The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan, and particularly the city of Regina, with respect to crimes by young people. The prayer reads:

> 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 organizations and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise with a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan regarding the problems with some of our youth.

> 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 charges, including car thefts and crimes of violence; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to present petitions on behalf of people of Saskatchewan.

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

And these appear to be from Bengough, I guess in that area around there, and Viceroy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present petitions today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

> 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 provincial budget, and table a long-term plan for further reductions in the PST in the years ahead.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions come from across the province, Mr. Speaker. From Denzil — lots of them from Denzil — Borden, Hepburn, Langham, Ituna, Parkview, Abernethy; Moose Jaw even, Mr. Speaker; from across the province.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reverse the decision to close Argyle Elementary School; and
>
> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reduce the PST by two points in the 1997 provincial budget; 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 establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime in Saskatchewan; and
>
> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to change the Saskatchewan big game damage compensation program to provide reasonable compensation.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 10 ask the government the following question:

> To the minister responsible for Finance: in light of comments made to the Regina Chamber of Commerce regarding targeted tax programs for business versus a reduction in the PST: (1) please provide whatever surveys or studies the minister used as a basis for her comment that Saskatchewan businesses prefer targeted tax cuts rather than a reduction in the PST; (2) according to the Department of Finance, how much estimated revenue do Saskatchewan businesses lose to cross-border shopping to neighbouring provinces, and the U.S. on an annual basis?

I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following questions:

> Of the Minister of Health: (a) how many Saskatchewan residents received publicly insured medical services outside of Saskatchewan in 1996; how much did the Department of Health pay to other provinces or U.S. states for medical services received by Saskatchewan residents in 1996; and (c) please provide a list of all medical procedures received by Saskatchewan residents outside of Saskatchewan and paid for by the Department of Health in 1996.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence I have two groups . . . I'm fortunate to have two groups to introduce to the House today.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and all members a group of 29 students who are seated in the west gallery and some of the students are seated here on the floor of the Chamber with us. These are students, Mr. Speaker, from the Alexandra Centre for Adult Education, part of the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) campus in Moose Jaw.

They are here this afternoon with their teachers, Yvonne Nicholson and Jan McArter. They've had a chance, I think, to tour the building, and I look forward to meeting with them for a short visit between 2 and 2:30, Mr. Speaker. I would invite all members to welcome these adult students from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And then, Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege as minister responsible for the Public Service Commission to introduce and to welcome a group of public servants, civil servants, employees of the Government of Saskatchewan who are today seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

These are the individuals who work in a variety of departments of government. They're here to spend the day at the legislature. And we sincerely welcome them both to the Chamber and thank them each individually for the work they're doing for the people of Saskatchewan.

Welcome to the Chamber.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Internet and Agriculture

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, as part of Agriculture and Food Week, I would like to take this opportunity to mention one change that is taking place in farming today that is having a tremendous impact. Mr. Speaker, it is the Internet.

Saskatchewan farmers are using new technology and new techniques to improve their crop production. Attaining the most up-to-date information in an efficient and timely manner therefore, has become a vital aspect of most farming operations. In their attempt to remain well-informed, farmers are turning to the Internet for that agricultural information.

In response to changing needs of producers, there have been numerous web sites set up that provide a wide variety of information to producers, such as the AgInfoNet and the Farm Business Management Information Network.

Agricultural sites on the Internet are increasing the competitiveness of Saskatchewan agri-food industry. The Internet, Mr. Speaker, will continue to play a major role in years to come. I hope that more producers take the leap and get on-line.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Quill Lake Goose Fest

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we often fail to recognize what makes our communities unique. Quill Lake has looked to its skies and chosen the Canadian goose, which flocks to the Quill Lake and area in spring and fall, as their mascot. In the past 13 years the whole community of 465 people have participated in the annual Goose Fest.

This fall at the annual conference in Prince Albert, the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association presented Quill Lake Goose Fest committee with a community achievement award. Over the 13 years of the Quill Lake Goose Fest more than $100,000 has been raised and returned to the community for rink renovations, artificial ice in the curling rink, community hall, and a playground.

The festival relies on the involvement of every service group in town, and even as people have been forced to leave the community the festival has been able to survive because those involved are willing to take on a number of jobs at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, Quill Lake exemplifies the spirit of Saskatchewan and I would like the Assembly to join with me in congratulating this rural Saskatchewan town on this recognition of their yearly Goose Fest achievement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Weyburn Co-op Expansion

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I stood to congratulate the Wheat Pool on the expansion of its Weyburn elevator. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also congratulate the Weyburn Co-op on its plan for a $2 million expansion and renovation of its Co-op food store scheduled for completion in September of this year.

The new-look Co-op will merge the services and products offered at the downtown department store with the new store,

install new refrigeration units, and feature more sales space. The refurbished Co-op will increase its space, Mr. Speaker, from 14,000 square feet to 21,000, thereby increasing the size of the Co-op to include a deli, bakery, pharmacy, and hardware departments, as well as adding a one-hour photo lab.

In effect, Mr. Speaker, the renovations and expansion of the Co-op will result in a complete shopping centre for the people of Weyburn and surrounding area. In addition, the expansion will create numerous jobs for the community. Construction activities will employ approximately 20 people and when the project is completed, five new positions will be added in the first three years and as sales increase additional jobs will be added.

The economic activities in Weyburn are very positive, just as they are throughout the province, and I congratulate the Weyburn Co-op for helping to create that atmosphere and for its commitment to the people of the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Exhibition of Allen Sapp's Paintings

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, Allen Sapp, the noted Cree artist and one of those fine people from North Battleford I spoke of yesterday, was recently honoured by having an exhibition of his paintings in Toronto. All residents of the Battlefords are proud of this very talented and respected member of our community, and North Battleford has built a gallery to display his work, which is now one of our prime tourist attractions.

The present exhibition of Mr. Sapp's work in Toronto is an appropriate occasion for hon. members to express our admiration for this great Saskatchewanian. It also provides we in the opposition an opportunity to reassure the hon. member from Saskatoon Southeast that opposition members do appreciate the contributions of Saskatchewan artists to our province and we are not the crude Philistines she seems to envisage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Alberta Provincial Election

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, as member for Lloydminster, the city that is half in the promised land of Saskatchewan and half in the outer darkness of Alberta, I want to comment on yesterday's Alberta's election, after the fact. I don't want to go on prematurely like the member from Kindersley did the other day.

Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member from Kindersley yesterday, it was evident that his image was incomplete — something vague about Spam. If he had finished his comparison logically . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order, order. I want to remind the hon. member that statements by members are not to be debated in the House. And she will be aware that she is engaging in debate on the member made by the hon. member for Kindersley and I'm sure she wants to avoid doing that.

Ms. Stanger: — Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'll avoid doing that. I do want to agree with one point, however. Alberta is still without an official opposition. However, like our . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I just want to caution the hon. member to . . . I just finished cautioning her to not engage in debate, and in debate in any form. And I'll just ask her to complete her statement without engaging in debate on a previous member's statement. Order. Order.

Ms. Stanger: — I'm sorry about that. You know, Mr. Speaker, knowing me personally it is very hard for me to not engage in debate.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the caucus of Pam Barrett and Raj Pannu might provide the only sober thought in the legislature in Alberta. That is the election of two New Democrats in Alberta yesterday. I do want to point out for progressively minded people that the NDP (New Democratic Party) members are a woman and a person of colour. This might be the most significant fact of the election.

I do congratulate all elected members and I want folks to realize that 50 per cent of the people of Alberta voted in the election and only half of them voted for Mr. Klein — a whopping 25 per cent.

New Liberal Leader

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this session began we haven't heard a word of the new Liberal leader. We think that's unfortunate because he obviously has some very intelligent things to say.

For instance, the other day in an interview with the Moosomin paper he said:

> The Conservatives provided more effective opposition on many issues than did the Liberals in the last session.

The new Liberal leader is obviously a very astute political observer. The Liberal caucus has made an excellent choice in having him as their new senior policy analyst, although I do question paying him from caucus accounts.

He went on to say:

> The PCs had an advantage. They were media coherent. They have quick wits and they know how to talk in sound bites.

I'm not sure if I believe the last part — four farmers and a school teacher able to completely manipulate Saskatchewan's media. Nevertheless we feel there are some very astute observations we want to bring to the attention of the House. We feel the Liberals should be congratulated on making a canny political addition to their office staff. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Korean Veterans' Wall of Remembrance

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every November 11 we pay solemn tribute to our soldiers who were lost in the two world wars of this century. As we must, Mr. Speaker, because without their sacrifices it is certain that the nation we have today would be significantly altered, and for the worse. Sometimes lost in the memory of those two conflicts is the participation and sacrifice of Canadians during the Korean conflict of 1950 to 1953.

As we prepare to turn the historical page on this century, it is necessary I think, to not let this smaller but significant moment be forgotten. We should not forget that this conflict presented the first challenge to the newly formed United Nations, the first time that 22 nations came together with the primary motive of enforcing peace, not to wage war. We especially should not forget that 516 Canadian soldiers lost their lives in the service of international order.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the Korea Veterans Association of Canada is raising funds to build a national wall of remembrance for a dedication date of July 27. On this 200-foot granite wall will be placed plaques which are replicas of the grave markers in the United Nations cemetery in Pusan, Korea where most of the fallen Canadians are buried.

Mr. Speaker, I know all members will join me in praising the Korean veterans association, and in urging all Canadians to participate in this necessary act of memorial memory.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Neonatal Ambulance Service

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to comment on the new state-of-the art neonatal ambulance the Regina Health District Emergency Medical Services Unit put into action in late January of this year. The new unit will transport critically ill children from throughout southern Saskatchewan to hospitals in Regina for life-saving medical attention.

This new neonatal ambulance is replacing a unit that is over 10 years old and which can no longer accommodate the neonatal team or its high-tech equipment. The team responds to an average of 100 calls a year and travels thousands of kilometres to aid children in need of life-saving medical care.

I extend my congratulations to the EMS (Emergency Medical Services) staff for spearheading efforts to raise capital for the ambulance, of which they raised half the funds. I would also like to congratulate the Children's Health Foundation of Saskatchewan which played an important role in helping the health district achieve its goal.

Providing transportation for critically ill children is a vital component in the health care of children. Children of southern Saskatchewan will undoubtedly benefit from the addition of this ambulance.

I ask all members of this Assembly to applaud the achievement of the Regina Health District for its continued high-quality service to the children of southern Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Dodsland Health Centre

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1993 this government, the self-proclaimed and self-delusional saviours of health care, closed 52 hospitals throughout this province and replaced them with empty shells which provide an assorted variety of services.

Now it appears, Mr. Speaker, that some communities are going to lose even those minimal levels of care. The people of Dodsland are being told their health centre may be closed despite $200,000 sitting in a trust fund — money, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Dodsland raised to ensure the future of their health care in that community.

The fund they created will not be used to keep the centre open and it may have to be shortly closed. Will the minister explain to the people of Dodsland why they can no longer use money they raised to ensure the survival of the health care clinic and what is he prepared to do to ensure the people of Dodsland will continue to have access to appropriate health care services in the community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the member does not quite have his facts correct. The member asks if the Dodsland Health Centre is going to be closed. I can advise the member, Mr. Speaker, not with any joy but just as a matter of fact, the Dodsland Health Centre, Mr. Speaker, was closed on October 1, 1996.

What the people of Dodsland are trying to do, and I support them, Mr. Speaker, is to create a medical clinic, which a physician will use for a number of days per week, in Dodsland. That's what's happening in Dodsland, Mr. Speaker.

And there is a trust fund — $15,000 was dispersed to the committee in Dodsland earlier. A business plan is to be presented by the community to the health board by June 1 of this year, which has not arrived yet, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately that has not been done yet. The health board locally is committed to meeting with the people locally to work out a solution. There's up to $200,000 in the trust fund and I'm confident that, working together, a solution will be arrived at, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the minister has just made our point in the fact that we've seen the level of services in Dodsland and the other 52 communities increasingly

decrease over the last three or four years. And that's what's happened, this. Yes, the health centre is not there any more. They're down now to a doctor two days a week, Mr. Speaker, and no services. And now the health district, because of funding cuts by the provincial government, want to close this.

Our question is, yesterday the minister stepped in and said that he was looking into the East Central Health District and looking at the tendering process. Now today he is saying that he will not step in. Which is it, Mr. Minister? Are you going to step in and help the people in Dodsland, and next Eatonia, to ensure that they're going to have the services that are needed there or are you not?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the difficulty I have of course, Mr. Speaker, talking to the member about funding, is what we hear from the member today and what we heard last year was that we should put more money into health care even though we have 100 per cent back-filled, dollar for dollar, the cuts by the Liberals to health care. And we're going to continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

But the leader of the member's party, Mr. Speaker, is on record as saying (a) he wants to shut down the hospitals in rural Saskatchewan and adopt the Australian plan; (b) he wants to cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of the health care budget. And what we need to know, Mr. Speaker, is where does that member stand.

Does he stand with us, believing that we should properly fund the health care system, or does he stand with the leader of his party who has said that we should take hundreds of millions of dollars out of the health care system, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Property Tax Reassessment

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the entire reassessment plans of this government were thrown into chaos yesterday. Municipal representatives have taken the dramatic step, to demonstrate their opposition to reassessment, by voting to refuse to implement reassessment in 1997.

Will the minister explain how this government intends to deal with the mess she has created?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier put it most clearly this morning when he said this issue is 30 years overdue in being dealt with. It's been discussed for 10 years, and with 85 per cent support from the voting delegates at SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) at their annual meeting for this reassessment process, it's time now to move with it, and we will be moving in that direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Deputy Premier is correct that this province is dealing with a reassessment dating back to 1965 while every other province is dealing with a base year of 1990 or more recent.

Yet in spite of how much they have been dragging their heels . . . In fact it is even now just only a few days since SAMA has provided updated figures to the municipalities as to what impact reassessment would have on property owners they represent. Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that if reassessment in the rural areas comes unravelled, this also unravels urban reassessment, as the one cannot go ahead without the other.

Will the minister explain if the government is prepared to do something, other than make veiled threats to our municipal politicians, to address the concerns and to deal sensitively with the issues of reassessment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite, and clearly to the people who are attending the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention in Saskatoon, that this is indeed a difficult process and a difficult situation, but not made easier by waiting to make tough decisions. And I think that's what governance is all about, is working with communities, which we do. I think on the assessment panel, the people making the decision to go forward with this, there were three people from SARM, three people from SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), and three from government. They agreed to go forward with this process.

And I just say to the member opposite, as tough as these decisions are, if and when you ever get to this side of the House, decisions have to be made. And the fact of the matter is, a decision has been made. It's a tough decision, one that will take a lot of cooperation, a lot of discussion, but we are moving forward on this issue with the people who voted in favour of moving on reassessment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Auto Insurance Rates

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was another report today stating that the people of Saskatchewan could be facing an increase to their auto insurance rates. Residents have been kept in the dark far too long, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister in charge of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) tell the people of this province what plans he has for the cash-strapped pocketbooks regarding possible increase to SGI auto insurance rates, and what avenue residents can expect to take to express their concerns and their opinions. If their only choice is the present 45-day review process, it'll be nothing more than an exercise in futility.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all I want to inform the member opposite that we have indicated now, I think, on two occasions — both the acting president of SGI and through a discussion that I had with the media — that our auto fund is experiencing some difficulty.

There is no question of that. And in the Crown corporations review when members of your party had asked me the question, I'd indicated to them as well that there was some pressure on the auto fund this year.

Clearly with the 1995 storms, the increase in the number of vehicles that are involved in damage this year, we're experiencing that kind of a need to examine the auto fund. If in fact there was a requirement for any kind of an increase in the auto fund, that will be discussed in some detail both at the corporate level . . . the 45-day review process as you stated is correct. It's still in place, and we'll be providing that information in some detail for you if that becomes a process that we choose to undertake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are as well to the minister in charge of SGI.

The minister is about, Mr. Speaker, to break yet another NDP promise. When the NDP introduced no-fault insurance, and I'm sure they will recall that on January 1, 1995, they promised a freeze for three years on rate increases. And it looks like an early thaw, Mr. Speaker. That freeze is now being lifted and the minister is blaming it on car theft and vandalism. Now that's quite a thing, Mr. Speaker. The minister can't control people from stripping cars nor can he control people from stripping in bars.

Mr. Minister, why are you breaking your promise to freeze SGI rates for three full years?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member from Maple Creek is obviously attempting to expose a couple of issues this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

And clearly the rates that the member is talking about are not . . . the considerations currently that we're experiencing in the auto fund are not directly related, as has been reported and the member purports . . . to do with car thefts and vandalism. Certainly there has been an increase in that area but it hasn't been significant enough to put enough pressure on the auto fund where we're requiring in fact to make auto adjustment increases.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, we had a tremendous number of incidents around the tin issue where we've had many rollovers; we've had a very difficult year in terms of weather conditions. And as a result of that, our insurance fund is under some stress, as I've indicated.

Over the next couple of months, we've indicated we're going to review that in some detail and we'll be coming forward to announce to this Assembly and to do a 45-day review process if that's in fact the case. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is yet another example of the tremendous cost that people are paying in this province for the NDP's inability to control car theft and related kinds of issues. Not only is this problem endangering the police department and the people, it is now endangering the general public.

And now every single driver in Saskatchewan is going to be penalized — caused to pay a fine, basically — through higher auto rates for the crimes of others. While the criminals continue to get off with little or no punishment, basically a slap on the wrist and a suggestion that they should be good boys and not do it again, we will be required, as the rest of the drivers in this province, to pay the bill.

Our roads, Mr. Speaker, are also a very great cause of this problem — another inefficiency of this government. The potholes are really there. And believe me, Mr. Minister, we have had winter in this province before. That's no excuse. We still have potash mines and lots of salt to put on them, just the fact that the problem is that we don't get it there any more. We also don't have highway crews any more either.

So, Mr. Minister, how much are the insurance rates going to go up as a result of your mishandling of the auto fund? And believe me, that is the problem, is the mishandling. Also, Mr. Minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order, order. The hon. member will know that he's been extremely lengthy in his preamble and I will ask him to put his question directly, immediately now.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Minister, how much is this mishandling going to cost the Saskatchewan drivers, and how much is the Minister of Justice also going to cost them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to indicate to the House and to the member opposite that in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have the most efficiently managed, the best auto fund that we have anywhere in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — In 1995, Mr. Speaker, we introduced in this province the personal injury protection plan which added to the services and programs that we provided for people who are injured in this province — the best rehabilitative services that we have anywhere in Canada today, Mr. Speaker.

The fact remains that in this province we have not had a rate increase, Mr. Speaker, in three years. We have not had a rate increase in three years and if you review the information that's been provided through the Crown corporations to the opposition, Mr. Speaker, you'll find that in this province we've only had a 4 per cent increase over the last six years in this province — six years since we've had an increase, Mr. Speaker.

I say to you that the kinds of discussions that need to take place over the next couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker, and months will be

to ensure that Saskatchewan people can continue to enjoy the lowest rates anywhere in Canada — as we have today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Property Tax Reassessment

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions as well are to the Minister of Municipal Government or her designate.

Mr. Speaker, the minister now appears to have a full-scale tax revolt on her hands as a result of the NDP mishandling of reassessment. Yesterday SARM delegates voted to delay implementation of the NDP reassessment plan for one year. No sooner had they done that, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Speaker, than the minister came up and the minister said that she was listening to the municipalities. However while she told them she was listening, she also threatened them by suggesting that municipalities who don't do assessment will be up the creek without a paddle. She's really earning her salary.

Madam Minister, when are you going to stop lecturing municipalities and start listening to them, and will you at least listen to their requests for a year extension to address the concerns they have with reassessment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member makes one good point and that is listening. And I listened very carefully to his question and I want to remind members of the Assembly where the idea of assessing property on resale value came from. It came from the previous administration, led by Premier Devine at that time, which that member was a member of and sat on this side of the House. This is where the concept of reassessment based on resale value came from.

And it is a difficult process, but I want to say that the municipal governments are in support of reassessment based on property value . . . resale value.

Now for the member opposite to come here and try to fan the flames in order to get some political impact from it I think is unfortunate, made even more unfortunate by the fact that they are part of the architecture that created the situation of SAMA in the original Bill which we are implementing today. And I say to the member opposite he should stand and apologize for trying to make a political issue where he is one of the people responsible for what we have to deal with today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister has proven a point once again. While they — and I heard the Premier this morning — blame Ottawa, the reality is the problems that RMs (rural municipality) are facing today is the problems that have been created by this government and the offloading, even this year, of $37 million on municipalities. On top of it — the reassessment plan, Mr. Speaker, had some good points — this government has bungled the whole issue. And number one, what municipalities are facing today, Mr. Speaker, is they do not have the proper information or the proper tools to get the assessment plan in its right place and have it ready for this year.

Madam Minister, will you do the honourable thing and allow a one-year renewal to address the concerns of RMs and thus avert a full-scale tax revolt?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make clear to the member opposite that this process of study and analysis and paralysis, which was so common in the previous administration, is not one of the traits of our government. The fact of the matter is that this issue is 30 years out of date — reassessment in this province. It's been debated and discussed for the nine years, the nine terrible years, that you were in government. You did nothing. You pretended to start the process before you were defeated in 1991.

And I want to say that this is a difficult issue and not an easy one to deal with. But the fact of the matter is assessment has to be redone in this province, is being redone with the cooperation of the municipal governments. And I say to the member opposite, he should come onside and help rather than create problems in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ministers' Expense Allowances

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of days we've heard quite a bit of debate about how much it costs to feed an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly). The Liberals, on $4 a day, are feeling more light-headed and faint-hearted than usual. Meanwhile, the Minister of Social Services is telling us he could eat well for $3.75.

The MLA expense rules actually provide a daily meal allowance of $26.75 for MLAs, the same as for most out-of-scope employees. However, there's a few out-of-scope employees who get a much bigger meal allowance. Cabinet ministers get $40 a day for meals; the Premier gets $50 a day for meals. I guess raising taxes and closing hospitals is a hungry business, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to whichever minister wants to explain this: why does it cost more to feed the Premier and the cabinet than it does other MLAs?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite, who knows a lot about food, and I want to say very clearly that we can debate the issue of how much it costs to feed a family in Saskatchewan or doesn't cost to feed a family.

I want to say to the member opposite that he should check the record on food allowances and where cabinet ministers stay today and eat today. The rules have not changed, that I know of, since their government was in power. And I want to say that in many ways the rates have been cut back. Salaries of cabinet ministers are 5 per cent less than they were when your

government was in power.

So I say again to the member, if he needs some help in studying analyses on food and amounts of food he should be eating, we can talk about that. But I don't think the rules for cabinet ministers or for MLAs are out of line at all. If he's getting paid too much he should send a little of it back in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Group Home Funding

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of our caucus learned two very important lessons yesterday. We learned that living on a $4 food budget, as residents of group homes do, is not easy. We also heard the Minister of Social Services demonstrate a true lack of compassion and commitment to the most vulnerable members of our society by suggesting that the $4 food budget is sufficient and is in fact too high when compared to StatsCanada figures of 3.75.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's attempt to detract from the issue at hand by quoting from outdated statistics is an affront to the seriousness of this matter. Many people have contacted my office expressing their indignation at the way the minister has slighted the needs of the disabled. I offer the minister this next moment to apologize to the developmentally disabled individuals in this province.

Is the minister prepared to offer an apology for his comments?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to speak to a number of group home operators in the province who, in their own way, assured me that while it's difficult to provide with the current food budget, they are managing and managing quite well in some cases.

Mr. Speaker, if . . . and the members of the Liberal caucus sit . . . they sit in their bench and laugh. Mr. Speaker, they sit in their bench and laugh or they shout; the leader shouts from his seat.

Mr. Speaker, if they had some compassion, if these people cared a whit about social programing in this country, they would stand with us and stand with almost every other provincial government in this country and speak to their federal counterparts about what those federal Liberals have done to social programing across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, why do they just engage in this chatter from their seats? Why don't they stand up and speak for the people of Saskatchewan that they're supposed to represent?

Environmental Handling Charges

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Social . . .

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

Now I've just recognized the hon. member for Athabasca, and I'll ask all hon. members on both sides of the House to allow the hon. member from Athabasca to put his question in a way that can be audible to all members of the Assembly.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services indicated yesterday he doesn't know where his government might find the money to increase the food budget for group home residents. And once again the Liberals have come up with a solution.

He may want to encourage the Minister of the Environment to examine an agreement that this government has with SARCAN. Under this deal, the government will take in an estimated $9.4 million from environmental handling charges on recycled containers this year.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of these funds will be turned over to SARCAN. However, $1.6 million will go into government coffers, not into recycling programs or to assist those with disabilities who are making a contribution to the preservation of our environment, as these funds were originally intended for.

Will the Environment minister explain how his government can feed its own coffers instead of properly feeding the residents of our group homes who are forced to live on $4 a day?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll take notice of that on behalf of the minister, who's at the SARM convention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very fact that Saskatchewan residents pay an environmental charge on recycled containers and a portion of these funds are directed into government's General Revenue Fund is cause for concern. When you collect money for a certain specific purpose, it should be used for that certain specific purpose.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — If in fact that these revenues are being collected as environmental handling fees, as I mentioned before, they should be used for environment. Anything else could only be labelled as a hidden tax.
Will the minister again explain what he intends to do to address what is, if I can use polite language, a less than honourable practice on the backs of our people with disabilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Let me just say very briefly that all revenues from the environmental hazard are part of the general revenue. The largest portion of these funds are then collected and they're paid back to SARCAN.

As for what revenue SARCAN will receive, I know the hon. member will be pleased to wait until budget day, when the Minister of Finance will outline all of these sums.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Government Office Space in Melville

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've sat here in the House this afternoon and heard about all the consultation and the cooperation that's necessary to make plans for the benefit of all people of Saskatchewan. The mayor of Melville has been informed the provincial police court is being moved out of the city's provincial building, a decision he describes as "stupid." It makes no sense. What's being proposed is that court be held in the Legion hall or facility run by the Knights of Columbus.

Is this another slap in the face to the community and residents of Melville, Mr. Speaker? What is the economic sense? What will happen to the law library? Why aren't Justice and SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) talking to the leaders of the communities?

The Melville *Advance* reports in today's issue that there are plans to close some 60 or 70 similar such facilities throughout the province. I would hope . . . I would ask the ministers, whichever one, will you consult with leaders of the community before you make moves to shut down needed services and facilities in rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to, first of all, inform the member from Melville that this government, in its process of dealing with a vast number of issues, aside from the one that I have responsibility for, continue to consult with communities in the decision-making process, first of all.

Secondly, I want to say to the member from Melville that the decision to consolidate some of the services in the provincial building are the kinds of work that this government's been doing in terms of rightsizing property all over the province.

And last year, when I was in the estimates, this very same member asked me about the kind of work that this government was doing in terms of rightsizing properties around Saskatchewan. And we outlined to him the number of buildings and properties that we have taken out of long-term leases that were established in this province previously by the previous administration. And where we're still stuck today, Mr. Speaker, was paying huge, huge funds to provide dollars for buildings that aren't being used at all.

In the case of the Melville situation, Mr. Speaker, we're consolidating today some of the SERM's (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) offices into the provincial building, and then moving some of those services into the community which aren't being used as often, and certainly at a lesser rate to the Saskatchewan taxpayer.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 5 — The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1997, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 6 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 1997, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 7 — The Cancer Foundation Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 7, The Cancer Foundation Amendment Act, 1997, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Wall, seconded by Ms. Lorje, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Krawetz.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to be standing here today representing the best constituency in the province and replying to the throne speech. The frustrating part about being fourth on the speaking list is merely repeating the thank you's to the many people who deserve recognition in this Assembly. To yourself, Mr. Speaker, for setting a precedent in Canada to ensure our young people recognize their part, and their representatives' part, in appreciating and maintaining democracy. I thank you.

To the new pages and the rest of the personnel in the Assembly who work very hard to ensure the voices of all people are heard, I thank you. To the people of North Battleford who sent a man who is considered a valuable asset, a trusted colleague, and a message to this government, I thank them. And to the people who have chosen the leader of our party and the next premier of the province, I thank them.

I came into the House last Thursday morning excited and ready for the next session. So many of the negative aspects of last year's session were gone. We had heard that the Saskatchewan

people had a bright future to look forward to after living through hell for the last decade.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was with growing trepidation that I listened to the opening speech for the throne for the second session of the twenty-third legislature. I don't fear for myself but for the people of Saskatchewan. This fear stems from the growing realization that we are being led from the brink of bankruptcy into a dark void of a much more ominous type of bankruptcy.

I refer, Mr. Speaker, to a bankruptcy of vision, a bankruptcy of ideals, and I refer specifically to a bankruptcy which is willing to write off everything that cannot be measured on a balance sheet. Our most valuable asset are people.

Mr. Speaker, this speech ignored the needs of the 1 million people in this province who are ready to get at the business of building the future. All they ask is to be allowed to get on with the task. The only real tools they require are to be freed from the stifling and prohibitive policies of this government.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, to be released from the pervasive, self-deprecating attitude that has been forced on them by a government unable or unwilling to show faith in the future. The Speech from the Throne which was presented last week, other than the usual half-hearted and hollow chest-thumping we've come to expect from this government, exhibited no real or measurable clue that the short-sighted, narrow vision of the future by this government is going to change.

The throne speech could in fact have been shortened to one sentence leaving more time for the true exuberance of Saskatchewan youth, the great performance by our young entertainers from the city. The real meaning and content of this government's stated intentions, it's vision for the future, could easily have been summed up by saying the beatings will continue until morale improves. Or at the most, to give some credit to the unsaid but vague hints implied in the speech, the beatings will continue until morale improves or an election is called, whichever comes first.

Really, Mr. Speaker, does this government believe Saskatchewan people are so naïve that they'll fall for the old political routine of pain in the first two years, coast for a year, and then give something back in the election year? Yet this is really the only clear message in this year's throne speech.

If I may be allowed one more metaphor, Mr. Speaker, the throne speech reminded me of the first time I went to a fair and saw cotton candy. There before me was a stand of huge cones filled with mountains of deliciously appealing yet somehow undescribable fluff that made me think of clouds. And I remember the disappointment when I touched it and tried to eat it. There was nothing there. It was superficial. There was no substance and it was just air. In fact if one did manage to eat it, it was sickening.

Mr. Speaker, that's what this throne speech offered — some intrigue but no substance; just fluff. And because we expected more, the result was sickening. So with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, allow me to fill in what the throne speech did not say.

I believe the people of this province have a right to know about the opportunities that were lost and the problems that were ignored by this coast-along-until-the-next-election-year speech. First in the area of fiscal management and the development of our economy, the stated intention of this session as expressed in the speech was simply more of the same.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that this beautiful province of ours, with its abundance of natural resources, has limited opportunity for sustained economic growth. I do believe we have the ability to maintain and even reinstate our infrastructure and our social safety net.

Yet by maintaining the status quo, as suggested in the speech, means our economy is based simply on emptying grandma's pocketbook at the casino, or sucking the vitality out of our farmers, business people, and labour force, through taxes and increased utility rates.

The government's plan for '97-98 is their indication of their vision through the omission of even one single new positive proposal. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker, I don't begrudge grandma her right to sit at the slot machines, but I don't believe it's fair or reasonable to expect her to carry our economy into the 21st century.

The government is content to hanging their hats on last year's *Partnership for Growth* proposal which could also be compared to cotton candy. There is nothing substantial in the document. It didn't work out last year and we have no reason to expect it will work this year.

Mr. Speaker, the problems that we see in Saskatchewan from child poverty, child prostitution, gambling and addiction, abuse, and younger offenders, stems from one very obvious problem — the lack of a good job. We have all heard the phrase, the best social program is a good job. The only way we can address the problem of child poverty is by ensuring that families have the ability to care for their children. The problems of poverty are increasing at an astonishing rate even though this government made a commitment to the people to eliminate the problem in their first term of government.

Mr. Speaker, do the people of this province realize that 82 per cent of single-parent families are headed by women? The problems facing our single moms centre around a meaningful job. Jobs require training and education. Are these issues truly being addressed in this throne speech?

The special challenges that women face in terms of securing a well-paid job must be addressed if this government wants to end the vicious cycle of poverty that has resulted in women being over-represented in poorly paying, part-time jobs. There are no concrete job plans or programs to enable the most vulnerable in our society the right to a good education to gain meaningful employment.

Mr. Speaker, where do rural women fit into this government's vision for the future? What is the plan to ensure that those who live in rural communities are afforded opportunities for education, training, or employment?

Anyone who has cared to research available data will know that women are three times more likely than men to succeed in small business. Where is this government's commitment to provide entrepreneurial opportunities for rural people, especially women?

So where should we be investing our very limited resources? Where is our hope for the future? Mr. Speaker, the answer is so obvious. It's so obvious that this government and all its high-powered help can't see it.

The answer is our young people. They are our only hope. It is today's youth who will still be paying taxes long after grandma's purse has been systematically vacuumed clean. It's today's youth who will still be trying to move our economy forward long after the present Minister of Economic Development has retired to an island off Cuba.

The answer is simple and obvious. And what are we doing about it? Are we putting forward any real measures which will encourage our young people to stay home and return home? No, Mr. Speaker, we're not.

And let me illustrate my point. Imagine and consider an average graduate from the University of Saskatchewan or Regina or a technical institute. You're probably seeing one of your own children. He or she has worked very hard and has excelled and now is saddled with a student loan roughly three times the size of my first house mortgage.

Now we say to that kid, go out and get a job, and by the way, start paying back the student loan. Over 80 per cent of the so-called new jobs are in the minimum wage group. So we have a student flipping hamburgers for a living with a commerce degree, and he's facing more of a challenge than our Finance minister ever did. She just downloaded her problems onto the youth.

(1430)

With the income tax rate nearly the highest in Canada, the take-home pay is $855. That's at an average monthly pay of . . . We have 172 hours at $5.65 an hour; take away income tax, CPP (Canada Pension Plan), UI (Unemployment Insurance), the rest, you have 855 bucks.

Rent payment, sharing quarters with a friend of course, is $250. Student loan payments will be about $320. Car payments on an old jalopy is $150. We have insurance costs, licence costs — which have increased — increased energy cost, increased power cost, increased telephone cost, gasoline costs at 62 cents a litre, and then we have to eat. Heaven help you if you have a high . . . a need for food. There is no money left to actually enjoy life. I believe if young adults are very thrifty, they'll only go backwards about $180 a month.

Could we at least not acknowledge that society has a responsibility and an obligation to ensure a future for our young people and to show a willingness to invest in that future? It could be a gamble for a small percentage of students, but this government has shown a willingness to gamble on risky business ventures outside our country and on gambling inside of our province. So in comparison, gambling on our children should seem like a relatively safe investment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — The government has given our young people some breathing space in the last budget. On the other hand, this government aims to give the students who have fallen behind in their payments to collection agencies. I always connected groups like that to — like the Mafia — to collection agencies. Why in the world would a government sick knee-breakers on our children? I have to question government priorities when they'll give a grant to a multinational firm on one hand, and on the other hand, send professional collectors to intimidate young citizens.

The icing on the cake is the fact that the government will give 30 per cent of the money the agency collects back to them. Why in the world wouldn't the student be given an opportunity to get a 30 per cent discount if they make the payment?

Mr. Speaker, this government's totally contradictory stand on youth entrepreneurship is as amazing as it is amusing. How could we have ministers of Economic Development and the Minister of Education attempt to establish programing to encourage our young people to go into business while, on the other hand, we have the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Labour make Saskatchewan the least profitable place in Canada to have a business? Saskatchewan has higher capital tax, higher corporate income tax, higher sales tax, higher fuel tax, than our neighbours to the east, to the west, or to the south.

Our convoluted Workmen's Compensation Act is as inefficient as it is overpriced. Our regulations and laws governing employees are a deterrent for hiring people. I am confident that as we approach the next millennium and production changes warrant employees in traditional production lines to not be needed, many of our young people will be intrigued with the idea of owning their own business. I am just as confident that our intelligent youth will look at the barriers to business in this province and continue to go to Alberta or B.C. (British Columbia) to start a business.

The new occupational health standards that were introduced last year added over 100 new regulations to Saskatchewan's already atrocious list. The *Partnership for Growth* document introduced last year stated that the government would reduce the number of regulations by 25 per cent in the next 10 years. Well it's going to be difficult to determine if that goal has been reached because we have no idea where we're starting from, and also because the government gets to be their own auditor of the report. It's something like asking a fox to guard a hen house.

But if this open and accountable government would give us the true numbers I believe they would fail the test.

Mr. Speaker, the whole idea of economic growth in the province is being left in the hands of a government who, from my research, tells me does not have one single member who's ever been in business.

I could be wrong. Maybe somebody did sell Avon or had a lemonade stand at one time, but I sincerely doubt if even one of those members has known what it's like to try and make payroll. I'm willing to bet that none of them have ever remortgaged their home or added a second or third mortgage to their home to expand a business.

There is no one across the floor who has the faintest clue what it means when a government decides to change labour laws, or to up utility rates, or to up workmen's compensation rates, or to add regulations or to require another permit for something and still try and carry on a business.

Do any of you know what it's like to try and do a cash-flow projection for a bank, meaning you have to sign your life away and your children's, and then have the whole picture change because some out-of-touch government changes the rules.

In Saskatchewan business people do not have control over their lives or over their companies. The government does.

Do you want to know why this government has to bribe companies like CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) and Sears to get a call centre in this province? Because they won't come without a decent bribe.

The systematic dismantling of our infrastructure in both urban Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan under the guise of reform has seriously put at risk those areas which the public has every right to expect to be the first priority of government — that being health, education, and highways. They have been dangerously weakened to a point of no return. The time for action is now, Mr. Speaker, not next year or the year after because it fits better with election planning.

Mr. Speaker, I was totally amazed and appalled to hear this government's glowing sentiments about their dysfunctional health care system. One only has to pick up a newspaper or listen to a radio or watch TV to hear the horror stories about people who are suffering from the effects of health reform.

In fact I believe it's Saskatchewan newest disease — health reform. In lots of cases it's terminal; it's nearly always debilitating; and it's very costly in terms of human suffering.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — We are still seeing hospital beds closing, even though the waiting-lists are growing. Treatment centres are overbooked, and hands-on health care is deteriorating because our front-line workers are overworked. But most importantly we now know how much Kleenex is being used in the system. Many of us are lying awake at night worrying about things like that.

Mr. Speaker, the continuation of reform has seen our unionized workers unsettled within their own jurisdiction because of things like the Dorsey report. And who says democracy is alive in Saskatchewan? This report is in effect forcing health care workers to unionize. Whatever happened to freedom of choice?

Our specialists and doctors are leaving the province in hopes of finding better working conditions. Our nurses are leaving the province in hopes of finding a job, and our patients are leaving the province in hopes of finding treatment. Can you tell me what's wrong with this picture?

The whole area of health reform underlines the fact that the throne speech is put forward by an arrogant government totally out of touch with the people of this province. The province who bragged about being the father of medicare is now nearly the killer of the same system. It's hardly fitting.

Agriculture was mentioned briefly in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, but the people of this province didn't hear any real encouragement for our single most significant area of economic activity, that being agriculture. The government offered no real solutions to the very real problems in the area of transportation, roads; no real solution or even acknowledgement of the problem that was created by our property tax assessment, a system that was so misaligned it requires tinkering to fix before it even becomes a law.

This government has to admit that the very flawed system they are instilling in our lives will not only pit towns and villages against each other, it will pit neighbours against neighbours and cities against towns.

There was no mention, Mr. Speaker, of the continuous, ever-tightening cost squeeze our farmers are facing this year. Many of the farmers in my constituency still have crops in the field, many of them are watching wildlife destroy their livelihood, and many have spent thousands of dollars to try and dry grain that has dropped in value by 25 per cent in the last year.

The rural gas program that would have meant substantial savings to farmers was another one of the government programs where choices were made as to who would benefit and who would not. I wonder if any of the analysts the government employs to manoeuvre numbers to their best advantage has ever figured out what it means to have your net income reduced by 25 per cent. That doesn't mean the farmers have 25 per cent less spending money for themselves; it probably means they have no spending money for themselves. Costs have remained the same. They have not been reduced by 25 per cent — just the income. The money they had in their pocket is gone.

Last year the government appeared to have a balanced budget without transferring the total amount originally budgeted for in March from the liquor and gaming corporation. And do you know how it was done? Because personal and corporate income tax exceeded budget expectations by nearly $200 million. So the money that was left then was left in the government slush fund.

But now, my colleagues, there has to be some fear that with farm income expectations down considerably, the cash will have to come from some place else. Farmers' GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) money was used to balance the budget in '95, and last year high grain prices helped balance the budget. And, Mr. Speaker, farmers have nothing left to give.

The other obvious exclusion in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker,

was any attempt to entice value added processing beyond this government's very narrowly focused view of agriculture. We all know there'll be incentives for hog barns and we all know that government believes potatoes are a priority. Beyond that, there's nothing.

Doesn't it seem entirely unreasonable for government to decide which areas of industry should advance? Why is the government choosing which industry should be a winner? What about beef production or chickens or bees or greenhouses or mushrooms? Every time a government singles out an industry, it means they're leaving out another industry.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify that our caucus is definitely in favour of supporting the hog industry. The opportunities in the meat processing industry, which are a by-product of the end of the Crow benefits, are very quickly being filled by our neighbours to the east and to the west. Manitoba has doubled its hog production and Alberta will triple theirs in the next year to fill the void in the Pacific Rim countries.

Saskatchewan industry is being stymied by the 9 per cent sales tax, and that of course is not an issue in our neighbouring provinces. I predict that your government will finally see the light, and after many years of lobbying by the stakeholders, they will eliminate this tax in the upcoming budget. We definitely hope so, but we're asking that you don't limit it to the hog industry.

Mr. Speaker, a number of colleagues have brought forward the problems involving our youth and young offenders to the floor of this Assembly and this debate is still raging. I will leave further discussions on that to my very capable colleagues, but there is one point I would like to make. With all the talk centring around offenders, we seem to have forgotten the problems of the victims — people who have lost their possessions that they have worked for many years to attain. People are now scared to leave their homes; the stress that people are living through because there's just one more problem beyond their control.

And you know what this does for government representatives like ourselves? It adds fuel to the fire of cynicism. People feel that government does not care and that government does not listen. I know it's obvious they aren't listening but apathy towards government hurts everyone.

As a socialist government, you should be all too aware of the saying, the minority shall have their say but the majority will have their way. All too often in this government, we see the majority paying for the sins of the minority. It's time this government got their priorities straight.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak to the problems in the area that saddens me the very most. I live in and represent an entirely rural area, although in the big picture all of Saskatchewan is rural. But, Mr. Speaker, the largest centre in my constituency has a population of less than 1,500 people. The 15,000 people I represent all live where they do because they have chosen to do so. We live there because we are convinced that our way of life is the envy of virtually the entire planet.

Furthermore, fully 60 per cent of the population of our province and most of the citizens in the two major centres very highly value the rural Saskatchewan way of life. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I dare say that nary a single citizen in this province, whether newly arrived from a foreign land or a fourth-generation worker of the land, does not know what I mean when I say the Saskatchewan way of life. The only people who seem to have lost a sense of the value of this way of life are the people who are leading us. Could this be?

What is worse, Mr. Speaker, is that this loss is going to be for ever. I believe that if the Saskatchewan way does not appear as an asset on the province's balance sheet very quickly, if it does not appear as a state of priority very soon in this government's vision for the future, then the Saskatchewan way of life will be lost for ever.

Mr. Speaker, I have tried in vain to find something in this throne speech that could make me believe this government believes in our province, in our people, and in the Saskatchewan way. It's not there, Mr. Speaker. This government does not have a philosophical belief in the future I believe we can have in Saskatchewan. For that reason I cannot support the motion to approve the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1445)

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased and I'm proud to enter into the debate on the Speech from the Throne in this the second session of the twenty-third legislature. On behalf of the constituents of Regina Wascana Plains, I rise to support the important agenda we have placed before this Assembly — investing in people, preparing Saskatchewan for the 21st century.

It has taken us a number of years to get to the point where we can open our session on a hopeful note, one of the most hopeful times in the province in many years, and I for one don't take this turning point lightly. Five years ago our first session had us come to the House in November to approve a financial statement, for there was no budget approved that year. The financial statement, sadly, had everything to do with debt and deficit and nothing to indicate we would be able to set our own agenda for a long while.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the time has come. And for the first time in more than a decade more people are moving to Saskatchewan than are moving away — a definite signal of hope. Our young adults, after years of living here, are hopeful they can stay here and find jobs. Our seniors are hopeful. They can see their values are going to continue into a new century. They are the ones who demonstrated to us the values of cooperation, of community, compassion, mutual respect, and a shared responsibility. Those principles also see the importance of a society that's grounded in a democratic forum for organizing ourselves and for decision making.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not mention your role in this valuable capacity. I compliment you on your agenda of

going out into our communities and our schools, and informing people throughout the province of our British parliamentary system of democracy. This expanded knowledge base also gives our citizens a new respect for the power of the people when we act collectively for the good of all. It protects us from the single-issue lobbyists, the corporate elite, and the greedy, me-first individuals, the individuals we see when we listen to the right-wing agenda that's presented to us.

Mr. Speaker, Commonwealth Day also brought home to me the diverse nature of our community, The gallery was packed with people united to keep strong a system of governing that other countries continually struggle to attain, some of them with their very lives. South Africa is an example of the vast strides that can be made in developing institutions to govern in a parliamentary democracy and also as part of a federal state.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your celebration of this day. I'm also continually impressed with your dedication to serve. I'm humbled when I follow the speeches of my colleagues on this side of the House. My congratulations to the member from Swift Current, the mover of the throne speech. And although I'm not particularly familiar with his pitching arm, I do know that his dancing legs are going to give him the stamina it takes to keep up with the best of us.

The seconder, our member from Saskatoon Southeast, shares a similar training ground as mine, a member of city council, and deeply concerned with the quality of life and social justice issues that are before her community. Both members did an excellent job to bring an overview of the priorities that are coming forward. All the speeches gave us an understanding of the individual constituencies and how each member views his or her responsibility to our great province.

As you know, my constituency is one of the new four urban-rural constituencies. It begins near Balgonie to the east and it encompasses the communities of Pilot Butte, White City, and Emerald Park, and it ends just west of Rowatt. The urban subdivisions include middle to upper income earners in Wascana View, Windsor Park, Wood Meadows, Varsity, and University Park.

In the course of a year I have the opportunity to meet with a broad range of my electorate — from the youth at school, at Optimists' public speaking contests, at carnivals, at sports events, at rodeos. I had the opportunity to talk with and discuss the issues with employers and employees and with the small businesses that are located within my constituency.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to meet with the seniors — those who are remaining active in their community events, who extend warm hospitality to me at their senior centres, or who invite me in to visit in their senior housing complexes.

And everywhere I go, I'm mindful that there is a cautious optimism and a hope for the future. There is agreement that a top priority for us must be jobs and economic growth.

My government's economic blueprint is set out in the *Partnership for Growth* strategy document. It brings together working people, business, the cooperative sector, on a clear goal — a goal of full employment. It builds on a growing, diversified range of opportunities. They include expansion of trade, expansion of our rural economy, renewal of our Saskatchewan Crown corporations, promotion of tourism, fostering of northern economic development, and employment growth.

Mr. Speaker, a job is the best form of social development I know. Someone should be telling this to our Prime Minister and the Liberal Party opposite. Goodness knows we've tried.

I'd like to know if the members opposite feel that double digit unemployment figures in this country are acceptable to them. They obviously are, Mr. Speaker. I've listened very carefully to the Liberal speaker before me and she did not place forward one new idea to expand the province's economy. She's leaving it to the youth of our province, Mr. Speaker.

Well our seniors showed us the way. We're working on it today and it will stand our youth into the future of this province, Mr. Speaker, in good stead, to be part of the employment of this province.

Is there a plan on the other side of the House that's the same as the federal Liberal government, who says that child poverty initiatives should wait until 1998; a Liberal government, whose first line of cuts and fiscal responsibility comes on the backs of health, education, and social safety nets in our country? Does it stand instead in shoulder to shoulder with the federal government — the federal Liberal government — whose job numbers, as the media have said . . . federal job numbers remain bleak. Bleak, Mr. Speaker — 10.5 per cent in February of '97, which is up from 10.4 in February of '96. Are the Saskatchewan Liberals doing anything about jobs? I haven't seen it.

Their independent member offered at least a job suggestion a day, Mr. Speaker. We've seen nothing a day from the Liberal members opposite.

I was hoping that this session we were going to move beyond gloom and doom economics from the Liberal members opposite, and here we go again. What a way to advance economic development, by telling everyone what's wrong with the province of Saskatchewan.

Now we hear from them, well let's cut taxes, let's withdraw from labour legislation. A blatant attack on occupational health and safety, Mr. Speaker. The number of people we consulted with before we put in that legislation that translates into the safety of the workers in this province . . . certainly is not viewed as a detractor to economic development when we have a worker in the workplace who feels safe and committed to the job that he or she holds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — So let's reduce occupational health and safety regulations. That's a way to increase the jobs. And let's reduce the number of regulations that are in place.

Well, Mr. Speaker, some of them make some sense and some of

them don't, and we're committed to looking at those and taking them off the way that we would do business in Saskatchewan. But there are some that make good sense, Mr. Speaker. They've been worked on and approved by workers and by the employees alike, Mr. Speaker. And some of those include the safety of our workers. Some of them include workers' compensation systems that would see the safety of the employer in that they wouldn't have the suit before them if something went wrong, but also includes the ease of the employee, knowing if something does go wrong there's a system in place to address that, Mr. Speaker.

All of these things, Mr. Speaker, from a party that wants to harmonize the GST (goods and services tax). Let me tell you that employers in Wascana Plains say that doesn't sound like a tax cut to them.

Mr. Speaker, harmonizing the GST, to many of the employers in Wascana Plains, sounds like a tax hike. Expanding the GST to children's clothing, to books, to restaurant meals, to building supplies and materials — this does not sound like a tax cut to me. Ask anyone if this sounds like a tax cut to them.

Well maybe what they want to do is further reduce funding to health and education. We've heard their leader say he can extract from health millions of dollars. Well that'll put employment opportunities into the health sector, Mr. Speaker.

This does not speak of job creation to me. In stark contrast, Mr. Speaker, here's the news I want to share with my constituents and with the people in Saskatchewan: 1996 was a very good year — it came from my newsletter, Mr. Speaker, and I wanted to just highlight some of the points of the good news and the optimism I want to share with the people of the province.

Saskatchewan was one of the few provinces in 1996 that enjoyed economic growth throughout the entire year. The oil, uranium, ag-biotech, and tourism industries all experienced substantial growth, as did the retail, manufacturing, and housing sectors of our economy. As I'd stated just the other day in the House, the reports this year are equally encouraging.

On July 1 Saskatchewan's population stood at 1,022,500 — it's highest level since July 1989. The province's population increased for 11 consecutive quarters, growing steadily since January 1993. How does that jibe with the speaker opposite trying to tell us that people are leaving the province and young people feel they're going to have to go somewhere else for a job? Mr. Speaker, tell them to get their researcher to do some more work.

Saskatchewan had the lowest monthly unemployment rate in the country throughout most of 1996. The spring budget last year provided 110 million in new provincial funding to replace the '96-97 federal cuts to our health, post-secondary education, and social service programs.

In August the provincial government injected an additional $40 million into health, and that was above the $47 million that we put into health to back-fill the federal cuts to our health programs. Our growing provincial economy, coupled with sound financial management, gave us the freedom to do this, Mr. Speaker.

Our mid-year financial report for '96-97 showed that the province will balance the budget for the third consecutive year and the province's debt reduction plans are ahead of schedule.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — On May 28, 1996 — a very proud day for this province, Mr. Speaker — Saskatchewan received it's first major credit upgrading in 20 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Standard and Poor's, one of the oldest, largest, and most influential credit rating agencies in the world, raised our credit rating from BBB plus to A minus.

That's the kind of news I'm sharing with my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And that's the kind of hope that we should be giving to the people in our province, not spreading gloom and doom and chasing away those people who would be the people that would move into my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

Well if that wasn't enough, I was looking through some material to try and organize my remarks for today and, lo and behold, I found the economic news indicators for Saskatchewan and I thought it wouldn't be wrong to reinforce this for the members opposite.

Employment in December of 1996 increased by 3,000 compared to December of '95. Saskatchewan was one of five provinces that recorded an increase in employment in December of 1996.

The unemployment rate: Saskatchewan's unemployment rate in December '96 was 5.8 per cent. That's tied for the lowest unemployment rate in Canada for that month.

As a result of the December sale of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights, 1996 calendar year revenues are the fourth highest since the sales began in 1952.

(1500)

Tourism: cumulative tourism indicators show us that there's an increase of 11.5 per cent compared to the cumulative numbers of inquiries of 1995.

Oil and gas industry has a near record year in '96. They posted near record numbers for the wells drilled and the licences issued. Oil and gas seismic activity is up. Plans submitted by oil and gas companies to do seismic work established a new record — the number established a new record in '96.

Jobs and businesses created: activity under the small business loans association program during the '96 calendar year include creation of 677 new jobs, 313 new businesses, and assistance to 275 existing businesses. Sounds like the economy is hopeful in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We've come a long way. We acknowledge there's much more that has to be done and that we are yet to do. We're putting the

same determination forward that we used for fiscal integrity in this province behind our job creation and economic development strategy.

Obviously education must fit closely in with this strategy.

In the throne speech you saw that we were going to invest in Saskatchewan and invest in education. Education, training, apprenticeship, co-op education — they all must play a prominent role in preparing our province for the 21st century.

My government is committed to providing the best possible education and training at every level. This is going to prepare our future generations for our new information-age economy, Mr. Speaker. It's not going to do the same kind of thing that a major withdrawal of training and funding dollars to our post-secondary institutions have done for us that the federal government chose to do in their round of budget cuts, Mr. Speaker.

To equip our workers to meet the needs for a skilled workforce, we'll be furthering our JobStart and Future Skills programs.

So other than re-announcing that they would do what we're already doing, what are the Liberals going to do about education, training, apprenticeship, preparing our youth? Stand back and say, oh woe is us, there's nothing we can do, and we'll let the next generation try? We haven't heard what the Liberals would do. We haven't heard what the Tories would do. Share your plans. If you don't agree that investing in Saskatchewan and investing in people in the area of jobs and training and education for our future generations is a priority, tell us what your priority is. Stop standing up and making excuses for the federal government. Give us your vision and your plan for this fine province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Where do you stand on the race to continue Mulroney's agenda federally? Where do you stand on implementing deregulation in our utilities? Where do you stand when the utilities are going to be deregulated and the impact it has on the province affects your consumers back home? Have you told them that's what's happening? Have you told them that's the Mulroney agenda full tilt?

You know the burden this places on Saskatchewan consumers and yet you've been silent on this issue. In fact Saskatchewan Liberals and the federal Liberals seem to have a little game going, Mr. Speaker. It goes something like this.

First, you quietly withdraw either financial or administrative support from long-standing, successful, cooperative national programs. Next, you loudly proclaim your support for and determination to enforce the standards of those said programs. Then, to publicly demonstrate your support, with fanfare you contribute a fraction of what was originally lost as evidence of your commitment.

We've seen it with health care; we've seen it with education; we've seen it with social services; we've seen it with education and training; and now we're seeing it with transportation with an announcement from Saskatchewan's contribution to federal dismemberment, our member, Ralph Goodale. The federal Tories started it and the federal Liberal government has completed the abolishment of the historic Crow rate. With the abolishment of the Crow benefit, Saskatchewan loses $320 million this year and every year henceforth.

The loss of this historic transportation subsidy is leading to more rail line abandonment, which means fewer elevators and more truck traffic, which means less business to small towns and more expense for damaged roads. And they're asking, where's our commitment to highways. We haven't heard them on what they're proposing that their federal counterparts should do in the abandonment of the Crow rate, Mr. Speaker. They've been silent on that issue.

Next the federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Goodale, came to the SARM convention in Regina and announced federal support for Saskatchewan roads last year — much publicity and much gratitude for the pittance. He announced the amount — 320 million was abandoned from the Crow benefit — $20 million last year or one-sixteenth of the amount that we had already lost was going to be put back into Saskatchewan roads.

And we've heard what their infrastructure program is for this year federally. Now that's a real commitment to the highways of Saskatchewan. Nothing. Nowhere near $320 million that was lost from the federal government.

Not only is that $20 million woefully inadequate to repair 60,000 kilometres of roads deteriorating from overuse from the truck traffic from the withdrawal of the Crow benefit, Mr. Speaker, there's strings attached. And you obviously have to be having a Liberal advantage to pull them. For it's the RMs who at the very last minute are going to have to coordinate their construction plans in a short time to be able to come into acquiring those monies, Mr. Speaker. Some strategy, I must say.

We're developing a comprehensive, long-term plan to ensure our highways are sustainable well into the future in spite of what Ottawa is cutting.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I have to tell you that I'm really proud of our Minister of Highways, who's been going throughout the province and working with a wide range of people, from the municipalities to the grain transporters, to the Wheat Pool, to the rail lines and so on, to try and develop a comprehensive strategy for the province. Not an easy task, Mr. Speaker, but something must be done in the face of a complete lack of a funding commitment from the federal government or any plans . . . a comprehensive transportation plan for this country. We will have a comprehensive transportation plan for this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Why would our members opposite vote against a throne speech that includes that for the province of Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, we're investing in health care; we're committed to medicare. I want to hear the commitment from the members opposite to medicare, not only in this province but in this country.

It's our government that replaced every dollar that we lost from the federal government — $47 million last year. It's our government that added an additional $40 million to help with the reforms to our health care system. We're introducing wellness and prevention to complement and to improve the best curative system in health care in this country.

When additional dollars become available we've put additional dollars into our budget. And that leads to the number one item on our budget for this last year and for this year coming up of about $1.6 billion for the health and the wellness and the care of the residents of our province. Mr. Speaker.

So much has been said about what's not being done in health care that I'm a little confused. I hear the members opposite say we're not doing enough. And the member particularly who came before me said that the health care system needs improvement and it needs funding and it needs this, and I haven't heard what their plan is except I did hear from the Leader of the Liberal Party that his plan is to do away with democratically elected boards who make decisions at the local level.

Now as they disregarded the democratic life of this House . . . because they, obviously in the last speech, stood up and said the best thing we can do is free this province from government and from democratically elected positions. Here it is again: free this province from democratically elected health boards who make decisions at the local level, and what? Let's replace 30 boards with 400 Liberal-appointed boards, Mr. Speaker.

I'm trying to figure out very quickly in my head how this adds up — that 30 boards require more administration than 400; that 400 boards require less time to make decisions than 30; would be more efficient than 30 district boards who are locally elected and appointed.

Well to let those members know where we've come from and where we are today, let me tell you that in our province health services in communities, such as home care, respite care, home intravenous programs and physiotherapy have been expanded. Funding for these services have grown 47 per cent.

Residents have better access to services in their homes. Adult day programs are in place for seniors. Physio and occupational therapy, counselling for mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, and health education are more widely available to residents right in their own communities.

Health services such as breast cancer screening and mobile wellness units travel across Saskatchewan, and particularly into rural Saskatchewan, to ensure better access for all residents. There is greater use of day surgeries, so there's less time spent in hospitals.

Twelve hundred first responders are currently in place in the province, Mr. Speaker, and I have to give them credit for the work that they do. They provide support to accident injury victims while an ambulance is en route. And they take great pride in the work that they're doing, Mr. Speaker. Before there was no recognition for the work that these first responders were doing.

The ambulance system has been maintained so that 95 per cent of the population lives within 30 kilometres of an ambulance site. And we've heard from our member from Swift Current about a neonatal ambulance that's been put in place.

Saskatchewan still has an ample number of hospitals, Mr. Speaker — more per capita than any other province. Seventy-eight hospitals for one million people where the Canadian average is 30.7 per million.

Three per cent of Saskatchewan's population lives in the northern administration district line, north of the line. The North is covered by four hospitals, including the La Ronge Health Centre, which offers acute care, a health centre, and a long-term care facility. There are also 10 provincial health centres: six primary care centres and four public health centres.

We're maintaining and expanding hi-tech health services such as the new kidney dialysis unit, major renovations to the Allan Blair care centre, and expanded coverage for cancer drugs.

Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite is hollering about what are the physical plants of those things, we all know it's what services are provided there and the people who provide those services who count in those areas.

They're hollering about the old bricks and mortar kind of health care, Mr. Speaker. We're hollering about providing more programs and services to the communities of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — I'd rather, Mr. Speaker, they hollered at me their commitment to medicare. I'd rather they hollered their commitment rather than starting to knock down the doors like the 1962 Liberals and starting to talk about bricks and mortar when we're talking about people and programs.

What we've got is one group mired in privatization. Let's put so much cost into that system and know that it's going to collapse under the cost and the burden of that cost, that we couldn't provide that for this province, Mr. Speaker. And what would it lead to? Privatization. Well the Conservatives are upfront about that, Mr. Speaker. They don't make any secret about their privatization of health care. You only have to look to Alberta to find out what their agenda is in health care, Mr. Speaker.

But the other group, as my colleague from Swift Current reminded me in his speech, is a little more underhanded and more insidious I'd say, but it's still the same desire to privatize the health care system. They're on record as supporting a two-tired health system in the form of profit clinics, and with taxpayers picking up the tab.

(1515)

Their leader? Has anyone seen that Liberal leader lately? And he said he's going to find hundreds of millions of dollars in savings in the health budget. We didn't hear one proposal from the Liberal members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I'd say, and I've just been through the health care system recently with a daughter, a 17-year old who has undergone surgery, and I would say she was treated with the utmost professionalism and care. But let's ask the nurses in the system who are already overworked and who are already stressed by the amount of monies we're able to put into the system, how they feel about another withdrawal of hundreds of millions of dollars from the system when they said the $40 million additional that we'd added was really only a band-aid approach to our systems but much more was needed.

Let's ask the front-line workers where the hundreds of millions of dollars of savings will come from, because our health and utilization committee is hard at work and they're not saying to us that they would find that throughout our system. And their leader is saying you know, that communities really can't be responsible for health care. It's much too complicated for the communities to address.

Mr. Speaker, I'll say to them, I have faith in our rural communities and the people who live throughout Saskatchewan, and I know the best decisions are made for the people at the local level in a democratic way. And I have faith that that is the process and it will maintain a good system of health care in our province. That's more than the Liberals are saying to our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, we're investing in people; we're investing in Saskatchewan. There's every reason to be hopeful and optimistic. We have a broad, progressive agenda. I'm proud to be a member of a strong team that believes in drawing people together; and in drawing together people, we make things happen.

We've put forward our vision. Not a vision of individual gain, but one of honestly investing in the province to position us as leaders nationally and internationally.

My whole constituency is looking forward to the democratic debate and the alternatives that would be placed before us by the opposition parties. Let's see it.

They ask us all to move past the political rhetoric we've heard and the grandstanding to let them know what they can expect from their leadership. Let's signal to them that we're all ready to have this province on the move again.

Mr. Speaker, I support our framework for action and I urge all members of this House to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to respond to the throne speech on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca. And the point I wish to make early on in this presentation, Mr. Speaker, is people in northern Saskatchewan want aggressive change. The people in my constituency are vibrant, they're intelligent, they're hard-working people that are self-driven and very, very proud. As other people throughout this diverse and great province, they have hopes and they have dreams for their children and their grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the North have waited and have been patient for too long. They are tired of the same old approach by governments. They are tired of being powerless over their lives and they are simply tired of the same, bland old approaches to the issues that they have been struggling with over the many, many years.

The people of the North and the people of Saskatchewan want exciting, they want innovative approaches to dealing with their issues. The people of the North, as with the people of Saskatchewan, want exciting and innovative approaches to governing this great province.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, the people of the North want change. We are, as I said, a proud people. We do not ever want, nor do we ever . . . will be wards of the government. We are tired of the stereotypical view of northern people. What we want, Mr. Speaker, is not special treatment. We want fair treatment. We want fair treatment and we want economic integration.

In order for us as northern people to remember where we're going, Mr. Speaker, it's very important to remember where we come from. Yesterday I paid tribute to a great man, Louis Morin of Turnor Lake. Mr. Morin dedicated 86 years of his life and I expressed to you and to the House here yesterday the many attributes and the many committees he served on and the many committees he founded and formed.

That type of effort, Mr. Speaker, should encourage all of us, myself as a young individual, the people back home, and most certainly the Government of Saskatchewan, in responding to the issues that he so eloquently and for very long expressed at public meetings, at government meetings, and throughout the media.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people all throughout northern Saskatchewan. As CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) once said: a million people, a million stories. Well, Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan we have 30,000 people and we have 30,000 stories.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have no choice as government, that we must do things differently in northern Saskatchewan. There are serious catching-up efforts that we must undertake immediately. There are problems with health care. There are problems with roads. There are problems with social development, with economic development, and infrastructure needs.

Mr. Speaker, northern Saskatchewan wants economic and social justice; not rhetoric and not empty promises.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, we know and I know and every single member of this Assembly knows that we have not treated northern Saskatchewan fairly. I have said on often occasions there is more vision for northern Saskatchewan in the little finger of many of the leaders, including the mayors and the chiefs, than the entire members of this Assembly. They have

more vision in their little finger than we all do in a collective effort.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, if we realize that and recognize that, why aren't we empowering them to make changes in their lives? Mr. Speaker, we are not doing this.

The thrust of my response to the throne speech is the issues of northern community initiatives. I will explain first the benefits of the industry, and in particular the mining industry. I will then provide the problems encountered in those northern communities. I will present you with disturbing facts and real-life story of hardship. I'll then explain the challenges facing the mining industry. And finally, Mr. Speaker, I will present one of the many of the solutions that many people share.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about asking for more. This is about giving people back their dignity and their pride, and it's about support for the people of the North. And they have been patient for so long, and I think their wait is over.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, you and I, throughout time, we'll realize that there never was a real grand strategy for northern Saskatchewan. I know it and the members opposite know it. And seriously, in the last year we've also heard, quote: "There is no real grand strategy for economic development in rural Saskatchewan."

Imagine for a moment, Mr. Speaker, where northern Saskatchewan fits. If rural Saskatchewan is put on the back burner, then sure as heck northern Saskatchewan is not even on the stove.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, in typical Saskatchewan pride, the Saskatchewan pride we all brag about, well, Mr. Speaker, it's alive and well and thriving in northern Saskatchewan. But some of the non-activity by the various governments over time — and that includes the PC (Progressive Conservative) and the NDP governments — have stifled that Saskatchewan pride. They want a new answer, Mr. Speaker, and they want to drive that economic engine on their own.

And I think the thrust of my presentation to the throne speech is to really indicate to you that in spite of all the rhetoric we've heard in the past several weeks, in the past several years, in the past several decades, you and I and the rest of the Assembly know there is no plan. That's the primary message that I want to give at this point in time of my presentation: there is no grand plan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to beg your indulgence to give a brief history of northern Saskatchewan and in particular some of the facts that are real. Most Northerners reside in 37 northern municipalities ranging in size from 40 to 2,800 people. In addition, 12 Indian bands live in the North, with several reserves located in close proximity to northern municipalities.

Although northern Saskatchewan covers approximately 50 per cent of the province's land mass, only 3 per cent — 3 per cent, Mr. Speaker — of the province's population, or approximately 35,000 people, reside in the area known as the northern administration district.

It is estimated that 80 per cent of the northern population is of aboriginal ancestry, split evenly between Indians living on reserve and of course the Metis, status, and non-status Indians living in northern municipalities.

Municipal government is different from provincial and federal levels of government, Indian reserves, or territories, in that they are not recognized in the constitution. Municipal governments are a product of provincial laws that gives them definition and sets out their authorities and responsibility.

In Saskatchewan, the major laws from which municipal governments receive their authority under The Urban Municipality Act, The Rural Municipality Act, and of course for northern Saskatchewan, The Northern Municipalities Act.

The importance of local government in northern Saskatchewan is best understood when one recognizes the diversity of its people and the expanse of its geography. Each community and area has a character of its own, unique to the individuals who live there, and the resources available to them. Local governments enable people to exercise democratic control and initiative in their own affairs.

The Northern Municipalities Act was passed in 1983, fully 100 years after the first local governments were established in southern Saskatchewan. Northern municipalities include 10 settlements which are administered by the province, 13 hamlets, 13 villages, and 2 towns which are autonomous local governments with a variety of authorities and responsibilities delegated by the province. And I quote some of these facts from a presentation made by a government official several years ago, Mr. Speaker, and it's all basically meant to give a brief historical effective . . . history of northern municipalities.

The next part of my information, Mr. Speaker, I want to share a couple of contrasting comparisons of what's happening in northern Saskatchewan. I will of course get into a large presentation in terms of the overall picture, but what I want to do was bring out a couple of points, Mr. Speaker, in comparison to what the government makes in revenues from northern Saskatchewan, to what the real-life story is living in northern Saskatchewan. I know, Mr. Speaker, because of the 58 members in this particular Assembly, I live in northern Saskatchewan and I see this almost every day I'm home.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, the province estimates that it puts in $1.67 for every dollar it takes out of northern revenues. However this calculation does not make clear that these revenues include money raised through the sale of power generated to the northern hydro electric utilities, the oil and gas royalties, forestry, the corporate, personal income tax, and the list goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, in the future, uranium production is estimated to increase by 42 million pounds annually when Cigar Lake and McArthur River begin production. It is estimated, Mr. Speaker, that the province will receive 100 . . . $200 million in revenues

annually from McArthur River and Cigar Lake alone. With the same production levels estimated for other mines, we can see that these revenues can greatly increase over the next 5, 10, 15 years.

Mr. Speaker, the McArthur River panel supports issues like hiring of northern people. They support environmental monitoring. They support training and they also talk about direct benefits such as revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. And the whole situation that we're coming up here is most people say, of the four issues that are important, what is your response as MLA?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that northern Saskatchewan has contributed lots to the provincial economy. Over the many years it'll continue contributing lots to the provincial economy. And yet, Mr. Speaker, you look at these disturbing facts. And I'll give some examples.

Health care: the biggest and the most serious example of a health care problem is La Loche's hospital, St. Martin's Hospital. Here we have a town of 3,500: La Loche, Saskatchewan. It's served by trailers, Mr. Speaker —17 ATCO trailers that have been up there for 15 years.

And let me give you an example of some of the problems, Mr. Speaker. First of all, ATCO trailers should not ever house sick people because of the extreme weather conditions.

(1530)

And another rule they made, Mr. Speaker, to the Assembly's information, is that when they take X-rays in the X-ray room, they have to go outside and make sure nobody's standing against the wall where the X-ray room is. Because if there is somebody standing against the wall, Mr. Speaker, what you have is two actually skeletons showing up on the same X-ray.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, before they take an X-ray, they got to go outside and tell people who may be waiting to see the doctor: you cannot stand against the wall because we're taking an X-ray.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, when you walk down the hall . . . I had the opportunity to visit the same hospital on three or four occasions, and the one occasion, Mr. Speaker, I walked in there and they had seven tiles on the ceiling collecting water, water dripping down. And, Mr. Speaker, nobody should accept that. Nobody in Saskatchewan should accept that.

And you look at the other problems they have in terms of visitors. You know, they often have bats; you know, they have rodents; they even have animals visiting that whole facility. And you have the main door falling off, Mr. Speaker.

And then to top it all off, you have health care workers working in that system, you have sick people in there hoping to be cured, and you also have people going there to visit.

So, Mr. Speaker, as long as that hospital in La Loche is not replaced and as long as it stands, it will be a symbol of the NDP government's commitment to northern Saskatchewan health services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of examples. I tell you of the thousands of stories. One such a story is in the village of Patuanak. Patuanak has a large number of older people, people that have developed this country through the many, many years of their contributions. And right now, Mr. Speaker, senior citizens haven't got a home in Patuanak in which they can relax and spend their final years in peace. They have been struggling with a senior citizens' home in Patuanak for many, many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about housing for a minute, Mr. Speaker. At this point in time they're 600 units behind in social housing in northern Saskatchewan — 600 units. There are no repair programs that have been accessible enough nor has there been any repair programs to help the many people that are living in overcrowded houses, Mr. Speaker. There is no question in my mind that there's often 15, 16, 17 people living in one house, Mr. Speaker. And this is not happening in Guyana, Mr. Speaker; this is happening in northern Saskatchewan. And these are serious, disturbing facts, Mr. Speaker.

As well we look at the other problems in northern Saskatchewan. There are no specific support programs, Mr. Speaker, for the chronically ill, the many people who have heart problems, cancer problems, and who have very little time to live. Where's their support system, Mr. Speaker? There are very, very few things out there to help these people along their way.

You look at the disabled, Mr. Speaker. There are close to 350 disabled people in northern Saskatchewan. What type of services have they got? They're busy, Mr. Speaker, rolling down their wheelchairs on gravel roads. Mr. Speaker, they have accessibility problems to buildings. And, Mr. Speaker, they have accessibility to services and support.

And, Mr. Speaker, the most important part of our history of course, is our elders. In northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have seen many elders — proud elders that have worked all their lives to build up their grandchildren . . . to build up their own children so they may become independent people. And they are disturbed at what they see, what's happening now.

But, Mr. Speaker, a double whammy — many of them are forced to go on welfare because they cannot afford prescription drug costs. Because of the sky-rocketing drug costs to these old people, many of them are forced to swallow their pride and go seek welfare so they can survive.

Mr. Speaker, that's not how you treat an elderly group of people. You treat them as treasures, Mr. Speaker. You give them support in their old age because they gave us support when they were young and we were in need of support.

So, Mr. Speaker, the problems of the chronically ill, the disabled, the elderly — it's all over the place, Mr. Speaker. And we need more aggressiveness and we need more commitment from this government to deal with these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use a few other examples. Before I go on to other examples, I want to point out that this government is anticipating to get $1.5 billion in revenues from two or three mines over the next 10 to 15 years. That's not million, Mr. Speaker, that is billion. And what are the people of the North saying? Well hey, we shouldn't be putting up with a lot of these problems because look at the revenues you're making. Look at all the money you're making off the North.

Now we're not demanding special treatment; we're demanding fair treatment. Treat us as Saskatchewan residents, because we are part of Saskatchewan aren't we? So that's the whole thing that we're asking. Aren't we part of Saskatchewan? And if we are, Mr. Speaker, then give them the services that they deserve and put your money where your mouth is when you say that you're committed to a certain people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I go back to the point of $1.5 billion for one mine alone. I talk about the roads, Mr. Speaker, the roads of northern Saskatchewan. They're in much worse shape than southern Saskatchewan, and some of the examples we use is Pinehouse, Patuanak, Turnor Lake, Dillon, St. George's Hill, Michel Village, Garson Lake. These are some of the roads in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. Black Lake. The road to Black Lake is also being planned and there's only $1.5 million put in by the province on this whole issue.

So, Mr. Speaker, what are the people saying in northern Saskatchewan? Are they saying we want paved roads in every one of these communities? No, Mr. Speaker. They're saying we want training programs so we can train 10 to 15 people from each of these communities; we can train for 3, 4, 5 years so we can build up these roads and we can do this work on our self.

And are they asking for new money, Mr. Speaker? No. Many of them are asking for training dollars; many of them are asking to recycle the welfare dollars. And a good example of that is La Loche, again, Mr. Speaker. Their mayor and council as well as their staff have been working really, really hard on the Garson Lake road. And they've asked the Minister of Highways for a $250,000 contribution for once every three years. So that's three years, three quarters of a million dollars.

And what does that do, Mr. Speaker? What it does is it lines up La Loche to Garson Lake. It connects Garson Lake to the rest of the province. But the most important thing, Mr. Speaker, is on from Garson Lake is Fort McMurray. And there, Mr. Speaker, is a lot of potential for natural gas, for tourism and for forestry.

So they're thinking, Mr. Speaker. At the community level they're saying, well if we build that road and then we'll get more traffic this way, we'll get more opportunity and perhaps we'll capitalize on it. And it's all recycled dollars.

So why don't we go and ask the minister for some support on this? So what happens is they come to us and we say no. There is no dollars. And yet, Mr. Speaker, the anticipated income for the next 10 to 15 years from one mine alone is $1.5 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go into Sandy Bay as well. Sandy Bay is right next to a power generating station, the Island Falls power generating station. And upon my visit to Sandy Bay this summer to attend a youth conference camp, I had a chance to visit a few people. And I asked them why they weren't playing hockey, because there's a beautiful rink and there's never any hockey teams from Sandy Bay. And they said, well last winter we had to shut our rink down. We didn't have enough money in our small village to pay for the rink costs. It was something like three or four hundred bucks. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a village right next to a power generating station. And they haven't got money to keep their arena going because they could not pay the power bill. So, Mr. Speaker, you tell me if that's fair treatment for northern Saskatchewan? And the obvious answer is no, it's not.

And let's look at other examples, Mr. Speaker, power bills in northern Saskatchewan. Again, living in northern Saskatchewan I, on the average, spend 150 to 200, sometimes as much as $225 a month on power bills. Over $200 on power bills, Mr. Speaker, telephone bills. So you see the huge costs of living in northern Saskatchewan yet there's no extra compensation to consider these facts.

So, Mr. Speaker, you point out the situation as clear as day. Number one is there is no plan. There is no economic or social agenda by this government for northern Saskatchewan. And as I mentioned before, some of these stark examples and the realities, you can check these facts. These are facts. Really judge if you're committed to northern Saskatchewan.

As the member from Kelvington-Wadena pointed out, a lot of fluff but the details will come out in the budget and, Mr. Speaker, northern Saskatchewan people are really, really watching.

Now to continue on some of my comments, Mr. Speaker. I want to share with you a few other disturbing facts. And the stats show that violent crimes are steadily increasing in northern Saskatchewan. And one of three northern children lives in a household below the low income cut-off level, Mr. Speaker.

And in northern Saskatchewan this is the fastest growing population, the young people. A huge amount of the aboriginal people of Saskatchewan live in the North — a huge amount, Mr. Speaker. And of that amount, almost 60 per cent are under the age of 24.

So you can see the challenges when you talk about social development, Mr. Speaker. And you can see the challenge when we talk about economic development. Simply, as I pointed out before, the government has no choice but to begin to address these issues. You need imagination; you need innovation; you need excitement, because 10 to 15 years from now, these people are going to grow up to become adults.

And what's up there for them at this point in time? Dependency on government. And Mr. Speaker, I go back to my point. They do not want dependency. They want their dignity back to earn their own living so they can instil pride and hope and optimism in themselves, and it's all for their children.

So, Mr. Speaker, 10 to 15 years from now these young people

are going to grow up and there's going to be 1,000, 2,000 people looking for work in some of the larger centres. There are going to be 2, 300 people looking for work in some of the smaller centres. What kind of work are we going to give them then?

So the point is, Mr. Speaker, is we've got to get off our duff right now and we've got to start planning alongside of northern leaders, the chiefs and the mayors, and start talking about aggressive, an innovative and exciting package for northern Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, unless we start getting direct benefits from some of the mining sector, then these problems will persist. It is only common sense — we deal with this problem now or we pay for the price later. That's the alternative we have, Mr. Speaker.

Continuing on some of my presentations in my response to the throne speech, I want to refer to the Minister of Northern Affairs when he quoted in the paper article, and I quote:

> The government is already sharing more with the North than it is reaping in resource revenue. The government spends 150 million on hospitals, schools, and roads in the North and takes out only $90 million in resource revenue.

What the minister failed to consider, Mr. Speaker, is that governments have traditionally been responsible for services like hospitals, schools, and roads elsewhere in the province. North, East, West, South, they all look after the province as one, but the government does not receive anywhere near 90 million bucks back from these other regions, yet it seems he's penalizing the North with this response.

And the other point that we want to talk about is the remarks to me are an archaic way of looking at northern Saskatchewan. We're no longer in the '60s and the '70s in northern Saskatchewan. We want you guys to begin to think of the '90s, the '90s and the year 2000. We talk about the 21st century, Mr. Speaker, yet our treatment is still stuck in the 1960s where the government will do all and be all. We must recognize and we must feed the Saskatchewan spirit that is alive in northern Saskatchewan people, and we ought to feed that by giving them control over their destiny and over their lives.

Continuing on, Mr. Speaker, the northern leaders have for some time been requesting meetings. There's been years and years of discussion, as I pointed out, on the whole issues of revenue sharing.

And again, March 12, this very day, and I quote from the paper, "Northern Saskatchewan leaders want to discuss revenue sharing.". The larger headline says, "Uranium meeting with Romanow sought."

Well, Mr. Speaker, these leaders have been for years talking about revenue sharing or direct benefits. They've been talking about this thing. And I go back to another article of Wednesday, March 5, and I quote, "Goulet seems in no rush to talk revenue sharing."

So I guess the response here we have is really, what is the situation here? Are you going to talk about revenue sharing or are we not going to talk about revenue sharing? And further in the article, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "But Environment Minister Lorne Scott said recently the government will re-examine it."

So, Mr. Speaker, we're getting a lot of mixed signals here, and what I'm trying to do with the thrust of my throne speech today is to encourage the government to begin to deal with this issue. Because if you don't begin to deal with it, Mr. Speaker, there are going to be significant problems.

(1545)

And it's not a threat, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe you can govern by fear. I don't believe you can govern by problems persisting in all areas. I don't believe you can govern by confrontation. You must govern, Mr. Speaker, by compromise. And this is what the northern Saskatchewan people want. They want to compromise. They want to talk about things which they want done, not 10, 20, 30 years from now when the mines are all gone. We want to talk about things that are going to affect us now — 5, 10, 15 years from now. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have no choice. We're not dealing with the situation on our own. We're dealing for this issues for the children of northern Saskatchewan.

Continuing on, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a few things also I think is very important. In northern Saskatchewan, as a province, people recognize and are proud that they've contributed to the provincial economy. Everyone in this room knows the largest industry in the province is agriculture.

The second largest industry, Mr. Speaker, is mining, the mining industry, and a huge majority of the mining activity in the province of Saskatchewan except potash occurs in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They have many mines: Cluff Lake mine; Key Lake mine; McArthur mine; McClean Lake; Cigar Lake; and the list goes on and on and on.

So the northern people know that they're contributing to the provincial economy. They know that. They understand that. Now what they're also saying is we don't mind if the North is developed. We're encouraged that the North is being developed. Their argument is let us become part of that development so we no longer have the poor roads, the poor housing, the poor hospitals, the non-support for social development, the non-support for economic opportunity. All these issues, that's what they're talking about, Mr. Speaker. They're trying to compromise. They're trying to compromise with the Government of Saskatchewan on what we think is the best medium for northern people in general.

And these are some of the things we have to look at, Mr. Speaker, and what you could in essence create is a win-win situation. When you deal with the northern Saskatchewan people's issues and all of a sudden the environment for mining activity to continue and to expand, is positive. The mining companies, Mr. Speaker, they want to operate in a non-confrontational manner. They want to do the best they can to ensure that they are able to mine these mines as efficiently, and without problems, as possible.

So what happens, Mr. Speaker, is if you deal with these issues you are taking away confrontation in northern Saskatchewan. You're giving the people of the North a fair share of what is happening and what is occurring as far as development in northern Saskatchewan. We know the North is going to contribute a tremendous amount of money, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to share with you a few other examples, just a few other examples, Mr. Speaker. The northern village of Pinehouse, a community of about a thousand people, and I was speaking to a number of people there. They want some social development dollars so they can deal with some of the problems at the local level. They said, we are tired of the same old approaches. We have no control; we have no say at the local level. Everything seems to be administered from La Ronge or from Regina. And where does that give us enthusiasm to change things in our own lives?

So the point is, Mr. Speaker, if the government cannot deliver these services to the local level, then let the local people deliver them on their own by using their resources that the government currently collects.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, a good example again is Pinehouse. I'll go to Pinehouse as well, Mr. Speaker. Here we have a community again of about a thousand people. They have been living next to the Key Lake mine for 20 years, 25 years. And this group of people living next to a mine, next door to a mine, they have not got, Mr. Speaker, even a public arena — no arena in that particular community.

So we know, Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is a problem. We know economic development is a problem. We know social development is a problem. We know roads are a problem. And we know all these . . . health care problems and the other problems in northern Saskatchewan are very apparent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again focusing my response to the mining sector, I want to point out that mining, being the second largest industry in Saskatchewan, I believe that they want to continue expanding the mining industry in northern Saskatchewan. And I believe that northern people want to support that. But we also know, Mr. Speaker, we know that there are thousands of jobs created in Regina, in Saskatoon, and Prince Albert as a result of the northern mines.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are millions of dollars created in economic activity for the service industry, for the construction industry, for the agriculture industry in southern Saskatchewan as a result of these mines.

We know that there are research and educational contributions made to all areas. And everywhere you look, Mr. Speaker, there are direct benefits associated to all the province of Saskatchewan because of the mining happening in the North.

And, Mr. Speaker, we haven't even begun to talk about the billions of dollars that they will also generate for the resource base, the Government of Saskatchewan.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out that the mining sector wishes to operate in a non-confrontational manner. They want these issues resolved at the local level so that they can operate in peace.

We know as northern people that the environment will never, ever be compromised. We will monitor the environment as best we can. In no way, shape, or form will the environment be compromised. And, Mr. Speaker, what happens in the environment in northern Saskatchewan? Cut-backs.

So once again the question you ask, is the government's commitment to northern Saskatchewan there? And I beg to differ with the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. It is my honest and true belief that the commitment is not there.

Mr. Speaker, a couple months ago there was several mines that we knew were going to close down. And recently the Komos mine shut down just north-east of La Ronge. And the primary reason, according to the people I spoke with at the main office in Calgary, was the price of gold. There is nothing that could be done at the provincial level regarding the prince of gold. We understood that and we're taking that realistic and responsible step.

However, upon continuing to discuss the issue, we talked about the overregulation of the industry; we talked about the taxation of these industries; and we also talked about the high cost of servicing the mine sector, such as fuel costs, electricity costs, and manpower costs. All these costs heaped on, one on top of another, Mr. Speaker. That, in essence, discouraged that junior mining company from continuing, and certainly discouraged them when they first began their efforts of trying to locate here.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's other examples — the Box mine near Uranium City. A lot of potential there, Mr. Speaker. Once again they could not afford to do business in Saskatchewan.

So what's happening here is we're stuck in a flux. You have the northern people wanting development but wanting a better share. Then you're having mining companies that want to come in but can't afford it. So in the meantime, who loses? The Saskatchewan people lose. And particularly, Mr. Speaker, the northern Saskatchewan people lose.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the responsible position that we should take is that we'll have great difficulty expanding the mining industry in northern Saskatchewan unless we deal with these northern issues, unless we start looking at how we can attract junior mining companies that are very marginalized in terms of their operations.

And when you haven't got a plan, Mr. Speaker, to address some of these issues, what you have is non-movement. And that, Mr. Speaker, is much worse than trying something and failing. Non-movement is non-movement.

So in making all these points, Mr. Speaker, naturally once again we want to make sure that we're not totally ignoring the fact that we have a solution. We as Liberals, and certainly myself as MLA of Athabasca, talk about solutions and we talk about a new direction for the North. And we talk about what we commonly refer to as a northern community development Act — a new northern community development Act, an Act that

will recognize the legitimate role that some of these northern communities play in northern Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — And the proposal is to develop this northern development Act. And how will we do so? Allow me to explain, Mr. Speaker.

We are not talking about investing more money. We're talking about reallocating dollars, current dollars, and we're also talking about reallocating new dollars that will come as a result of the expanding mining industry.

We're not going to compromise any of the issues of northern Saskatchewan communities. We will provide accountability to this new plan. We will empower northern citizens, Mr. Speaker. We will empower communities and we will empower ideas at the local level to this northern community development Act.

And this Act, Mr. Speaker, will look and recognize local councils, local municipal councils — issues like direct financing of local economic development corporations; issues of direct financing of social development agencies; issues of training dollars right at the local level; issues of dealing with infrastructure needs over a sustained period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we as Liberals want to provide the solution with a new northern community development Act. This Act, Mr. Speaker, can finance local organizations and local people to come up with that change they so desperately need. And, Mr. Speaker, this Act will also address some of our responsibilities as provinces to look at the road issues, the health care issues, the hospital issues, and the housing issues, Mr. Speaker.

This new northern community development Act talks about ways and means in which the municipal governments could become a greater partner. At this point in time, the only revenues that they have is enough to collect garbage, to maintain their water and sewer system, and shoot dogs, Mr. Speaker. And the moment they start talking about economic development or social development, there is no money — we haven't enough money.

I could name, Mr. Speaker, 10, 11, or 12 communities that get 60 or $70,000, Mr. Speaker, 60 or $70,000. What could you do with 60 or $70,000, Mr. Speaker? You cannot do anything and no wonder the frustration is so apparent, Mr. Speaker.

I'll give you an example, a very proud example, of how and why we should begin to invest in northern communities, is none other than the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. They got help from the federal government, Mr. Speaker, to buy a 40 per cent share in a struggling pulp mill — NorSask Forest Products.

And MLTC (Meadow Lake Tribal Council) then launched a new business to do reforestation, logging, and road construction. MLTC since then has paid $11 million in taxes and saved $10 million in social assistance. This is a creation of 240 jobs, Mr. Speaker. So one project by one tribal council ultimately saved us $21 million.

So our choices are (a) continue putting money into social assistance, or (b) become aggressive and start looking at things like the northern community development Act. And people say, well what do you mean, how do we finance that, how do we begin to build on that, Mr. Speaker?

And this is just one idea. I don't want to say this is the idea that's going to be prevalent in northern Saskatchewan. I want to be very cautious on that. What I do want to say is this one idea that we spoke about . . . And the point is easily: where can you get the dollars to set up a new northern development fund? We have one already — $4 million. Well, Mr. Speaker, $4 million and you divide that by 35,000 people — I'm not sure how much that works out to be. If my math serves me correct, that's maybe 50 or 60 bucks a person.

So, Mr. Speaker, where could you get dollars from? And I use the example in many of my northern community speeches: in Regina alone this provincial government put $150 million into the Crown Life Insurance Company for the creation of 800 jobs. And I applauded that effort. I said, good for them. They're attracting a new insurance company to the province that provides an expansion of our services.

(1600)

And what did they do for 35,000 people in northern Saskatchewan that occupy half the land mass of this province? They put $4 million in for 35,000 people. And, Mr. Speaker, that money is earmarked simply for the mining industry. It's got to be geared towards the mining industry. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough. That is not good enough.

So in essence what we should do is look at a series of dollars, Mr. Speaker. Revenue-sharing, for example, from resource extraction or direct benefits, whatever you want to phrase it. Federal initiatives — there are a lot of initiatives that could result if we had the money to back us up.

As well, Mr. Speaker, when the province does become involved with treaty land entitlement in southern Saskatchewan, they're usually buying land. So in the case of buying land in southern Saskatchewan, the deal is that 70 per cent of that cost of purchase is being paid for by the federal government, 30 per cent is being paid by the provincial government.

What happens, Mr. Speaker, when this land is being purchased in northern Saskatchewan where the government owns all that land? Instead of coughing up 30 per cent, they're gaining 70 per cent. And let me tell you, between the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, the Prince Albert Grand Council, and the Peter Ballantyne Band, there's a lot of land being purchased.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can go on and on about the ideas. We talk about reallocation of provincial programs, the northern development fund, the Primrose Air Weapons Range, all these different examples of where the money could come from. And, Mr. Speaker, if you lump in revenue sharing, you lump in the federal initiatives, the sale or lease of Crown land, you talk about reallocation of current programs, you talk about the northern development fund, the existing one, all of a sudden you're easily up to 10, 15, $20 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not about new money. This is about existing money. And we've pointed out the indication the North has, the pressing indication that the North has is that, give us a piece of the pie so we can become part of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I am almost finished my presentation but I want to make a couple of qualifying remarks. First of all, this new northern development Act should not be compared to nor should it be confused with self-government; nor should it be confused or compared to when you talk about the current responsibilities of the provincial government. This new northern development Act does not talk about highways and schools and hospitals, Mr. Speaker. They simply cannot afford to sustain that type of need on this small, meagre amount of dollars. These are three very separate issues, Mr. Speaker, and they must be viewed as separate issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the Liberals do have a plan — this northern community development Act, of which I hope to introduce a Bill this session to talk about reallocation of current funding, not new funding.

And the point is, Mr. Speaker, is we have to get away from this whole archaic system of thinking, we'll we're looking after the North; we're putting more than we're taking out. We know that is not the truth, Mr. Speaker. And that very attitude poisons any hope of northern Saskatchewan people realizing their own destiny.

We are very serious in northern Saskatchewan to develop and build a future for our children. That responsibility is ours; we realize that, Mr. Speaker. But for crying out loud, give us some power and control over our lives. And I can almost guarantee you, if you begin to empower people, Mr. Speaker, you will see the welfare rolls drop; you will see the crime rolls drop; you will see the dependency on governments drop. You will see that Saskatchewan spirit rise, Mr. Speaker.

As well, the North is also concerned of some of the challenges facing us as a province. We're not only contributing to the province but we also believe, Mr. Speaker, is that we cannot simply save our way out of this debt. We cannot cut spending as our way out of this debt.

Mr. Speaker, the northern people believe that we have to create a stronger economy to generate more tax dollars to also reduce this debt. If we have aggressive economic planning in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, like the Meadow Lake Tribal Council has shown, we can generate a lot of tax dollars. The North once again wants to help with that task, Mr. Speaker. And again I reiterate that we have to make that effort. We have got no choice.

I also want to point out, in reference to the previous Tory caucus, when they were in power, Mr. Minister, they gave away everything to the mining sector. All the tax breaks you needed. The PC caucus gave that away. And how did they give it away and who did they give it away from? From the northern people again. And we're asking, would not a truly socialist government support the concept of empowering people, communities, and ideas to become self-sufficient? Isn't that the social agenda, Mr. Speaker? Isn't that what this is all about — empowering people?

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the government not to wait. No government have crystal balls determining what is going to happen six months from now, much less six years from now. So in saying this, we know we cannot wait for every election year to give out goodies.

What we do know, Mr. Speaker, is politics is changing all around us, and sooner than later we have to turn back control and power to the people we serve. We are public servants, Mr. Speaker, and it is time for a new, fresh approach to politics in the North, East, West, and South.

And again, Mr. Speaker, if there is a commitment to develop the North to the same standards as the South, then we must have steady, sustained, and consistent planning that is controlled at the local level.

And contrary to what the CBC news may have reported, the North is not threatening court action and blockades. They have, through various press releases, indicated: let's consult; let's negotiate; let's sit down at the table and talk these things out. That's what they want, Mr. Speaker. And is it any wonder that their frustration level has gotten to their level over the years of constantly being not heard.

Mr. Speaker, the northern people again are a very proud, productive people, and they are prepared to fight, to work, and to work smart for a better future for their children. They will hold their own and they will contribute to this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, in closing I refer to the final word as a song that John Lennon sings, and the words are: "I may be a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope some day you'll join us and the world will live as one." Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, and members of the Assembly, it is indeed an honour and a pleasure to address you on the Speech from the Throne for 1997.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to respond not only to the members from across the floor on their comments but I would like to respond in a structured format which deals with the issue of right-wing governments and social spending, right-wing governments and debt. Liberal and Tory governments being the same in history or being the same as Republicans. And also when we look at the issue, they talk about taxes. I would like to mention the issue of taxes as well as also the issues from the member of Athabasca in regards to the North, and also aboriginal peoples.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start out by first of all paying due respects to people who have passed on recently. I would like to join with the member from Athabasca in regards to recognizing Louis Morin, the late Louis Morin from Turnor Lake.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I knew this person from the early '70s, and he was a strong fighter in regards to education. I watched

him at the meetings where Metis people gathered. And you saw his strength, his determination to deal with many issues, whether it was fighting for jobs, whether it was in regards to the issues relating to resource management in the North, and also for Metis people and their fight for aboriginal rights.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say these words in the true spirit of Louis Morin. He was a person who spoke English, Cree, and Dene. In that spirit I would say, with all respect to the languages of the House and our peoples:

Kigistenimitinan Kagee isi weechihak utoskehinu uschi tu neepuhistumasowak.

In translation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's respect — and this is in regards to the late Louis Morin — that you have helped us achieve educational control, to fight for jobs, and the fight in regards to standing up for your peoples.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to also pass those same words on to Dr. Oliver Brass in regards to his tragic death last week. He himself was a fighter for the improvement of education in this province, for his own people, first nations of this province. Mr. Speaker, his work has impacted us as individuals in the aboriginal community, but I also see it impacting people in the rest of the province in a positive way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I would also like to mention a friend of mine from Sandy Bay, the late Alfred Stewart. He passed on earlier this year. I've known him when I did my oral history thesis in Sandy Bay, on the stories and the history of Sandy Bay back in 1983-86. So I've known him for quite a while as a strong fighter, again in regards to the trapping issues. As I went to Europe with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), with the Metis representatives, with the trappers' organizations, and fight for trapping and a way of life, I thought of Alfred Stewart who did many work in his community — and I might add the same type of words for Louis Morin.

(1615)

So, Mr. Speaker, with those remembrances, I'd like to take my place and debate the issues of this House that were brought forward, not only from this side of the House but from the members in the opposition ranks.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the speeches made by the members opposite and when I looked at the historical record of the past 20 years, I looked at the situation from not only a practical basis, but from an ideological basis. I saw a lot of rhetoric from right-wing governments, whether you looked at the Republicans under Reagan and Bush and their over 20 per cent cut in the social spending area, or whether I looked at the history of Brian Mulroney and the Conservatives in Ottawa, or whether I looked at Grant Devine and the devastation that he put forth in this province.

Every one of these governments attacked the poor, the defenceless, the middle class of the system. Their devastation ended up to be a burden not on the taxes to the people capable of paying, but to the middle class and small business of society.

In many ways, I saw them utilize a lot of the public funds from people who worked hard, who paid the taxes fairly, and what they saw in all those governments was people spending and putting us in a tremendous debt.

After we went through this period of the '70s and then '80s — and most particularly in the '80s — we saw a lot of people saying we need to have some sense and responsibility to it. People were starting to get sick and tired of right-wing governments coming in here and their rhetoric of anti-government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — People were getting sick and tired of the rhetoric saying pick government when these same people had a selected mix of big-business friends which they supported through tax loopholes, etc.

There was a tremendous amount of monies that were spent in that capacity. They said absolutely nothing in regards to the big expenditures with their selected friends in big business who supported them in putting all kinds of money in their party coffers — absolutely nothing — but they kept attacking the middle class and the poor.

So when you look at the situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this anti-government talk which we saw in Grant Devine, we are now facing the suffering of that mentality. You look like Senator Eric Berntson going to the States after Dick Collver tried to make everybody an American here in the '70s. He speaks in New York and he says we will mismanage this government so that no other governments can run this again in the future.

This was the essence of anti-government sentiment for people who are supposed to be here to be proud of one of the greatest democratic institutions in the world, our parliament, where people elect us and put us in so that we can be responsible, look after their money and make sure that we utilize it on health, education and the many things that our children hope and dream for as we face the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I looked at the devastation of Devine, a lot of the people . . . as I walked into my constituency in northern Saskatchewan and I looked at that history, I reminded people that many of these right-wingers were Liberals one time, Tories next time. They just took their membership cards and moved from one party to another but were the same old right-wingers.

Even when you look at a top person like Senator Eric Berntson — he was a Liberal and then he became a Conservative. And now we see the connection in regards to the devastation.

You look at a lot of the people who are in regards to the new Liberal leadership races that took place after they kicked out their old leader, the member from Greystone. In many cases, I saw them move with the same group that used to support the

Tory Party. It's the same old group.

When we look at what it really means . . . And a lot of people ask me: what does $15 billion mean in the hole? What does it really mean in regards to the devastation? And I might add on this one, the Liberals figure they can get away with it at the federal level on the $600 billion there, but one-third of that money was there when the Liberals were governing this country. They overspent that money, and that was the essence of what started the Tory big-spending spree.

So when you're looking at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people ask me what is the difference between a million and a billion dollars? The difference between a million, which can run a teacher education program like NORTEP (northern teacher education program), one of the finest in northern Saskatchewan, and get 200 people into the classroom, when we get a program like that for approximately a million dollars, I hear people say we can relate to that; but a billion, we don't know.

Well a billion, my explanation to them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this: if you owe a million dollars it will take you 12 days to pay it up if you paid a dollar every second — 12 days to pay up a million dollars. If you owed a billion, it would take you 32 years. The difference between a million, on a million that you owe, is 12 days . . . 32 years for a billion to pay back if you paid a dollar every second. What these Tory- and Liberal-type people have done in this province has wrecked havoc for many generations of our young people.

When I look at the federal Liberals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see the Chrétien government being worse than the Tories before them with Mulroney in the sense of attacking the poor and the middle class of the country. And regards to the Tories, remember the history. They tried to do de-indexing of the pensions on seniors in this province. Remember that they also backed down from it when a lot of people and a lot of seniors from across Canada said that would be devastating to our seniors.

But when I look at Chrétien, he was not only talking about de-indexing. It was a $7 billion cut. When you compare one million to 12 days and one billion to 32 years, this is a $7 billion cut on things that they said that they would never wreck. Medicare — we support medicare, they said. But like Thatcher who kicked down the doors here many years back, that is what they are attacking.

When you look at the aspect of education, they give you a lot of rhetoric in regards to the youth. But youth see the questions arise, etc., and they see that $7 billion cut having an effect. For this province alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it means $110 million last year, over 90 million this year, making it over $200 million in a two-year period. Those are the cuts, Mr. Speaker.

The member from North Battleford chirps from his seat on taxes. I will mention the GST later on.

So when you look at the situation, Mr. Speaker, on the health side, I look at the situation in comparison to the federal government and their devastating practices. They talk a good round and they try and sound like the NDP before the election, but they govern even worse than the Tories.

So when you look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out of that $110 million, $50 million were cut in health in this province alone — $50 million. What did the province do? Not only did they replace every penny of the $50 million that they cut, we put another 40 million on top of it.

Now this is an important thing. The member from Melville said something about the hospitals. I will mention something about those district health boards which they called puppets earlier on.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of the Tories, they love comparing us to Alberta. Of course they never mention — and they talk about the taxation which I'll mention later on — but they never talk about the $860 per family of four that they pay in regards to health care premiums over there. But what is more important is this: how much do the Albertans spend in regards to health per capita? When we look at it in Saskatchewan on a per capita basis, we spend $1,560. In Alberta, it's $1,340. In addition to that, Alberta has kept 15 per cent, whereas we have added on to our health costs and put in more health dollars of 40 million last year.

Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the member from Canora-Pelly yesterday or the day before, I was actually very, very surprised. For a person elected in this province, for many years we talk about elected people and democracy whether at the local level, the regional levels, or the provincial levels, or the national levels, the importance of democracy. We have had for many years appointed boards of which there were about 400 in this province.

We made a decision to go with a combination of eight elected members and four appointed system in this province. We made sure there was a majority of elected members in those boards. And when I listen to the member of Canora-Pelly, the words he used were very scathing against the people who are dedicating their lives in regards to the governance of health in this province. He said that there were "puppet health district boards."

(1630)

I am very surprised at the Leader of the Opposition. He said that our health boards were democratically elected by the people of this province and in their own areas were puppet. These are people that are chosen by their own people in their own areas. I thought that maybe the member from Canora-Pelly was trying to . . . after running for leadership, he was trying to please his new boss. He was trying to impress his own boss and he came out with puppet.

And when I looked at it, of course it was not much different from what Melenchuk had to say. The Liberal leader, on November 25 last year, 1996, quoted in the *Star-Phoenix*. This is what he said:

> When you're dealing with an issue as complex as health-care delivery, your governance people need to be highly educated and highly knowledgeable on health-care delivery. You may not get that with a democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk and say that Melenchuk will hand-pick the elite of this province, the so-called educated, knowledgeable people, it is absolutely no different than what I heard from Grant Devine when I was in opposition. Not only is this concept and this proposal by the Liberal leader elitist, it is a put-down for the people who fought in regards to the elections.

But when you look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Melenchuk, when I say that the Liberals and the Tories are the same, they are the same in this sense. Grant Devine when he was in trouble — and they're in trouble because they're divided up and fighting amongst each other, getting a new leader all the time — when they're in trouble, what Grant Devine did was he was going to select 100 people to make recommendations to the province. Some people may have forgotten that process. We used to call it con Sask. He tried to con the people with a handful of selected people — hand-picked versus the elected process that we've seen.

It was that democratic process of people putting their vote in selecting those health boards that was important, that the new leader completely disregards.

So, Mr. Speaker, here you have a new leader that will talk about the new Liberalism, the new democracy. But we know that they will have absolutely no respect for the knowledge base of the people and the educational levels of the people. They will have new respect about that and push forth their new elitist form of patronage which they have been well-known for in the past. This is old Conservative Liberalism of the past.

I also, when I looked at it, this is not a fluke from the leader who says that, and from the Leader of the Opposition, you know, the member from Canora-Pelly who sits in this House. I also heard it from the member from Wood River who talked about two-tier medicine. And again when I look at it, on two-tier medicine and the fight for medicare in this province, what I saw was a quote from the leader again, the leader of the Liberals, again the *Leader-Post* September 10, '95, and this is what he said: the province should allow private clinics.

Again we saw the situation, Mr. Speaker, of complete disrespect not only for our elected people but on the two-tier system that was proposed by the member from Wood River, which by the way he became your first member of the House who stood up in the newspaper to support Melenchuk. I knew right away they were heading on a right-wing direction when I heard that.

Mr. Speaker, on the educational side, I had already mentioned the tuition increases because of the Liberal cuts, you know, by the students . . . borne by the students of this province. But also what is forgotten today . . . for example, we saw in the House, disabled people in the House. Those programs were devastated by the Liberal cuts of last year. And I think that in many cases we saw that in relation to the women's programs as well in this province. They were devastated by the Liberals. Now they're trying to tiptoe around by their appointments by the Liberal leader, you know, across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, so when you compare the Saskatchewan NDP government versus the federal Liberal government, we see the idea of debt and debt management by the province; and the fact that we have balanced our books, the first to do in Canada, and the fact that we passed balanced budget legislation so that the Conservatives or the Liberals or whoever comes in power cannot go accounting the way the Tories did. And I think it's very important to have this balanced budget legislation so that there will be no trickery in the books.

I listened to one of the members talk about trickery. And they should know a lot about it because that's what they know best. Even as I look at the new Leader of the Liberal Party, we see him getting a pay cheque as a research staff person from the caucus budget. Is he an elected caucus member? No. He's not an elected caucus member, but the new leader is getting a consultant allowance.

I remember we used to bring this up with the leader from Greystone who also had another salary from the Liberal Party. Maybe they should disclose their books and find out whether or not they're even getting extra pay from the Liberal Party on top of their research staff situation. That would be a good question, you know, for the press to research out.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the situation of cuts, we knew in the province that we had to do a certain amount and we knew that a certain amount of it takes place at the federal level. But the difference was the severity of the cuts. At the federal level the cuts on health, education, and social services represented 73 per cent of the cuts. And yet it was only 17 per cent of their budget, and yet they bore the brunt of 73 per cent of the cuts. And I heard these members from across talking about a social conscience. They have no social conscience, Mr. Speaker.

The other major piece of rhetoric that I always use in regards to taxation. I used to listen in this House in opposition with Grant Devine talk about the gas tax, and how he'd save the province lowering the gas tax. And I remember later on he brought it back because of the huge debt that he caused in this province. Now, like I said, the Liberal is a Tory is a Liberal is a Tory. The Liberals are saying the same thing. They're talking about tax cuts again. These are the same people who at the federal level promised to do away with the GST. These are the same people who promised that they would help the people in regards to the GST.

I looked at the TV before Christmas and that poor Jean was shaking in his boots because he knew he was not telling the truth, Mr. Speaker. He tried to weasel away on some words, but he just couldn't, he was caught right on camera. Then they looked at the TV from where his previous statement had been, and it was true that he promised to do away with the GST. But is it done? No, it is still here.

Those Liberals from across, they want to harmonize, they want to harmonize the GST. They're trying to harmonize it. Children's clothing —that's what the Liberals want to tax. They want to tax education. Not only do they have a rise in tuition, they want to tax the books at the educational level. And yet, he wants more educated board . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order. I'll ask the

cooperation of all hon. members on both sides of the House to refrain from shouting across the floor of the House. All hon. members will have the opportunity, if they haven't already, to enter into debate, and if they've already entered into debate, then I'm sure that they will no longer need to be obliged to shout across the House.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think, Mr. Speaker, the truth is getting to them. The truth hurts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I know very well that when they tried to run away from the GST, we know that there was election of and re-election of Sheila Copps on this issue. She resigned. And here they tried to say that they had never promised to do away with the GST. And so when you look at it, Mr. Speaker, taxation — they always try and work on taxation. We're the ones who protected the issue in relation to restaurants, books and education, and children's clothing in this province. It's the NDP who protected the people of this province.

When you look at the situation, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this rhetoric, let's look at the facts on the politics of the rich and poor in North America. About the 1920s and '30s about 1 per cent of the wealth was controlled by 20 per cent of the people. And when you look at . . . I mean 1 per cent of the population controlled 20 per cent of the wealth. Today 1 per cent of the people control 40 per cent of the wealth. So it's very clear that the rich got richer over this period in time.

And also in the '50s when I look at taxation, the corporations used to pay about 30 per cent of the tax in this country. Working people, people who paid a personal income tax, paid about 32, 33 per cent in the '50s. The unemployment rate was 4 per cent.

The line that they try and sell you all the time is that lower taxes will create jobs. Now you look at the history. Today, when you look at this history, whereas the corporations used to pay about 30 per cent of the revenue at the federal level, they now pay 8 per cent. But did you know the unemployment rose from 4 per cent to 10 per cent?

So when you look at the facts of some of the right-wing rhetoric in regards to taxation, they let off some of their big-business friends on tax loopholes. Even when banks are making record profits, they let them get away with it, but the poor students, the seniors, the middle class, the small business have to pay. So when you look at it, Mr. Speaker, they talk a lot the good line about tax, but all it means is a bigger tax load for the middle class of this country and this province.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on now on the question of the North. The member from Athabasca was there. I knew that the member from Athabasca has a tremendous doom and gloom feeling. I know also I see him get mixed up on the facts. One hand he wants more money, the next two paragraphs as he speaks, he says, we're not talking about new money; we're not talking about more dollars; we're talking about reallocation. He is going this way and that way, like the Liberals and the Tories. Same old people.

And I see the poor member from Athabasca. When I looked at it, I knew, Mr. Speaker, that he supported Lynda Haverstock. And he was the head in the front benches, the House leader. When the smoke cleared and when they had a coup and they went around with a new leader and they had a temporary leader put into place, they moved him. But at least one thing they had respect for was his knowledge about northern issues, about northern Saskatchewan. At least they put him as a critic of Northern Affairs. Mr. Speaker, today I look at it and I see the member made a speech about the North.

And I look at the MLA from North Battleford, who is now the new critic for Northern Affairs — not one word did he say about northern Saskatchewan. The new critic of Northern Affairs said not one word of northern Saskatchewan. They tell me that he took one ski-doo ride to La Ronge and that's his experience in the North. They tell me in the North, as I travel, that maybe those Liberals got mixed up because the word North Battleford had the word north in it. Maybe they think that's the North.

But I think this much, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this overall issue from the member from Athabasca, it reminded me about even the member from Canora-Pelly's talk about the North and aboriginal people. Because he's saying — the member from Athabasca says something about stereotypical views. That's what I heard again. There wasn't even a word from the Leader of the Opposition in that regard.

So when you look at it, Mr. Speaker, it also reminds me of the time when I voted against Meech Lake in the House. I later on met with Elijah Harper. When I voted against Meech Lake in 1987 I talked to Elijah Harper about my experiences about that, when I stood up in regards to the issue of aboriginal and treaty rights in this province. When I looked at it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from North Battleford says, great Liberal. I think he's a sorry Liberal.

Elijah Harper is a sorry Liberal today because he was an NDP cabinet minister. When he became a Liberal they put him in the back benches like they put the member from Athabasca in the back rows to keep him quiet. They don't even allow him to speak on northern issues; he's not even the critic of Northern Affairs any more. They took that away from him. That is modern day colonialism, Mr. Speaker.

So when you look at this situation, Mr. Speaker, those Liberals are the same as the Tories. They only talk about Northerners and Indian, Metis people in doom and gloom terms. Never any feeling about the fact that Northerners can accomplish anything or that Indian, Metis people can accomplish anything. All they talk about is welfare. They, the Liberals, are the welfare mentality when it comes down to Northerners and for Indian and Metis people.

When I look at what happens in regards to the North, I am proud of the people of northern Saskatchewan. I'm proud of the people who go in and fight for the jobs in the mines, combined

with good, sound governmental policy from the NDP. On our lease agreements we make sure that the people have contracts, the people have jobs, that environment is cared for. No other province in Canada — Liberal, Tory, or whatever — can say that.

But this NDP government has done that in what has been a success story. The member from Athabasca slipped up because he said when there was nothing done, he said the '60s. But the government from the '60s was none other than Thatcher and the Liberals. It was a devastating period for the North, you know, as it is when the Liberal government is around at the federal level.

Now you look at the NDP record. For the first time in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, we have 1,000 people employed at the mines.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — This is cooperation from the mining companies, the communities, the Government of Saskatchewan. This is an historic first. Out of that 1,000 — over 1,000 people — we have 874 that are Indian and Metis workers.

Mr. Speaker, in addition we have people who are in the labour sector, the mill operator sector, as well as the apprenticable trades and the technical trades. We have now 121 people in the technical trades. We also have 70 people now in the apprenticable trades — electricians, mechanics, etc. We also have people in management and supervisory positions at the mine, approximately 40 people, Mr. Speaker. Now this is something to be proud of. When we used to be 5 per cent of the employment rate, we are now 50 per cent and we're working even further than that.

The other thing that's very important is, the Liberals can't stand the success of what I saw in the northern opportunities business conference. I saw about 150 entrepreneurs talk about exciting things, on how to bid for contracts and how to get parked right into the mining development and forestry development.

We saw, Mr. Speaker, from 1991, about $25 million worth of contracts. The northern businesses moved from 25 million to 155 million this year. There is absolutely no government in Canada that matches our record. That is a tremendous success story — a 500 per cent increase in regards to contract dollars for businesses. Can the federal government say that? No, absolutely not.

When I look at the question of the environment, we have absolutely every community represented in three environment quality committees in the North. We spend about a quarter of a million.

But I'll tell you one thing that the member from Athabasca forgets about. When the two leaders met the other day to talk about revenue sharing in the North, they talked about not only the provincial government but the federal government. The federal government will also reap over a billion dollars, a billion and a half dollars, from mining. But did they put any money in the environmental quality committees where people are involved? Not one penny.

We have a $4 million program that the member from Athabasca calls down. But did the federal Liberals put any money into it? Not one cent.

So when you talk about revenue sharing, we are revenue sharing. In regards to business development, in regards to employment, we are making headway and we are the leaders in Canada in that regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, in regards to that, we also had . . . when I went to school 30 years ago there was about a handful of us. I was the one at the university and there was a few at the technical institutes from throughout the North. Today the report is 1,750 people in education, people who are trying to better themselves, people who are making headway, looking for babysitters so that they can go to school, so they can see a better and brighter future. That's what the people of the North are doing now. But all we hear is doom and gloom from over there.

So when you look at it overall and aboriginal people as well, we have seen tremendous success by this government. When you look at the governments across Canada, there was only three locations where there was movement on land. We are the only ones in Canada that have moved in on treaty land entitlement that will more than double the size of reserve land in this province. When you look at the Tory governments — zero; Liberal governments — zero. The only place where they did some work was in Ontario when Bob Rae was around. The only other place where they're doing work on land for aboriginal people is in B.C.

So the only place where it's been successful is here in the province of Saskatchewan because we know that . . . we know the history. Thirty million acres, 38 million acres of land on the free homesteads — we had about 31 million acres and 6 million acres on paid homesteads. We worked with the settlers to build their farms in the province, to move forward, and that policy was very positive.

But there was also positive effects in regards to other areas. But I would say that when I look at aboriginal peoples on treaty land at that time, we had 60 million acres of land all over the province for corporations. Even the Hudson Bay got 3.4 million acres of land, 15 million for the railroads, and . . . (inaudible) . . . for the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway). But when you look at it overall, the aboriginal first nations have gotten 1.2 million acres of land at that time — 60 million for everybody; 1.2 for aboriginal people.

So we had a lot of supporters out there when we explained this to the public and they said that is a matter of fairness and that is what we believe in. You're going by the right way and that's the way to do it. And that's how we approached this issue.

So when we look at it, we see mining success. The world's largest company on uranium development and transportation is Lac La Ronge Indian Band in the partnership with the communities as well as other businesses. That is a success story.

The member from Athabasca did mention Meadow Lake Tribal Council, a success story. I think that it is important to remember that is the essence of building, and that as we move forward, economic success and putting food on the table and economic self-sufficiency is the way to go for everybody, including aboriginal peoples.

Also in what was not discussed by the member from across is that last year in this legislature we passed respect for aboriginal and treaty rights — exactly the same thing as was at the federal level on section 35. The first government, first provincial government, in Canada to do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I looked at their record compared to the Liberals, we see the same old Jean Chrétien White Paper strategy of offloading to the provinces in regards to social services, to the provinces on Indian issues, on offloading on many of the responsibilities in regards to northern revenue sharing only to the provinces. This Jean Chrétien strategy of offloading to the provinces still alive and well while we are fighting and partnering with people in making sure that there is a better place for our children — whether it's in the North, whether it's Indian, Metis people, but also non-aboriginal people in this province.

We will, I think, Mr. Speaker, make a great effort, when we look at it, to really challenge the type of amendment that they put forth. And as we move forward, put across our 1997 throne speech as another excellent an example of the Government of Saskatchewan working with the people of this province in building a better and positive future. In fact, that is my address on the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn the debate.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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