered. That would cost farmers. I believe it's the Canadian Wheat Board that estimates about \$65 million — over \$15 million, Mr. Speaker, in demurrage charges. That's the charges that the ships will charge. And guess who pays? The farmer, for waiting for the grain, their grain, in a situation that they have no control over. And that's not fair.

The other \$50 million in costs, of course, is because of the permanent loss to prairie producers from grain that will have to be sold next year. The problem here, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, is the record of Canada with our trading partners — the reliability issue. They rely on Canada for that good quality grain that we produce and they rely on a speedy delivery when they need the product.

But we're not giving it to our trading partners, Mr. Speaker. And will they be there next year? I don't know. Will they be

there the year after? I don't know. Will we lose sales to the United States, to Australia, to other producing countries? I don't know.

How many millions of dollars have the producers on branch lines had to incur to truck their grain from the branch lines to the main lines? Another cost. And what about the additional cost to Saskatchewan taxpayers for the added road damage as the grain starts to move in the spring when the road bans are on?

The federal government, the Liberals, are not concerned about that. The railways certainly aren't concerned about that. But it's going to be the farmers again, it's going to be taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan, who are going to have to fix those roads as we move that grain to the main line.

It is time that the federal government and the railroads were held accountable. They're not held accountable. I was reading a little article this morning in *The Western Producer*, March 6: "Grain cars wander the countryside." This is by Joe Pender. And he says: "Our Canadian railway system is very inefficient and irresponsible, with a don't-care attitude."

I'm afraid the federal government is the same thing. It's a don't-care attitude. They have a meeting in Calgary on February 13 and they are going to get the grain moving, is what they say. Well is it moving? Not very fast. What's happened? The money that the farmer is losing, is there anybody concerned about that? I don't think so. I haven't heard one word from the Liberals on this issue.

I know they talk about potholes in the highways, which is a serious problem. But how about the farmers' income? How about the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan? I know you're not concerned about that and you want to play politics with the pothole situation. Why? Because you want to defend the federal Liberals, because you're Liberals as well. And I can understand that.

The federal government reduced farm income by over \$300 million a few years ago by eliminating the Crow benefit, and we haven't heard much about that from the members opposite. They like to talk about the potholes in the highways — I know that — but they have to defend the federal Liberals, you know, and they have to protect them because they're one and the same. And I can understand that.

We introduced the Canada Transportation Act. The federal Liberals did that last year. Now there's a Conservative government in Alberta and there's a Conservative government in Manitoba and there's an NDP government in Saskatchewan — the best, of course — but what happened? We went to Ottawa twice. Once to see the Transportation Committee and explain the concerns we had. We went to the Senate committee, the Standing Committee on Transportation, and told them about our concerns. And where were the Liberals? Nowhere to be seen, no help at all.

We made our presentations, we thought we had got a reasonable hearing, but it fell on deaf ears again. No concern about Saskatchewan, no concern about Alberta, no concern about Manitoba, no concern about the farm community. It fell

on deaf ears and here we are today, grain sitting on the branch lines since mid-December and not moving to market.

Today we continue, with our counterparts in Alberta and Manitoba, to push the federal government into some action and to show them the problems with their new legislation, but we're not being heard.

We argued vigorously that the Canada Transportation Act, Bill C-14, is too biased towards the interests of the railroads. It did not promote competition in Canada's railway industry, and it wasn't responsive to the needs of shippers and that producers would suffer as a result of this legislation.

But no, didn't hear anything from the federal Liberals except that no, the Bill would go through. Didn't hear anything from the provincial Liberals because, you see, they have to support the federal Liberals and they're one and the same. And so, you know, they would rather support the federal Liberals down East than the producers from Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba, which I find ironic.

In nearly every instance the federal government ignored our requests and concerns, and instead of standing up for producers and shippers they sided with — guess who — the railways. These are the same railways that are now making record profits while reducing service in rural Saskatchewan.

The federal government told farmers they would benefit from these changes through the improved transportation system at a reasonable price. That's what the Liberals said. In a 1995 speech to the Institute of Public Administration in Regina, the federal Minister of Agriculture, Ralph Goodale, said the reforms would, and I quote:

... help generate faster, cheaper, and a more efficient system, one that delivers on time for farmers at the least possible cost, and one in which the cost savings are fully and fairly shared among all stakeholders including, most especially, farmers themselves.

Well isn't that interesting. We tried to tell Mr. Goodale that Bill C-14 was not going to react in this way, that farmers were going to suffer. But no, he convinced the people that it was going to be a very good thing. The Liberals, the Saskatchewan Liberals, agreed with that. And what do we have? Grain sitting on the branch lines, waiting to be delivered to port, farmers with no income. Hard time to pay the bills with no income, Mr. Speaker. Very difficult time.

I want to remind the Liberals across about what has happened since this new federal legislation has come into force. Number one, poor performance of grain handling and the transportation system. Two, continued deregulation in spite of shippers raising concerns with the federal government.

I mean we were not the only people that went to Ottawa to tell them of the errors in their ways, about our concerns about Bill C-14. Shippers from across the Prairies went in droves. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was there, other grain companies, to tell the federal government, look, we have some concerns with this Bill; it's going to have some effect on us.

But what happened? The Bill was passed. The Senate even passed it. And the Conservatives didn't help much there neither, but needless to say it seemed to slip by the Senate as well. And we're . . . one of the reasons we're not sure if the Senate should still be there. We have our concerns about that.

(1130)

I want to speak a little bit about the demurrage costs. You know, that's what the ships are expecting that our farmers should pay them while they wait for our grain. Over \$15 million, Mr. Speaker. Over \$15 million. The farmer has absolutely no say in the system. His grain is either in the elevator or in his bin or sitting on a car on some siding somewhere in rural Saskatchewan, not moving. And yet he has to pay the ships for waiting for his grain.

And what does Mr. Goodale say? We are going to fix the system, he says. Well where is he? Where is the compensation from the federal government that we're asking . . . that's being asked for in this motion? Why should the farmers pay that \$15 million?

If Mr. Goodale does not want to straighten out the system, he certainly should look after paying that to the farmers and then make sure that the system is fixed so that this never happens again, so that our trading partners can in fact rely on what they expect from Canada — speedy delivery and good quality product.

Our reputation, Mr. Speaker, I talked about it earlier. What is it going to do to our reputation? Will the other . . . those trading partners of ours come back to buy our good quality grain if they are scared that it will not be delivered by the railways? I don't know. I'm very concerned, very concerned.

But we have the Liberal Party here, Mr. Speaker, not concerned about that. They are concerned about some potholes in the roads. I am concerned about those potholes too. But there are other issues that we have to deal with, a lot more important issues even — the income of farmers, allow them to get ready for spring so they've got some money in their pockets for seed and fertilizer and chemicals.

Our fears of that new legislation have come true, and I can say it over and over and over again that I told you so. But did we get one letter of support from the provincial Liberals? No, we did not. Not one, not one word of support.

Why, Mr. Speaker, why? That's because, that's because they are Liberals, you see, and the federal government is Liberal. So how can they say that the federal Liberals are doing a bad job? They may believe it, but they are never going to say that.

So I guess we will continue to fight on. Saskatchewan farmers are paying the price due to the inability of the federal government to deal with the railways and that seems okay with the Liberals in Saskatchewan. Under the CTA (Canada Transportation Act) there is little room for the federal government to penalize the railways for any poor performance. Why wouldn't there be a system of reward and penalty? I don't

know. I have no idea.

Who will say that this will not happen next year? Will it happen next year? I would urge that the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan join with us, join with this motion, and let's tell Ralph that we have a real problem here. We've got to fix it so that in fact it will never happen again and send a clear message to Mr. Goodale.

And I know that you're Liberal and he's Liberal, but you have to overlook that. You have to put that aside and you have say look, yes, do what's right. You know, even though we're both Liberals, please do what's right for a change, you know.

The current situation is not working. We need a rail system that meets everyone's needs, including the producers. The system must not be just the sole benefit of the railways, just cost savings to the railways, without some service there for the people that need to use it. We have a bulk commodity. Grain is a bulk commodity. We are captive to rail in many cases. And the railways know that.

But this Bill certainly, Bill C-14, always did favour the railways. It's set up to favour the railways and not concerned about producers and shippers.

Mr. Speaker, it has not only been the province's lobbying for change, as I mentioned earlier, but the prairie Pools also were there. The Canadian Wheat Board were there. We asked the federal government to intervene but it wasn't done. Everyone was disappointed. Now reality is here. Now we see what's happening, what the Bill really meant.

Railways and grain companies introduced Direct Hit. They're going to get the grain moving, clean up the backlog, they say. We're going to do this till the end of March. The Direct Hit program is industry driven and maximizes the grain shipments from high through-put elevators located on the main lines. But what about the branch lines? What about the lines that are away from the main lines? I know the railways would like to abandon them as quick as they can.

An Hon. Member: — What are you doing to stop that?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The member opposite says, what are you doing to stop that? He should know that it's federal jurisdiction. Railways are governed by the federal government. You know, and he sits there and he says, what are you going to do, Mr. Province? I mean I know he doesn't want to tell the Liberals in Ottawa anything because he's a Liberal too, and I can understand that. I know how he feels. But if they're making an error, he should still tell them. I mean that's his responsibility. Don't worry about the election. Don't play politics. Do what's right.

Shippers and producers adjacent to branch lines are the hardest hit, of course. They're going to be . . . (inaudible) . . . in spring they're going to have to try and get their product from their branch line, from the elevator out in the country, to the main line elevator over Saskatchewan highways and municipal roads. And is there any concern there? I don't think so.

My government is very concerned that when service does return to the branch lines — and hopefully that's soon — that our producers will be faced with the road bans, as I mentioned earlier, and will be busy trying to get their crops into the ground.

Are the federal government, are they even a little bit concerned that the province's road authority will have to pick up that cost, and ultimately the citizens of the province? No. Are the federal Liberals concerned about rural municipalities having to pick up that cost, and ultimately the consumer or the farmer out in the country? No. Are the railways concerned? Well, no.

And maybe the federal Liberals are not concerned because they want to be friends with the railways. I don't know why that is, but I think as a Liberal, a provincial Liberal caucus, certainly you should take this a lot more seriously and demand from Mr. Goodale some action very quickly.

I want to speak about what the effect might have on unemployment in the provinces. Many of you know we have the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada right now. And in comparison to Liberal provinces, Liberal provinces of course, have the highest, highest unemployment rate. They have a sad, sad record, Mr. Speaker, sad record indeed.

And I don't know, if this grain doesn't move and if it sits, what affect that will have on our unemployment rate. We don't want it to go up. And I know that the Liberals opposite are not really concerned because Liberals in other provinces aren't very concerned with unemployment.

But I'm just concerned that, you know, if the grain sits on those lines for a long period of time, that in fact it will have an effect on our low unemployment rate.

It's interesting to note that while the Liberal provinces have very high unemployment rates, that the province that has the best job growth in all of Canada is — guess where — British Columbia. And you know what kind of government they have, Mr. Speaker? It's an NDP government.

And do you know where the lowest unemployment rate is in Canada, Mr. Speaker? If you don't, I'm going to tell you. It's actually Saskatchewan. And you know what government governs Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? NDP again.

So I just wanted to let you know that, because we are certainly concerned as well that the unemployment rate doesn't move up as the grain is not being delivered.

So I would ask that everyone join with me in urging the federal government to fix this backlog situation immediately, to compensate producers, road authorities, for costs like the demurrage costs and road damage costs.

We need to have the federal government revisit the Canada Transportation Act to ensure that this never happens again and ensure our trading partners that indeed we are taking preventative action that this will never happen again, and that you can trust Canada and our delivery of our products to them.

And I know we will not get a lot of support from the Liberal opposition. I know that. They don't understand the situation very well. This was very obvious when the member from Saltcoats made a statement last week calling on the government to establish a two-year moratorium on branch line abandonment in Saskatchewan. That was a very interesting comment. The system from elevator to port is under federal jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, and I just wanted maybe to let him know that.

But I know he doesn't want to talk to the federal government and tell them what a bad job they're doing because they're Liberals as well. And I can understand that. But really they're leaders in their community and should take that responsibility very seriously — to tell Mr. Goodale and the other Liberals in Ottawa even when they're doing a bad job that, you know, I know we're Liberals and they're Liberals but you've got to do a better job. And it's not that hard to do — you should try it sometime.

And I noticed the member from Wood River, he made a statement yesterday in the *Star-Phoenix* or in the *Regina Leader-Post*, I guess. He says perhaps the Premier has the ability to influence both the railways and the grain companies to stop abandoning rail beds. Well isn't that interesting, you know?

Instead of saying I'm going to convince Mr. Goodale we've got to stop this abandonment because it's the federal government that has the jurisdiction, what did he say? No, we're going to ask the Premier to intervene.

It's very hard for me to understand the logic. I think it's a bit of playing politics, Mr. Speaker. I think that's what it is. I think they, you know, they want us to fix the potholes, and I can understand that. They want us to stop the abandonment of rail lines even though it's a federal jurisdiction.

You never hear about the offloads from the federal government to the province, like the \$110 million last year at health and education. Haven't heard a word from them on that at all. Why? Because the government in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, is Liberal and the opposition across is Liberal, and so they don't want, you know, they don't want to say that the Liberals in Ottawa are doing a bad job. And they support it totally.

The member from Melfort-Tisdale said, oh the federal budget was so wonderful that we as a province should follow the federal lead on budgets because theirs was so good. It was a little . . . we'll give the provinces a little but we'll take away a whole bunch kind of budget. And the Liberals in the House, Mr. Speaker, say, oh what a wonderful federal budget there was. It's very, very interesting, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say in closing, Mr. Speaker, that I would hope that the Liberal government are done with their old ways and will stand up and support this motion so we could get this off to Mr. Goodale as soon as possible, so something can be done to our rail service.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't have the opportunity to be here to listen to all the comments made as I was doing some interviews outside the door here. But what I did catch was more than interesting coming from the Transportation minister in a province that is so reliant on agriculture, the export of agriculture products, the movement of grain.

And they're more than prepared . . . I can accept why the third party or Conservative leader would want to just be in here just playing politics, but the Minister of Transportation has a job to do and part of that job is not just transportation but, as part of Executive Council, to ensure that the workings of this province are done in a manner that's beneficial to all. And he shouldn't be playing the kind of politics he is today. I don't think that's responsible. The people have asked him to do, actually much more than that.

So at the end of my brief comments, I will be moving an amendment to the motion and I will read it at that time, Mr. Speaker.

But let's just talk about the government for a moment, the provincial government. We're not, our caucus is not, for a moment saying that there isn't a great deal of responsibility to be shared with the federal government and the railways in what has happened. It's disastrous, we accept that, and we want it fixed just as much as the third party and the government. Let's get that clear. Let's get that clear right now.

But the problem is, is that it just didn't begin today. We just didn't have snow fall last week. We didn't have some of the problems that they're basing their arguments on in the last days. We've had it for some months now. The grain is . . . the backlog of grain has been building, building, building, and the only response I've seen from Executive Council, from the Premier, from the Highways minister, is to ask, by way of news release, that there be some compensation. I think that was about four or five weeks ago and he knew he was going to be in trouble. I think that news release came out in a somewhat timely fashion. Perhaps they had a view that things would happen sooner, the session would come in sooner, and they didn't want this to be coming around to bite them in the neck.

So if we take a look at what action they should have done though, keeping in mind that Saskatchewan is so reliant — so reliant — on the movement of grain, should they have not have perhaps had a special meeting with the federal Agriculture minister and the railroads? I mean in any part of the speech that we heard from that minister today have we heard that they were taking an initiative that was beyond simple politics?

An Hon. Member: — No we did not.

Mr. McPherson: — No, I don't think we did, did we. It was just, just get out there, try and beat up on the provincial Liberal caucus. That's what the goal was here today. And we can accept politics.

But you know when we're done in this building and all the politics aside, what hurts me, Mr. Speaker, is when I get the

phone calls from my constituents, the people that I represent — and my colleagues, they get those same calls — and they are hoping that there is no politics to be played out on this very, very serious issue.

And I hear all the members chirping across the way. They happen to be members that aren't representing rural constituencies; so if they would sit back and listen, they'll learn. But I think it's incumbent, I think it's incumbent that they get up and get moving on some of these issues; they do it right away. Quit playing your simple politics.

If you were going to be serious about the issue, if you agree that \$65 million is too big a hit for Saskatchewan farmers, Saskatchewan farm families, to take on the chin this year, then you should have been proactive and progressive and got a trip lined up to Ottawa. If you felt there was a problem with one person or railroads, you should have done something about it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to this motion and it will be seconded by the member from Saltcoats:

That all words after the word "that" be deleted from the motion and replaced by the following:

That this Assembly, in light of the multiple circumstances that have affected grain transportation in western Canada, including lack of initiative on the part of the railways and a lack of direction from the federal government, all of which have affected Saskatchewan producers by placing a financial burden on them, calls upon the railways, the federal government, and our provincial government to take immediate action on behalf of our farmers to improve grain transportation and to provide compensation to our Saskatchewan farmers.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member from Wood River and speak on the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, a worse time this grain handling backlog could not have happened. I mean farmers have payments to make, spring seeding — operating money is needed now. We notice out there that municipal tax arrears are on the rise once again, as they were a couple of years ago. At the same time grain prices are dropping, input costs went up and are not dropping.

We're just coming into the time of year when bans are coming on the road and the delay in the grain movement will be crucial to our road system as the minister across alluded to. Although he didn't get quite into just how bad our road system is. He should spend more time out of the city and he might understand what is happening out there.

You know, Mr. Speaker, instead of sitting across there as the members opposite do and pointing the finger time after time after time at the federal government, wouldn't it be nice just once if they would get off their behinds and join with the federal government and do something for the farmers of this

province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the Highway minister in his glowing speech from across gave the impression that that government really cares about our farmers in this province. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am a farmer in this province and in the last five years I haven't seen much caring.

I'd like to bring to your attention a few of the points that I'm talking about — \$188 million in GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) money that disappeared out of my back pocket.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Forty per cent funding cuts to conditional and unconditional grants to municipalities already before the \$20 million that your government cut this year on top of that, and that amounted to 25 per cent of what is left — the funding cuts of the \$20 million.

On top of that, the members opposite supported another \$17.6 million cut to the revenue-sharing pool for municipal governments when they replaced the 2 mill health levy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — To sit across there . . . And the Minister of Highways says, we care about farmers. I doubt it. Last year the farm compensation for the deer damage out there . . . And the Minister of Environment is sitting there — what did you people do? Again, nothing, absolutely no compensation.

So maybe it's time. Instead of pointing the finger and just giving lip service to our farmers out there, why don't you join for once with the federal government and resolve the problem and come up with a compensation package that will help out farmers who so dearly need it at this time?

Mr. Speaker, I second the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well you know what this reminds me of, Mr. Speaker? This reminds me of an old saying, this reminds me of an old saying, and I've used it before in this House because you can tell every time, and that saying is: when you throw a stone in the dark and the dog yelps, you know you hit the dog. You can just tell. You can just tell. This is the case in this House. I rest my case.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member for Wood River, sitting beside . . . yes, Wood River and Arm River. The two river boats . . . river rats are sitting over there.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Order, order. The hon. member recognizes that the comment he just made is clearly out of order and I'll simply ask him to withdraw that remark and proceed with his debate.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that remark and

I apologize. It just kind of slipped out. But at least they took it in good . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the hon. member knows when requested to withdraw a remark that no explanation is in fact neither necessary or welcome, and I'll just simply ask him to withdraw the remark and proceed with his debate.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I withdraw the remark, Mr. Speaker.

But the member for Wood River is right for once. This is about politics, this is about politics because we do have a federal election coming up in the near future. And we on this side accept this motion, we accept this motion for a number of reasons.

The first being it's important that the farmers move their grain because of the way the system has to work in order to get compensation back to the farmers. But secondly, is to flush out of the woods the provincial Liberal government and the federal Liberal government in terms . . . the provincial Liberals and the federal Liberals, who will always be in opposition, to tell us where they really stand on this issue because I'll tell you . . .

An Hon. Member: — We just did.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Oh yes, you did — after being whacked in the dark you stand up and say . . . you mouth the words, yes, we support.

But let me tell you something. Where were you, Mr. Liberal Opposition people, and Ms., where were you when the federal the safety net funding was reduced from \$850 million to \$600 million? Did we hear a puff? Where were you when the Crow benefit of \$320 million was cut? Did we hear a sigh, any words coming out of the Liberals?

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, where were they? Nowhere. Where were they when the federal Liberal government was increasing the cost for inspection and grading of grain? See, until you flush them out, they say nothing.

So then the next question is: do you believe them? Do you believe them? Do you believe the federal leader? Do we believe the federal Leader of the Liberal Party, the Prime Minister? He had to apologize on one occasion that I remember. So do we believe what they say?

Where were they, Mr. Speaker, when they cut the support to dairy programs? Where were they when the federal government quit funding PAWBED (Partnership Agreement on Water Based Economic Development) and PARD (Partnership Agreement on Rural Development) and the green plan? Where were they?

They weren't in this House to be trapped. They were out so they didn't have to say anything. But now they're in the House, they're trapped, they're caught. And being caught in a trap, you holler and squeal just like the members were doing.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is about politics and who runs this country and how it's run. Because we've got a federal Liberal

government who's pushing forward deregulation. In a deregulated system, supported by the railroads — and I'm not going to point fingers at just the railroads; I think they have a great responsibility — but the fact of the matter is the Liberal federal government has the opportunity, it has the cause, and it has the power to make legislation or make points and make the railways and everyone else's system accountable so that the \$65 million that the farmers are losing because of this grain hold-up is paid for . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well they're cheering at the \$65 million a farmer is losing. I'm not sure if that was appropriate, I'm not sure that was appropriate. But to ensure that that \$65 million the farmer is losing is not coming out of the farmer's pocket — it's not coming out of the farmer's pocket — I would like to see them table their correspondence with the federal Agricultural minister or the federal Transportation minister saying this is wrong.

I'll bet you a dollar to a doughnut there hasn't been one letter written — not one — to the federal government complaining about this. I'd like to see it. I invite you to table it when the next speaker gets up, because I'm sure you'll all want to have something to say.

So Mr. Speaker, this is about politics; this is about how the government's run. This is about the interests of Saskatchewan and western Canadian farmers. The president of CN (Canadian National Railway) says this on March 6th in *The Western Producer*. I'll quote:

The president and chief executive officer of Canadian National said in an interview last week that the failure to meet rail car unload targets this winter shows a regulated system can't work.

So then again you've got to ask yourself, who's running the government? I mean, the railroads say a regulated system can't work. And here's what else he says, and I quote:

Give us full control and we're willing to be held fully accountable.

Full control. Well when the WGTA (Western Grain Transportation Act) was replaced with the CTA, the railway was given more control. They were given the power and less and less responsibility. That's a deregulated system. And what have we got this winter?

(1200)

An Hon. Member: — Snow.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — A backlog of grain. Well snow is the excuse that the railways are using why the grain isn't moving. So I understand when you say snow that you're sort of siding on that side. But look, there are snow slides every winter in the mountains. This winter was worse, yes, I agree. Okay.

Unloads are almost back to normal, but there's 17 per cent

storage space in the elevator system. That means it's plugged. That means it's plugged.

The railways say give us full control and we'll be fully accountable, and a regulatory system is impeding the shipment of grain. Well I don't believe that. I don't believe that simply because we have had deregulation and it's worse this year. So you have the opportunity.

And who's running the government?

You know what — 1994 tax year — you know what CP (Canadian Pacific) Rail gave to the Liberal Party? — \$63,000. Well, you know, I understand, I understand why you may not be so eager to jump up and smack them then, because you don't bite the hand that feeds you. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.

I just want to put that on record. But I put it aside because I'll tell you this is about how this country is run. And this is about how the grain movement system should be regulated. And this is about the federal Liberal government and this is about the provincial Liberal opposition not sticking up for the farmers of this province, not going to their federal brothers and sisters and saying this is wrong. That's what it's about and that's what this debate is about.

You know what, Mr. Speaker, a little irony — I remember when at times when the grain movement was stopped because of labour disputes. That happens from time to time. And I can recall the Liberals sort of jumping up and down and saying those darn unions, they're rooking the farmers, you know, hurting the farmers. And it does, and it does affect. There's no doubt — it does affect.

But they're very quiet when it comes to the railroads slowing down grain delivery. The farmers don't count then because of the old pocketbook of the Liberal government. The Liberal Party might get hurt.

And in this upcoming federal election, Mr. Speaker, the people of this country have to decide who they want to run it. They have to decide who they want to put in as MPs (Members of Parliament) to fight and stand up for things like the movement of western Canadian grain to port. Do they want people who are being lined in the pocketbook by some of those who would want a fully deregulated system give us full control? Well, it looks like it.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, that the vote on this motion, the vote on this motion is critical. We have to show support for Saskatchewan, but we have to remember when you look at the long list of things that this federal Liberal government has pulled out, that pulled the rug out from underneath western Canadian farmers from Crow benefit to safety-net reductions, all the inspections fees, PAWBED, PARD. I only read part of that list. I only read part of that list because it goes on and on, and maybe I should finish it if I can find it.

So, Mr. Speaker, 25 per cent at one time of the grain was on the tracks in cars, is what I'm told, in the system. We're getting our unloads back to par but there's a great backlog out there, and

the federal government . . . it's incumbent upon the federal government to make sure that they do something.

This is the most . . . this is the lowest movement we've seen for 10 years to the west coast, Mr. Speaker. As of March 4, there were 39 ships waiting to be loaded. Six ships have been waiting for over 30 days and one ship for 61 days. Does that identify a problem? Does that identify a problem? I think so.

The problem is the grain isn't getting there. Now here's the problem: demurrage is being paid for by the farmer. Every day the ship waits over a certain number of days they charge the Wheat Board for that grain. That comes directly out of the farmer's pocket.

If there's no responsibility, if there's no responsibility from the farm gate by those people who touched the grain all through the line . . .

An Hon. Member: — Unions included?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The unions included. Responsibility, and I say the west coast movements . . . (inaudible) . . . You tell me when the last time there was a strike at the west coast. A long, long, long, time ago.

The grain companies are putting on extra shifts to try to get rid of the backlog. That's being responsible. The union folks are working hard to get those ships loaded. That's being responsible. The farmers are sitting back paying the bill though whenever anybody stops this system, whenever anybody stops the system, the farmer pays.

So here's Mr. Goodale's opportunity. Sixty-five million — who do you think, Mr. Speaker, should pay for that? Who do you think should pay that \$65 million loss when every dollar of export grain outside this country from the farmers contributes to this economy, contributes to everyone working in this country. Is it their responsibility when somebody else clogs the system to pay? I think not.

This is why it's up to Mr. Goodale and the federal government, Mr. Chrétien, to move and move quickly. We will see. The best thing we got going for us, the best thing we got going for us is the fact that there is an election around the corner, because that's when Liberals move. They try to buy it. And hopefully, although I disagree with this, hopefully they're going to try to buy some votes and buy their way out of this one, at least to help support the farmers. We'll see. We'll see.

Mr. Speaker, the locomotive power has to be increased. The railroads know that. They've ordered more cars, but they leased cars this winter. I understand one in four didn't work because of the cold. They're not geared to cold weather conditions.

And then we also have, Mr. Speaker, one other issue, one other issue. I've got many other issues, but I've got one I want to talk about right now, and that is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well members that don't want to listen, when I sit down I will listen to you as long as you want on this issue.

I want to talk about the short line railroad offload, the short line

railroad. The federal Liberal government is allowing the railway companies to just abandon the rail lines, simply abandon them.

Successor rights? Absolutely. Successor rights will not be a problem in short line. But here's the problem. You see this is the difference in the attitude. The Tories are worried about successor rights because they think unions are the curse, the scourge of the world. But the Liberals . . . But successor rights isn't the big problem here. The big problem is when you abandon a short line the legislation changes from federal responsibility to a provincial responsibility.

So I'll tell you we have to be very, very, very cautious about what short lines — and the people out there know that — what short lines can be developed and what short lines shouldn't be developed. Because if there's a financial problem in a short line, the company doesn't go to Ottawa and say, we need some help. You know where they go? They come to Regina because the legislation changes. And that's the problem. Nothing to do with successor rights. The labour folks out there will make the short lines work to the best of their ability. I know that — they told us so.

But the problem is it's a direct offload. So then when the offload goes from the federal Liberal government to the provincial government, what's the response by the federal Liberal government? Do they say, well we'll come out with a national . . . a long-term infrastructure program like the U.S. has where they put about 40 per cent of the federal infrastructure . . . or the road system is federally funded as opposed to 6 per cent of the road system federally funded in Canada?

No, they come up with another short-term infrastructure program. I'm happy to get it. But this is another thing with the offload of the short line on the provincial government. With more grains moving on by truck, let's see that Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Goodale come forward with a long-term, federally-funded infrastructure program not just for Saskatchewan and western Canada, but for all of Canada, like they do in Australia, like they do in the England, like they do in the U.S., and like they do in Germany and most countries around the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — So, Mr. Speaker, there is a major problem. There is a major problem, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

And here . . . You know, Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. This is shameful. We have \$320 million of Crow benefit cut out of this province. Our net farm income has gone down. It's projected to be lower than last year, okay. Our farmers are responding miraculously, by diversifying, by doing all they can, from game farming, which is a growing industry, to spices, to all kinds of things. They're responding.

But here's what Mr. Martin says. Here's what Mr. Martin says. August 1, 1995. It says, "Martin enlightens locals." Yes, a bright light. In Nokomis, Saskatchewan, in the *Last Mountain Times* of Tuesday, May 14, 1996, I quote Mr. Martin:

August 1, 1995, the day the Crow died, was the best day the province ever had, Paul Martin said.

The best day the province had, cutting three hundred and . . . The federal Finance minister is coming to Saskatchewan. You talk about arrogance. You talk about arrogance and talking down to the little farmers of Saskatchewan, saying, you guys don't know what's good for you. And the result was a \$320 million, Mr. Speaker . . . is a drop in net farm income.

And then what have they done? What have they done about rising input costs, which again hits from the federal level? We have brought forward in this province — I have through the federal-provincial meetings — brought up the fact that input costs is probably one of the number one overall arching . . . overarching concerns to the farmer. Because when the price of grain started to bolt up last year, inputs bolted up. Now grains come down; inputs are still up. That's why . . . another reason we're having a net farm income problem.

Farmers are still optimistic because they know that the grain supply, the world grain supply to consumption, is the lowest it's ever been. There's some relief in that; some relief in that.

But, Mr. Speaker, until the issue of input costs is addressed . . . And I know that you don't have any direct control about input costs. You can't say, okay, we're going to charge X dollars for this and X dollars for that. But the federal government has a responsibility to look over the shoulders.

And the Liberal government responded in 1995 by having a little task force. Do you know what the result of that recommendation was? Input costs are high. The solution by the federal Liberal government, Mr. Speaker, is farmers should — get this — shop around. Shop around. Arrogance? Arrogance? Shop around? Out on my farm I can shop around all I want and is still . . . the prices, even though with competition, are fairly static. Fairly static.

I think the federal Liberal government has a responsibility again and that's why I put it on the federal table and will be again talking about it in July — federal input costs. I've talked to Mr. Goodale about it. It took a year to get them convinced that this is a priority and hopefully . . . I've asked them to put it up on the agenda, higher on the agenda than it has been.

Mr. Speaker, shop around? Shop around. What kind of a mentality do they have? What kind of mentality do they have?

So, Mr. Speaker, I end by saying this: I asked the federal Liberal government, the federal Liberal government, I asked the provincial opposition, to follow the lead of the Government of Saskatchewan. Follow the lead of the Government of Saskatchewan.

We decreased one input cost by nearly 25 per cent — crop insurance. Which one? Hello, where were you? Quit crop insurance. On average, across the board, a decrease of 23 per cent, the first time an input cost has been significantly reduced since . . . In the 25 years that I've been farming, the first time that input costs have been significantly reduced. I asked Mr. Goodale and Mr. Chrétien and I ask you to talk to them as well.

Please get on the board and please help Saskatchewan farmers by getting the grain moving, and make sure it keeps moving, by

reducing input costs, by stop being so arrogant and talking down about people and saying that \$320 million out of Saskatchewan farmers' pockets is the best day Saskatchewan ever had. Please, follow the lead of the provincial government in Saskatchewan and help reduce input costs for the farmers of this province. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.
(1215)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I could talk about grain handling but I'm going to, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. No you can't talk about grain handling. You only have leave to introduce guests.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you. I'll stick to what I do best, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a grain handler actually, a former distinguished colleague, to all members of the Assembly, Mr. Tom Keeping, who was the member for Nipawin, who served in this Chamber with dignity and honour, and I know that . . .

An Hon. Member: — And humour.

Mr. Pringle: — And humour, and humour. And that was shared, that view was shared by all hon. members. And he's just a great friend. Some things haven't changed. I was out for dinner with him last night, and I paid the bill at Greko's and . . . so perhaps he has come around to reimburse me, I don't know. But I would invite all members, as I know they will, to give Tom a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I'd like to ask leave to introduce a guest as well, and then I'd like to speak to the question.

Leave granted.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't take the opportunity to welcome Tom back to the Assembly. As you all know, he once sat on our side of the House, even though he was a member of the other party. And I really think that after listening to a lot of his poetry and those kinds of things that he used to do so well, that most likely he should have been a member of our party too. But maybe he'll do that later in life.

We're happy to hear that he's doing well in his private life once again and we're happy that he took the time to come back and

visit with us. Sometimes when people leave here they find that the circumstances under which they've left have left a bad taste in their mouth and they may not come back. But with Tom, he of course has seen the benefit of our institution and we're happy to see him back.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Grain Transportation Delays (continued)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy this afternoon — or this morning, I guess it is yet, almost afternoon — but anyway, I'm happy to enter the debate on the issue that our colleagues have brought up this day.

And I'm a little disturbed, Mr. Speaker, at the way this debate has carried on. And naturally, naturally we see the old, the old ideas of politics come forth. And it's a little sad, when you have such an important issue as this, that people have to position themselves along political lines.

Here we have the Liberals trying to throw a pail full of red herrings into the mix of a great debate on an important issue, trying to defuse it, water it down and muddy it up so that nobody can recognize what the issue really was to start with. And so they bring in an amendment that in itself, and I'll give them credit, is not a bad solution to problems. It's got some merit.

Unfortunately though, Mr. Speaker, what it really does is simply defuse the gist and the importance of the push that we are trying to put into this great and important issue. And there's no sense doing that. It's not reasonable to do that today. Let us carry on with the motion that our leader brought forth, which directly identifies the problem, directly identifies the people that caused the problem, and suggest a direct solution for the problem. No messing around, no muddying it up. Go after the people that are responsible.

On the other hand, we have the government side, Mr. Speaker, that decides, well because the Liberals are bringing in an amendment we'll have to get into some political rhetoric and do a lot of those kinds of things too. And back and forth goes and back and forth goes the debate from their chairs. And instead of addressing the issue as an important issue — as it is — they simply position themselves for political grandstanding on this very first day when we should be talking about this very critical, important issue and that is, why farmers in Saskatchewan are paying for other people's mistakes.

And that is really what the question is all about: who should pay for the mistakes in the grain handling system? Should it be the farmers? Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that I'm a half a century old and about the first word that I learned that I thought was a swear word, but I found out, Mr. Speaker, just to assure you, that it really wasn't a swear word, but I thought it was, because more than 50 years ago I thought the word "demurrage" was a swear word. My father echoed it in disgust, and my grandfather echoed it with more disgust and more

disdain. And all of my neighbours echoed the word "demurrage" as though it were the worst thing in the world. And so I thought it must be a swear word.

But I've come to discover that it is an identification of a problem that not only existed then but continues to exist to this day, and not one government has had the intestinal fortitude or the backbone to cure the problem — and that is, to attach the cost of these mistakes to the people that make the mistakes.

Who causes the mistakes of demurrage? Who causes ships to be ordered into port in Vancouver so that they can be paid to have a paid holiday? The minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board is ultimately responsible because it's the Wheat Board that orders those ships. They don't come in there and collect demurrage simply because they have the right to do it. It is not their God-given right — they are ordered. They are brought in because somebody said, come. And it's high time we put an end to that, Mr. Speaker, because it is not fair to the farmers. They pay for those mistakes.

And Mr. Ralph Goodale is, ultimately, as the minister, responsible for those mistakes and I demand his resignation here today even though he's not here. But the words of this speech are going to his Prime Minister, and I tell him today: have the gumption to stand up and do what has to be done or else resign.

And I'm going to say to the members across the Assembly here: you as the government have the majority of the power of the vote in this Assembly. I ask you to throw out the pail of red herrings, throw out the rhetoric in the political debate, and throw out the amendment. Put that amendment down and get back to the main motion and support us to solve the problem. Let's get back to causing people who caused the problem to pay for their worst mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, there is a long history of mistakes in grain handling. And this is not a simple solution and nor will it be easy. It will take a lot of political determination because even though the solutions can be easily found, it won't be easy to have the political will to put them through.

Saying to the people in the Canadian Wheat Board, that you as directors of that Canadian Wheat Board should pay part of the demurrage costs out of your pay cheque as a penalty for your mistakes, is not easy. But we demand today that that is exactly the direction that the federal government should go, cause those people to lose out of their pocketbooks. Tell Ralph Goodale either to resign or to put up a thousand dollars a day out of his wages for every day that there's a ship collecting demurrage. That'll hit the pocketbook, that'll hit home, and there will be a change when we hit these people where it counts — in the pocketbook.

And we say the same to the CPR and the CNR (Canadian National Railway Company). There is no competition in rail traffic in this country. It is a monopoly and these people do whatever they please, whenever they please, for 50 years and I expect for 50 years before that. Mr. Speaker, the solution is very simple in terms of what needs to be done. And that is to charge the demurrage to the railway companies, to the Wheat Board

directors, and to the minister in charge, and not to the farmers of Saskatchewan.

There is absolutely, Mr. Speaker, no reason why farmers should be caught paying these penalties or losing the income. Just last week, the Japanese were buying wheat from the Americans. Has anybody really got in their heads the idea that those folks aren't our competitors? And they come in here and tell us that no, we haven't lost any markets. Well wake up and smell the coffee. They just bought their wheat from the Americans — that's not us. And that means we lost a sale and we'll lose some more — 39 ships sitting in the port.

Believe me, you couldn't make money any faster than to go out and buy a grain ship right now and get an order and tow it into Vancouver. And I say tow, because you don't want to buy too good a one — it would cost too much money. Tie enough inner tubes on it so you can make it float and collect demurrage and when you're done, you're rich and you sink the thing. That may be a little bit of a stretch, Mr. Speaker, but the truth of the matter is that that's exactly the kind of foolishness that's going on out there. People are ordered to come in to load grain when everybody that's in charge of getting the grain into position knows very well there is none to load. What kind of a scam is going on?

I ask you simply to question yourselves, who is profiting? And why are they allowed for 50 years and more to profit? Because something is smelling in Denmark, is also starting to smell in Saskatchewan and in Vancouver's ports. There is something wrong with this system and it needs to be corrected by putting responsibility on the people that make the mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this Assembly to support my leader and his motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to join in this debate because I think it's a very important topic or issue in my constituency. All the way from White Fox to Birch Hills, agriculture is very important.

One of the things that's really changed this year comparing to last year, farmers are not very optimistic today as they were a year ago. The prices of grain last year were climbing, there was a lot of potential for grain to be moving at a great speed, input costs were up, grain prices were going up as well. So things looked good last year.

This year the farmers have not been able to move that grain that they had a lot of optimism on. So the price climbed on input costs. So this year I'll tell you the farmers have not got a lot of optimism out there. They are really uptight with the Liberals federally, provincially, for not putting pressure on the rail lines to get our grain moving to port.

So I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I ask and I call on the provincial Liberals to join in with our minister, our Agriculture minister, to put pressure on the federal government to have our grain moved to port, to get it rolling at least.

I also ask that we need to commend our transport minister for the work he has done to try and get the federal minister to listen, to get our grain moving. And I want to say our provincial minister has done a lot of work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — I also want to say in closing, Mr. Speaker, I will carry on when the throne speech is more into agriculture, at that time. So right now I want to say I'll be supporting the motion and not supporting the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 12:30 p.m. until 12:31 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 9

Krawetz	McPherson	McLane
Gantefoer	Draude	Osika
Bjornerud	Hillson	Julé

Nays — 36

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Wiens
MacKinnon	Shillington	Mitchell
Johnson	Whitmore	Goulet
Lautermilch	Upshall	Kowalsky
Renaud	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Lorje	Scott
Nilson	Cline	Serby
Stanger	Hamilton	Murray
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	Jess	Langford
Murrell	Thomson	Boyd
D'Autremont	Heppner	Goohsen

The division bells rang from 12:35 p.m. until 12:36 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 45

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Wiens
MacKinnon	Shillington	Mitchell
Johnson	Whitmore	Goulet
Lautermilch	Upshall	Kowalsky
Renaud	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Lorje	Scott
Nilson	Cline	Serby
Stanger	Hamilton	Murray
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	Jess	Langford
Murrell	Thompson	Krawetz
McPherson	McLane	Gantefoer
Draude	Osika	Bjornerud
Hillson	Julé	Boyd
D'Autremont	Heppner	Goohsen

Nays — nil

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, to move a series of routine motions before it is a day . . . of which it is traditional to move the day after the throne speech.

If I have the leave of the House, I'll move them.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Referral of By-laws and Amendments to the Special Committee on Regulations

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Fairview

That the by-laws of the professional associations and amendments thereto, the by-laws and amendments are tabled in the present session, be referred to the Special Committee on Regulations.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld, by leave of the Assembly having been granted:

That the *Public Accounts* of the province of Saskatchewan as tabled in the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from P.A. (Prince Albert) Carlton:

That the various reports of the Provincial Auditor as tabled in the present session be referred to a Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Report to the Standing Committee on Communication

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Watrous:

That the report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library be referred as tabled in the present session to the Standing Committee on Communication.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Finally, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Lloydminster:

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

Motion agreed to.

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

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, before proceeding with orders of the day, I rise pursuant to rule 46 and ask leave of the Assembly to engage in a debate of urging and pressing nature.

The Speaker: — The hon. member for North Battleford has requested leave of the Assembly to proceed with a debate related to pressing and urging necessity, and I will ask the hon. member to advise the House as to why he considers this subject to be of pressing and urgent necessity, and then advise the members of the motion he wishes to introduce and to do that very briefly.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the news and the unfortunate incidents, especially in the city of Regina this past week, I am requesting an emergency debate on the means by which we can mobilize the resources of the community and of this province to find solutions to the problems of misdirected youth. The Hon. Minister of Justice has acknowledged that there is a serious problem; I've heard nothing yet on solutions. I would like a debate on how we can address this pressing issue.

Mr. Speaker, if I may read the text of the motion which I would like to propose to this Assembly:

That this Assembly urges the government to establish a special task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts as well as crimes of violence. Such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.

The Speaker: — Hon. members, you have heard the hon. member for North Battleford describe why he would like to see this matter dealt with as a matter of urging and pressing necessity. You have been given notice of the motion, and leave is required in order to proceed. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

(1245)

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Youth Crime

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you for correcting me, Mr. Speaker. I think there are still a few things I have to learn.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Justice has of course already informed us that the Young Offenders Act is federal legislation and that he has, of course, informed us of the problems of federal funding. However, we know that we are in the same federal system as nine other provinces, nine other provinces which seem to manage much better than we do under the same framework.

We have to ask ourselves why do we have the highest rate of incarceration of our youth of any jurisdiction in North America? We have to ask ourselves why do we have the second highest level of child poverty of any jurisdiction in Canada? We have to ask ourselves why we have less job opportunities for our young people than any other province in western Canada? We have to ask ourselves why has SGI surcharged our house insurance in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, and other communities because of the terrible history in home break-ins?

We have to ask ourselves why do we have so few youth workers that when a young offender is placed on probation for the first offence in the hope that work can be done with him or her in order to get him off the track he's clearly on, that why the workloads of our youth workers are so high that probation largely exists on paper and there is no-one to work intensively with that youth to redirect him into more positive goals?

We have to ask ourselves why the education levels of Saskatchewan youth are now below the national average? We have to ask ourselves why, as we go around our streets, our malls during school hours we see many young people in those malls and on those streets who are not in school.

Mr. Speaker, there are many problems, obviously, and there are issues which deal with the federal government. But I would point out the other provinces have that same federal government. And somehow they have dealt better than we have dealt with the problem of young offenders, youth custody, probation, and finding better channels for our young people than what we have.

When I came to this Assembly, I thought that the purpose of this Assembly was to find solutions for the problems of this province. I now worry that perhaps the main purpose of this Assembly is to whine about the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — I submit there are things that we can do. And I submit that we do have powers that we can use if we choose to use them.

Certainly it is easy to simply address the problem of youth crime with a rant. And the events of this past week do indeed strongly suggest that there are some people on our streets who ought to be in custody.

Nonetheless, the fact we already have the highest youth incarceration rate in North America does suggest to me that simply building more jails and locking people up for longer and longer periods of time is unlikely to result in the safe communities we all want. We have to be able to provide our young people with the hope and the opportunities that can redirect them. And when they are in custody, Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere hope that custody will not be a period of enforced idleness. When I say that, I'm not talking about chain-gangs, but I am saying that leaving our young people in a big cement room watching television is unlikely to be a great rehabilitative measure.

I would like to see them involved in programing from early morning to late at night. And that includes obviously schooling, it includes rehabilitative measures, it includes addiction problems, which of course so many of our young people going into custody do have, and yes, in appropriate circumstances, it would also include work placement as learning the expectations of our work world and of employers is indeed also important in the development of our young people.

In North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, I have been involved since its inception in the street worker program. That is a program which was designed to identify and work with young people pre-charge, pre-court, and to work with them and their families to ensure that they would be in school, in worthwhile extracurricular activities, they would be involved in sports, they would be involved in other enrichments, and that the parents would also have a support network.

Our street workers have had, I think, considerable success in working with young people who are not yet in trouble but appear to be headed in that direction.

I respectfully submit that these are the areas we have to look at and we have to look at seriously. I respectfully submit it is not enough of a problem to say we need more money from Ottawa. Because the fact is the other provinces are somehow coping and they're coping better than we are. And that suggests that there is something wrong here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, although the Young Offenders Act is of course federal legislation, the administration of that Act is provincial. Family welfare is provincial. The youth workers are employees of our provincial government. Programs to assist and enrich families are likewise provincial.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the time to pass the buck. This is not the time to whine about somebody else being responsible for our problems. This is a time for us to take ownership of our problems and of our youth. This is a time to say that we believe our youth can be better directed.

But part of directing them is to convince them that they can have an education and a future in this province, that they can drive a good car without stealing it . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — That they can go into a nice home someday that they hold title to, and they don't have to break in the back window.

I respectfully submit that what we need is a sense of hope and a sense of empowerment and a sense of belonging to this community and being a part of this community.

I also accept, of course, that part of any system has to be correction and discipline. And the message must go out, firmly and loudly, that those who refuse to abide by society's rules, of whatever age, must anticipate some penalties. I have no problem with that and I endorse that, and I think that we have to look at ways though in which that can be speeded up.

The one thing we know, Mr. Speaker, is that, with young people especially, it is very important that when discipline is to be meted out that it come as close as possible to the offence; that unfortunately much of the impact of discipline for youth is lost when that punishment comes so long after the fact.

I also know that on a youth's first brush with the law our tendency is to try and avoid incarceration and to try and work with that youth through the elders, through the youth workers, and through other divertive measures. I am in support of these, but my problem with them is that so often because these resources have been underfunded and simply are not present. In many cases, these resources exist on paper. And there is no reality to working with a youth on probation in order to avoid him proceeding on to the next dreary step where he is now in court and awaiting sentencing and more charges yet again.

I am confident that our judges are responsive to the community and that they will do their part to respond to the problems we see before us. I am confident that our judges will look at each case on an individual basis, as they must, and that they will be careful who is being released awaiting sentencing.

I accept that it would be wrong of this Assembly, or the federal Parliament for that matter, to lay down blanket rules as to who must go into custody and when. There must be latitude to take each case and each individual on its own merits.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the people who are being victimized by crime will feel that this Assembly is responsive to their problems, that this Assembly recognizes that security of the person must include, as far as it is humanly possible, protection from the negative impact of crime. We have the right to our homes and our cars without the molestation of the criminal element.

But I would hope that the message would also go out that our young people deserve a better future. They deserve more resources directed towards them. They deserve a better example from adults, from their parents, from youth workers, and that we wish to mobilize the resources of the community we know are out there. We know people are concerned. They should be brought together.

And I have worked extensively with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and I know that the RCMP are as concerned as anyone, not in simply building up charge

statistics, but in trying to work with young people before they are charged, before they are thrown into jail. Because when we throw someone into jail, that is an acknowledgement that our society has failed.

So let us pull together the resources of our society, the people who want to work in community to address these problems, to say that we find it unacceptable that our crime rate is higher than other provinces. We find it unacceptable that our child poverty rate is so much higher than other provinces. We find it unacceptable that our young people have a lower education rate than the national average. And we find it unacceptable that our home-owners are more victimized by crime than those in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask for support of this motion.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member from Melville:

That this Assembly urges the government to establish a special task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts as well as crimes of violence; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to enter this debate very briefly as a seconder of the motion. I'm looking forward to the members, the hon. members in this House for their support.

I come at it from a different perspective. When I hear that the chief of police is saying that things are out of control, when I hear that police officers' lives are in danger, they're endangering their own lives and they're being endangered by young people, misled young people, that angers me.

This is not something that just occurred within the last week. This has been building up to a crescendo which is now expressing itself in much more serious ways than it has in the past. We better start waking up and doing something about it and put a stop to it.

Citizens themselves are taking it upon themselves to go out and obtain signatures. I very much admire Lil Schroeder for taking the initiative. Why? They're becoming frustrated. They're afraid, and they're being told by our government that what you need to do is spend more money on devices to protect your property and your own property, your own vehicles. This is unacceptable.

It's not up to the public to continue paying out more money for the protection and services that the Justice department, that this government is incumbent upon them to provide all people of Saskatchewan, urban and rural.

Therefore, I second the motion as a seconder. I implore

everybody in the House here to support that motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice. And having recognized the Minister of Justice, the clock has now reached the normal time of adjournment. Order.

Before adjourning, I simply want to welcome back the hon. members to the Chambers and to advise the hon. members how pleased the Chair is with the enthusiasm of the members for the task that is before them. I wish for all members that this will be an enjoyable weekend with your families and in your constituencies. This House now stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 1 p.m.

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