

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan and particularly the city of Regina with respect to the increasing criminal activities. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause 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 including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; 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 fight against youth crime.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise with petitions signed by concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause 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 including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; 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.

I so file.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of people across Saskatchewan as well:

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 the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are coming in from across Saskatchewan. These particular ones are from Saskatoon and Regina. I'm pleased to present on behalf of the people today.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today with petitions, a number of them, from people throughout

Saskatchewan in regards to the big game damage that has been caused. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to: (1) change the Saskatchewan big game damage compensation program so that it provides more fair and reasonable compensation to farmers and townsfolk for commercial crops, (a) silage bales, shrubs, trees, which are being destroyed by overpopulation of deer and other big game, including the elimination of the \$500 deductible; and (2) to take control measures to prevent the overpopulation of deer and other big game from causing this destruction.

And as in duty bound your petitioner will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the pages and pages of names on these petitions, most of them are from my own constituency of Wood River and the towns of Mankota, McCord, in through that area where a lot of devastation has occurred. I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan this morning.

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

I so submit, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to develop a program to compensate people who are affected by the government's failure to properly inform parents and babysitters of changes to the labour standards regulations; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to reduce the PST by two points in the 1997 provincial budget; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to reverse the decision to force hunters to pay the entire cost of big game damage; and

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reverse the municipal revenue-sharing reduction; and

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to make an exemption under The Labour Standards Act respecting agreements between Saskatchewan families and their care-givers.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 8 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many Saskatchewan residents were under government and/or district health-funded treatment for gambling addictions in the years 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996; and what was the average cost per patient to the Department of Health and/or district health boards in each of those years?

Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 8 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many air ambulance transports were conducted in the province of Saskatchewan in the years 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Now as the hon. members will know, today is Commonwealth Day and the House will be diverting from its usual procedure in order to give special acknowledgement to Saskatchewan's involvement in the Commonwealth.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery are several Saskatchewan residents who have come to our province from other Commonwealth countries. It is now my pleasure to introduce these special guests to you.

I ask each person to stand as the name of your country is called and to remain standing until all are introduced. And I'll ask all hon. members of the Assembly to welcome them as a complete body at the conclusion of my introductions.

If you would stand then in this order: from Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Cameroon — and please remain standing — Dominica, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, South Africa, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda.

From the United Kingdom, introduced separately; from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales; and Zimbabwe.

Would members please join with me in welcoming the representatives of these 26 Commonwealth countries to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege on behalf of the Premier and the government to join you in welcoming our visitors to this special Commonwealth Day.

It's gratifying to see how many Commonwealth countries are represented by guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. A number of organizations, especially those involved in international affairs,

have also sent representatives today, and we welcome them.

All too often we take the Commonwealth for granted, perhaps in part because it has been there for 70 years. It often goes about its business quietly without the same publicity or fanfare and becomes a normal part of our cultural and political heritage.

The Commonwealth is an active, busy place with an intricate network of multilateral connections in health, in education, in agriculture, in development assistance, human rights — of which I'm going to return in a second — the status of women, and the environment, to name only a few.

Indeed the Commonwealth has been one of the prime instruments by which the problems in south . . . the challenges which South Africa faced have been resolved as they have been. I was telling the ambassador earlier when I met him that I was, and I think we were all very, very impressed with the way South Africa has developed. It just shows how much the world has changed.

When the ambassador came into my office I was reminded of an incident which occurred when I was a teenager and just beginning to take an interest in world affairs. The country had elected its first prime minister from the Prairies, John Diefenbaker, who was born in the Prairies . . . John Diefenbaker.

On attending his first Commonwealth conference — and I'm going here entirely from memory but I think this is accurate — on attending his first Commonwealth conference, he took strong exception to the presence in the Commonwealth of a government — not a country but a government — which had an openly avowed policy of apartheid.

To the chagrin of the British, almost the entire membership of the Commonwealth supported Canada, and for a period of time South Africa was out of the Commonwealth affairs.

We're, I think, all . . . we all I think can take pride in the role that this Saskatchewan politician played as an early advocate of universal brotherhood of mankind and equality of rights for all people. And I think it's an illustration as well of the role the Commonwealth has played in promoting the ideals of equality and the brotherhood of all mankind.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, of which we're all members, promotes democratic governments and political rights and freedoms to elected representatives of all Commonwealth countries. In fact we all belong to the association, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan branch is going to host the Canadian regional meeting here in July.

Mr. Speaker, the Commonwealth is not only a forum for discussion, it gets a number of things done, and I think we as Saskatchewan people can be proud of the leadership role which Canadians and Canadian prime ministers have played over the years.

Saskatchewan has its own special connection with one member of the Commonwealth — South Africa. Since 1993, we have

been closely involved with the province of Free State in developing institutions of governance. The new South Africa is not only a parliamentary democracy, it is a federal state as well. And it's been our privilege to host many representatives from South Africa and elected officials and government officials from this province have gone to South Africa.

I want to again conclude by welcoming all members, all our special guests today from all parts of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is very much alive. It is around us in Canada and here in Saskatchewan. It's an organization which I'm sure all members of this House would join with me in saying we treasure. It makes the world a better place for us to live.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition caucus, allow me to also welcome the many representatives of Commonwealth countries we have here with us today.

It's also my pleasure to welcome, on behalf of caucus, the High Commissioner for South Africa. I certainly hope you find your visit to the Assembly very beneficial, sir.

I would also like to congratulate the people who have been responsible for putting together the display and all of the articles that are contained in the rotunda, an excellent educational display, and I hope everyone takes the time to view what's out there.

Mr. Speaker, today 53 nations around the globe join together through their common history to mark Commonwealth Day. All Canadians should be proud of our continued links with the Commonwealth under the reign of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

The Commonwealth is comprised of people of varied races, faiths, languages, and cultures. They are linked through shared traditions and the belief that their interests are served by this partnership. Mr. Speaker, I think the theme of this year's Commonwealth Day describes very well what we are celebrating — talking to one another.

The great advantage of an organization like the Commonwealth is that it gives us a common backdrop to talk to one another. Through this communication, we can go far in emulating what we think right in the Commonwealth, and correcting what we think wrong.

Mr. Speaker, from the Commonwealth, we take our democratic principles, the very principles that allow me to stand here today as Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. And this legacy of freedom is worth remembering, Mr. Speaker, and it is worth celebrating every day of the year. So once again, I welcome all our guests to this Assembly on this very special day. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today

to add my remarks to the observance of Commonwealth Day. For those who are cynical of tradition or ignorant of history it is very easy, I'm sure, to dismiss an event like the Commonwealth Day as an obsolete carry-over from colonial times. However I think it is the Commonwealth Day that provides us parliamentarians with an opportunity to reflect on the tremendous gifts we have in this country, thanks to our connection to Britain and its former empire.

Many members of the Commonwealth share with us, British style parliamentary system which is quite an awe-inspiring institution. It has evolved and grown over eight centuries, it has been exported to the four corners of the globe, and it has become the standard of democratic government for cultures as diverse as the East Indian, the Australian, the Hong Kong Chinese, and of course our own. It is a tradition of flexible, adaptable, yet effective government that deserves the deepest respect from all the members of this Assembly and indeed from all members of our society. This is one of the gifts that we have received from being part of the Commonwealth.

We also gain from a sense of brotherhood and community with 53 nations. Surely if we look at the strife that confronts many countries these days, such an opportunity for cooperation and mutual benefit should not be taken lightly. Mr. Speaker, once again, on behalf of the Conservative caucus I would like to welcome all of our Commonwealth guests and ask all members to join with me in honouring Commonwealth Day.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I referred to this individual by name in my earlier comments, but I want to take a special opportunity to introduce to the House the High Commissioner for the Republic of South Africa to Canada, His Excellency, Billy Modise, if he'd stand and be recognized. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This, Mr. Speaker, is His Excellency's third visit to the province. Mr. Modise had a distinguished career in teaching, in international development, in the United Nations, and the African National Congress. He's been a High Commissioner here for approximately two years.

I had a visit — altogether too short — with Billy Modise this morning. He talked very thoughtfully about the challenge in a federal state which has a multi-racial population. I thought to myself as I was listening to him, there's a great deal Canadians could learn from what the South Africans have accomplished over the last few years.

My congratulations to you and your country and we're honoured by your visit here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — If the minister would like to introduce his school group that is visiting then he may continue, and then I'll recognize other hon. members who have visiting school groups as well.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I then will have two more introductions with that indulgence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to introduce to the House as well, in the same vein, the chairman of the Saskatchewan Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Dr. Ralph Cheesman, who is seated behind the bar at the moment. I would ask the House to recognize him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Finally, and certainly not least, it's my pleasure to introduce a group of grade 4 and 5 students from St. Gregory School in my constituency whom I had the honour to visit with a little before the House convened today. They're here with their teacher, Mr. Ignace Minja, who also represented Tanzania in our celebration today.

The St. Gregory students have contributed to the Commonwealth display in the rotunda in the Legislative Building. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these students here on this special day.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure as well to introduce Ms. Hilary Ibbott and her grade 7 class from Lumsden High School. They are seated in the west gallery. It was our pleasure, Mr. Speaker, you will recall, to visit with this group earlier in the year and we were most impressed with the work they have done in understanding how government works. I also want to commend them on the fine Commonwealth display that they brought to the school and the rotunda.

So thank you for being here, and please join me in extending a warm welcome to them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to take the opportunity to introduce through you to everyone assembled here this afternoon, a group of 61 grade 8 students from Lindale School, sitting in the east gallery here, accompanied by their teachers, Ms. Fysh and Ms. Campbell. I also would like to recommend to everyone assembled here today to take the opportunity, if they haven't yet, to look at the displays out in the rotunda. And I certainly enjoyed looking at the display that the class did on Australia out there and it was a very interesting one. So I would just like you all to join in a round of applause for them this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce someone to colleagues in the Chamber and everyone that's here today — a lady that has an interest in youth crime, having fallen victim to youth crime herself. And she's seated in the gallery behind me so she could face the government and keep an eye on the Justice minister.

I'd like everybody to welcome Ms. Lil Schroeder, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and members of the House this afternoon, seated in the west gallery, an individual, a young man by the name of Jason Dubois. Mr. Dubois has been the past president of the Saskatchewan Students Against Drinking and Driving. As you well know, today, Mr. Speaker, is in fact Impaired Driving Awareness Week and Mr. Dubois and students from across Canada have been . . . or across Saskatchewan have been very instrumental in putting together the legislation that we have in this province today.

Later this day my member from Meadow Lake will be making a further statement on this, but I want to ask all members of the Assembly to join with me today and to congratulate the work of students across Saskatchewan in making this legislation possible.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Impaired Driving Awareness Week

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister just referred to, today marks the beginning of the Impaired Driving Awareness Week. As a member of the select committee on safe driving, I'm proud to see that the legislation we worked on with the Saskatchewan people to develop is achieving its goal and that is to reduce the incidence of impaired driving and alcohol-related fatalities by 20 per cent within the first five years.

Since you too were a member of that all-party committee that helped develop the legislation, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you will be especially pleased to hear that since August 1, alcohol-related traffic convictions have decreased by 9 per cent — that's compared to the same five-month period in 1995.

The legislation, combined with other factors such as safety campaigns and enforcement, are making a difference. I am proud to have participated in this landmark process that led to such innovative legislation. Not only, Mr. Speaker, are we working to reduce drinking and driving, we are in fact saving lives.

I ask the members of the House to join with me in congratulating everyone who was part of the team responsible for developing the toughest drinking and driving legislation in this country. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agriculture and Food Week

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, though you can hardly tell it from looking out the window, in a few short weeks Saskatchewan farmers will be back out on the land in what's being called the most of Saskatchewan's megaprojects. I'd like to take this opportunity to note the start of Agriculture Week in our province.

Though this special week began yesterday and runs through March 15, in reality every week in Saskatchewan is agriculture week. There's not a single person in our province who isn't affected by the fortunes of our farming community, and this year's theme: Agriculture and Food: Saskatchewan's Economic Foundation, probably sums it up best, Mr. Speaker.

Agriculture does remain our economic background and it will remain so. Despite the fact there are fewer farmers today than in the past, that doesn't lessen the importance that farming plays in all our lives whether we farm ourselves or not.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I ask all members to join with me in recognizing all farmers in Saskatchewan and acknowledge their continuing importance in all of our lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Impaired Driving Awareness Week

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the PC (Progressive Conservation) caucus I would like to join with other members of this Assembly in acknowledging the Impaired Driving Awareness Week. We extend our welcome to Jason and ask him also to say hello to his father who I happen to have attended school with.

Every year our province is witness to countless deaths and injuries due to impaired driving. This waste of precious human life is tragic, deplorable, and just downright unacceptable. For many years, a wide variety of groups have worked to educate the public on this issue. SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving), students against drunk driving, MADD (Mothers Against Drinking and Driving), mothers against drunk driving, and SCARED, Saskatchewan Citizens Advocating Responsible Educated Drivers have done tremendous work in this regard. They and other groups like them deserve society's profound thanks.

Yet in spite of all of this effort Saskatchewan still has the same shameful distinction of having amongst the highest drunk driving rates in Canada. Clearly, this is an area where we as legislators can do better.

In acknowledging Impaired Driving Week, I think that the members of this Assembly must also renew our commitment and our responsibility to fighting this senseless crime. Mr. Speaker, we were also included on the safe driving committee, and we're very happy to have served there and we hope we will be able to improve this situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agriculture and Food Week

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to join with the opposition members in reminding people that . . . of this Assembly that March 9 to 15 is Agriculture and Food Week

in Saskatchewan. Agriculture has always played a primary role in our economy. Today we are facing a rapidly evolving agriculture and food industry that is producing tremendous growth, innovation, and opportunities province wide.

The agricultural industry is a major contributor to Saskatchewan's gross domestic product. It employed approximately 72,000 people in 1995. Additionally our ag-biotech industry in Saskatoon contributes 30 per cent to all ag-biotech activity in the country and is projected to have commercial sales of over 300 million by the year 2000. Furthermore, sales from farm equipment manufacturing reached 411 million in 1994, and our food processing sector is close to a billion dollars in '96.

With over 60,000 farms in Saskatchewan, most people are generally aware of the importance of agriculture to the province, but may not fully realize the impact of the ag and food industry in their community's economy and future well-being. Today we are trying to increase the awareness and understanding of an industry that has elements which, until a few years ago, were virtually non-existent.

This year's theme, Mr. Speaker, is: Agriculture and Food — Saskatchewan's Economic Foundation. And appropriately enough it gives us an opportunity to focus on how the industry is changing and its importance to our economy's well-being.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

90th Anniversary of St. Paul's Hospital

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today marks a very special anniversary in the city of Saskatoon. It was on March 10, 1907, that St. Paul's Hospital was established by the Grey Nuns.

The hospital was opened as a response to the typhoid epidemic that raged through the area at the time. Ninety years later the Grey Nuns' legacy of hope carries on with St. Paul's doctors and nurses continuing to provide a high quality of health care, despite the sometimes difficult circumstances that exist in health care in Saskatchewan today.

Mr. Speaker, as guests gather at St. Paul's today for a special celebration, I ask members of this House to join with me in marking this occasion and acknowledging all those who have come and gone through those 90 years, who have helped build St. Paul's Hospital into what it is today. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As noted by the official opposition, right now as we speak, there's a very significant birthday party taking place in Saskatoon. St. Paul's Hospital, formerly Grey Nuns Hospital, is being fêted right now for 90 years of outstanding medical service to the people of Saskatoon and area. As we know, Saskatchewan as a province is only 91 years old, so we are talking about a venerable institution that has practically coexisted with Saskatchewan.

A couple of interesting facts about St. Paul's. In the early days, doctors often came to work by sled and helped the nurses with chores around the hospital. When St. Paul's was founded, Saskatoon was in the midst of the typhoid epidemic. The St. Paul's Nursing School opened in 1909, nursing recruits to be 18 years old and having a grade 8 certificate.

Between 1909 and 1995, over 80,000 babies were born in St. Paul's. And I might add that Ruth and myself's four children were also born in that hospital. Closer to our day, the first hemodialysis treatment in Saskatchewan was performed at St. Paul's in 1960.

Mr. Speaker, St. Paul's has had a significant role in health care for 90 years. It continues to be significantly involved in the health care of the residents of the immediate community, the health district, and the province.

Mr. Speaker, I know all members will want to join me in wishing — not singing — happy birthday to St. Paul's and thanking doctors, nurses, and administrative staff, past, present, and future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Impaired Driving Awareness Week

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join with the members from Meadow Lake and Cypress in drawing all members' attention to Impaired Driving Awareness Week. Mr. Speaker, there is no more senseless a tragedy than a person who is killed by the thoughtless action of someone who climbs behind the wheel of a vehicle drunk. Drinking and driving is a criminal act that we all have to do more to stamp out.

Drunk drivers cause more than 50 deaths on our road every year; 1,000 more people are injured because of drinking and driving. Between 35 and 50 per cent of all traffic accidents are linked to drinking and driving. And, Mr. Speaker, impaired driving costs the province \$35 million each year in health care, loss of income, and property damage.

Mr. Speaker, the rate of impaired driving in Saskatchewan is too high, even though there was a considerable improvement. Last year this House passed legislation which makes 24-hour licence suspensions more common and toughens up other laws. This is the legislation the opposition supported. The House will also remember we put forward an amendment asking for zero tolerance policy for 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds. Unfortunately that amendment was not passed.

Mr. Speaker, the fight against impaired driving is far from over. We, as legislators and citizens, must do everything in our power to get these people off the streets. The time for talk has passed; the time for action is now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agriculture and Food Week

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would like to also acknowledge Agriculture Week which runs from March 9 through to the 15th. This is an annual observance sponsored by the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association and we would like to commend SWNA for their ongoing commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

I hope that all members of this Assembly, and all members of the public, take this time to reflect on Saskatchewan's most important industry. Whether you work in a hotel in Regina or in an elevator in small town Saskatchewan, you can see your fortunes rise or fall based on agriculture.

Businesses across Saskatchewan, be they on Main Street in small towns or in the big city, all have agriculture as their centre of gravity.

In addition to, and perhaps more important than, the economic contributions of agriculture, are the social and moral contributions that our Saskatchewan rural culture makes to our way of life. We all support values of hard work, persistence, honesty, belief in the family, a kinship with nature, and a host of other values. These are the traits for which Saskatchewan people are known and respected wherever they go, and we owe them to the agricultural spirit that built this province.

Again, in closing, we would like to thank the people of rural Saskatchewan for their undaunted persistence in these tough times and we would like to thank SWNA for providing us with this opportunity to show our respect to agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Property Tax Reassessment

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when this government introduced its tax reassessment plans, we heard how home-owners and farmers would be protected from the full impact of reassessment. But today we see the results of this government's incompetence. They have driven a wedge between our small cities, towns, villages, and rural municipalities. What I find truly amazing is that this is the government which tried to force amalgamation on municipalities last year and may now have made any form of shared services on a volunteer basis virtually impossible.

Will the Minister of Municipal Government or her designate tell us how this government intends to put out the fire it has created amongst our urban centres and RMs (rural municipality)?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the House will know, over 10 days ago our government announced that we were going to mitigate the shift of education tax from farm land. And we have done that with

the approval of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association.

As the members will know, we had an assessment system in the province of Saskatchewan that was 30 years out of date. This legislature and Municipal Government, along with the Department of Education, have introduced tax tools that will allow the various municipalities to deal with some of the shifts that have taken place as a result of reassessment.

We think that the farmers in this province are extremely happy that this government recognizes that farm land has gone up significantly in value and we've made sure that farm land across the province will experience no more than a 5 per cent increase in educational taxes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the minister that all she has done is poured gasoline on an open fire.

Mr. Speaker, this government could have headed off these problems by absorbing the shift to agriculture land and now a subsequent shift back to towns and villages. Instead, the minister appears to be satisfied with adding to the anxiety and frustration among local governments and pitting one against the other. As Humboldt Mayor Doug Still notes in the recent press release, "Pitting urban residents against our rural neighbours is a poor way for the province to build partnerships."

Will the minister tell this House if her government will consider picking up the original education shift on agriculture land and grant this back to rural taxpayers instead of dumping it on their urban neighbours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well as the member may know, we collect, through property taxes, over \$500 million a year to pay for the K to 12 system in the province of Saskatchewan. What the member is asking us to do is somehow find hundreds of millions of dollars. This province is well on the road to economic recovery, but I can assure the member, as a result of decades of mismanagement by the Conservative Party, we're not going to find \$500 million to do what the member wants us to do.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have made a reasonable decision. Farm land in this province will receive no more than a 5 per cent increase in educational taxes on average across the province. The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association support the government with this measure. The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities supports the government with this measure. And, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to change what we did, because we want to support farmers, contrary to what that group over there wants to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the minister is

talking in hundreds of millions of dollars because, as everyone knows, the government has downloaded its responsibility for education funding from 60 to 40 per cent.

The Minister of Municipal Government hinted recently that this government may be prepared to reverse that trend by picking up as much as \$300 million that school boards are presently raising through local taxation. Will the minister explain that if the Minister of Municipal Government was serious about this issue, when can we expect a formal announcement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I find this line of questioning absolutely incredible. It's bizarre. This is the beginning of Agriculture and Food Week, and what is this loyal opposition arguing for? A bigger tax increase on Saskatchewan people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the opposition and all of the people in this province that this government is not going to increase people's personal income taxes or sales tax or any other tax in order to give the members what they're asking for. I can assure you of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Youth Crime

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Minister, the Minister of Justice has claimed that he's dedicated to rehabilitating our youth, many of whom have addiction problems. One must question then why his government shut down the Whitespruce youth addiction and drug treatment facility. This facility was set up by the Conservatives, proof that at one time they didn't always believe in chain gangs and locking away our youth as the only way to solve our problems.

Will the Minister of Justice admit that his decision to shut down Whitespruce was a short-sighted one, and will he commit to reopening the Whitespruce youth alcohol and drug addiction centre in order to deal with the problems facing some of our young people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the member's concern about Whitespruce, he will be aware that the Whitespruce program has not been shut down. The Whitespruce program has been moved and consolidated at the Calder Centre in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. Whitespruce has not been closed.

But in addition to that, in addition, Mr. Speaker, the member, while he's new, I hope would be aware from his own experience that in health districts across this province there have been a rebirth of drug and alcohol facilities on a community basis and young people, and adults for that matter, are accessing those services not in distant communities but in their own community, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, that is indeed a surprise that there

has been a rebirth in youth addiction services.

However, I wish to ask the Hon. Minister of Justice, I was surprised recently to learn that prosecutors in this province are being sent to media school for a two-day course in media relations. I wish to ask him if sending prosecutors to school to become better spin doctors is the government's way of responding to the crisis in public confidence that faces our justice system today over youth crime and other issues, and if media training courses are really the way to deal with these difficulties in our justice system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that I want to make it very clear today that the Department of Justice and the Department of Social Services are working very carefully with the Regina Police Service to identify and deal with approximately 35 youth who have been identified as serious habitual offenders and who are primarily responsible for the rash of car thefts in Regina. For these serious habitual offenders, this means the use of jail. We'll continue to be tough with these young people and to use the full force of the law to respond to their unacceptable behaviour.

Also, as it relates to the whole justice system, it's very clear that the media focus on all aspects of the system includes the prosecutors, and on a continuing basis over quite a number of years, senior prosecutors have received media training as part of their job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice as well.

Mr. Minister, on Friday we heard more evidence of the latest crime spree in Regina is a result of our revolving-door justice system. Two of the suspects arrested in the serious incident Thursday were arrested just one month ago for auto theft in an incident which resulted in a seizure of a stolen shotgun. They also tried to steal a police car in that same incident. Yet one month later they're back on the street, free to steal another vehicle and jeopardize the lives of police officers and the public. One of them has now been charged with escaping lawful custody.

Mr. Minister, incarceration of young offenders in your responsibility not the federal government's. How is it that a teenager was able to walk away from custody and go out and steal another car?

And don't you think that young offenders when they do escape, that police should be able to publicly identify them and warn the public, contrary to the Young Offenders Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of issues set out in this question. And practically, what I would say is that we are working very carefully with the city of Regina police to deal with these issues. The whole matter of

the Young Offenders Act changes . . . there have been some changes made that will increase the ability of the police to give information to appropriate parties. So that has been dealt with.

As it relates to the charges against these people, the prosecutors work with the police, the matters are presented to the court, the judges deal with the evidence that's before them, and they have the final say on the length of sentence. It's very clear under the Young Offenders Act that the sentences that the judges give cannot be varied in any way by the Department of Social Services who actually administers the incarceration of the young people. We have these sentences set by the judges and those sentences are followed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you say that you're working with the Regina police department. Police Chief Langgard says that repeat offenders need to be locked up for a long time yet the minister continues to say that jail isn't the answer.

Mr. Minister, I agree that rehabilitation must be the goal of our justice system, but the primary goal has to be the protection of the public. Mr. Minister, over a hundred vehicles were stolen in Regina last week. I suspect many of them were stolen by repeat offenders. I can guarantee you that not one of them was stolen by a young offender who was in jail at the time.

Mr. Minister, why aren't you helping by telling these kids that there will be serious consequences for dangerous criminal behaviour? Mr. Minister, will you join us today in publicly calling for changes to the Young Offenders Act that provide for serious consequences for serious offences — restitution, public identification, and stricter sentences for repeat offenders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll only repeat my answer from before. These matters are being treated very seriously, and for those serious habitual offenders that means jail. There's no other term for it.

We'll continue to be very tough with these young people and deal with them through the appropriate measures that we have in the court system. The Young Offenders Act sets out some very clear penalties and those are the penalties that we will be enforcing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grain Handling Delays

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier or his designate.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday as we in this House unanimously joined forces in a vote condemning the federal government's handling of our grain transportation system, the Premier was in Saskatoon meeting with Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of this country. So we ask: did the minister stand up for Saskatchewan farmers and deliver that message to the Prime Minister? No, instead the Premier said he is satisfied with the

commitment that Chrétien is making to grain movement. And I quote:

I think that's about as good as it gets when you get the prime minister identifying the importance of . . . this economic commodity (the Premier said) . . .

That's about as good as it gets. Mr. Premier, that's not what this House said in its vote and that's not what farmers are saying or demanding. The grain is not moving. Demurrage is still being charged. Farmers need action not more commitments from Jean Chrétien and Ralph Goodale, the kind we've seen in the past.

Would someone care to tell us why your Premier is acting as an apologist for the federal Liberals instead of standing up for Saskatchewan farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I'm glad at least one party, Mr. Speaker, spoke up about agriculture on the week that honours agriculture in this province of Saskatchewan. I don't expect the opposition, perhaps, to have a question.

But I want to say to the member opposite, we have a grave concern about the freight handling in the province of Saskatchewan. While we were discussing that important issue in this House on Friday, the CTA (Canadian Transportation Agency) was meeting, deciding that perhaps the railways should in fact have more money to carry the farmers' grain to market. It wasn't enough that the farmers had to pay \$15 million or \$16 million in demurrage, but now they're going to in fact . . . maybe . . . I don't know if it's because the railways are doing such a good job that we are going to reward them now for the job that they're doing in getting our products to market.

This government is going to take every step to make the federal government aware and to make the railways aware of the problems that farmers face in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, not only is the federal government refusing to impose penalties on the railroads, which we talked about in our vote last Friday, but on Friday, that very same day, they announced from the federal government a \$15 million increase in freight rates. And that's the first time I've ever heard of a performance bonus for poor performance. It happened on this very same day.

And to his credit, the Minister of Highways over here did condemn this latest cash grab from the prairie farmers. But at the same time, his Premier in Saskatoon was saying that's about as good as it gets. The Premier is in Saskatoon thanking Jean Charest for putting the boots to Saskatchewan yet again while we here in this Assembly work hard to try to change that opinion.

I hate to paraphrase Murray Mandryk, Mr. Speaker, but, earth calling Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier, on our planet, grain isn't moving. Farmers are demanding action. And the Premier is supposed to stick up for Saskatchewan farmers, not agree with

the federal government.

Why did you not demand an immediate action from Mr. Chrétien, Mr. Premier, when you had him by the throat last Friday, or should have had him?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I want to say I agree with the member opposite that putting Mr. Chrétien in charge of rail transportation or at the interests . . . ahead of the interests of farmers is like putting Colonel Sanders in charge of the chicken coop. It certainly disturbs me as well.

But what we are doing on this side of the House, and I would hope with the acceptance and the partnership of the third party and the partnership of the official opposition, is to in fact tell Mr. Goodale, tell Mr. Chrétien, tell the railways we believe that Alberta and Manitoba and British Columbia will be joining us in this fight. Why don't you join us because it's very important?

Farmers are doing reasonably well right now. The part that they're having difficulty with is input costs, and when you attach \$15 million of demurrage to a situation that's no fault of their own and then tack on or give the CN (Canadian National) and CP (Canadian Pacific) a \$15 million raise to haul their product to market, it just isn't fair.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Group Homes Funding

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Social Services. It has come to my attention the Saskatchewan group homes which fall under the umbrella of community living division are struggling to provide adequate services for their residents under the current budgets. Time and time again this problem has been brought to the attention of this government. To date nothing has been done. The needs of some of our most vulnerable citizens have been ignored by this government. For example, the food service budget in an average group home is \$4 per resident per day. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Social Services tell me if he believes that \$4 for food per adult resident in a group home is adequate?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for her question. I thank her for raising this issue. It's an important issue and it faces many of the funded agencies in our province, including the group homes, all of the community-based organizations. She is absolutely correct. Those organizations have been raising this with the government for some years. I know they have met with herself and other members of her caucus.

We're in the circumstance, Mr. Speaker, in this province, of trying to balance all of the many, many demands upon the public purse. And they are many, particularly in the field of human services; particularly in social services the demands are many. She will know that we're handicapped in meeting all of these demands by the significant withdrawal of funding from the federal level. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure that member that these concerns are very deeply felt by members in government and they are very actively being concerned.

And I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, just to wrap up. I have had an opportunity to visit many of the group homes, many of the community-based organizations, and these groups, these individuals, people that work there, are doing a tremendous job for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess to that, Mr. Speaker, I would reply that the value placed on our most vulnerable citizens is reflected in the policy of this government.

Mr. Speaker, the manager of Mackenzie Society Ventures in Preeceville indicates that he cannot offer residents a well-balanced menu because of the \$4 limit for their food budget, and I believe that most people would agree.

To get a feel for just how difficult it is to eat on \$4 per day, tomorrow the Liberal caucus will be doing just that. Members of our caucus will be able to spend no more than \$4 for meals all day. Will the Minister of Social Services, the Minister of Finance along with their party colleagues, and our colleagues from the third party be willing to taste their budgetary measures by accepting our challenge to do the same and eat on a \$4 budget tomorrow?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intent, I think, of the member's comments. I would hope these are not somehow for political grandstanding, but to raise an important issue.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my earlier comments, we're struggling, struggling in this province. And we're not the only province struggling with this issue. On the one hand, the significant need that exists in our community, whether it be a community-based organization, whether it be in the homes of some of our families in this province, the needs are great, Mr. Speaker.

On the other hand, the resources have been dwindling, dwindling primarily as a result of Liberal policy in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. If you want to make a significant dent in many of these issues, I'm going to invite the member, I'm going to invite the member to join us, join us in communicating with the federal government, their Liberal colleagues in Ottawa, a protest of what they've done to the funding of social programs in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My challenge holds firm and I challenge you tomorrow to join the Liberal caucus to eat for \$4 a day, if possible.

Mr. Speaker, there is also growing concern about the wages and benefits provided to the community living employees working in these residential group homes. SARCAN's review of their wage structure shows that those who provide residential and vocational services for persons with disabilities earn 30 to 50 per cent less than the workers who provide the same services to

clients who are not cognitively disabled.

Is the Minister of Social Services reviewing this funding and will these concerns be factored into the upcoming provincial budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, to speak to the member's question very directly, yes indeed, we are reviewing all of the issues of funding around community-based organizations, as we have in past. We've not cut that funding. We've not been able to add to it as we would have wished, Mr. Speaker. And of course it's under review.

But again, I point out to the minister, and I understand . . . point out to the member, and I understand just following, just following the most recent federal budget, her caucus got up and saluted that federal budget. Well that federal budget, most recent, Mr. Speaker, took another \$90 million from the people of Saskatchewan for social programs in our province.

How can they get up and salute, salute that federal budget and then come into this House and implore this government to provide more funding for social programming in our province. How could they do that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Compensation for Parents Affected by Labour Standards

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the provincial government has demonstrated in the last few months how truly out of touch it is with people in this province. A year after amendments were made to The Labour Standards Act, parents learn that care-providers were entitled to their minimum wage.

After weeks of pressure, the Minister of Labour finally admitted that the government has made a mistake and care-providers shouldn't have been subject to the legislation. However, he stopped short of announcing compensation for parents who face bills totalling thousands of dollars.

Will the minister make a commitment in this House today to provide compensation for those parents who face substantial bills because of this government's mistake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member will know, of course, the answer to his question. We announced it publicly. The Premier announced it. I confirmed it on a number of occasions and it is as follows.

We will monitor this situation very carefully. We will try and keep track of how many claims there are and what the settlements are. Any decisions on this question is going to have to be made down the line when we have a lot more facts in our possession than we have now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, a number of parents are facing substantial bills because of a mistake that the Minister of Labour has admitted to, and that of his government as well. These parents are now examining the possibility of having to take legal action against the government to get compensation.

Will the minister indicate if his government plans to do the honourable thing and compensate those affected, or does he plan to force them to take court action?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, it's the same question. We will monitor the situation, and any decisions that have to be made will be made at a time when we are in possession of enough facts to make a sensible decision. If someone in the meantime wants to take court action against the government, that of course is their right. It's the right of any citizen who feels that a wrong has been committed, to go to court. I wouldn't deny them that right for a moment.

But in the meantime we'll do our job, which is to try and accurately assess what this situation is about, how many claims have been made, what the settlements have been, and make any decisions that are appropriate at the appropriate time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Goohsen: — To give notice of a Bill.

The Speaker: — The hon. member is out of order — we've passed that point in the order papers — and may submit it either in written form or orally tomorrow. Order.

Before orders of the day then, hon. members will all be aware that we will recess just momentarily for our Commonwealth Day ceremony, which will include the reading of Her Majesty's Commonwealth Day message, and an address from the floor, of the Assembly by the High Commissioner of South Africa.

Having said that, I'll recognize the Government Whip.

MOTIONS

Recess for Commonwealth Day Ceremonies

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move, seconded by the member for Regina Northeast:

That this Assembly do now recess to observe Commonwealth Day and reconvene at the call of the Speaker.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — Hon. members, we will now recess and begin the Commonwealth celebration ceremonies in just a moment from the floor of the Assembly, and so I'll ask everyone to stay in the room, not to leave, and we'll begin just shortly.

We'll reconvene at 4 o'clock following the Speaker's tea and I'll ask that the bells will ring at 5 minutes to the hour to summons members back to the Assembly. The House now stands recessed.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

(1600)

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Prorogation Speech Error

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like to present the House with the Speaker's ruling. On Friday, March 7, 1997, the Leader of the Opposition raised a point of order concerning the accuracy of a statement made in the prorogation speech which ended the first session of the twenty-third legislature.

The statement in question referred to the passage of the service districts Act which was before this Assembly as Bill No. 33 during the last session. Since reserving my decision on this point of order, I have reviewed the text of the prorogation speech and the status of the legislation in question.

I concur with the Leader of the Opposition and the Government House Leader that the speech was in error by stating that the noted Bill was implemented when in fact it was left standing on the order paper.

For this reason I order that an editor's note be placed in both the *Journals* and collective *Hansard Debates and Proceedings* of the first session of the twenty-third legislature to identify the error made in the prorogation speech.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The great baseball pitcher Satchel Paige and I have two things in common — one, we became rookies at an age when most of the players have hung up their spikes. After pitching for decades in the old Negro leagues of the pre-integration ball, Paige made the bigs in his '50s, he said. No one was ever quite sure of his age. And he acquitted himself very well for a season or two.

And here I am, more or less a rookie MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), after decades in the trenches of public education, with the great honour of moving the motion in support of the second throne speech of the twenty-third legislature. I hope to acquit myself with the grace and composure that some say come with age, as did Satchel Paige.

The second thing we have in common is a blazing fast ball, but this is not the arena for me to demonstrate this hidden talent of mine.

Before I begin, I want to say how pleased I am to see all of my colleagues on both sides of the House from the last session. And I'm happy to be one of the first to welcome the new member from North Battleford. You will find, I think, that the proceedings in this House are spirited, informed, and unashamedly partisan, which is the nature of our system.

But they are also collegial, because at the end of the day we all realize that we work, each in our own way, for the good of the people we represent. And all of us represent all of the people of Saskatchewan. I will have a few more words to say on this topic a little later.

I also want to commend the new Leader of the Liberal Party for giving the new member from the southern city the critic responsibility for Northern Affairs. After all, what does a first nations person from the North know about the area he represents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I am honoured that the Premier chose me to move the Speech from the Throne because it puts me in line behind a number of my colleagues who since December of 1991 have set high standards.

From the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood to the member from Battleford-Cut Knife, members on this side of the House have spoken with elegance, passion, and vision. They supported with vigour the actions of this government, acts which have given back a future to the people of our province. They excoriated with force the shameful and felonious derelictions of the previous government which put that future in jeopardy.

I have a big act to follow, but like my colleagues, my job is easy because like them I am speaking on behalf of a throne speech which offers a positive plan of eternal virtues of cooperation, community, and compassion, a plan that meets the challenges of these final years of the 20th century, one that prepares us for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st.

I am honoured as well to be delivering this address to you, the keeper of the keys of decorum in this House and the guardian of the recess bell for those of us who get our work done on time.

There are difficult jobs, Mr. Speaker, but few as difficult as yours. You have to be above the fray when everyone in this House knows that you would like to be in the middle of it. You have to be apolitical in the most political of all arenas. You must keep your head when all about you people are losing theirs, to quote Kipling. And you must perform these duties with the full knowledge that in history your predecessors often had a brief and sometimes bloody tenure. I congratulate you and I say, with all the sincerity I can muster, better you than me.

As movers before me have said, I am honoured and humbled by

the knowledge that I am part of a centuries-old continuum. In a time when too many traditions are devalued or ignored it is good I believe, to remind ourselves that we did not invent the world. There were people before us just as there will be people following us, and we have a duty to both.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Swift Current is home to some of the finest scenery and most independent voters in Saskatchewan. We are comfortably distanced from the major centres of government and commerce — a wise decision by our pioneers, we feel. These pioneers were innovative and self-reliant, as they had to be, and that spirit is alive and flourishing today.

Mr. Palliser, one of the first Europeans to pass through our area, reported back to England that the triangle which still bears his name could not support human habitation, an observation that got him elected to the Royal Geographical Society. Because of ill-advised judgements like his, our people's sense of independence has always had a healthy dose of defiance attached to it.

Ours is a beautiful but an imposing landscape, and one has to be a self-sufficient problem solver to live there. That landscape has produced the Governor General award-winning poet Lorna Crozier, a member of the cultural renaissance His Honour mentioned.

Swift Current sent to the political legislature one of the first woman cabinet ministers, and it produced the first woman leader of a political party in Saskatchewan. Swift Current also is the home place of statesmen like Harry Gibbs, Everett Wood, John Penner; the seat of championship sports teams; and the location of the famous Frontier Days rodeo. Something for everybody. I am honoured to be its representative.

And, Mr. Speaker, as a tangible and lasting tribute to the spirit of our people, Swift Current Health Region No. 1 was a successful trial run for the medicare system we have today; the system that became the model for Canada in 1962. The system in turn has become the prototype for the world in 1997. Canada knows where medicare began. Saskatchewan knows where it had its trial run.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan know what party fought to introduce medicare. As well, they know what party fought and failed to stop it. That party, Mr. Speaker, is the Liberal Party, the party with the new member, the new leader, and a renewed commitment to yesterday. The party with one idea which can be expressed in a number of ways — stop; don't; back up; you can't; leave it alone; not yet; not here; not us.

The Arkansas poet, Maya Angelou, wrote of her home state, "Today is yet to come to Arkansas." She might well have been speaking of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, just like a Liberal, I got a little side-tracked there.

As I said earlier, I am pleased to be speaking in support of His Honour's address because it outlines the continuation of our

plan to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, the second phase of our renewed mandate from the people of Saskatchewan given in June of 1995. This speech, as last year's, is a forward-looking document suitable to the singular time in human history, the countdown to a new millennium, and two and a half years till all of the numbers on the odometer roll over.

It is interesting to note that one consequence of our cultural fascination with the millennium is a renewed interest in the past book, in the first book of our civilization, the Book of Genesis. There have been a number of public re-examinations of this first account of our beginnings, both in the national media and in numerous study groups of one kind or another. I suppose that as we prepare to make a big leap forward it is reassuring to go back to the beginning to check our antecedents, so to speak.

Mr. Speaker, I am far from a biblical scholar. I suppose I have the same comfortable familiarity with the Old Testament as most practising Jews and Christians, in that I think I know more than I really do. But I think one reason for this renewed interest in Genesis lies in the fact that even in our mythical beginnings our defining stories are of individuals striving to become a people, of a people striving to become a nation, and of a nation attempting first to maintain its existence and then to create laws and institutions which will benefit its people in their relation with their God and with each other.

In the relation these people, from Adam through Abraham to Joseph and his brothers, were sometimes larger than life, often heroic, by turns abrasive and humble, occasionally heroic, and always deeply flawed; capable of great good, prone to the reverse. In short, the Book shows our ancestors to be just like us — two steps forward, one step back; progress one day, regression the next. But, and this is what has always fascinated and inspired me, even though the Deity's influence is never far removed, all of God's creatures are shown ultimately to be responsible for their own destiny. They are granted the opportunity to succeed or to fail, to act in the image of their Maker or to turn their back on that image.

From the beginning they were human like us and — without immersing myself in a theological argument way above my head — the stories are inspiring because nothing is predestined. Hope is an ingredient of faith. Optimism — very cautious optimism — seems to be our original theme.

Mr. Speaker, it may be drawing a long bow to tie the second session of the twenty-third legislature to Abraham and Isaac, but I don't think so. Because in a small sense what we are doing here is simply continuing their efforts to use our imperfect characters and our limited skills to shape a society which reflects our highest impulses and keeps at bay our darker side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — As many speakers in this Assembly have noted, government by itself is neither good nor bad. Like a hammer which can be used to build or to destroy, government is simply the people's tool to do collectively what they cannot do individually. We on this side of the House have a shared philosophy of government which was best expressed by the

Premier. He said, and I quote:

A province or nation represents a moral commitment by its members to share a future, a commitment to act together to build fairness and equality, and to establish the basic conditions and structures of our social and economic lives to achieve those goals.

While we believe that this idea of shared opportunity and shared responsibility is the tap root of the Saskatchewan character, and we also believe that there is such a thing as the Canadian identity, it is to be found in this characteristic. Our commitment to this idea we believe is part of the historical condominium I mentioned. As His Honour said, it is manifest in our promise to invest in our province's people and our future so that "We can meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The 21st century is not going to sneak up on us. It's been coming for a few years. Planning for it did not begin yesterday. We began in November, 1991 by hauling off the Tory rubbish of the 1980s, rebuilding the foundation of fiscal integrity, and designing the plan which led to our ability to make the investment in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!
(1615)

Mr. Wall: — Our investment portfolio has six pockets, each distinctly important on its own, each intimately connected to the others; each, Mr. Speaker, achievable because the people of Saskatchewan have the will, they have the vision, they have the experience, and they have the leadership in the government of Roy Romanow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Now the hon. member will know that it's not proper to refer to hon. members of the Assembly by their proper names but only by the offices they hold or the constituencies they represent. And I know that the hon. member will want to avoid doing that and he'll want to continue his address.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, during this session we will continue to invest in jobs and the economy.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is robust. The evidence is present for all to see. For instance, retail sales increased by 8 per cent during the first 10 months of 1996 to 5.7 billion, a rate higher than Manitoba's and — guess what? — higher than Alberta's. This, according to our friends at the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Housing starts were up by 56 per cent in the first nine months of 1996. Oil sales increased by almost 25 per cent in the first nine months of 1996. And as a further buoyancy of this particular sector, the February sale of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights brought the total for the fiscal year to 140.8 million, the second highest total ever; 2,840 oil and gas wells were drilled in 1996. Oil production increased by 10 per cent to approximately 127.5 million barrels. All that is particularly

good news for my constituency, but also for a few of the other ones, including the member from Kindersley.

There's more, Mr. Speaker. Farmers harvested many tonnes of major grains. Sales of recreational motor vehicles increased by 21 per cent. Uranium sales increased by 64 per cent. Potash sales were high for the third year in a row. Manufacturing shipments rose by 8 per cent.

This growth was not achieved by robots, Mr. Speaker. They were achieved by Saskatchewan people working in Saskatchewan jobs. Our unemployment rate is consistently the lowest in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And because Saskatchewan people are working to make the economy grow, the number of Saskatchewan people is growing as well. Our population has increased steadily since January, 1993.

And, Mr. Speaker, these jobs are coming not just from our traditional industries, but from the industries which have been identified as the growth areas of the future — ag biotech, communications, tourism. In ag biotech alone, sales are expected to grow to 307 million by the year 2000.

As I said, evidence for all to see, except the opposition. Mr. Speaker, I have never heard such a sorry bunch of despairmongering Jeremiahs in all my life as I hear from the Liberal caucus.

To hear them talk, there is no good news in Saskatchewan. There is no one working. For that matter, there is no one here; everyone has left. Those that remain weep by the cold evening light of the candle stubs donated by their rich relatives who have moved to Alberta. It's a sorry picture they finger paint.

Funny thing though, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals like to brag that there were a thousand or so delegates to their leadership convention in November where they got together to bemoan the sad state of our province. These thousand poor souls stayed at the finest hotels, ate the best food Saskatoon has, met in very comfortable surroundings, and reports state that there were more \$500 suits in one place than ever before in Saskatchewan. Somebody is working.

And the reason they are working is not an accident. This government knew from the beginning that the way to economic recovery, growth, and prosperity was the way of cooperation and consultation with workers, with businesses, with communities, and with cooperatives. We launched the *Partnership for Renewal* in 1992 and followed it with a *Partnership for Growth* a year ago.

Unlike the megalomaniacal megaproject mentality of the '80s, this partnership is a bottoms-up reasonable strategy that unleashes the resources and entrepreneurial talent of Saskatchewan. It is built on three simple goals with 21 objectives, all of which are progressing or on schedule.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The partnership provides for a positive environment for growth which will allow Saskatchewan to build on its traditional strengths and new growth opportunities and develop programs and partnerships to create full employment. While the new Liberal leader and caucus research officer cries woe, his traditional friends in the chamber of commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business are full of optimism for Saskatchewan. Their members overwhelmingly expect improvement in employment and revenue for 1997.

Mr. Speaker, *The Globe and Mail* says Saskatchewan is prospering. The *Winnipeg Free Press* says we are doing well. The chamber of commerce is optimistic about our prospects, and the CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business) is yelling whoopee. I'm pretty happy myself. It's sadly obvious that the only thing that will make the opposition happy is total economic collapse so the rest of us can be as miserable as they are.

Mr. Speaker, I'm particularly happy with the announcement of the Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development which recently opened its doors in Swift Current. This centre will provide business advice, information and resources for our area's youth, potential entrepreneurs, and also for existing businesses.

The SCED (Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development) will integrate business, community development, and education. It will provide a bridge between the region's high schools and community college and specialized entrepreneurial skills needed by the next generation of business owners and operators in our area.

The Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development is another example of cooperation and consultations between regional economic development groups, private sector business, and government agencies from the federal and provincial level. It could well be a prototype for other centres throughout the province investing in our province's people, Mr. Speaker, to meet the challenges of the future.

Part of the mandate of SCED is training — training based on the identified needs of the business leaders of the future. Education and training is the second pocket of our investment portfolio. Mr. Speaker, there was a time not long ago when the target of education for many was a high school diploma; for a few, a university degree; for most, a strong back.

For good or ill, these times are gone. We still need the three R's, perhaps more so than ever, because there is now so much knowledge to pile onto the basics. Changing knowledge, knowledge that was revolutionary one day, obsolete the next, particularly in science and engineering. Graduates today can expect to be back in school during their career almost as much as they are on the job.

It is in this context that we are designing our education system so that our people remain the best educated and most highly motivated anywhere. That is why we initiated our highly successful JobStart and Future Skills program, to make sure

lifelong learning is a reality for our workforce and to make sure that learning is tied to the demands of the job market.

In that light, Mr. Speaker, I was interested to read that one of the new Liberal leader's proposals for saving us from outer darkness was a plan to tie training to job demand. Brilliant! And only a year or two after we had initiated our plan. Yesterday has almost come to the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, the strong economy with educated workers is not an end in itself. It also provides the means by which society as a whole may improve the lot of those set aside by poverty and neglect, especially the children of our nation who through no fault of their own are denied the things we take for granted. The most glaring example of our imperfect human nature is the fact that society we have created ourselves, a society built in a land of plenty, still has the blight of child poverty in its midst.

We can do no better than we have . . . we can do much better than we have, and in Saskatchewan we pledge to do so. As a government and as a society, we can only use the instruments we have to minister to the problem. I'm happy to see that this government is working with the other provinces and with the federal government to protect children from a life of poverty which only perpetuates itself.

I am proud, as all Saskatchewan's people should be, that our Action Plan for Children was given an award for outstanding commitment to children by the Child Welfare League of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — I am also proud that at the urging of the New Democratic Party governments here and in B.C. (British Columbia), a national action plan to attack child poverty has been initiated. Although it's worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that the federal Liberal government announced it will not contribute one new dime until 1998. This is one way Liberals are looking forward: they invest tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, for our children left out of the blessings of our culture, tomorrow is not good enough. The author of the Psalm said, "Although they have no words or language and their voices are not heard, their sound has gone into all the lands and their message to the ends of the world."

It is our duty to make their voices heard, and I believe our child action plan along with other welfare reforms announced by the Minister of Social Services will do so. And by the way, we will do it without giving bus tickets to Alberta or B.C.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, let me speak plainly in words of one syllable. Medicare is here to stay. Our health system is stronger than it has ever been. Its five principles are intact. The first phase of universal accessibility is completed. The second phase of revamping and reorganizing the delivery system is well under way. It is positioned to serve us into the 21st century. Saskatchewan's health system is the envy of the world.

Saskatchewan still has the highest number of hospitals per

capita in Canada; 99 per cent of our people live within 50 miles of a hospital; 80 per cent of our people live within a 10-minute drive of a nursing home. Simply put, if someone needs access to a hospital or to a nursing home, they will get it. And any survey will show, Mr. Speaker, that if a Saskatchewan person has had personal experience with the health system in the last while, they are almost unanimously satisfied.

If on the other hand they listen to the irresponsible, fright-wig scare tactics of the Liberals, they might think that there is something of a problem.

There is a problem, and it's twofold. One part is misrepresentation by the opposition; the other part is the typical Saskatchewan Liberal desire to march us smartly to the past. In this case, back to a health care system that threatened to sink under its own inefficiency. A system which inevitably would have lead to the destruction of medicare, which is what the Liberals have wanted since 1962 anyway.

Surely the most bizarre spectacle in Saskatchewan public life today is the sight of Liberals scurrying about the province announcing that they have come to save health care. And leading this crusade of the counterfeit saviours is their new leader, the good doctor with salt and aspirin in his bag and a vision of medicine as it was practised 50 years ago. A truly amazing sight, Mr. Speaker.

What do the new Liberals propose for the health care in the 21st century? Well first of all they propose an end to the people having a say in how it's practised and administered. After all, the 20th century, the century of democracy, is almost over and it's obviously time to end this messy experiment.

The new leader says health care is too important to be left to the democratic process. We need highly educated and highly knowledgeable people governing the system, he said. After all, democratically elected health boards bring health care too close to the people it serves.

What next, Mr. Speaker? Education is pretty important too. Let's get rid of those school boards and turn the system over to highly educated people who know best. Certainly we don't need civilian police boards. Get rid of them.

Of course the most important sector where we need these educated and knowledgeable people is in government. And we can't trust the people with choosing the people who will run it, can we, Mr. Speaker?

A highly knowledgeable person like the Leader of the Liberal Party would have, he says, kept open the 50 small hospitals converted to health centres. A highly educated person like the good doctor would have kept the 500 local boards because 30 health boards are too many. Don't ask me to explain the logic, Mr. Speaker. I'm just reporting what he said. Of course, the 30 local boards have to go, he says.

Here's the one I like. We need, he says, the highly knowledgeable people to run our system, but he would overturn the opinion of three studies by highly knowledgeable and educated people which said the Plains hospital in Regina should

be closed. He cannot even trust the highly knowledgeable people.

(1630)

He is opposed to province-wide computerized health data resource system. I suppose because it would be up to date. And he, his health critic, and his caucus are for a two-tiered system. What else can they term their call for pay-as-you-go medical clinics?

It's perfectly clear that Liberals and their Tory clones want to return to the top-heavy system of bricks and mortar illness care, an out-of-date and expensive system that would be prelude to American style privatized health care like we had before 1944.

The answer from this government and the people who support it is never. Never again a time when the quality of your medical care depends on the depths of your pockets. Never.

Mr. Speaker, others in this debate will go into more detail, but what we are doing in this, the second phase of medicare, is shifting money and emphasis from institutional care to community-based services and home care, because this is where many services performed by hospital and nursing homes should be.

We are investing the same number of dollars — no thanks to the federal governments, by the way — but investing them smarter, investing them in new, more effective and cost-effective services. Again, in words of one syllable, a New Democratic government introduced medicare in Saskatchewan in 1962. Liberals and Tories fought it with some of the most despicable, underhanded tactics ever seen in this province. A New Democratic government saved medicare in 1992 and after, by introducing the second phase. Liberals and Tories oppose the reform of medicare, just as they opposed its inception. Today is yet to come to the Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, the government is also committed to improving the transportation system in our province. Here I'm tempted to turn the floor over to my good friend from Saltcoats because he knows better than we how to go about improving the grain handling system in Saskatchewan and, by extension, the whole transportation network of roads and railways in our province.

What we should do, he said, is to admit with him and the caucus the complete superfluousness of the federal Liberal government. Although a federal responsibility, the province should stop rail branch line abandonment. We should, I suppose, rescind the federal Canada Transportation Act of 1995 which allowed the railroads to move quickly and abandon branch lines without consulting the public. This is the Act we fought before a House of Commons standing committee and before a Senate committee. The provincial Liberal Party said nothing then. Now, nearly two years later, after the fact, the same Liberal Party wants us to spend more money on roads being damaged by the consequence of this branch line abandonment they did nothing to stop. More, more of the bizarre Liberal world.

Mr. Speaker, one of our dollars can only be stretched so many

different ways. But we are investing wisely and planning carefully to maintain our roads. I remind us all that we have more roads per capita than any province in the country and that 90 per cent of our traffic is on about 6 per cent of those roads.

We are improving our roads where it is most needed, and we are putting together a comprehensive transportation plan to address the long-term sustainability of our highways. What we need, and what we have been urging, is a national, cost-shared highways program — a program that every country in the western world has, except Canada. That would be a Liberal government showing leadership, and that would be a first.

Mr. Speaker, the sixth part of our plan to invest in the future of Saskatchewan is to continue our commitment to a fiscal responsibility and frugal, good government.

Here I simply say that this government, under the leadership of the Premier and with the guidance of two of the ablest Finance ministers ever to wield an abacus, we have done exactly what we said we would do.

One of the enduring images of this legislature is the Premier waving the 1991 election card which begins by promising and I quote: "The first things first — common sense financial management."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — We promised a balanced budget in our first term, and a long-term plan to eliminate the Devine debt, while managing our finances frugally and responsibly. We kept that promise as we kept all the promises of that card, as we are keeping the promises made in 1995. We are keeping our financial promise for at least two reasons: one selfish, one not.

First, a government in debt is a government enslaved to the financial moguls from the mysterious East and from off-shore. We want to manage our affairs as the people want us to manage them, not as these outsiders would have us.

Secondly, money going in interest to someone else's pocket cannot go to health care, to education, to highways, to tax reduction. A dollar, like everything else in this world, cannot be in two places at once. Simple logic, not understood by the members opposite. As Lord Buckley, the 1950's comedian, said: "It was just like the jitterbug; it was so simple it evaded me".

Well, Mr. Speaker, simple logic is our strong suit over here. Simple logic that says the way to build a strong, sustainable economy is through cooperation and consultation with all the players. Simple logic, saying education and training should be matched to the realities of the world. Compassionate logic, what tells us if some are left out of life's opportunities, the quality of all of our lives is reduced.

Common sense which announces from the mountains that quality health care for all is the right of all, not the privilege of the few. Simple logic that says society's infrastructure is the business of all governments. Common sense that says in our imperfect world, we must be able to pay for what we have.

Mr. Speaker, the six points in this government investment strategy as outlined yesterday by His Honour made sense. They represent a marriage of practicality and vision — what we can do on the one hand, what we dream of doing on the other. If we work, if we cooperate, if we allow free reign to our noble impulses, we can move ourselves another small step forward to that perfect society we can never achieve but keep as our goal.

We can almost, as Saskatoon songwriter and poet Joni Mitchell says, “get ourselves back to the garden.” The garden with which the Book of Genesis begins. This is where I began, I believe.

I want to close, Mr. Speaker, by reaffirming something I said last year during this debate. For many years I was a teacher and I am proud of my first profession. I don’t want to call it a noble profession because those are the ones that are automatically underpaid. Now I am a politician and I have no hesitation calling it a noble profession — for that reason I just mentioned, and for others.

I am proud to be a politician. I am honoured to be a public participant in our democratic process which is, as Churchill said, “the worse system of government in the world except for all the other kinds.” I am humbled but frankly more than a little pleased to realize that my constituents voted for me to be their representative. And I am more than willing to put my beliefs and principles and party’s policies up for public scrutiny in this or any other forum.

And should the time come, I will accept a different verdict from my constituents. I do not believe, as a member opposite was quoted as saying, politics is a necessary evil. I don’t believe that. I do not agree with the House of Commons . . . with the member from the House of Commons who said that the House of Commons has a poisonous atmosphere. I don’t believe that.

These attitudes and these assumptions have their basis in the third-rate, thoughtless clichés appropriate to late-night talk-show hosts, attitudes which ignore the parade of fine men and women who have served in parliaments and legislatures through the centuries; men and women whose footsteps we humbly follow. I would not want to speak for others, but I believe Tommy Douglas is a much better model than David Letterman.

We are human, yes. We make mistakes, certainly. Some of us fall pretty far from grace, and when we betray the public trust the response must be swift and severe. But I reject the idea that there is a disease which we contract at the drop of the writ.

I am proud to serve with you, Mr. Speaker, and with all the hon. members of this legislature. Because I am a proud member of this Assembly, because I am a joyful member of this government, and because I believe in the policies of this government as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, I am happy to move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Southeast:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable John E.N. Wiebe,

Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty’s dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of this present session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to address a few preliminary remarks to the House. I am very mindful that we will obviously be coming back to continue the important work of this session this evening, and so what I want to do right now is to address a few preliminary remarks on the subject of the Speech from the Throne.

And I would like to start out by commending the mover of the Speech from the Throne, the member for Swift Current.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — It was obvious, listening to him giving his speech, that he has a rich vein of oratorical talent, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I might say he has a rich and a large vein of oratorical talent . . .

An Hon. Member: — Rhetorical too.

Ms. Lorje: — Rhetorical too, probably, yes. It is so obvious that the people of Swift Current have benefited from his tutelage over the years. And it is so obvious that the people in this legislature will benefit from his oratory and his rhetoric.

I will be happy to second his motion for approval for His Honour’s speech because, quite frankly, the programs, the themes, and the policies outlined in the throne speech are extremely easy to defend and extremely simple to defend, because they make sense. And it is time in this country that we had government that made sense.

We have right now a government in one of the provinces of this country that talks about common sense, but quite frankly I don’t think they’re making any sense at all. And I think that we will find, as this session proceeds, that the Saskatchewan way is far more the sensible and common sense way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, I listened as the member from Swift Current was addressing his remarks. And he talked about the great black baseball player, Satchel Paige. And he compared himself to that baseball player.

I then listened and I heard the Leader of the Third Party, and I must emphasize that’s the third party — that’s not the Leader of the Opposition; that’s the Leader of the Third Party — talk about perhaps there is another way that the member from Swift

Current is like Paige, and that is that he would be having no hitters.

Well quite frankly I have to say, Mr. Speaker, he is extremely wrong. Because what we're going to see in this session of the legislature is a lot of home runs from members on this side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Unlike the Leader of the Third Party, Mr. Speaker, who won't even get to first base with the people of Saskatchewan.

I think when he decides that he wants to tackle us on either baseball analogies or on politics, he'd better take a look at the record because, quite frankly, the record of his party with respect to their fiscal irresponsibility is not something that anyone on this side of the House would ever want to emulate.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that we have a fiscally responsible government. I believe that the people of Saskatchewan are proud of that fact as well. You can tell by virtue of the fact that we form an overwhelming majority in government, by virtue of the fact that we are consistently doing well on anyone's polls, and by virtue of the fact that, unlike with the members opposite, we have a clear and consistent and concise message to deliver to the people of Saskatchewan.

And that message, Mr. Speaker, is a message . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, I hear some chirping from the members opposite. It's a little difficult for all those guys in suits to chirp, but they're doing it. Oh, Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I was not aware of the member from Humboldt. I didn't see her sitting . . . The member from Kelvington-Wadena, I apologize to her.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now the Chair is very pleased to recognize that there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the debate on the Speech from the Throne. And as good news . . . as good luck will have it, there's lots of time and all hon. members will have the opportunity to put their remarks on the record and I'll encourage them to put their remarks on the record when it's their turn.

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for your wisdom and for the intelligent perspective you're bringing to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, that reminds me that I would be remiss if I didn't compliment you. It is obviously traditional to compliment you on the great job you're doing maintaining order and decorum in this legislature. I realize it's traditional and I will do it with some reluctance because I'm listening to the noise from the members opposite and I'm wondering exactly what kind of decorum is being displayed in this House right now and what kind of example they think they're setting for the voters of this province.

But nevertheless, I do want to compliment you, Mr. Speaker,

not only for doing a fine job under very difficult circumstances. I want to compliment you about something else, Mr. Speaker, and that is the excellent job that you are doing by taking the concept of parliamentary democracy to all the schools in this province.

I would wish that the members opposite would listen for a moment because, quite frankly, what the Speaker is doing is both revolutionary and evolutionary. All too often when we get school groups coming to this legislature, they wonder what we're doing here, why we're doing it, why there's so much banter to and fro. And they also wonder why the guy that sits up at the front prances around in a dress. They don't seem to understand what the concept of being a Speaker is. They don't understand that his robes . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. The Speaker will neither enter into debate, or should ought the members involve the Speaker in the debate. And I simply want to remind the hon. member that I think she's veering very closely to involving the Speaker in the debate. And out of respect for the rules of our House, I'll ask the hon. member to continue without doing that.

Ms. Lorje: — I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to involve the Speaker in the debate. I think that the Speaker does an excellent job in maintaining the rules of this House, as has just been amply demonstrated.

I do though, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I want to commend you for the job, the fine and excellent job, that you are doing by taking the concept of parliamentary democracy to the schools. It is absolutely imperative, if we are to maintain a democracy in this country, it is absolutely imperative that students at an early age learn the nature of their government — how it functions, who its functionaries are, what they do, and why.

Frankly they don't get that from the media most often. Even when they would watch the televised proceedings in the legislature, they would get only a single slice of what goes on here — a snapshot, as it were, taken from a fixed-angle camera.

I've often heard school children comment on what they see as the rather childish nature of some of the proceedings here. And it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that by having you go out to the schools and explain to the students what is going on here in this Chamber, why we do what we do, what the nature of question period is, what the nature of the banter, the to and fro comments and comedic insults, what they mean, I think that that does an excellent job in explaining to the students just exactly why our nature of parliamentary democracy is so important. By going out directly to the schools, by patiently answering the students' questions, by posing them challenges of your own, you're giving them a real-life notion of what's involved in the legislative process.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that you are to be extremely commended for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — At the risk of involving the Speaker one more time, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that you are also to be commended

for arranging the Commonwealth Day and the observance today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — It was marvellous, Mr. Speaker, to come into this building and to see all the school children here and to realize that not only were they coming into the legislature and seeing how their parliamentarians work but they were also seeing people from other Commonwealth countries and were able to talk with them and get their perspective of how their Commonwealth countries work.

It is that kind of real-life experience, I believe, Mr. Speaker, will fire the imagination and the democratic passion of those students and I think that it is extremely imperative that these kinds of things happen in this legislature, in this city, in this province, and this country.

Part of the reason I think that, Mr. Speaker, is because these days we hear an awful lot of talk about the global village but all too often we tend to not have a real clear idea just exactly what that global village might mean. I mean we have so many millions and millions of people living in this planet, and even though we have relative ease of air transportation and everything, for most of us we tend not to get too far away from our home base.

And so we have a great deal of difficulty understanding what some of these numbers in the global village mean. For too many people I believe, they think that the concept of global village is just a code word for downsizing and union bashing. In fact global village is, I believe, our attempt to try to make sense of the nature of the world today, and it is imperative that all of us understand that we live not only in our own individual communities, but we live in a country that exists within the larger context of the world.

Canada, quite frankly, in this global village really exists within the high-rent district of the global village, and it is important that all of us every once in a while stop and pause and reflect on the living conditions of people who aren't so privileged to be able to live in the high-rent district.

Mr. Speaker, in that sense I think it's important that we take a look at what actually is happening in the world today. If we were to make sense of the statistics, if we were to hypothesize that the world is a village and it's a village consisting of 100 people, what would it look like if there were 100 people living in that village but we maintained the same ratios of population and of achievements that we currently have?

The people who are working for the March 21 observance of the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination did just that.

And they produced some statistics that I think quite frankly are shocking, Mr. Speaker, and I believe, tie in with the initiatives that you are trying to accomplish with the observance of the Commonwealth Day.

They took a look at what the world would look like if it only

consisted of 100 people. In that world, Mr. Speaker, 70 of those inhabitants of that 100 population village would be non-white, 30 would be white. Even more amazing, Mr. Speaker, 50 per cent of the entire world's wealth would be concentrated in the hands of just six people — 50 per cent of the world's wealth held in the hands of six people.

More shocking yet, Mr. Speaker, those six people would all live in the United States of America. Talk about concentration of wealth, concentration of power, and concentration of privilege. Those are the kinds of statistics, Mr. Speaker, that we — all of us — need to be aware of as we prepare to launch our work for this session and as we think beyond our own narrow, lean horizons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne talks about the initiatives that this government will be undertaking with respect to poverty. Poverty, unfortunately, still exists in Saskatchewan and it exists all over the world. Mr. Speaker, in that global village of 100 people, 50 of those citizens would be suffering from malnutrition, 80 of them would live in substandard housing, and only one would have a college education.

Mr. Speaker, those kinds of statistics I believe scream out to us to recognize our privileged position in this province, and they should prompt us to seriously examine the seeds and the sources of racism. We all of us as legislators have to work to combat racism wherever it might exist, but most particularly where it exists in our own backyard. It is a responsibility, it is a duty for us as legislators, to combat racism, and we need to be doing it in a way where we are actually walking our talk rather than mouthing easy words.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do commend you for what you've done today. I think that by bringing the school children here, by having the displays in the rotunda, by having the speaker from South Africa address this legislature, you have gone a long way to setting an example for the kinds of things that all of us as legislators ought to be doing to combat racism in a real and practical way.

Mr. Speaker, I have many other things to say about the Speech from the Throne. I feel that even though many people think that we don't work when the session is not . . . when we don't have the legislature sitting, in point of fact, Mr. Speaker, probably the bulk of the work that we do is done before then, all the homework that we do to prepare for the Speech from the Throne and for the budget. Mr. Speaker, I think I speak on behalf of all members in this House, on all sides of the House, when I say that we actually do work very hard, very diligently, and we do care about the needs and concerns of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock, the House will stand recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Osika	35
Hillson	35
Boyd	35
McPherson	35
Goohsen	35

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk	35
-------------	----

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Osika	36
Draude	36

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker	36
Shillington	36, 37, 38
Krawetz	37
Boyd	37
Murray	38
Aldridge	38
Osika	38
Serby	38

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Impaired Driving Awareness Week

Sonntag	38
Goohsen	39
Draude	40

Agriculture and Food Week

McPherson	39
Jess	39
D'Autremont	40

90th Anniversary of St. Paul's Hospital

McLane	39
Whitmore	40

ORAL QUESTIONS

Property Tax Reassessment

Bjornerud	40
Atkinson	41

Youth Crime

Hillson	41
Calvert	42
Nilson	42
Boyd	42

Grain Handling Delays

Goohsen	43
Renaud	43

Group Homes Funding

Julé	43
Calvert	44

Compensation for Parents Affected by Labour Standards

Aldridge	44
Mitchell	45

MOTIONS

Recess for Commonwealth Day Ceremonies

Kowalsky	45
----------------	----

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Prorogation Speech Error

Speaker	45
---------------	----

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Wall	46
Lorje	51

OBSERVANCE OF COMMONWEALTH DAY	Back of Hansard
--------------------------------------	-----------------