

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise on behalf of concerned citizens with respect to youth crime in our communities. 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 a 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I also rise with petitions from concerned citizens of Saskatchewan on the issue of youth crime:

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; 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologies for not standing quicker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present to this Assembly from individuals across this province who are raising the issue of provincial sales tax. And the petition 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 years ahead.

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

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by individuals from across this province. Some areas in Saskatoon, Regina,

Wroxtton, Warman, Martensville, and many other communities. I so present.

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

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 to further reductions in the PST of the years ahead.

And this comes from the people of Unity, Saskatoon, Paradise Hill, and all over Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today. The prayer reads:

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.

These petitions come from the Outlook, Hawarden, Hanley, Kenaston areas, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan:

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.

Today these folks come mostly from the Wilkie-Unity area of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we have a lot more of these to come.

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 reduce the PST by two points in the '97 provincial budget;

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.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, the Saskatchewan health ombudsman Act.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Monday next move first reading of a Bill, the Saskatchewan government post-employment code.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to present notice of a written question if I may. I also give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation: how much does the government pay per month for rent — in rent, pardon me — for the Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management office at 117 Third Avenue West in Melville; how much has been budgeted for the renovations at the provincial building in Melville for the relocation of the SERM office to the provincial building; and how much does the province currently budget per year to hold provincial court in Melville?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Environment: regarding the big game damage compensation program: (1) is there a \$500 deductible for individuals claiming compensation under the program; (2) if yes, why is there a deductible; (3) how many acres of Saskatchewan crop are at risk of wildlife depredation and/or consumption; (4) does the Environment department have a long-term plan to deal with this problem in the future; (5) does the department plan to cultivate and to plant more palatable crops on each quarter section of wildlife land and/or Crown land to help alleviate this problem; (6) if the \$11 licence is found not to be necessary in the future to fund this program, will the fee be eliminated?

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Women in Agriculture

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is Agriculture Week and I am pleased to speak in support of women in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, we all know about the traditional role of women in agriculture in this province. We know that the farm wife who managed the household, made meals for the men, sewed the clothes, and did her countless hours of chores.

That traditional farm wife got very little recognition for her work on the farm, for her financial contribution, for her emotional investment in the farm along with the farm family. That traditional farm wife was a real person, Mr. Speaker, and without her contribution the business of agriculture would not

have succeeded to the extent that it has in this province.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the role of women in agriculture is changing. In the last two years at the University of Saskatchewan, over 50 per cent of the students have been women. According to the latest federal census, 21 per cent of farm operators in Saskatchewan were women.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those figures are from the 1991 census, and so I'm confident that the percentage of farm operators who are women is actually higher than 21 per cent today. Mr. Speaker, I would never quote a statistic from 1991 or 1992 in this House without acknowledging that it may be a little bit out of date. In this case I'm sure the percentage has risen.

Mr. Speaker, today women are taking charge of farms. They are handling finances and doing a very fine job. They have many issues of concern. And, Mr. Speaker, I commend them very, very much and wish them all the very best in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Computers in Agriculture

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as part of the Agriculture and Food Week here in the province, I would like to recognize a new piece of farm equipment that is making an impact.

As we all know, farming has always required various types of equipment — the cultivator, the seeder, the sprayer, swather, and the combine to just name a few. The equipment has changed over the years as technology has developed, but its general purpose has remained essentially the same.

However, new, highly specialized equipment has been developed because of the diversity that has occurred within the industry. One of the new pieces of equipment, Mr. Speaker, and the one that many may not equate as being essential for farmers, is the computer.

The use of computers as a farm management tool is steadily increasing across Saskatchewan. They are being used in many farming areas, from deciding what to grow and when to sell produce to assist with the bookkeeping, business planning of the operation.

The computer provides producers with the capability of accessing a wide variety of information and technology. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of a new computer technology that actually controls the tractor to prevent overlap in spraying and seeding, which will save on input costs.

With computers, producers have an immediate access to such information as weather reports, market, and agricultural events. The computer, Mr. Speaker, has become an essential tool for our farming community, along with the seeder, the cultivator, and the combine. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Paul Bodnarchuk's 105th Birthday

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all reach certain milestones in our lives and I have one in particular that I would like to share with the members of this Assembly.

In my constituency, I want to recognize the 105th birthday of Mr. Paul Bodnarchuk, celebrated on February 27, 1997. At the present time, he is a resident of the first floor of the Melfort hospital. He was born in the Western Ukraine in 1892 and arrived in Star City, Saskatchewan in 1911.

A farmer, Mr. Bodnarchuk, was well known for his skill as a cantor at St. Nicholas Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Mr. Bodnarchuk still enjoys smoking a pipe and visits from his family. He has been a resident of Gronlid, Diefenbaker Place, Pioneer Lodge, and Nirvana Pioneer Villa in Melfort.

Please join with me today in extending our very best wishes for plentiful health and happiness to Mr. Bodnarchuk on the occasion of his 105th birthday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oil and Gas Exploration and Development

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker. For the past few days now, I've had the pleasure of standing before this Assembly and giving positive economic news regarding my constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy. I do not want to break the streak, Mr. Speaker, so today I want to comment on one more positive economic news, that not only benefits my constituency but the entire province.

Statistics show that February sales of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights were \$31 million, which brings the fiscal year to \$140.8 million, the second highest level for a fiscal year. Seventy-eight percent of the February sale was in the Weyburn-Estevan area.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, a record was set with the purchase of a sixty-four and three-quarter hectare parcel of land in the Weyburn oil and gas pool at over 1.8 million or at an amazing \$28,203 per hectare. Furthermore, four special exploratory permits were issued to encourage exploration in the central part of the province. These four bids, Mr. Speaker, totalled 9.5 million.

The new records and new commitments, Mr. Speaker, are clear evidence that Saskatchewan's economy is growing. Oil and gas exploration development is one of the many sectors of our economy proving that the economic agenda that this government established for the people of Saskatchewan is working. With restored confidence comes renewed growth. This government has restored the confidence and we are now witnessing the growth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rafferty-Alameda Dams

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to a story in the *Leader-Post* today both Rafferty and Alameda dams are expected to fill to capacity this spring, preventing an

almost-certain flood on the Souris River were it not for these two dams.

Of course just four years ago the Deputy Premier said he could take a walk across Rafferty without getting his chin wet — there's no water; there hasn't been any water there, there's no water within miles of the boat launch and there never will be, to quote the Deputy Premier.

Proving that, while he may know about fine dining, he knows very little about water management, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again invite the Deputy Premier to come down and take his jaunt across Rafferty-Alameda.

And while he's in the area, there's some very good restaurants in Carnduff and Oxbow and Alameda that would provide him with an excellent meal for his \$40. I've taken the liberty of copying the restaurant listings from the yellow pages for the Deputy Premier's information and I look forward to seeing him down in our area in the restaurants. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sled Dog Championship

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1 and 2 at Candle Lake, the first annual Oval Sled Dog Championship Derby was held. This is a special event because this is the first time in Canada that an oval dog championship was held.

The Lieutenant Governor and his wife both attended this event and they also participated in the dog sled race. I also had the opportunity of entering into the race against the mayor of Candle Lake. I did well, Mr. Speaker — I won the race.

I would like to thank the sponsors: the community of Candle Lake, the PA (Prince Albert) Musher Club, the CanNorth Oval Sled Dog championship derby. They did a wonderful job in organizing this event. I wish them well in the years to come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Local Songbird

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada recently honoured the best of the best in the industry with the Juno Awards. Among some of the names we will recognize were Shania Twain and Celine Dion.

As Canada continues to develop and nurture musical talent we may see a young local woman become one of the newest shining stars. Stephanie Thomson is the daughter of Dennis and Loretta Palmier of Fort Qu'Appelle. I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Palmier on the Fort Qu'Appelle and District Chamber of Commerce.

Stephanie is releasing her debut album "Almost Blue" and debut video tomorrow here in Regina, March 14. This is a project that's been two years in the making. I will also have the privilege of attending a debut in Fort Qu'Appelle on Saturday night

To achieve this milestone, Mr. Speaker, along the way Stephanie won first prize in a 1994 Bud Country Talent Search, has sung at the Big Valley Jamboree, the Merritt Mountain Music Festival, on the Nashville North Stage at the Calgary Stampede, and has been the opening act for Martina McBride.

Most recently, a television crew from Saskatchewan came to Vancouver to tape the recording session for "Almost Blue" and they were so impressed with her talents they featured her as one of five up-and-coming Canadian country stars on CBC's (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) *Prairie Roadhouse*.

I am sure all hon. members will join me in offering best wishes to Stephanie and wish her much success in all her future ventures.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Support for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The internationally acclaimed Canadian writer Margaret Atwood once said, and I quote, "What would happen to our individual identity if every morning we looked in the mirror and saw the reflection of someone else."

And what happens, Mr. Speaker, when a nation like Canada looks for its cultural reflection and sees instead *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* or the latest take-off on the O. J. trial. Specifically, what happens to Canada and our sense of ourselves if we lose the institutions which have helped shape and define our identity? The short, irrefutable answer is that the loss of identity is the first step towards loss of sovereignty.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I want to publicly state in this Assembly my support for the national effort to save a most important Canadian institution, the Canadian Broadcasting system, the CBC.

For 60 years the CBC has given us programs that reflect Canadian identity, Canadian values, Canadian history, Canadian lifestyles. It is so much more than a news-gathering device, to which we on this side say, thank heavens. Canadian musicians, writers, actors, are joined with the Canadian people through the CBC.

The CBC is part of the lifeblood of this nation and this province. It is crucial that it be allowed to remain so. Therefore I want to commend and endorse the efforts of Ours to Keep committees here in Saskatchewan and across the nation, Mr. Speaker, that is much more than a . . . so that, Mr. Speaker, Canada is much more than a geographical spot on the map.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Property Tax Reassessment

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of reassessment was raised in the House yesterday, but today I want to direct my question to the Premier because it is

such an important issue and it cannot be ignored. Mr. Speaker, I quote: "Has democracy succumbed to bureaucratic dictatorship?" That question was posed to the Premier yesterday at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention in Saskatoon, and clearly illustrates that the bitter feelings over reassessment continue to fester.

Rural leaders have made their position clear. They want to wait a year to work out the obvious problems in the reassessment process. The Premier himself has admitted what people have been saying all along, and I quote: "Reassessment is not perfect. Are there inconsistencies — yes."

Mr. Speaker, the problem with reassessment are more than just inconsistencies, and the people of this province deserve to have their concerns addressed and the problems resolved before the reassessment process proceeds any further. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally listen to his residents and make changes to the forced reassessment process before they are forced to take drastic action and break the law?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by first of all expressing my hope that the hon. member's concluding words of the question were not an invitation by the hon. member — I'm sure they weren't — or suggestion that any law-abiding citizen in Saskatchewan would break the law as the question seems to imply. And I hope that in his follow-up question he makes that absolutely clear.

The fact of the matter is that since 1987, as the former Devine administration passed the SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) administration laws, something with which we concurred in, people in Saskatchewan decided at the request of the RMs (rural municipality) and urban municipalities to come to grips with the question of assessment, now 30 years overdue. For 30 years everybody has been afraid to pick up this political hot potato. For 30 years people have shirked their political responsibility at all levels.

Now as a result of SAMA, which is controlled by the RMs and the urban municipalities, we are ready to proceed. Let us roll up our sleeves and get on with the job of modernizing the tax assessment basis for taxation in Saskatchewan, plus provide all the tools — as we have — for local governments to achieve the same.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rail Line Closures

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've already seen the confusion the government has created by not thinking through its reassessment plan. Not only does this show how irresponsible government is being, it also shows the government's short-sightedness. Another example of the government's lack of long-term vision is how the closure of rail lines will impact the municipalities' tax burden.

Mr. Speaker, I have some examples of the huge hit municipalities will suffer if rail lines close. One example shows that if a 40-mile track of line closes in the Imperial subdivision, it will directly affect six communities, including Imperial,

Stalwart, Liberty, Penzance, Holdfast, and Simpson. The tax loss will be staggering — over \$83,000, Mr. Speaker. The total loss of education taxes will be approximately \$48,000, more than half the total amount, Mr. Speaker.

In another area, 10 communities, including Broderick, Elbow, Strongfield, and that line stand to lose about \$120,000, Mr. Speaker — \$120,000.

Will the government explain who is going to shoulder the lost revenue when these lines are shut down?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, perhaps the hon. Liberal member would tell the Assembly and the people of the province of Saskatchewan where he was and where the provincial Liberal Party has been over the last three or four or five years when the Liberal Party in Canada, in Ottawa, embarked upon its massive program of branch-line abandonment and railway deregulation. They were nowhere, Mr. Speaker. They were absolutely and completely silent.

And we said when they did away with their Crow rate, we said when they're going on branch-line abandonment, that this would wreak a lot of havoc and a lot of difficulty for the farmers of Saskatchewan. Silence from the Liberal Party opposite — silence and complicity of the provincial Liberal Party, in the hip pocket of the federal Liberal government in this whole issue.

Mr. Speaker, where are we at? We are with the provincial governments of the West in standing up for branch-line abandonment programs, which we oppose, but a short-line railway program, which we support; doing all that we can working with our rural municipalities and our farm communities to try to keep this vital link of transportation alive — something which you people worked to destroy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crop Insurance Deadline

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, stand up for the people of the province. Stick up for rural Saskatchewan for once. Take a leadership role and look after your people, instead of blaming the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, all members of this House are aware as well that the deadline for farmers to register for crop insurance is Monday. This is a new program. Many farmers remain sceptical about any program offered by this government, as a result of the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) fiasco. And there's a delay in the grain transportation system in this province because of weather and because of the lack of leadership by this government. Resulting is a very dismal sign-up record for crop insurance, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, given these facts, will you extend the deadline for crop insurance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I think that the Liberal member opposite and the Liberal Party opposite suffer from a great deal of the lack of credibility . . . a lack of credibility. No, no, the hon. member talks about lack of leadership. Safety net funding reduction by Ottawa, a cost of \$250 million. Crow benefit elimination by the Liberal Party has cost us \$320 million. Deregulation of the transportation system, a cost of \$65 million. I could go on with respect to pesticide registration and the costs of recovery. I've got a list of 10 items, all of which cost the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And you get up . . . He says I'm the Premier. Why weren't you with us when we were objecting to the Liberals in Ottawa doing all of this? Where is the provincial Liberal Party? Don't be in the hip pocket of the federal Liberal Party. Stand up with us.

With respect to crop insurance, we have paid down \$150 million of the crop insurance debt to make it affordable to the people of Saskatchewan — to your silence.

We're standing up for the farmers of Saskatchewan; you have abandoned them just like you and your railway friends have abandoned them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Contaminated Groundwater

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that most members of this House would agree that governments must do what it can to ensure that there's a clear balance between industry development and environmental concerns.

However today's edition of *The Western Producer* paints a very poor picture of Saskatchewan's Environment department. It tells the story of Perry Anton, a farmer from south-west Saskatchewan who claims a Calgary oil company is to blame for contaminating his groundwater and the subsequent death of dozens of his cattle.

An autopsy of one of Mr. Anton's cows found a chemical that is used in the oil industry to remove rust from pipes. And Ocelot oil denies the charge. And in the words of the Environment minister, "Our people have been in touch with the company, and when they say they have never used it, we believe them, I guess."

Will the minister explain why his department is letting this matter go on without conducting a proper investigation of its own?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. We have been dealing with Mr. Anton for several years on this very unfortunate issue. We have a number of reports prepared on the situation, in fact it measures several inches deep. And we are continuing to correspond with Mr. Anton, to work with him. Most recently we have offered to test his cow herd at our expense and to do any autopsies on any future animals that perish.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the Chair is having a great deal of difficulty being able to hear the hon. minister, and I'll ask members on both sides of the House to allow the answer to the question to be heard. Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — As I said, Mr. Speaker, we are working with Mr. Anton and doing what we can to help resolve this unfortunate situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rules for Lobbyists

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, questions have recently been raised about whether the Premier's former chief of staff is exercising undue influence as a paid lobbyist only a short time after ending his tenure with this government. As a result, I would like to inform this House that I will be introducing a Bill in short order entitled, the Saskatchewan government post-employment code.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of such a Bill would be to prevent top-ranking government and Crown corporation officials from leaving office and immediately begin lobbying the government or Crowns whose services they've just left. As such, these individuals would be subject to a one-year cooling-off period.

This government already has such rules in place for cabinet ministers. Will the Justice minister indicate whether he is prepared to extend this law to cover top-level bureaucrats, as the federal government and three other provinces have done?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member for his question.

I want to assure the member and all members of the House, in fact we are considering the kinds of options that he has put forward in the House today. We'll be looking at whatever suggestions he may have in legislation and we have been giving this matter some thought and will be giving it further consideration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Murder Case

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Minister, four months ago the Justice department laid murder charges against four individuals for the brutal murder of 14-year-old Darrelle Exner. Those individuals have been in custody since then. But today, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, the Crown prosecutor announces there is no reliable evidence to charge three of the four and releases them.

Mr. Minister, how can you be certain enough to lay charges and deny bail for four months, and then suddenly decide, whoops, I guess we have no reliable evidence? Mr. Minister, the people of Saskatchewan deserve an explanation — what happened?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member well knows, this matter is before the court and I cannot make any comment.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I was expecting that type of an answer, but I have another question that hopefully we get answered down the road. And this question is . . . And, Mr. Speaker, one has to wonder whether or not, if there is no reliable evidence, that the minister has a handle on his department. The Milgaard case, the Martensville case, the Latimer case — botched, botched, and botched. And now once again it looks like another case may have been botched. The Crown prosecutor said it. There was no reliable evidence to proceed with charges against three of the accused.

Mr. Minister, and Mr. Speaker, any way you look at this situation, something has gone terribly wrong. Either three innocent men were jailed for four months for a crime they did not commit, or three guilty men have just been released. Which one is it, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I previously said, I'm not in a position to comment on this and I will not do it.

Provincial Sales Tax

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Madam Minister, there you go again telling businesses what's good for them instead of listening to what they're telling you. The Regina chapter . . . chamber is saying that we need more than a targeted tax relief. The president of the chamber says a 2 per cent cut would be a good start.

Madam Minister, that's exactly the same position as the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party. That's exactly the same position as thousands of people who have signed our PST (provincial sales tax) petition. And more keep coming in every day.

Madam Minister, when are you going to listen to business groups who need a tax break? When are you going to listen to Saskatchewan taxpayers who also need a tax break? Will you lower the PST to 7 per cent in next week's budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for the question. And first of all, when you're dealing with a Tory question you have to set the record straight. What I was not talking about was the budget. I made it clear yesterday that the budget is coming out in about a week, and until that time I'm making absolutely no comments about the budget.

But what I was referring to, that is important, is the support the business community has given to this government for our targeted tax cuts. And I'd like to take this opportunity to read the letter. It's a letter from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and it says:

It is important for the business community to recognize many of the forward-looking decisions that were announced in previous provincial budgets.

Then they list our targeted tax cuts to business and say they're working, and conclude by saying:

Most importantly, your government's attention to the deficit and debt has offered small firms one of the most important elements they need to create job stability.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of setting the record straight, possibly targeted tax relief does work. But, Madam Minister, yesterday our leader met with the board of the Saskatchewan chamber. They are saying the same thing that the Regina chamber said — targeted tax relief is not enough. They told them to make sure we set the bar high and continue to call on you for a broad-based tax relief through a cut to the PST.

Madam Minister, I agree that targeted tax relief works, but only for those sectors that are targeted. Wouldn't a broad-based tax cut that puts money back into the pocket of every consumer and into the till of every business be even more effective?

Madam Minister, every day Saskatchewan business, money, and jobs continue to hemorrhage across Alberta and Manitoba borders. It's time to stop the bleeding. It's time to cut the PST. Why don't you do that, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite seems quite attached to his question. And I'll say to the member opposite, I'm equally attached to my answer. The budget is coming in a week and we will wait for that.

But I must say it is a little amusing to have the Tories talking about tax cuts. If there's anybody in this House responsible for high taxes, it's them. It's them. They're the ones who brought the flat tax to this province. They're the ones who tried to harmonize the sales tax. They're the ones who drove up the debt so that we have to pay a level of interest which, by the way, if we weren't paying that level of interest, we wouldn't need a sales tax in Saskatchewan.

So I say to the members opposite, they can ask the question as many times as they want — all they should remember is, it's only seven more sleeps till the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Education Funding

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are growing more and more frustrated with the shrinking financial commitment of this government towards education. The devastation we are seeing in the Regina education system is being played out in rural areas as well. Provincial grants to rural school divisions totalled about \$167 million this fiscal year — \$22 million reduction in the past three years.

Results are clear. Three schools face possible closure in the

constituency represented by my colleague from Saltcoats; four others may close their doors in the Kelvington-Wadena constituency, Mr. Speaker; seven schools may soon close in just two constituencies.

If education is a priority as indicated in the throne speech, when can the people of Saskatchewan expect to see an adequate financial commitment from this government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that after several days in the legislature the Leader of the Liberal Party finally asks a question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I find so amusing about the question is that this Leader of the Liberal Party was the former chairperson of a school division in this province and he oversaw the closure of schools in his own school division.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say to the member exactly what the Minister of Finance said: it's seven more sleeps; wait till the budget. The budget will be delivered on March 20, and you will hear the details of the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the minister that, as she indicated this week, schools have closed in the past and will continue to close. There's no disputing that — there's no disputing that.

I would also like to bring to her attention that the Wadena School Division, along with the people of Margo, last year closed the school. A kindergarten to grade 6 school — 19 students affected.

The school board of Canora closed the school in Rama last year, a kindergarten to grade 6 school — 23 students affected, Mr. Speaker.

Today what we are hearing though is that communities like Annaheim, communities here in Regina with schools of enrolments in excess of 200 students, are in jeopardy of being closed. In rural Saskatchewan, we're seeing schools of 150 students in jeopardy of closing.

Will the minister be able to reassure boards of education that their funding concerns will be addressed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what I find interesting in the member's question is that it's okay if he closes them down but it's not okay if other people close them down.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said last week when I had the opportunity to answer this question, is that in this province of Saskatchewan, over several decades schools have closed. They have closed as a result of demographics. As well, Mr. Speaker, in this province, we've had school closures of 12, 20, and so on, schools per year when there were 10 per cent increases in educational spending, 20 per cent increases in educational spending.

Mr. Speaker, it's a week to the budget. We'll all get the results of the budget. It's seven more sleeps. And all I can say to the members is stay tuned; it's coming; it'll be here in a week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I guess maybe that's one of the reasons why I haven't asked the question of the Education minister, because I knew what the answer would be.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, a letter I received recently from the Kamsack Board of Education indicates that it can no longer bear cuts to its funding allotment. The correspondence states and I quote:

The only thing left to reduce is that portion of the instruction which directly affects the quality and type of education our children will receive.

It goes on to indicate that:

We cannot afford to mortgage our children's future with respect to education.

Mr. Speaker, these sentiments have been endorsed by at least two other school divisions — Melfort and Tisdale. What commitment will the Minister of Education make today that will ensure all Saskatchewan residents have the same access to quality education?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that when you look at the results of what the public has to say about public education in the province, the public in this province overwhelmingly support our public education system. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, it is getting better. People overwhelmingly support public education in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is seven days to the budget. We have seven more days, seven more sleeps. I know the member really wants us to talk about the budget today, but we're not going to do that. The Minister of Finance will deliver her budget I think at 2 o'clock, March 20, next Thursday, and we'll all be here to hear the results.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Utility Rate Review Process

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) told this House yesterday that any proposed increase in auto rates will be subject to the government's present 45-day review process, in spite of the fact that this process has been proven to be little more than a farce. The fact that only a handful of people attended the recent meetings to review the proposed increase in natural gas underlines little if any confidence in the present system.

This is why I was pleased to hear the vice-president of SaskEnergy indicate recently that this government is proposing changes to the process. As Ken From put it in a February 12 news item:

I think the public really wants the utility to charge them fairly. Until they see an independent body doing that, I don't think the public will be satisfied.

Will the minister in charge of our Crown agencies tell this House when the process will be updated and the new one put in place?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I think the options that the members would put forward would be quite welcome, if they wish. There are obviously processes that have been used in the past that have been very large failures in terms of the public usefulness of them.

The wars between lawyers on two sides battling whether or not something should be higher or not has no access by public citizens at all; so that is an answer that has had very little utility in the past.

So the question of whether there are better processes than this, I think is an open question. The Crown review has heard from the public. We are in the process of discussing a number of governance and management issues with respect to the Crowns, and if members opposite have good suggestions with respect to the process, let them advise us.

I can say that in the meantime, that the 45-day review process has, while with its warts, has given the public access to a discussion that allows them to hear the answers to questions on major themes that concern them.

We will look forward to continuing to improve the transparency of our Crowns and look forward to your advice in that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 9 — The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 9, The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act, 1997 be now introduced and read a 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. 10 — The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 10, The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification 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. 8 — The Tourism Authority Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 8, The Tourism Authority Amendment Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to speak on behalf of the energetic and visionary people of the Humboldt constituency in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I say with a great deal of sincerity that I hold these people very near to my heart and I intend to uphold the traditions and values that they cherish so very much.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the Humboldt constituency are an exemplary model of liberalism. They are a people who value free enterprise, a social conscience. They are self-starters, risk takers, and they possess common sense. They are a faith-filled people who place a great deal of emphasis on family, community, sharing, and a concern for their neighbours and the world around them. And I am proud to be their representative.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech I would like to take a few moments to commend some very fine people for their contributions to this Assembly and their province.

I wish to commend you, Mr. Speaker, for your effective manner in dealing with the business before this Assembly. And I wish also to commend you, Mr. Speaker, for initiating a province-wide tour of schools to promote an appreciation for democracy and the work performed by elected representatives.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to welcome the new member from North Battleford to our caucus and this Assembly. He

brings with him his life experience, his enthusiasm, and his respect for all people. We're more than happy to have him with us.

Also, Mr. Speaker, welcome to the pages. This is a great opportunity for them to witness and to be part of democracy in action. And I truly appreciate the support that they provide for us throughout the time the Assembly is gathered.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express my gratitude to the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, and the entire legislative staff for the support services they provide.

In addition, every member of this Assembly is fortunate to have the support of their constituency assistants, their constituency executives, and their family members. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to every one of them for their support and friendship. It means a great deal to me.

Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the throne speech and I thought how wonderful our province could be if all that was contained within that speech was actually happening. But as the speech came to a close, the words of one of my constituents describing the NDP (New Democratic Party) government came clearly to mind: flowery rhetoric that is not followed by actions. They talk the talk, they say, but they certainly do not walk the walk.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard this type of comment repeatedly in the last few years and so I have recognized that people are actually experiencing something different than the accomplishments that this government is professing.

This government is proclaiming that people of this province are in better shape than ever before. Well as social service critic, Mr. Speaker, I have heard a different story from the many people in this province who are disillusioned. I have heard from the unemployed and those victims living in abject poverty. And I have heard from those people who say that they will find a way in spite of this government's oppressive policies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, Lynda Bigknife-Watson is with Chili for Children and after the Speech from the Throne, she told reporters that her program serves 20,000 lunches a year to the poor, and she says they are seeing more preschoolers and adults in food lines. She is troubled by the increasing number of people while funding decreases. And I'm sure she is troubled, Mr. Speaker, by the lack of vision and wisdom in this government's policies.

Mr. Speaker, to quote Lynda Bigknife-Watson: "If a parent is a sole supporter in their family they need to find full-time employment and they need suitable pay." This is an observation, Mr. Speaker, from a person who sees poverty day after day. And you can bet that she, and others like her, are going to hold the NDP accountable for those bowls of chilli. And you can bet she and others, including myself, will be listening carefully to the budget address to see what monies are being allotted for training spaces to assist people into the job market or their own entrepreneurial activities.

What concerns me the most, Mr. Speaker, is our children. Large numbers of our children are living in poverty. You see, the Premier and his government have made promises, promises about eliminating child poverty, but they have not kept any of them. Mr. Speaker, in a campaign speech in 1991 the Premier said and I quote, as many people have heard before: "By the end of the first term an NDP government will have had this problem beat."

It's almost six years later and this government is into its second term. The term following the term that they said they were going to beat the problem. Now, since the Premier made that promise, more kids line up for more and more community food programs in centres all over Saskatchewan.

In 1991, Mr. Speaker, the Premier believed that his government had it in their power to beat this problem. Now the only solution he offers is to blame the federal government. The truth of the matter is, I believe that the Premier does have a certain amount of power to beat the problem, but it won't happen unless he and his government start believing in the abilities and the talents of the people he is governing.

Government can improve the situation for our people by improving the climate for small business, for medium-sized businesses, for farmers, and for individual entrepreneurs. We simply cannot choose otherwise, because food bank numbers are increasing. Despair is not uncommon among our young people, and the dignity people possess is being eroded.

In Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the development of an underground food bank in the last few years. Many families are hungry but they refuse to make their hunger openly known to others because of the stigma attached to those in poverty. And so church members have set up a food bank, but it is not on Main Street. It is quietly operated through the church to protect the dignity of those who cannot bear the thought of anyone knowing — knowing that they cannot find a job to adequately provide for their family.

No wonder people are losing confidence in this government. This is a government whose prime focus has been on power at any price. The members opposite are misleading the very people who elected them. Mr. Speaker, they refuse to recognize or speak of the reality at hand.

Honesty, integrity, and compassion are essential ingredients of a just society that we would all hope government members would strive to possess. However it appears that these virtues are becoming obsolete in the world of government because of the lack of commitment to those virtues. It is becoming increasingly difficult for this province to move ahead and become the kind of place that we can all say we're proud to call home.

Mr. Speaker, without placing a high priority on our moral obligation to our people, we will continue to operate with a distorted sense of values that continue to detract from the truth at hand. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that this province is in a shambles because of misdirected priorities by the Premier's government.

The people of Saskatchewan are fearful of their health care system because of unnecessary funding cuts to services and staff in our hospitals and nursing homes — funding cuts driven by this government's underlying motivation to centralize and maintain absolute control over everything. The doctors and nurses know that and so does everyone in the community.

This province has more money on hand than it has ever dreamed could be possible, due to their high taxation, windfall revenues in the oil and gas sector, and VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues, and transfer payments from the federal government. And still we close down all that is meaningful in our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, people throughout the province are talking incessantly these days of the government's lack of caring and concern for their viability. They speak of the NDP's lack of humanity, of their exclusion of people in the decision-making processes. The people are fully aware of this government's predetermined agenda to cut costs to health, education, and social service at any cost, without consideration being given to common sense planning or the lives of people, without allowing businesses, communities, and people to have some say in determining the direction to be taken. Mr. Speaker, good government should be about building up, not tearing down.

Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan has never been awarded the respect or the consideration by this government that it really deserves. Farmers, who deserve our allegiance for contributing so much to the lifeblood of this province, have been handed out disrespect by this government in the way of broken promises regarding GRIP money that rightfully belonged to them but was snatched away to balance the budget, the discontinuation of the RUD (rural underground distribution), and rural gasification that would have assisted them so much with value added diversification in the agriculture industry; escalating fuel prices, high taxation and utility rates, etc., etc., etc.

(1430)

Mr. Speaker, people know that rural Saskatchewan is being systematically dismantled by the NDP government. Rural people claim, and rightfully so, that this government could care less about their existence. Everyone knows the importance of a strong infrastructure needed to support vital growth in all our communities. The people know that we need our schools, our hospitals, and a good road system if rural Saskatchewan is to survive.

Mr. Speaker, this government has to deal in a concrete and positive way with the main concerns facing the people of this province before it's too late. Economic development and job creation go hand in hand on the road to prosperity. Without economic development there can be no sustainable jobs for the future. Saskatchewan remains a have-not province. This is totally unnecessary and unacceptable.

People of my constituency and people throughout this province know that entrepreneurial activity is the way of the future. And they also know that restrictive labour policies, high taxation, and sky-rocketing utility rates, fees, and unnecessary government interference is standing in their way. Everyone

knows this except the NDP.

The New Democrats talk about economic growth and job creation, but they just can't seem to bring the two together. And so what we have, Mr. Speaker, is a feeling of helplessness and futility, of pessimism and distrust that is shared by both individuals and the business community. When nothing is happening it means we have stagnated.

I suggest the Premier and the honourable minister of no economic development listen to the definition of the word "stagnant." According to Webster's *New World Dictionary*, stagnant means "without motion, not flowing or moving, a lack of movement, lacking in activity or interest, sluggish." Need I say more, Mr. Speaker?

These very words — sluggish, without movement, lacking activity or interest — are an apt description of the Saskatchewan economy.

Why can't the NDP see what everyone else does? Why? They can't see it because they just don't understand. They don't understand or place value on the immense power of human potential within the people of this province. They don't understand that as government they are here to create an environment conducive to growth that will assist in the fruition of this immense human potential.

It is government, Mr. Speaker, who can assist in providing opportunities for people to reach that potential. But the members opposite don't understand the fact that they are here to serve and not to be served. I believe it is the responsibility of government to seek out the best in our society, to encourage, develop, and strengthen it. But rather than taking responsibility for unravelling the economic and social fabric of our province, this government continues to ignore the reality at hand and it continues to blame others.

Resorting to blame, Mr. Speaker, is a sign of weakness — avoiding the issue and not solving the problem. It is clear that the Premier's government do not feel any obligation for their mistakes, misrepresentations, and miscalculations.

But thank goodness, Mr. Speaker, that the people of my constituency, the people of the Humboldt constituency and, I know, many others in this province, are tenacious and wise people. They see through all of this and in spite of the stifling policies of the present government, these people continue to possess strong characters, determination, and vision.

Mr. Speaker, these people are a faith-filled people who believe that out of chaos will come order. They continue to persevere in the face of this adversity and they will not be put down.

A fine example of this tenacity and determination, Mr. Speaker, was evident two weeks ago when 3,000 signatures from the people of Humboldt and area were placed on a petition in their fight against service and staff cuts to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Humboldt — 3,000 signatures collected in just two days and presented to the district health board. Three hundred people, many of whom were seniors, rallied to attend that district health board meeting to make known that they would stand firm and

combat further destruction to their health care system and their community.

I applaud these people, Mr. Speaker, and I admire these people. They know the meaning of interdependence and community. They know when they're being sacked, and they intend to put an end to this government's ludicrous policies that speak nothing of substance or coherent planning. And they will finally put an end to this government in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, if I look across the floor, I see the purveyors of the provincial health care reform — or should I say the merchants of misery? Surely, this can't be the medical scheme envisioned by Tommy Douglas. Was it his idea to pit cities, town, and municipalities against one another? I think not.

And yet that is the situation we find everywhere. People scrambling to keep the doors open to their seniors' complexes and community hospitals. Doctors in rural centres find little or no time off for themselves and their families. Nurses are exhausted due to staff cuts because of the instability in the system.

Concerned community leaders present common sense cost-saving plans, more services for fewer dollars, but they are being ignored by the district manager in sync with the Health minister. What is the use, people say, they just don't care. The Premier does not even care about us.

Mr. Speaker, I shudder to think of the gross indecency of this government's destructive policies. And I dare say that Tommy Douglas would not recognize his medicare nor would he condone the insensitivity and cruel tactics of this so-called socialist government.

This government, Mr. Speaker, has exhibited a divide-and-conquer approach and is driving a wedge between urban and rural residents. They have done this in relation to municipal governments, school boards, and health facilities. Is this the proud legacy they wish to leave?

I know that I sound a bit angry and I know I've raised the ire of a few members opposite, Mr. Speaker, but it should be understood that as an elected representative I am simply expressing the feelings of indignation of the people of my constituency and of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I care particularly about the youth of our province, the youth of Saskatchewan. Some of our young people are fortunate enough to have the financial and moral support of their family and community, but there are also many who are feeling despair and don't know where to turn.

Mr. Speaker, many who desire and have the ability to seek out continued education can no longer afford it. One has only to look at the recently announced tuition increase at the University of Saskatchewan to be sceptical. Tuition at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) will increase by an average of 10 per cent per year for the next two years. That means a first-year medical student will see tuition increase to \$5,200 next year and

\$6,000 in 1998-99. So what are they to do, Mr. Speaker?

And even if they do spend years at university, they find themselves unemployed because there is little or no opportunity for them to find work in this province, their own province. For working students, a minimum wage job or part-time job is not the answer. Despair sets in, Mr. Speaker, and some of these young people will be forced to go on social assistance. Disillusioned and impoverished, many resort to addictive behaviours to kill their pain. Some will simply leave Saskatchewan.

As elected representatives we need to understand that through our policy directives and legislation, we bear a heightened responsibility for the moral state of society. The morale of our youth can be strengthened through policy directives that afford them the opportunity to find and live out their purpose in life.

Through honouring and encouraging the vision for Saskatchewan that our young people brought forward in 1995 when they met in Prince Albert at Forum '95, we can do our part — our part — by measuring policy decision-making process and making sure that it is in line with and supports this vision of these young people.

This vision, I know, may be beyond the understanding and the horizon of the current government members. However, our young people do understand this and possibly within them lies our hope for not only the future but the present. Our young people are truly coming to realize today that they are the catalysts, the leaders not only of the future, but the leaders of today. They are taking responsibility and they are offering ideas, visionary ideas, for what their generation can be.

Mr. Speaker, many of our youth envision a new kind of society, one that will bring meaning to the lives of our people. One that speaks of creative, productive, and satisfying pursuits, unlike the activity that we now experience as economic and social development. The hon. minister of stagnant development and his cohort, the minister of offloading and taxation, promised pie-in-the-sky gambling profits.

But the government didn't plan well, again, and as usual, didn't listen. They went ahead and they rolled the dice and they crapped out. Greed was the motivator, Mr. Speaker. The NDP gambling policy is simple — there isn't one. It was a greedy grab for money without any thought of the consequences. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the consequences of the NDP gaming policy is family breakdown. One only has to look at the problems resulting from VLTs to see marital breakdown, child neglect, and suicide.

This so-called government finds itself in a balancing act, trying to weigh its greed for profits against its moral obligation to deal with social issues. And as I see it, government has dropped its obligation to protect those in our society who are the least able to help themselves.

A good example, Mr. Speaker, is spousal abuse. There is inadequate funding available for safe houses or transition housing in this province. Where are the priorities of our Premier and his government? Mr. Speaker, \$500,000 was put into the

Family Support Centre in Saskatoon. And soon after, that funding had been slashed in half and the centre now is forced to turn victims away.

As the member from Saskatoon Sutherland mentioned in his throne speech, the Family Support Centre is a very valuable asset and has proven it is needed. At least 23 organizations and agencies validated the need for the centre and the successful work being done through the centre. And so I ask the members across the way, how much does this government justify cutting the funding in half on such an important project?

The other point I'd like to make is now the minister seems to be reconsidering the fact, and he's paid \$15,000 to one of his cohorts to study the whole thing again to see whether this centre is needed.

The well-being of women and children are at issue, and this government shows very little concern for the victims of spousal abuse. The fact that many women are encountering some form of physical or sexual abuse during their lifetime does not seem to concern the Minister of Social Services, otherwise funding for the Family Support Centre would not have been cut in half.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that the incidences of pedophilia are on the rise. Children are the defenceless victims of those who prey upon them. Child prostitution is on the increase, and again the defenceless members of our society are overlooked.

Where is our government in supporting programs for them, in taking immediate, profound, powerful measures to deal with the perpetrators of this crime — one of the most unforgivable crimes allowed to go on and on, a crime that damages one's body and soul for life. Where is the compassion and the understanding from this government? And where is the action plan for these child victims and their perpetrators?

And while I'm at it, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier about employment equity. While in opposition you called on the previous government to introduce employment equity legislation. What's happened to it? You're the government now; you can make it happen — and happen immediately it should.

While women wait for you, they take jobs that pay less and jobs that are demeaning. They are women in the workforce who have resorted to striptease because of the lack of pay equity and management opportunities. Maybe the Premier never intended to bring in employment equity in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I find this government to be very arrogant. We have seen many examples of arrogance on high, Mr. Speaker, many. All because the government does not feel they have to listen to the people. They feel they know better, they feel they know best, and they will do what they think is best.

Well that happened in 1982. Remember? And in June of 1995 you were not listening and the opposition side of this House grew larger.

Mr. Speaker, the culture of politics is shifting. There is no longer an acceptance of politics without principle. Our leaders and a good government must look beyond themselves. They

must have an attitude of servant leadership that nurtures the great and immediate desire of all people to participate and flourish in our society. Our citizens will accept nothing less.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, if the government could create an environment that would lead to prosperity, then I would have supported the throne speech; however, I feel the Premier and the members opposite are still not listening because they simply don't understand how to create the environment people are asking for, and therefore I cannot support the Speech from the Throne. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe this is my, perhaps 10th or 11th opportunity to speak to the Speech from the Throne. And I'm just reminded, Mr. Speaker, each and every time we have an opportunity to stand up in this House what a rare privilege it is. Whether we're standing up in question period to ask a question or answer a question, whether we're standing up to address a throne speech, or a Bill, or to take part in the process of estimates, it is a rare, rare privilege that each of us has to stand up in this House. And that privilege is granted to us by our constituents — by the people of our home communities who give us this privilege. And so I don't begin this speech or any reply to a Speech from the Throne without expressing my deep thanks to the people of Moose Jaw Wakamow who have extended to me this privilege for some 10 and 11 years.

Also I want to, Mr. Speaker, give a word of welcome, as other members have, to the new member from North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt in my mind that I'm hoping his stay in the House is a short stay, but there is also no question in my mind that he will in some ways raise the level of debate to bring some constructive debate, constructive comments, from that caucus, which is not typically what we have heard.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend my remarks in this throne speech today to be lengthy, but I must say, Mr. Speaker, I am motivated a little in the task by comments that have been made first by the mover of this throne speech, the member from Swift Current, and comments made by the seconder of the throne speech, the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

I was particularly inspired by both of their very thoughtful speeches. Rare in this House, Mr. Speaker, is it that we have two back-to-back presentations which are as thoughtful and as considerate and as eloquent as were the mover of the Speech from the Throne and its seconder.

And perhaps, Mr. Speaker, not surprisingly, my attention was engaged by both of these speakers because both, Mr. Speaker, interestingly, took analogies from the Scriptures. You will recall, the members will recall, that in moving the Speech from the Throne, the member from Swift Current talked about the people and events of the Book of Genesis, of those individuals, families, then become a community, then become a nation in the Book of Genesis. He talked about that experience and how that experience didn't happen overnight. It wasn't a sudden

process. It took, it took years and generations of time.

And then we went exactly to the other end of the Scriptures, right to the Book of Revelation, with the member from Saskatoon Southeast when she seconded the Speech from the Throne, because she talked about the New Jerusalem and the vision of the New Jerusalem. And she talked about how difficult . . . what labour is required, and what patience is required to reach the dreams of a New Jerusalem on Saskatchewan soil. She talked about, I think I recall her talking about, Aesop and the parable of Aesop and the dropping of the pebbles.

Interesting though, Mr. Speaker, both the mover and the seconder, each from their perspective of Scripture, drew the same essential analogy for life in government in the 1990s. That analogy or that illustration or that lesson being that the building of a vision — of a New Jerusalem — the building of a nation and a community under God is not a rapid process, but a process that takes patient, patient labour.

Mr. Speaker, if I have to characterize our government over the last five and six years, this has been a process of patient labour in building a vision that we share for this province.

Now I don't, interestingly enough perhaps, Mr. Speaker, come with an illustration from Scripture today. But I do come with an illustration. Now this illustration I bring, Mr. Speaker, is not really all that profound but it is a little story that I used to tell my Cub Scouts around the camp-fire.

Now I didn't quite tell it in this fashion. I'm going to embellish just a little. But for me, this old Cub Scout illustration that I used to use at the camp-fire, I believe, is quite illustrative of life in government in the 1990s, and particularly the life that it has been for this government.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a story about three frogs, three little frogs, one of whom was a social democrat, two of whom were right-wingers. Now I'm not able or prepared to say to which political movement these right-wing frogs would line up with because that changes. Sometimes they're Tories and sometimes they're Liberals, and then once in a while we get a Reformer, and sometimes we get a Reformer who jumps to the Liberals. So I'm not clear how we can identify them politically, but let us just say there were two right-wing frogs and one little social democrat.

Now the three of them, Mr. Speaker, they leave the marsh. They leave the marsh to tour the farm, because they're curious little frogs. Rounding by the barn, Mr. Speaker, what do they find but a little cream can — you know the old cream cans about this high — and the farmer had left the lid off the cream can.

So the three little frogs think that it would be a great bit of joy to jump into that can and sample the cream, Mr. Speaker — to jump in. And sure enough the decision was unanimous between the three of them — social democrat and the right-wingers. They all got together on this project and they jumped right into that cream can.

And I tell you the first 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker, it was like

nirvana. They had never in their life tasted anything like the cream in that cream can.

An Hon. Member: — Usually it's mice in the cream can not frogs.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well the Leader of the Liberal Party here says it's usually mice in the cream can. No, he's got the stories mixed up. If he insists, I'll tell him about the mice and the cats too, but today we'll hear about the frogs in the cream can.

Mr. Speaker, for the first 10 minutes I tell you it was nirvana and they all just sucked up that luscious cream. They'd never tasted anything quite so good. And then I tell you, Mr. Speaker, reality set in. How do we escape the cream can? Because when they decided it was time to leave, they couldn't jump out, you see, Mr. Speaker. There was no way you could jump out of that cream. And try as they would — they'd leap a little — they'd hit the wall. They're all covered in cream; they're slippery. They slid right back down into the cream, Mr. Speaker.

Well I'll tell you, as the minutes in that cream can began to turn to hours, there seems to be some panic starting to set in. And the right-wing frogs of course, they really panic. How are we going to get out of here? I mean if we don't get out of here soon, we just won't have the strength. We're going to just perish. We're going to die in this cream can. And the little social democrat frog, he said, don't give up, keep on paddling.

Well the hours turn almost to sunset, Mr. Speaker. The sun is going down and these right-wing little frogs, they finally do just say, well it's over; there is no hope.

So what are we to do? Well let's just drink the cream. Let's just drink the cream. Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. And the little social democratic frog, he says, don't give up. Do not give up, my friends. Keep on paddling. Keep on labouring. There will be a way out of this mess.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the sun sets on the cream can. The sun sets on the cream can and three little frogs are left to die.

In the morning the farmer comes along and she looks in her cream can and what do you expect she sees, Mr. Speaker? Well she sees one little social democratic frog sitting on a nice pad of butter that he has churned through the night, Mr. Speaker. He has churned this butter through the night and there he sits in safety on this little pad of butter. And what do you expect he's doing, Mr. Speaker? In the tradition of social democrats, reaching out and holding up his friends.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I review the course of governments in this province over the last three decades, I tell you I think we all got the cream can in the 1960s and the 1970s; we had the notion — we had the notion — that the cream was unending. And I don't differentiate so much between all political parties here. We thought the good times would never end.

That was a mistake, but I tell you then we made a bigger mistake in this province and in this country. We elected a bunch of Tories — we elected a bunch of Tories here in Saskatchewan, and then we compounded our misery by electing a bunch of Tories in Ottawa, and then we've compounded our

misery by replacing the Tories in Ottawa with Liberals in Ottawa.

When this government, Mr. Speaker, came to office in 1991, Mr. Speaker, there was no cream left in the can. At best what we had here was skim milk, and we're expected to turn this skim milk into butter. But I'll tell you there's only one way to do that, Mr. Speaker — there is only one way to do that and that's to do what we have done for the last five and six years, just keep on labouring — keep on labouring to turn the province around and to begin to rebuild to that vision of the New Jerusalem which motivates us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, there is much in what the member from Humboldt said earlier this afternoon to which I would take great exception. I'm not going to take up the time of the House to debate the rhetoric. But let me say there were comments that she made that I take . . . that I join in agreeing with her wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker.

She spoke in her remarks this afternoon about Saskatchewan's youth and how within that youth of Saskatchewan there is the promise of our future. On this point, Mr. Speaker, I, 100 per cent, fundamentally agree. Because I think we all ask ourselves the question in this House — I know we ask it in the government discussions and benches — we ask it regularly: why do we do this? I mean why do we go through this labouring and paddling in this cream can with its incessant demands and oftentimes criticisms? Is it not, Mr. Speaker, for a single reason? Is it not to craft on this prairie soil, a life that is better — not for ourselves, not just for ourselves — but a life that is better for our children and their children, for those who are the young people of Saskatchewan today, the people which the member from Humboldt just talked about? Is that not the reason we labour, Mr. Speaker?

Now I know since the opening of this House, since its opening day, much of the discussion and much of the debate which has gone on in this Chamber and beyond this Chamber has focused on a certain group of young people in our province. And here I refer to that group of young people who have been violent in our streets, who have conducted themselves in an intolerable manner, attacking persons and property, stealing cars, and so on. And this legislature appropriately is struggling with that issue.

The danger I think, Mr. Speaker, in this discussion as it's gone on here and gone on beyond this Chamber, is that we may give the impression, or we may leave the impression, that somehow this group of young people are somehow reflective of Saskatchewan young people generally. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This small, small group of, violent sometimes, young people involved in intolerable behaviours, do not represent, Mr. Speaker, the vast, vast, vast majority of Saskatchewan young people. For that matter, Mr. Speaker, they do not even represent a majority of young people who find themselves in conflict with the law.

You will recall well, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure all members do, that when His Honour was here to read the throne speech in this legislature, we were joined by several, two at least, groups of young people to be part of that throne speech reading. One was the Peacock jazz choir from Peacock Collegiate in our city of Moose Jaw. Another was another group of young people from Moose Jaw who are involved in what we call the Grinning Lizard Teen Wellness Centre. It was mentioned in the throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, here are young people in numbers, who are giving hours of their lives and talent in the pursuit of great goals academically, athletically; in the case of our jazz choir, musically. In the case of the young people involved with the wellness centre, they're trying to reach out to their peers, to make a better world for their peers. These young people who were here to witness the throne speech are the kind of young people that are representative and are typical of Saskatchewan young people today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The trouble is, you see, they just don't very often get in the headlines. They don't merit the headlines, they don't get the lead on the 6 o'clock news and they don't get the whole legislature in an uproar. Although I must say, with compliments to the Regina *Leader-Post*, I thought it was more than appropriate that in the midst of this debate they chose to publish an article, and a good article, about the number of young people involved in the Scouting movement in this city.

I thought that was good of the *Leader-Post* to do that. Just to remind us you know, Mr. Speaker, on any given day of the week, on any given day of the week there are more young people involved in Cub Scouts in a troop than there are stealing cars. Any day of the week there are more people in a hockey rink, any hockey rink, than there are out stealing cars. And I just think, Mr. Speaker, this legislature needs to stand up and say unequivocally, that the young people of Saskatchewan today are some of the best young people we've ever known in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I have the great privilege and opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to serve in this government at this time as the minister responsible for the child action plan — an action plan that has been pioneered and brought to fruition by other of my colleagues before me, other ministers of Social Services who have served and ministers who have served in other portfolios — the now Minister of Finance; the now Minister of Education; my now seat mate, the member from Saskatoon Eastview, who gave this child action plan in Saskatchewan its birth and its impetus.

But I, Mr. Speaker, now fortunately have the privilege of being the minister responsible for it. And because of that responsibility, I am often afforded the opportunity to be with Saskatchewan's young people and their families, and people

who are working with families and young people in Saskatchewan.

The member from Humboldt, in her remarks this afternoon, talked about the Chili for Children program here. She was quoting one of the people actively involved there at Chili for Children. I've had the chance, Mr. Speaker, to be down there at Chili for Children to assist in passing out some of the food there and seeing the kids, seeing the adults at work there; it's a wonderful experience.

And as I go there and I see these children, and I think of the children in our own homes, Mr. Speaker. And then I think of how life has changed in the last 10 and 20 years. We were all young once, Mr. Speaker, I think.

An Hon. Member: — Not that long ago.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Not that long ago for some us, as my colleague from Eastview says. But just compare, Mr. Speaker; we have in our home, a 13-year-old and an 11-year-old, and I think about their lives at 13 and 11 and my own life. We live about in the same neighbourhood, not far from . . . well we're just in the same neighbourhood. And I think about our children, I think about my growing up in that same neighbourhood.

When I was 11 we had two channels of television, Mr. Speaker; they were both black and white, when the TV was working. Two channels of television, and one of them was based here in Regina and one of them was based in Moose Jaw. That's before the CBC deserted Moose Jaw; but two channels, black and white.

Now kids today, they turn on the television and they'll see 15 channels, some of them. Oh some folks have a dish out there, I'm sure, and they're looking at 40 channels, Mr. Speaker. And these channels are not coming from Regina; they're not coming from Moose Jaw. Where are they coming from? They're coming from Detroit and they're coming from Toledo and they're coming from New York; they're coming from Hollywood, and they're putting into our homes all these values that have nothing to do with the values of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when I was 11 years old, I think it would be fairly true to say that myself and my generation and our friends, we, for the most part if not unanimously, had a mom and dad at home. When we went home, there was mom and dad at home. And I don't think, even though my dad did not have a high-paying job, I don't think I ever lost a night's sleep worried that my dad might lose his job. I didn't worry about that.

The Premier of the province was in Moose Jaw not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, and spoke to a group of young people of high school age, the high school leadership in Moose Jaw. As we were leaving that meeting that night, one of the young people came out with us and she stopped the Premier aside and said, there's something I want to talk to you about. What was it? She asked the Premier of the Province of Saskatchewan if he could assist in her mother getting a job, Mr. Speaker.

I tell you when I was in grade 11 and grade 12, I wasn't around asking the Premier to find a job for my parents. I tell you, Mr.

Speaker, when I was 11, my grandmother and grandfather lived one block away. My other grandparent lived a few blocks away. I had aunts and uncles all over town. Nowadays, we don't have that kind of extended family in many cases. We just don't have that.

When I was 11 years old, I remember the public health nurse coming to school. She was teaching us how to brush our teeth. Now the public health nurses come to the school and teach our children about AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

We have the police coming to our schools. They used to come and teach us how to cross the street safely — that's what they used to teach us. Now they come to our school and what do they teach our children? What do they have to teach our children?

An Hon. Member: — Inappropriate touching.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Inappropriate touching. How to watch out for pedophiles on the streets of our cities and towns.

Mr. Speaker, for children growing up in the best of family circumstances, these are not easy times to grow up in. Now imagine then, imagine then, the children who are at programs like Chili for Children who are growing up often in very difficult, difficult family situations; imagine what it's like for children growing up in poverty, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why do we keep on paddling in this cream can? It's not for ourselves. It's for these children and young people of Saskatchewan. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, you can take any component you desire of this throne speech — any component you desire — and you will see the purpose and the motivation is to build, albeit patiently and slowly, but to build a better life in this province for our people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And that is why, Mr. Speaker, you will find at the very centrepiece of this throne speech the commitment of this Premier and this government to addressing the needs particular to children who are living in poverty, to children in their families who are facing the scourge of poverty in this province and in this nation. That is the centrepiece of this throne speech.

And I am deeply, deeply appreciative of the remarks that the member from Saskatoon Sutherland brought to this debate in the House the other night on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity earlier this year to be doing a little reading of Robert Burns. You may know his very famous "Cotter's Saturday Night." In that little "Cotter's Saturday Night" the scholars say he was really describing his own home and family situation.

He concludes "Cotter's Saturday Night," which is a description of a simple home and a simple family, he concludes the "Cotter's Saturday Night," does Robbie Burns, by saying: "From scenes (such as) . . . these, old Scotia's grandeur springs." The grandeur of Scotland, says Burns, is in the scene of the humble home.

Well I tell you, Mr. Speaker, my political philosophy is to say this: the strength of a nation, the strength of a nation is in the strength of its homes; the soul of a nation is born out of the soul of its homes — out of the place where we go at night to be with those we love.

Our goal surely as legislators and our goal in this Speech from the Throne is to strengthen the Saskatchewan home — our home, which we all share, and particularly those homes where we go at night. That's the goal. And that's why we're in this. And that's why we will not forsake the task irregardless of the competition, irregardless of the criticisms that come from across the House and come from those right-wing frogs who sometimes just get in the cream and want to eat it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to sit down in a minute. I just want to share one other observation. And this comes . . . I'm motivated to remember this and share it because of the comments of the member from Humboldt when she talked about Chili for Children. It brought back to me a memory of a time that I was at Chili for Children — it was in November last year — and they had the children do sort of the Aladdin thing. You know, if you had three wishes, if you had three wishes what would you wish for? And they'd had the children do that as a little exercise. And all of the children had written out their three wishes and had a nice little poster and they posted the posters all over the gymnasium. So after the meal was over, I just went around and read some of the posters.

And you can predict, you can predict what was on many of those little posters. You know — if I had three wishes I'd get a Nintendo, or I'd get . . . the kind of things that you might expect 8-, 9-, and 10-year-olds to be asking for. But the one I think that — well that I don't think, I know — I will never forget, a little 11-year-old girl, and what did she put on her list of the three things that I would wish for. Number one, I would wish for a job for my mom. Number two, I would wish for a car for my mom. And number three, I would wish for a puppy for me.

Now note that list, Mr. Speaker. And if that isn't a political agenda for governments of all stripes, I don't know what is. A job for my mom — employment and the security and the dignity that comes with employment. A car — that symbol of freedom, that symbol of a decent standard of living for every family. And a puppy for me — just a little bit of love, please, in my life.

If in the course of this government and this legislature we can move our province even a few pebbles closer to making it possible for every home in our family to say there's a job for mom and a car for mom and a puppy for me, we will have done our work.

This throne speech takes us closer, Mr. Speaker, closer to that vision. And therefore I will wholeheartedly stand in this House and support this speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to enter into the debate. As we have listened to the members from

both sides of the House now for a few days, obviously there are some who believe that the Speech from the Throne possesses within it some futuristic plans, and there are some who believe that it doesn't.

I've studied it very carefully. I mean it's not a very long document so I've read through it, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to go into it a little bit. But it's going to be difficult. Because as I thought last night after I got back from the Ducks Unlimited banquet, what would a fellow say if you had to get up and make a speech tomorrow on this particular document? And I thought to myself, it's going to be really difficult to say something about nothing.

However if you think about it, you can say something about nothing if you think positively and think about the potential for doing something out of nothing. And so I'm going to try to do that for a while today.

Now I don't want to get right into that, Mr. Speaker, because this is the only opportunity that I've had to ramble at a little extent. I want to take a minute to thank some people who have attended in my constituency and I think that's an important part of the throne speech and the things that have happened in our own constituencies.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I would like seriously to take a moment to thank the Speaker of this House for the trip that he took to our constituency this past year. In the program of course, that people have talked about earlier, we were included where Mr. Speaker took it upon himself to go around to the schools of our province to advocate to the children of our province the necessity of a democratic process and the reality that the one we have not only is working but is good in spite of the criticisms that we have received.

I want to share with you, Mr. Speaker, the comments of one lady that phoned me from Hazlet, Saskatchewan after you and I attended to that school. The person that called was a young woman who teaches part time at that school but was not in the school the day that we were there.

She said that ordinarily her son comes home from school when she hasn't been there and she will say, what did you do today? And he'll say, oh, not much. Well did you learn anything? Well not really. Well where are you going? Where are you going? Oh I'm going to watch TV. And that's the last she sees of him.

Well this day she said he came into the door bubbling all over. Hey mom, guess what? And she said she said to him, well what? He said there was two fellows at our school today, and boy, were they ever interesting. They even got along. They were from two different political parties and they weren't even fighting. And not only that, she says that he said, I know exactly now how the legislature works and why we have it.

And she said he went on for half an hour telling all about the experience that he'd had. And she was so thrilled by that that she took a special time to phone my office to let me know, and I wanted to congratulate you for having made that possible. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — In other areas, of course, we want to welcome all of those folks that are involved in this sitting of the legislature. We have pages of course, and everybody has talked about them and we want to add those kind of welcomes as well to all those that participate in the system. Nice to have everybody back.

And it's good to be here. Myself, I enjoy the opportunity to speak in the Legislative Assembly, and I enjoy of course passing on now to the people of Maple Creek, the town in our constituency that has, I understand, now joined us on television. For the very first time in a very long time I will be able to deliver messages directly to people, because obviously I would have to drive out there with a car and go door to door to speak to them in other years.

(1515)

Now I understand that they can just simply turn it on and they have the advantage now; they can also shut it off. So probably . . . and you know, Mr. Speaker, that I have learned to start most of my speeches with a very simple line, and it goes like this — it's my job to talk; it's your job to listen. Let me know if you get done before me. And if you do, of course, if you're on television, you can just shut it off.

But welcome to the people from Maple Creek, the town, and those people that are possibly in from the rest of the outside community visiting with grandma or grandpa and have a chance to turn the TV on to the cable network. We're on channel 2 there, and we hope that you will come to learn that the democratic process is a good process and that your MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) actually does work.

So here we are, Mr. Speaker, with an obligation to not only let the people of the province know what's going on, but it's also good to know that we have the chance to thank our researchers and the people in our staff offices for the work that they do, especially when they just send me my speaking notes so that I would know what I was supposed to say. I'm glad they got here. So I will review them very quickly to see if there was anything intelligent in here that I should talk about.

There are some days when we are prepared. But nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, as you will know from past years, talking about the Speech from the Throne really doesn't need a whole lot of speaking notes prepared. One simply has to listen to the content of the speech and put it into the reality of the life that surrounds us in our own home constituencies and try to relate that into our remarks here so that we can, as the member from Moose Jaw just pointed out, help to contribute to the betterment of our society and the betterment of life for our people in Saskatchewan. And that's exactly what we're trying to do.

Talking to the member from northern Saskatchewan a few minutes ago, obviously his intention is to try to make life better for the people up North because they have different circumstances. And we have such a big province with such a diversification in weather, and such a diversification in distances, that we need to get together like this and talk, not only on our feet, but sometimes behind the bar, where we

discuss with people . . . and I do mean the pole, not the one where we have a drink. Just to make sure the folks from Maple Creek understand there's a difference.

We do want to go back there occasionally and visit with these folks while some of the other proceedings are going on and find out what they really think about life, and what they really know about their conditions that we don't understand.

And it's surprising how often I've found that I don't know a lot of things about people in this province, even though I thought I knew quite a bit. And especially when I was younger, I thought I knew it all. But as time goes by, we find that there are things that we don't understand about other people within our own province. And as we debate and talk, that is a melting-pot that is necessary in the process.

We see in the address from the throne, Mr. Speaker, comments about trying to cure the problems, for example, of child poverty in our province. This is a noble initiative by any government, and we certainly would never say anything against that initiative. And we would encourage the government to continue to try to help young people.

As the father of six, I understand all too well the need for people to get a good, basic, sound start in life. Education is an extremely good part of that, but it goes back to the small years when a child is growing up. And certainly if you're hungry, you're never going to have your full potential realized.

And certainly the remarks that were made by the member from Moose Jaw a few minutes ago are all valid. Unfortunately though, I had a problem. I know that this man is a United Church minister. I sometimes attend the United Church myself. But I had to say to my colleague, it's a good thing we're not in church because I'd certainly have to heckle if this was a sermon.

And I certainly would have had to heckle because he alludes to the fact that right-wingers perhaps drink all the cream and leave nothing for anybody else. Believe me, we have a social conscience just as big as yours, and we may apply it in a different way but our hearts are still in the same place and we do sympathize with the children who are in poverty.

We honestly believe though, sir, that we have, Mr. Speaker, solutions that might even be better; better than the ones that the government is proposing. And we have said from the outset, as an opposition party, even though we are at the rating of third party status, we've always said that we will have an alternative and become a true alternative to the government. And then let the people choose at the polls next time whether they think our ideas are good or not.

I believe they may have some consideration for our thoughts on child poverty. You cannot solve child poverty the way this government goes about it. Because there's a fundamental flaw in dealing with child poverty with socialistic ideas. And the reason for it is because you depend on using other people's money and finances and resources to pay for your problem. And that will never work because you will run out of resources because there aren't enough rich people in the world to solve the problem if you took all the money that they've all had.

Because money really buys you nothing. Money is only a unit of exchange and all you can buy with money is what's available to be sold. You have to have goods and products and services. You can't give a child a carrot if nobody grew a carrot; doesn't matter if you pay a million dollars for it.

Look at the currencies of Europe. You can have in Germany inflation for three times after the war, and you could carry — I heard stories from my grandfather — you could carry around millions of dollars in a wheelbarrow and what could you buy? A pound of butter. And the next day you might not even get that.

So money is only numbers; money is only a unit of exchange. What you really need to solve poverty — and stay with me here — is something that's real. And that is jobs. And that is work; that is businesses.

Now the member, of course, from Moose Jaw alluded to the fact of jobs being great. And he said a nice little story about a child who wanted to have a job for her mother, and I think it was a car for mom and a puppy for me. And I don't know where her dad went to in this story, but I'm hopeful that he would be here too.

Because . . . In this story, let's change that a little bit to: how about a small business for mom and dad. How about if we have two cars, one for mom and dad. And how about if we have a few toys instead of just a puppy; and an education in a small school some place in Regina, one of those that might be closed in the next little while.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Why not aim just a little bit higher, Mr. Speaker, is what I'm saying. Because the spin-off effects of providing opportunities are much better than providing the alternative that this government is suggesting in this throne speech.

The approach that is being talked about in this Speech from the Throne is simply this: we'll send people to get educated and trained so they can get a job. And that's good. We do that. I've done that with my children. However, if there's no job to go to, what good is all the training?

So here we are with a whole group of people who are going to have a lot of new training, a lot of new emphasis on all of these things that are going to get people prepared for jobs. But we have no jobs prepared.

So here's what we've done. We run them through the school cycle, 12 years in school. Then we send them on to university. And we can get them there for three years or maybe five, and if we're lucky, six. And we've taken them out of the job market now for 18 years plus 6 and that's 24 years old now because they were six when they started.

So now they're 24 years old; they've never done a day's work in their life. And what do you do? You get them on welfare for awhile because they can't pay their student loans back and they

haven't got a job yet. So they go on welfare for awhile.

Now the welfare program says we got to figure out how to get these folks to work. So we come up with a job assistance program some place, and some businesses offer some incentive so that they will put these people to work. So they get a job and it's just long enough so they qualify for unemployment insurance, after which time of course they go on the unemployment insurance — after they've had this short period of job — and they run that through to the end.

After that, they have to go back on unemployment insurance. And there they say, well we've got to retrain you for a new job because you haven't found one yet. So it's back to community college, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) or some place else; back into the training program. Now this kid is 30 years old, still hasn't had a job, and knows no place where to go except maybe to Alberta.

However, in the scheme of things, if we had concentrated a little more on a right-wing philosophy, which is to have an industrial revolution in this province . . . And you will say oh, you're a hundred years too late. Well let's talk about this for a minute. The reality is that Saskatchewan missed the industrial revolution.

We were so busy fighting the Dirty Thirties and the war and the droughts and the grasshoppers, we missed the industrial revolution.

The hewers of wood and the haulers of water. Why did we get that tied onto us, Mr. Speaker. How did that happen? Because that's exactly what we are. We have always delivered raw, natural goods to the rest of the world and we never process them at home. What does that mean? We missed the industrial revolution. Because what was the industrial revolution? It was the determination to diversify, a thing that we just started talking about again. I've heard it all my life. I've been around for quite awhile too. Heard it a lot of times. What should we do? We should diversify. We should raise hogs, feed our barley. We shouldn't ship our calves to Ontario. We shouldn't ship our barley to Ontario, and feed our own cows; we should do it at home. Nothing new about this story. We've heard it many, many times before. So we missed the industrial revolution. Let's have it now. Let's start.

Somebody said, well hindsight is 20/20. Of course it is. And it's no good to have hindsight unless you say at some point we missed the boat, let's get on it or let's at least start paddling it. Now is the time. We'll have the industrial revolution and we will do that because that's what's going to happen.

And here's how we'd get these young people out of poverty — we create this job base of real, solid jobs, not shuffling for paper from this building to that building over there, from one desk to the other. We've been paper shufflers *extraordinaire*. But they're not lasting jobs and they're not productive. See jobs created by government are never productive. They never have a spin-off, trickle-down effect, and that's what we need, is jobs with a trickle-down effect.

You've all been into the country with the oil industry. It takes

\$16 million to create a job in the oil industry. However, when you create one, if you drill an oil well and you've got production, you have a real product. You've got oil; you can turn it into gasoline; you can turn it into heating oil; you can turn it into soap, I guess. You could even turn it into a plastic or whatever. It's all got spin-off effects. Those are real jobs, things that people can do. And their trickle-down effect is, for every time you create one of those jobs, you've created another spin-off of seven or so jobs as well.

That's an economy. That's the kind of thing you have to encourage. That's where you want to put your money, is not in investments in those companies, but providing the opportunity for them to be able to work. That means changing your labour laws and getting them on a level playing-field with the rest of the world. It means things like short-line railroads that the Premier alluded to today, and I thought that was great. I was really happy to hear that.

The Premier of this province says he supports the short-line rail concept because he believes that that's good, and I can understand that because it is good. And the reason that it is good is because it's probably the only way we're going to save a lot of our branch lines. We're going to have to do it ourselves. We're going to have to get off our duffs and do it ourselves.

Sitting around waiting for the federal government to do it isn't going to happen. It is not. There's no way this federal government in Ottawa is ever going to remember that Saskatchewan exists, so we may as well do it for ourselves. And we'll start our own short-line railroads and we're going to have to do some things.

We're going to have to provide a level playing-field for those to be able to compete, and that means that we have to change our labour laws — and you people know that. There are labour laws in this province that trickle down from the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) over to the short-lines, and the short-lines cannot operate under those circumstances. And today I think I heard the Premier recognizing that problem. When he started talking about their need and the reality and his support of short-line railroads, I heard the message in there that he's going to do what it takes to make it work. So look out, big unions, I think you're targeted; you're going to get hit. And it's about time.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about poverty and rail lines and transportation, it's not all this issue and then the next issue. They all roll together. It's one great ball of effect — cause and effect — for our province. We need to diversify. We need to have the industrial revolution. We need to have jobs that are real. We need to have people then able to solve their own problems of poverty by being able to include themselves in the provincial economy and in the provincial wealth. And that can happen if we go back to the fundamental basis of letting business operate, and letting people be the business operators.

So instead of getting mom and dad a job, let's provide the opportunity so that they can have a small business. Not everybody can do that, but a lot of people can. Let them be entrepreneurs. Let them create their own wealth, and let them feed their own children. It's fine to educate people, but it's no

good to provide them with an education and no job at the end of the trail, except in Alberta or in the United States. I know all too well about that. I have to travel thousands of miles to find out where my children are at.

This note that I have here says I'm going to keep my comments brief, believe it or not. I don't think so. It also says on the next page I'm going to keep my comments brief. Well I think we'll throw that one out, too.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we wanted to talk a little bit though about some of these other issues that pertain to the Speech from the Throne. For example, we have heard people from the chamber of commerces lately criticizing, very much, the taxation issues of our province. And I'm surprised that we didn't go into a little more depth in this Speech from the Throne on some of the more current issues and some solutions to those problems that plague us at this particular time.

(1530)

The SAMA issue has been a festering boil on the neck of society for two years already. And the reality is that so many people say that they understand what's going on, but in reality I don't think a lot of folks do. So I want to just talk about this for a minute.

The reality is that in years gone by we have depended on an assessment that has gone back to values of 30 years ago. And somebody said, well that's terrible; that's out of date. Well that may be true. But on the other hand, suppose all of the values are 30 years old throughout the whole province. As long as they were fairly compared so that taxation was fair from one group to the other, what difference did it make? Not a bit.

But in the scheme of things, we must be modern. And so we have said, we've got to update by 30 years. And we don't want to be out of tune with Manitoba and Ontario or somebody else that upgraded and they're up to 1994. We've got to be modern too.

So in the sake of needing to be modern and up to date, we'll change the system. That process did apparently start in the 1980s when the government said, look this is too hot of an issue for governments to handle. So they set up an organization called SAMA because they wanted to duck the heat. Don't blame them a bit because this is a hot potato politically — always has been, always will be.

I said at that time, as a municipal councillor or as a reeve perhaps at that time already, I said this is going to be nothing but a fiasco. We're going to have a lot of trouble here. Not that I'm a soothsayer, Mr. Speaker, but simply because it was one of those things that just naturally looked like it had to cause a lot of trouble. The minute you try to shift taxes out of my pocket into your pocket, you're going to be mad. And if I try to pass your taxes over to the fellow's over there, they're going to be mad and they're going to all try to pass them back to me so that I have to pay them out of my pocket. And then I'm going to be mad. So everybody's mad no matter what you do when you start fooling with taxation, especially if it includes shifts of who should pay.

So right from the start when the plan was to upgrade to . . . the timing, we were going to be in trouble. Not that being because we're going to improve the timing and be modern but because we're never going to stop there. The minute you set up an organization called SAMA with a big fat budget — I think it was at that time \$700,000 a year — you had to know that those people were going to find it necessary to do something to justify their job. And how do you justify your job if you're on a board called SAMA? You make some changes. Well if you don't make changes, then they all say, well you're redundant, you're useless, we might as well get rid of you. So we got to do something.

Well we'll go to market value assessment instead of production value on farm land. Well that was bound to create a stir because automatically you distort it right there, any comparison of tax base from one municipality to another or from one area to the other of the province. When productivity got out of the picture and market value got into it, anybody could distort the tax system, and it has started already.

Immediately the oil companies started saying, we're being treated unfairly; and the gas company said no, we're paying too much; and the guys with the pipeline said, heck no, we've got the worst problem here. And everybody started lobbying. Where did they lobby? At SAMA? No, not at all. They started at the Premier's office. May as well go to the top and get this problem solved.

So it became a political football when it was supposed to be in the realm of the SAMA organization, and of course it never, ever did land in that court at all. It automatically became a provincial problem, a provincial political problem, and we're kicking that football back and forth here every day. And it's going to continue. It can never be stopped any more. It's one of these revolving kind of things that once it gets started, you can never get it stopped.

And so we're in a mess. And it's going to be a big mess because you're going to have a tax revolution on your hands out in rural Saskatchewan.

So what does the Minister of Education do? She says we can't have a tax revolution on in rural Saskatchewan. That's terrible. My father's a farmer. So she went back to the drawing board and said, we're going to stop this all and we're going to solve the problem by putting a cap on.

Well I got a phone call the next morning from the mayor of Leader, and believe me he's not very happy. Because that means that the costs are going to be transferred back to his town. And there's no way he wants his residents paying for the taxes. So back we go, and the fight is on.

Well believe me, the only way that this problem can be solved now is by going to folks like the people at the SARM convention, the farmers and the ranchers that go there. You go to SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) where the businessmen and the small communities around the province are represented, and the big cities are even included in all of this, and you talk to those folks at the grass roots level.

And you say to them, how can we solve this problem? And they said, we've got to have a year to try to work out some of the problems. And the Premier says, we're not going to give you a year.

Well what is a year in the scheme of things as long as people pay their taxes so that you can deliver the goods and services that taxes are supposed to buy? What difference would it make? Why are we drawing a line in the sand and saying to people, we challenge you to not break the law; we challenge you to not collect your taxes. What good is that kind of confrontation? What is that going to accomplish? You're collecting the taxes on the basis of last year's assessments anyway.

Like the municipalities are going to continue to operate. The schools are going to continue to operate. The plea here was for a year to try to solve some of the problems and iron things out. And there's nothing wrong with that because it doesn't hurt anything. Everything will continue to operate. It's not as though you're shutting the machine of the province down and the whole thing stands still. It's a year to solve some problems. That's not too much to ask when you've created the kind of fiasco that this whole thing has become.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I do have to say that this government is consistent in one way. Everything they touch turns to a fiasco. As good intentioned as it could be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, sir, I'm sorry. You're not on television; you can't shut it off. And I have a few more minutes left here that I'm allowed to whale on the government, and that's what I'm going to do today because this government needs whaling on.

It is not Ralph Klein, believe me. You may have stolen a few of his right-wing ideas, and you may have a Premier that they're starting to talk about in songs and that sort of thing — at least that's what I thought I heard today was that the Premier was becoming a blue something or other . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, my singing voice is not in tune.

But reality is, Mr. Speaker, reality is that we need to point out to this government that while they steal a few of Ralph Klein's ideas to help this province to get on the right track, that in itself is not enough. Because you have to follow through consistently to the end and not cause a fiasco with everything and get it all mixed up. And halfway through, after you've had a good idea that you swiped from Ralph Klein, try to change it back to a semi-socialist idea to get back to your left wing to hold them together politically.

And none of that can work, you see, because that's the problem with Saskatchewan. We're halfway a conservative government, but they haven't got quite enough push to end it. And so every time they get into something they end up finding, whoops, we've got to change our mind; we have to appease some other group. We got a little lobby group over here; we got a few folks over there that aren't happy. And they try to dish out a few nickels here and a few dimes there and they're throwing money in an attempt to put out the brush fires politically. And the first thing you know you got everybody mad on every issue that comes up.

I haven't seen one issue in this province that's come up in the last three years that's been resolved simply or easily. Everything that comes up ends up in a great big storm of protest and people angry and everybody mad, and three-quarters of them going off to Medicine Hat to shop.

And what do they do that for? What do they do that for? They do it just to get the heck out of Saskatchewan so they can let their nerves settle down. I mean, they're so frustrated with the highway that some of them have told me that once they get to Medicine Hat they're almost tempted not to come home. There isn't a double lane anyway.

But we could spend an hour talking about highways. I've been on quite a few of them. And I want you to know that if you folks think your highways are bad, you really got to come to my constituency. I have got a road for you to drive on. I'm inviting you all to come with me. I've got a truck. We'll put chairs in the back, you can all sit down, and I'll drive you down No. 13 Highway and we'll take a little detour down No. 18. Now if any of you are still in the truck when we get done, you get a hundred dollar bonus because this truck doesn't have a cab to hold you in. And if you don't have a rope to tie yourself down, you're not going to be there.

And I suggest that the member from — the former member from the former constituency of Shaunavon — Wood River, there we are, really should come along with me because his roads are no better. I can attest to that. They're just as bumpy . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well look at that, Mr. Speaker, now everybody has a highway they want to throw in because they're all bad.

Well I didn't deny that. I don't deny that. I'm just saying that we probably have the worst and now they think they've all got the worst. Well if it's a competition, we could all get together and we could take a pool on who's got the worst highway.

The reality is though, Mr. Speaker, that there is a good reason why south-west Saskatchewan, in all seriousness, should not have the bad highways. And that is because the government pulls revenue out of south-west Saskatchewan far greater than anything that they put back in.

And I don't care if you add up health and education and all the other great and wonderful things that we get paid for by the monies that are taken in. The reality is that with the oil revenues that are coming out of that corner of the province on the land sale leases, with the revenue spin-off from the gas industry and the agricultural industry, the wheat that's grown out in that part of the country, all of those products that are produced — we got all kinds of cattle being grown out there, and there's all kinds of calves that are being born right now — every bit of that money is tax money as it's being sold. And those monies are going into the pot — into the general revenue pot.

Believe me, Mr. Speaker, if half of the money that comes out of south-west Saskatchewan was put back in there, we'd have roads paved in cobblestones glued together with cement. I almost said gold, but of course we can't quite afford that. But really, we do have the cobblestones, and I'm sure we got people that are doing nothing in this province, that we could put to

work putting the cobblestones one beside the other.

And you think that's such a bad idea. I was in Europe one time and there we were on a road and it was made out of cobblestones. And I said, you know those rocks look just like the ones at home. And I talked to some folks and I said, well when did they build them? And they said 500 years ago. They put them rocks, he said, one by one. People had jobs. So that's how they created work — one by one and they cemented them together. Five hundred years later I'm walking on the same road and it still didn't have any potholes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to suggest that we build all of our roads out of solid cobblestone tops, but I will go the stretch to say that there is no reason why we can't expect a better highway system than the one we have with the kind of revenue that's being taken out of rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if we can get all these folks to go for a ride with us on No. 1 Highway, I'm sure that it won't take them very long to find out why we pick on the minister from SGI. The minister from SGI says we got to put the rates up. Why do we have to put the rates up? Well to pay for the cost of all the wrecked vehicles. Well why are they wrecked? Well he says because the kids in Regina have stolen them and they vandalized them and there's a big wreck on. It's in the media and everybody knows about it.

Believe me, Mr. Speaker, it is no small matter that people steal cars in Regina, and we are not happy about this problem. But it is also true that the amount of dollars that are going into the cars that these folks are damaging or wrecking is very insignificant as compared to the amount of money being paid by SGI for the big semi-trailers that are whipped off the road in windstorms when the highway is covered in ice out at Maple Creek. You roll one of them units into the ditch, whether the driver walks away alive or not, and sometimes they don't, but you take one of those big rigs and you can pretty well write off \$100,000 for every one that's in a wreck.

You take 10 of those wrecks and you got a mile of road built already. And you could simply fix these highways and not have these wrecks, Mr. Speaker. And quite frankly that would pay for the roads, and SGI could afford to give the money back to the government to build the roads.

You see, it's cause and effect. You got to have the gumption to gamble a little bit in life and to take a chance on spending some money in the right places. You fix the roads; you don't have accidents. You don't have accidents; you don't have claims against SGI. You don't have claims against SGI; you don't have to increase the rates and you don't have a whole bunch of people in the hospital with broken legs getting mended, and you've saved a bunch money on medicare. It all works together.

And the Liberals think we ought to join with them. Well not a bad idea. Maybe they'll join with us, at least in the debate and in the fight for equity and fair play for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm a little sorry that I put the other

Speaker to sleep, but nevertheless this Speech from the Throne presents so many possibilities for us to tell this government where they've gone wrong that I would expect that it would probably take me the rest of the day if I got really all going and put it all together and talked about everything that needs to be done.

There isn't an issue out in rural Saskatchewan that comes up that isn't negatively impacting in the last six months. My telephone jumps off the desk every day with calls from people. It has escalated very significantly from the year or two before that. Why is that? Because people are becoming more and more disenchanted with the service that they're getting in comparison with the taxes that they're paying.

Everybody's paying higher utility bills. I'll get a call about how much did my taxes go up on . . . my rates go up on my telephone. The other day a fellow phoned up and said, I found another dollar on my telephone bill for 911. And I said to him, well did you have that before? And he said no, he says, I never saw it there before. He says, what's going on? Well we have to find a path to the minister's office to try and track this down. I have no idea why all of a sudden he's being charged extra.

The fellow down the next road phones me up and says, humph, my natural gas went way up. My bill's up — can't afford to heat my house any more. That's not uncommon.

I'll get another call. My power bill's going up. What the heck is going on? Who put my power up this much?

Well these increases have been coming gradually all along. When people get the bill, that's when they notice it. We sit in here and we hear about the announcements, and we know it's going to come. We can predict ahead of time, and sure enough it goes down the line — every utility you've got. I'll get a call on every one of them in the next month.

I'll get a call on just about every road in my constituency in the next month. I'll get a call on SAMA, and I'll get a call on health care, and I'll get a dozen calls on education because there's a fiasco in every facet of our life in this province that somebody will bring to my attention.

(1545)

And why is that, in a province that's supposedly booming, in a province that supposedly has enough money to have a \$5.2 billion budget where the Finance minister quite frankly doesn't seem to know where she's going to throw all the money next.

Why do we have all of these inequities? And I'll tell you why. It's because of the word "targeting". The Finance minister likes to say, we're going to solve the problems by targeting. You know what that really means, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Targeting really means political control, putting out brush fires politically. Whenever you've got a problem you throw some money at it and try to put it out. It does not mean building a structure of a province that is fair and equitable on a broad basis for all people. And that's why we're in so much trouble.

That's what's got to be happening here when we talk about people going to listen to what Ralph Klein's doing. You don't

just throw money at the problem. You follow it through with a program — a planned, consistent approach, a solution. There might even be some Liberal governments that do that. I'm not sure. But of course, I'm willing to acknowledge that there's always a possibility.

The member from Wood River I believe, wants to join me in this protest. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in spite of the fact that there are probably at least three hours more comments that I could make to tell people how bad this Speech from the Throne really is — because there's nothing in it — I do want to give these other folks an opportunity to speak.

So in the days to come, folks can be sure we'll have a lot more to say about these kind of programs, and when the budget speech comes, we'll give them another shot. So stay tuned, Maple Creek. Thanks a lot.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is with pride and pleasure that I speak today in support of the throne speech and this government. We as Saskatchewan citizens should be proud of our accomplishments as we continue to grow and prosper under the leadership of our Premier. It has taken determination and vision to overcome the financial difficulties and yet remain steadfast in maintaining and expanding the quality of life for all Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Battleford-Cut Knife is located in the north-west part of Saskatchewan, with rolling hills, grazing and farmland. Agriculture, small business, tourism, and oil are integral parts of the economy, each playing a vital part in my constituency. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the people — the people — who provide the vitality, the energy, and the creativity to my constituency; people who are dedicated to preserving and enhancing our rural way of life; people who have made the sacrifices necessary for our economic recovery; and people whose ingenuity is creating new jobs and opportunities for our communities.

For instance, the Bannack Winery opened their doors in Battleford this year. Wally and Diane Bannack are producing a vintage product, while enabling other people to grow and harvest the ingredients, thus providing opportunities for others.

Our government's agenda is investing in people — our people, Saskatchewan people. We are focusing on job creation and the climate is encouraging. Oil drilling activity has been strong, resulting in jobs in my constituency and in our province. Tourism is the sixth largest employer of Battleford-Cut Knife people. Visitors to my constituency spend an estimated 20 million, helping to support more than 64 tourism businesses and events.

Major events, such as the Bunnock tournament in Macklin annually attracts over 1,000 people for the August long weekend. And the Poundmaker Interpretive Centre has opened, promoting first nations history.

We are encouraging the expansion of trade. When the Minister of Agriculture was in the Pacific Rim, opportunities opened up

for the increased development of large pig farms. Public meetings are now being held in Evesham, Unity, Marsden, and Neilburg for two projects — not megaprojects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but community projects.

Plants for the pellet plant at Wilkie are well under way. And the north-west terminal in Unity is operating and serving the area well.

Farmers in my area are diversifying as they prepare for the 21st century. Fields of peas, canola, barley, oats, lentils, dill, and wheat are some of the crops. And bison, deer, and elk graze beside herds of cattle.

Farm women are opening up businesses such as greenhouses. Kathy Pagett and Marion Kelly invest hours tending small plants so that I and others will have tomatoes and cauliflower in our gardens.

And for those of you who do flower arrangements, those dried flowers could easily have come from the farm of David and Hannah Froelich, who have become one of Saskatchewan's largest producers of dried flowers.

To encourage our young, rural children to remain in our area, Wilkie School Division has coordinated a program enabling young men and women to work in agriculture-related businesses while completing their grade 12. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this opportunity portrays optimism for our rural area and agriculture-related industries.

I represent five first nation bands — Poundmaker, Little Pine, Red Pheasant, Sweetgrass, and Mosquito — progressive bands implementing programs to address their problems.

For the past five years selected residents from the former North Battleford youth cottage have attended a developmental camp on the Poundmaker Reserve. Sweetgrass also has a provincially managed youth offenders' facility. And I wish to acknowledge the initiatives to teach youth about their cultures, their values, and their respect — basic life skills — and to develop meaningful relationships with elders and members of the community.

The Minister of Social Services and I had the opportunity to attend these camps this summer and to sample the bannock and soup that supervised youth prepared. My constituency has lots of bannock.

Red Pheasant's healing lodge is committed to deliver different kinds of preventative, educational, and intervention services within the communities — services that are designed to begin the process of restoring integration, wholeness, imagination and wellness, as ways of life within the first nations communities.

We as a government encourage programs to improve our people's quality of life. Last year, my constituency received prevention support grants to fund the Battlefords interval house project addressing family violence; the Cut Knife High School drinking and driving awareness project; the summer drop-in program for youth ages 12 to 18 living in Unity and surrounding area; the Battleford Concerned for Youth project to

host mini-workshops on teen alcohol, drug use, and teen pregnancy — all worthwhile projects that are forward-looking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the negative comments from the members opposite about elected health boards do not reflect the positive initiatives in my constituency. The elected Battlefords health board has just announced that they have partnered a unique initiative to provide a new service to residents of this and neighbouring health districts — a short-stay suite, the first of its kind in The Battlefords Health District, designed to provide a temporary accommodation for people who are receiving medical treatment and need to be close to health services.

The Greenhead Health District has initiated the care project, a program addressing families with special needs children. Twin Rivers Health District is going green by starting an energy management program, a positive step into the future for Twin Rivers and its environment.

The division school boards of Wilkie and Kerrobert and Battleford and North Battleford are discussing the possibility of amalgamating, coordinating programs and staffing to better meet the needs of our youth, our future.

These are community initiatives by community people investing in people, and our government's agenda strengthens this investment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have highlighted some of the good news in my constituency, a rural constituency that has seen change and growth, and that economic growth is being enjoyed throughout all of the province.

In 1996, Saskatchewan was one of the few provinces to experience substantial growth in oil, uranium, ag-biotech, retailing, and manufacturing. On October 1, our population stood at 1,024,900 — its highest level since July 1989.

We had the lowest monthly unemployment rates in the country. Our spring budget provided 110 million in new provincial funding to replace the 1996-1997 federal cut-backs to our health, to our education, and to our social service programs.

Our growing provincial economy and our sound financial management enabled us to do this. Under the small business loans associating program, 677 new jobs and 313 new business were created. People initiatives benefited our communities in a positive climate — all made possible by our forward-looking government policies.

We are investing in people, in our communities, in our province, and our priorities are reflected by our fiscal responsibility to produce a balanced budget and reducing the debt.

We're investing in education and training, in our transportation strategy, and in our programs for consumer protection, the child action plan, and our young offenders. But we are not doing it alone. We are doing it with our partners — the people of Saskatchewan.

Challenges can be stepping-stones or stumbling blocks. And this government has had many stumbling stones: a horrendous debt, deterioration of the highways and the railway system, high unemployment, federal cut-backs. But each year this government has identified the stepping-stones to achieve what will be the best investment for our people now and for the future. And we will continue to do so.

I would like to acknowledge the member from North Battleford and welcome him to this Assembly. And also a warm welcome to our pages. I would also like to congratulate the mover and the seconder on their excellent speeches supporting the policies of this government.

To Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank him for his informative tour of my schools this fall. And I am proud to serve with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and with the members of this legislature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this throne speech promotes the positive agenda of this government for Saskatchewan and for Saskatchewan people. Therefore on behalf of my constituents, I will proudly support this motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter this throne speech debate, which is really the opportunity of all members to share in the Legislative Assembly and in a very public way some of our ideas and our thoughts, proposals for the future, and even to swap a few barbs with each other. As you know, basically everything is in order here as long as we use parliamentary language.

And I value this opportunity — I always have — to not only express some of my views, but to listen carefully to opposition members and indeed listen to some very, very fine speeches, such as the example we just had from the member for Battlefords-Cut Knife. Great speeches have been the earmark . . . or the hallmark of this year's throne speech debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — I want to, before I get into the text of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I do want to extend my sincere congratulations to the new member from North Battleford. I wish you nothing but the best in your deliberations in the Legislative Assembly and I trust and hope that you will be able to represent your constituents with the diligence and effectiveness that I am sure you desire and I know that they desire as well. So welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Regina Coronation Park, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the constituency that I have been blessed with the honour of representing. Coronation Park is in the northern end of the city; indeed it butts up against some farm land to the north. It's a constituency made up of working people, family people. There are some retired, but primarily the constituency is families in the growing process. And it's a constituency made up of a number of communities in Regina, all of them fairly strong in their own right and fairly active in lobbying and working to make their own communities and our city a better place in

which to live and raise our families.

(1600)

The housing stock ranges from a few houses in the \$200,000-plus range — and I stress, a few — to an equally few number of houses that are less than desirable, to put it politely. But the majority of the houses in Regina Coronation Park are more middle class, if I can describe it as that — two- and three-bedroom houses, 20 to 40 years old. And of course into the mix you throw in a smattering of apartment blocks, particularly as we get towards my Albert Street border on the east side of the constituency.

The trees . . . or pardon me, the streets are not lined with gold, as some people would say. But the streets are lined with trees. And over the years the Queen City has done a very good job of seeing that Regina gets treed, and they've also done a very good job of creating green spaces. So the byword in Coronation Park is really tree-lined streets, lovely parks and green spaces, and just a real pleasant and nice place to raise a family and to live your life out in.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention on the south end of the border of Coronation Park there is a CN (Canadian National) rail and Lewvan Drive underpass well on the way to completion. And that will be a most welcome addition to all of my constituents, I'm sure, as we try and travel around Regina getting from the north end to the south end and back again. It's been a frustration for a great many years as we wait for the trains to finish shunting back and forth across that street. So that will be a very welcome addition.

There are some, of course, problems with local traffic in that community and I know that the city of Regina has done virtually everything they can to mitigate on behalf of those residents most directly affected. But for the vast majority . . . I think it is safe to say this is one example where the minority have had they say and the majority are getting their way.

Mr. Speaker, to the throne speech. Our throne speech outlines the priorities of the government, I think, in a very, very good way. The throne speech card entitled *Investing in People - Building Saskatchewan Together* is really what it's all about — 1,024, 900 Saskatchewan people, of which I am one, all of us are one working together and the government working with this 1,024,900 people investing in our future. Interestingly, the top line on the throne speech card is "The Top Priority: Jobs" — "The Top Priority: Jobs."

And there's eight points on this card, on this throne speech card. We are going to be working, amongst other things, to encourage the expansion of trade. Saskatchewan is the most trade-dependent province in Canada. Full stop, period. And of course we are a tremendous exporter — our agricultural products. Oil and gas are a growing export. The mining industry, potash, uranium, all of the . . . Gold is even a growing export. All of these things. So we're going to be doing what we can to enhance and encourage expansion of trade.

We're going to be promoting the expansion and diversification of our rural economy. And one of the things that just pops into

mind that happened is we've recently underwritten — or written off, I guess is the proper term — \$150 million of crop insurance debt. Why would we do that? So we don't saddle today's farmers with the debt from the crop insurance that has been run up over quite a large number of years. It's designed to help today's farmers have affordable crop insurance, an affordable plan, not saddled with the sins of the past. And I say sins without pointing any particular fingers or anything like that. But that's one quick thing that comes to mind.

In the interests of time, I'm going to move on to the next heading, which is "Renew Saskatchewan's Crown Corporations." Last year we started the review of Saskatchewan's Crown corporations. I know that under this administration we have started various international arms of some Crown corporations, and it's my view, Mr. Speaker, that these international arms will be providing just a tremendous opportunity for Saskatchewan's Crown corporation employees, Saskatchewan's Crown corporation employees that have tremendous knowledge built up over, in some instances, many, many years.

But whether they're relatively new to the Crown corporation or what we'll call lifers, either way, Crown corporation employees are trained to a very, very high standard. They're a very talented lot. They have done phenomenal work on behalf of their Crown corporations, and thereby on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, for a great many years.

The Crown corporations international arm provides an opportunity for us to have Saskatchewan workers working in other countries where the payroll frankly is paid by these other companies . . . other countries, because the international projects are all done on the basis of we have to turn a dollar for the local Crown corporation — the Saskatchewan Crown corporation. And there's certainly no shortage of examples of that.

You look at SaskTel and its cable venture in England that had a net profit in excess of \$90 million. You look again at SaskTel and their venture in the Philippines where they were involved in a \$40 million telecommunication project. You look at SaskTel in the Chunnel where they got a great deal of credit for their technological expertise.

And one of the latest examples, potentially we've got SaskPower in Guyana, which is a very relatively small power utility but one that needs some leadership, if I can describe it that way, some leadership capabilities that SaskPower can provide. And that's going to frankly mean some opportunities for Saskatchewan people to work some term projects in Guyana in this instance.

And I frankly welcome it. I know that the due diligence studies have been done, and I just hope that this turns out to be an absolute winner where we provide employment, jobs for Saskatchewan people, and where we can see a return on the investment to Saskatchewan Power in this case; but because SaskPower will realize a profit on that venture, that helps in stabilizing all of our electrical rates.

So I'm really quite excited about some of the things that are

happening in the Crown corporations sector. And I want to just before I leave the Crown corporation sector, I want to point out that if we think the status quo is good enough, we're dreaming. It's just not on. If we stay stagnant, we're really sliding backwards. We're really sliding down. And our vision for the Crown corporations is one of corporations that provide employment, that provide stable services, that bring all of the best things that we all want for our province, for our children, and even for ourselves.

So I'm real excited about what is happening in the renewal of Saskatchewan's Crown corporations. We're going to be working to improve access to capital for particularly small businesses. We're going to be pursuing key, strategic projects. Again, employment enhancers, jobs being the number one priority.

We're going to be promoting tourism and the hospitality industry. That's an industry that has seen tremendous growth over recent years — and I'm not sure I'm being entirely fair when I say just recent years. It's an industry that is clearly growing. As us baby boomers get older and older many of us have increasingly free time and the desire to see new things. So tourism is a growing industry.

We want to foster northern economic and employment growth, and indeed there's many examples of that. The minister outlined that in his speech at the end of yesterday and I would refer you to that.

We will be participating in an extended national infrastructure plan. All of these things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by way of job creation — a real concern for this government in this province. Why? Because we want to govern to the benefit of all Saskatchewan people. We're all in this together. The more jobs we can create and fill, the better off everything works including . . . I know the Minister of Finance will collect more taxes when more people are working. And that's absolutely true.

Now what's happening on the job front? I think it's important that we take just a little snapshot look at what has been happening. And I've got some — I almost hate to do this — I have some statistics; but without numbers, I don't know how you could say well, are we gaining on the job front, are we losing on the job front, or are we simply standing still? Because we've got to be doing something.

What is happening? Well, in Saskatchewan in February of 1997 — 14 days ago — the latest numbers show that there was 453,300 persons employed in Saskatchewan. Now what's that mean? In itself, nothing. Let's go to February last year. February last year we had 446,400 people working. The gain in employment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is 6,900 more people working in February this year over February last year — 6,900 solid record of job growth for the people of the province of Saskatchewan; 6,900 more men, women, and young people working in Saskatchewan today than a year ago.

Now what happens to the unemployment numbers? Because that's relevant too. Well this year we have 33,900 people unemployed in February — 33,900. I readily admit that's too high. That's why in the throne speech job creation . . . jobs are

priority, top priority, priority one — jobs.

Well in 1997, 33,900 unemployed in February. What about in '96 then? Thirty-eight thousand seven hundred — 4,800 fewer; 4,800 fewer people unemployed this year as opposed to last year. How can that be? The unemployed and the employment don't match.

Well what I'm building to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is some people would have us believe that we're exporting our unemployment. Well the truth of that — what is it? — the latest figures, from a different source, but the latest figures in Saskatchewan happen to be for October 1, 1996 — that's the last quarter for which there's a report — and the population has grown again to 1,024,900.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the 12th consecutive quarter of population growth in Saskatchewan. For more than three years the population of Saskatchewan has been expanding . . . has been growing, putting to rest the lie that we're somehow exporting our unemployment. We are dealing with the job concerns, the creation of jobs right here, in our own way, giving it the best efforts we can. I've outlined some of them a bit earlier and there will be more. But 6,900 more people working in February this year than in February last year.

I think that is just phenomenally good news. It's not good enough, not good enough, but it's phenomenally good news. But that's why jobs and job creation — priority one in the throne speech.

Well I want to do a little bit of a contrast in this because I think it's important for my constituents, and people generally, to see well, how does Saskatchewan stack up? I know that the opposition would have us believe that they've got all of the answers. They're very in tune with the economic realities; they could manage a province very well. They could see better numbers in terms of economic growth, better numbers in terms of employment, fewer people unemployed, and of course better highways and all those other good things. And I thank the hon. member for agreeing with that.

(1615)

Liberals believe that somehow they've got their pulse on good government. Well this is the same Liberal Party, the same Liberal Party that — I'm trying to think, it would be about a year and a half ago, a little better than that, when we had the last provincial election — the same Liberal Party that had its own scratch and sniff "red book", whited out in selected places before it was ever released. And everyone knows the last election was hardly a snap election.

The Premier had stated the day he was sworn into office, the election would be June 1995. So the election shouldn't have snuck up, shouldn't have snuck up on the Liberals.

Okay, white out, scratch and sniff "red book," a "red book," Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was projecting 8 per cent annual growth, was their major method of balancing the budget — 8 per cent economic growth per year, per year. These are the same Liberals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have supported their federal

cousins who last year cut \$106 million in transfer payments in health, in education, and in social programming to Saskatchewan — \$106 million cut.

Now I've been in this legislature longer than just since last year. I have yet to hear the official opposition mention boo about anything that the federal Liberals do in a negative way. Their silence is absolutely deafening. This is the same Liberal Party . . . I talked about the 106 million last year, a further little over 90 million cut this year — I don't hear anybody talking about that.

It's the same Liberals that were absolutely silent with the grain transportation matter that happened over the past 18 months. Absolutely silent, while their Liberal cousins in Ottawa made huge changes, changes to grain transportation that even Brian Mulroney couldn't push through. The same Liberal opposition that has been silent as we, this government, wrote off \$150 million in debt in crop insurance. Why? So that today's farmers can have affordable, or more affordable crop insurance unhindered and unhampered by the debt that had been run up in previous years.

Now that tells a bit of a story of what goes on here. But I talked a little bit about unemployment numbers and I want to share what's happening. Now if the Liberals in opposition knew how to govern a province, I think it would be reasonable to say that Liberals, being Liberals, should share some of those good ideas with other Liberal provincial parties, and even with their federal Liberal counterparts.

I think it's fairly reasonable that if a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal that they could share some thoughts. Well this Liberal opposition in Saskatchewan is saddled — and that's a gentle term — but saddled with the economic record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of their Liberal counterparts who form the government in four — four — of Canada's provinces, four provinces where they have Liberal governments, plus the federal government.

An Hon. Member: — How are they doing?

Mr. Trew: — My colleague asks how are they doing? Well let's look. The unemployment rate in Saskatchewan is 7 per cent in February, 7 per cent. But what about Liberal New Brunswick? What happened year over year in New Brunswick? Their unemployment rate in Liberal New Brunswick, the unemployment rate went up 2.9 per cent to fourteen and a half per cent, more than double the unemployment rate in socialist Saskatchewan.

What happened in Liberal Nova Scotia? Year over year, unemployment rate goes up 1.3 per cent to 14 per cent. Liberal Nova Scotia, an unemployment rate double Saskatchewan's.

What happened in Liberal P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island)? Up, unemployment up 2.7 per cent to 20 per cent. One in five working people in Liberal Prince Edward Island are unemployed — one in five — unemployed. Liberal P.E.I.

What happened in Liberal Newfoundland? Up, up .8 per cent. Unemployment up .8 per cent to 21.4 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Liberal Newfoundland has an unemployment rate more than three times what Saskatchewan's is. Four Liberal provinces. I guess it's just the bad luck of the draw, right? That's what the Liberal opposition would have us believe, just bad luck of the draw that we happen to be governing in real destitute provinces. Bad luck.

Well bad luck that Saskatchewan people and my constituents sure don't need. This is bad luck, that in every single Liberal province, governed by Liberals, unemployment rate is double to more than triple the unemployment rate in Saskatchewan — Saskatchewan, which has for a number of years now enjoyed the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Lowest unemployment rate in Canada right here.

At the same time we've enjoyed some nice job creation, some growth. Not enough. And I'm the first to say that — not enough. We have 33,900 people in February of this year unemployed. Clearly it means we need some more jobs. That's why in the throne speech, job creation, number one.

Now I've dealt with the four Liberal provinces. I wonder what's happening in Liberal Canada? I mean, surely, surely Liberal Canada . . . It seems to me we had a Tory, Brian Mulroney, campaigned on jobs — pardon me, jobs, jobs, jobs. And did he deliver? He delivered unemployment, unemployment, unemployment.

Then the "red book" came out, and it seems to me that the Prime Minister of Canada campaigned on jobs, jobs, jobs. Well what happened year over year? Let's look. In Canada, in January . . . well, or February; you can take either one. But January the unemployment rate for Canada was 10.5 per cent. I'm talking January 1996. January 1997, 10.6 — higher unemployment. The same increase in February — higher unemployment.

Well this is the Liberals. Or is it the Tories? I've forgotten. Who was it that campaigned on jobs, jobs, jobs?

An Hon. Member: — Same old chicken.

Mr. Trew: — Same old chicken, my colleague points out. Same old chicken . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now what about us guys? What about us guys, the member for Wood River asks. Well in New Democrat socialist Saskatchewan we had job growth year over year of .9 per cent, taking us in February from an 8 per cent unemployment rate to a 7.2 per cent unemployment rate in 1997. I already talked about the fact that there are 6,900 more people working in Saskatchewan this February than last February. But a .9 per cent reduction in our unemployment.

Now some people might argue, well this is solely because of our geography. And to some extent I have to buy into that argument. But let's have a quick peek. What about Tory Alberta, where they just re-elected Ralph Klein again. Conservative Alberta. Their unemployment rate dropped .8 per cent to 7.4 per cent — .8 per cent to 7.4.

And, Mr. Speaker, we compare very, very favourably throughout the whole piece, throughout the whole piece.

Bucking the national trend, building a solid base, having taken over from the frogs in the cream can, as the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow called it — having taken over government at a very, very difficult time. Not just difficult for government; difficult for 1,024,900 Saskatchewan residents. People who have said, this is my home. This is where I want to live; this is where I want to earn my living; this is where I want to raise my family — 1,024,900 Saskatchewan people have made that choice.

It's for them that we're all here, and we should be ever mindful of that. It's why we're here dealing with the priorities that we have as government. And it's for those people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I point out the contrast that naturally the Liberal opposition would be silent about. The contrast between socialist Saskatchewan and our record of job creation, our record of reducing unemployment, versus the four Liberal provinces and Canada as a whole, all of whom have Liberal governments.

I think that it behoves us to be aware of what is going on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't for a second believe that somehow we have some right given to us by a higher power, by whatever you might want to call that higher power. I don't think we have that right. I don't think we have that right to govern. I think we have to earn the right to form government every single day.

And how do we earn that right? I think we earn that right by listening to our constituents and to the people of Saskatchewan as a whole; listening very carefully, acting wherever we can and doing what we can to make sure that our province has a solid foundation for a tremendous future — a future that I want my children, my grandchildren, to say yes, yes, Saskatchewan is home. This is my place of birth. This is the place I want to spend my years. Saskatchewan. Home.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted, more delighted this year than I have been and more excited this year than I have been for a number of years, in supporting the Speech from the Throne. It will be my pleasure to stand in my place when the time comes, and vote yes to this throne speech. I thank you for your attention, and it's again been my sincere honour to say these words that I believe represent the majority feeling of the good people of Regina Coronation Park. It's been my pleasure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. First of all I would like to congratulate and thank the mover from Swift Current, and a member from the Southeast Saskatoon, for a wonderful speech on the throne. Also, Deputy Speaker, I'd like to once again thank you for the rulings you've been doing in the House last year, and I think once again this year, and it's good to see you there.

And also to the Speaker. We need to thank him for the law and order that he does for us here in the House.

(1630)

An Hon. Member: — Not an easy job.

Mr. Langford: — Not an easy job, that's right. I would also

like to talk a little bit about my constituency as well, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, I also, like the member from Maple Creek, I've got Shellbrook now being able to watch us on TV and being able to turn us off whenever they want and turn us on whenever they want. And I'm sure with me here, that Birch Hills I should say, will be watching me all the time.

There's a little more on the constituency. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it's quite a big area. It covers, to the south, Birch Hills; over to the east, Muskoday, also White Fox; and the national park to the north. And to the west, we have the RM of P.A. (Prince Albert).

Saskatchewan Rivers is quite a diverse constituency. We have logging. We have pulp and paper. We also have processing, garlic. And we have people, farmers, growing potatoes, oilseeds. Some of them are in game farming, also cattle, cereal grain. So I want to say it's quite a diverse constituency. Also we have a lot of tourism in that area and fishing, hunting. So I want to say that I'm quite proud to be the member that represents that Saskatchewan Rivers constituency.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Well on a more . . . on a positive note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about what we've been able to accomplish in the last few years as government. Mr. Speaker, in 1996 economic indicators — retail sales \$5.7 billion the first 10 months of 1996, an increase of almost 8 per cent. Sales by recreational and motor vehicles dealers raised by 21 per cent over the same period last year. Housing starts risen by 5.6 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in the first nine months of 1996. Farmers harvesting an estimate of 28.5 million tonnes of major grains, which is about 23 per cent above 1995.

An Hon. Member: — If only the feds would help us get it to port.

Mr. Langford: — Right. Oil sales increased by almost 25 per cent in the first month of 1996. Uranium sales are up by more than 64 per cent in this same period. And manufacturing shipping raising by 8 per cent over the first 10 months of this year.

An Hon. Member: — That creates jobs. Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Hear, hear! Mr. Speaker, let's look at the federal budget. Deficit reduced on the backs, Mr. Speaker, deficit reduction on the backs of the unemployed, the poor, and the sick. No job creation strategy for the unemployed. Insufficient funding to adequately address the issue of child poverty. No commitment to reduce unemployment insurance premiums. Nothing, Mr. Speaker.

No further commitment for improvements to Canada's infrastructure program, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's . . . You know, if you look at what the provincial government has done over the last few years, it isn't something that we've just picked out of the sky. They've had a plan.

And I want to tell you, the federal government under infrastructure plan is only for the year before the election. So

we want to really look at that. And I want to stress that very well, because I think we'll see an election coming up in June. So we aren't going to be fooling the people. The people understand that this is an election promise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — There's no commitment to help boost economics of . . . the economy of rural Saskatchewan. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it's not only rural Saskatchewan, it's all of Canada. When it comes to rail line abandonment, they've not only taken it out on the Saskatchewan farmers but also all through the West. You bet.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal oppositions say that it is our responsibilities — our responsibilities to look after health, education, and social programs.

An Hon. Member: — Somebody has to. The Liberals aren't.

Mr. Langford: — Right.

I want to ask you something, Mr. Speaker. I asked the Liberals why, with their GST (goods and services tax), why have they . . . they have that in the "red book." Why haven't they did away with their GST? Broken promises, you bet.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition talks about transportation system. Well the opposition must have found the word, transportation. I haven't heard the Liberal opposition talk about transportation, the cost to the farmers, the cost to the rural municipalities — I haven't heard them say anything. Why? Because the federal Liberals are downloading onto the RMs and to the province.

Health care, Mr. Speaker. We have . . . I have in my constituency a couple of health centres. And I want to tell you, these health centres are there. They are looking after the needs in that community.

An Hon. Member: — By elected members.

Mr. Langford: — By elected members, that's right.

I want to say there is maybe some problems from time to time, but it's not that the people in that community and the elected health boards, that they can't work out.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said that, I want to say that I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour to speak in support of the throne speech, a throne speech which is one of optimism and hope for our province, investing in people, preparing for the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I am also honoured and pleased to be back in the legislature with my many colleagues from both sides of the House. And I wish to extend a special word of congratulations to my colleagues on this side of the House for all of their excellent speeches.

The members from Swift Current and Saskatoon east set high standards in moving and seconding the throne speech and that quality has been maintained by my other colleagues.

I also want to welcome the new member from North Battleford. Even though I would have preferred a New Democrat being elected, I truly do welcome you to the legislature.

What I do note that is truly important is that there was a by-election and it was timely, and that's in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan. This was not always the practice in the province. There was a previous administration in which by-elections were avoided and people of Saskatchewan were not always represented. So I welcome the member from North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, the democratic system is a system that must never be taken for granted. It's a privilege that should never be abused.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, your role is very important in preserving our legislature's parliamentary democracy for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I know how strongly you believe in bringing honour and respect to the institution of government. And I applaud you in your ongoing efforts to maintain order and decorum in the legislature. And my position as caucus Chair certainly gives me a little insight into the daunting task it can sometimes be in keeping order.

But I'd also like to express, Mr. Speaker, my appreciation for your travels around the province, visiting schools and community groups and explaining our parliamentary system of democracy. All too often, we take our democratic system for granted. And I believe each of us as elected members have a responsibility to rebuild the confidence of the people in our system, in our democratic system.

And even though our system does not always seem efficient and our debates may sometimes seem to be too confrontational, at the end of the day our decisions are made after a war of words, and not weapons, for the people of Saskatchewan.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, you have an important role, as do all members of this legislature, in our commitment to democratic principles and the British parliamentary system, a system that serves the people of Saskatchewan well.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech is about hope and optimism for the people of Saskatchewan, investing in people, investing in jobs, health care, education, redesigning our social programs, reducing child poverty, improving our highways and transportation systems, and still maintaining fiscal responsibility. Mr. Speaker, the priorities of this throne speech are the priorities of the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Mr. Speaker, I represent people who are hard-working, creative, adaptive, and resilient; people who believe in strong families and strong communities built on cooperation and compassion. And there is a tremendous spirit of pride and volunteerism in my constituency, in my communities. The constituency of

Weyburn-Big Muddy has a rich heritage, politically and historically, and it is truly an honour to be an elected representative of this area.

I am also honoured very often in my constituency, as the elected MLA, to attend many events. I'm always impressed with the hospitality, the caring and the pride my constituents have in their communities. The amount of volunteerism, the generosity, and the commitment to make their communities better places to live is truly commendable.

As the mayor of Weyburn always reminds me, Weyburn is the hospitality capital of Saskatchewan, and of course I concur. Mr. Speaker, in Weyburn annually the agriculture society sponsors a rural-urban night in which the farm community expresses their appreciation of the business sector in Weyburn, while the chamber of commerce reciprocates with a farmers' appreciation night in which the business community honours farmers, expressing their appreciation for the farm community. The constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy understand the importance of cooperation of rural and urban, working together for a stronger community.

Mr. Speaker, next week I will have the pleasure of honouring one of my constituents, Judy Buzowetsky, who is being presented with a Saskatchewan volunteerism award. Judy is very deserving of this award, and I look forward to the opportunity of congratulating her formally in the legislature next Wednesday so I will not list all her achievements today. I simply want to note that Judy exemplifies the type of people who make it an honour for me to represent my constituency — the type of people who make Saskatchewan the best place in the world in which to live.

Mr. Speaker, as you can tell I am very proud and I'm very honoured to represent the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and I'm committed to working hard for all of the constituents in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe strongly in strengthening the communication between the people of Saskatchewan and the government, and bringing government closer to the people. And I'm very pleased to announce that, for the first time, the legislative channel is being made available through Cablenet services in Weyburn on channel 50. This is good news for our area, and I certainly look forward to the comments from my constituents as they have the opportunity to watch our government at work in the legislature.

This fall and winter I held nine public accountability meetings in my constituency and I wish to thank the constituents who took part in this process. The meetings are one way in which I have the opportunity to hear their views and opinions, and those views then, I can better represent to the government.

It also gives me the opportunity to explain the role of government to my constituency. These meetings, and meetings with local governments, education boards, health board, community organizations, business groups, and the labour council group give me a better understanding of the issues and the concerns in our area.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what did I hear from the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy through this consultation process? Well I heard that jobs and the economy are a priority. I heard that health, education, and social programs must be protected. I heard that highways and transportation issues were important — especially as they pertain to the agriculture community.

(1645)

I heard that my constituents are supportive of our Crown corporations. I heard from the communities of Gladmar, Minton, Ceylon, Ogema, and Bengough, that they hope to have cellular service expanded to include their areas.

I heard my constituents tell me that they want to have continued balanced budgets, debt reduction, and they want no new taxes. They want our government to be effective, efficient, and accountable. And they want a government that consults and listens to their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the throne speech addresses the priority of my constituents. Our throne speech is about hope and optimism. Today, through cooperation, community, and shared effort, Saskatchewan is back on its feet. Five years of hard work and sacrifice by the people of Saskatchewan has paid off. We are rebuilding a stronger Saskatchewan together by investing in our province, our people, our future.

Mr. Speaker, the government's top priority is jobs. That means a partnership with working people, business, and the cooperative sector, building to create a growing, prosperous, fully employed economy. This means jobs for today and jobs for tomorrow.

The government's strategy is spelled out in the *Partnership for Growth* platform. This proposal was developed in partnership with business, cooperatives, and communities. Twenty-one REDA's (regional economic development authorities) have been established throughout the province. In my area, the South East REDA, SEREDA (South East Regional Economic Development Authority), has been working with the community of Weyburn and area to develop projects and job opportunities for our area.

And our economic strategy is working. Saskatchewan's economy is doing well. The 1996 economic review shows that our economic performance is among the best in Canada last year. The areas of strongest growth were agriculture, manufacturing, retail, and the resource sector. These are all important areas for my area of the province.

Retail sales in Saskatchewan increased by 8 per cent last year. This is the largest increase in the country. National retail sales averaged just 2.5 per cent in 1996. The jump in retail sales in Saskatchewan indicates that families and businesses are regaining confidence in our economy.

Other areas of increase last year: housing starts are up; oil sales were up; manufacturing shipments were up. And, Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. And what is even more important, or as important, is that more people are moving into the province, into Saskatchewan, than are moving

away.

These positive economic signs all show that Saskatchewan is on the right track, and we will continue to do well in the years ahead.

And we are seeing this economic optimism in Weyburn-Big Muddy. Just recently I attended the annual chamber of commerce banquet and there was a feeling of optimism. It was evident. They commended the government on including the chamber in its consultation process. There was talk of the recent expansion announcements of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Weyburn Inland Terminal, the Weyburn Co-op, Alcatel. The gas and oil industry has also been booming in the Weyburn area and is expected to continue.

As a matter of fact, in February there was more good news for Weyburn area and the province as the Energy and Mines released their report. The February sale of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights realized \$31 million in revenue for the province, and 78 per cent of that activity was in the Weyburn-Estevan area, of \$24.3 million.

Another record was set with the purchase of a parcel of land of about 65 hectares by Maverick Land Consultants for \$1,826,144 in the Weyburn Pool, south-east of Weyburn. This exceeded the previous record by about \$25,000. This is exciting news for Weyburn and for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is good to wake up and hear CFSL Radio, the Weyburn radio station, announcing the recent rise in real estate sales in Weyburn. And the recent headlines in the local papers read: One hundred per cent sales increase in real estate for January; Promising outlook for construction this spring; Many opportunities for 1997. This is good news for Saskatchewan and good news for Weyburn.

But we must continue to do more. And that is why I'm so glad to see in our throne speech address, the areas in which we are working on to improve — for our top priority for jobs; areas in which we want to improve expansion of trade; promoting expansion and diversification of our rural economy.

Some of the areas that have been touched on by other speakers is our new crop insurance program, a new hog marketing strategy, investment of \$100 million through the agri-food development and equity fund, defending a responsive Canadian Wheat Board. These are all important initiatives for agriculture and for our economy. We also are going to participate in an extended national infrastructure plan — very, very important initiatives for our economy.

Yes, we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, but that is not enough. We want full, meaningful employment for all the citizens of our province. Job creation and the economy is our top priority — investing in people.

The second priority of the throne speech is education and training — bridges to employment. This is also a priority of the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and of course a personal priority to me as a parent and as an educator. In 1996 we had the most extensive public consultation that our government has

undertaken. We did a K to 12 review called structuring of education . . . in our K to 12 structuring of education.

I attended the public meetings that were held throughout my area. There was one in Weyburn which included a number of school divisions around Weyburn. There was one in Radville that included the Radville School Division and St. Olivier. And one in Milestone which included the Prairie View School Division and the Wilcox School.

These consultations included teachers, trustees, parents, students, and other citizens. The meetings were well attended and people did really voice their concerns. And what we learned from these meetings is that education is a top priority with Saskatchewan people and with the people in my area; that public education is held in high regard; that teachers were respected and valued members of their communities; that students are the priority of our education system; and that decision making is a balance between local participation and Sask Ed.

We learned that parents in rural communities were especially concerned by the length of bus rides for their children, and about rural school closures. We learned that parents want the very best quality of education for their children, and that restructuring school divisions should be locally driven and that any administrative savings that result from restructuring should be directed to the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, our government listened to the people of Saskatchewan. They listened to the public consultation. And I want to commend the Minister of Education for her listening. She read all the briefs, she met with boards and teachers and parents, and she took a tremendous commitment in this review process. And at the end of the review we made our decisions and we did listen to what we heard from the people of Saskatchewan.

Our government will take leadership in school division restructuring only as needs are locally determined. We've established again a partnership. We made a commitment that any administrative savings from restructuring will be directed to the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in my speech, I believe government must be more open to the people. And I want to commend my colleagues as we have moved government out of Regina to the communities of Saskatchewan.

Last November the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Highways and Transportation, along with MLAs from Swift Current, Estevan, and Regina visited several communities in Weyburn-Big Muddy. We had an excellent day, meeting with the people of my constituency in Bengough, in Ogema, in Pangman, in Minton, in Radville, and in Weyburn.

The Minister of Education and my colleague from Swift Current and I visited schools in Ogema and Gladmar, and had the opportunity to meet with Radville and St. Olivier School Divisions. In Ogema we had an excellent tour of education in progress, from K to 12.

Our informative and gracious tour guides were Chad Hudson, the president of the SRC (student representative council), and Curtis Viergutz, the vice-president of the SRC. And it was exciting to see the enthusiasm of the teachers and of the students. We saw computer labs in operation. We saw the wellness program, part of the new curriculum being used. The students talked in such ways in which they weren't afraid of change and were looking forward to the opportunities that were for them in the future.

When we visited the division 1 and 2 we had two young tour guides, Karen Webb and Caylin Hill. And again we saw such an excitement in learning. We saw special education programs. We saw students becoming acquainted with computer stations. We saw wonderful literary displays of Saskatchewan authors. We saw such a pride and such an enthusiasm for learning.

In Gladmar we also saw a school of tremendous activity — excellent science projects, and long-distance education delivering a psychology class to the students in Gladmar from Campbell Collegiate, here in Regina. Long-distance education — some of our technologies can help provide the best of education to all our students right throughout this province.

In Weyburn, the Minister of Education and I visited a group at the junior high at St. Mike's. We sat in on a class in which there was group learning and an awareness session, and we just again marvelled at the responsibility and the participation of the students.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Weyburn Comprehensive School with you, Mr. Speaker, as you presented the importance of our parliamentary and democratic system to the students.

In all of these outreaches, I was impressed with the quality of programs, the enthusiasm of the teachers and students. We do have much to be proud of of our youth and our education system here in Saskatchewan. It's an excellent system.

Does it continue to need to evolve, to get better? Yes, it does. And we need to provide education beyond the K to 12 system, because education is a challenge in which we all have to become lifelong learners. Education does not end with grade 12. We all know that we must have a post-secondary system which is responsive to the challenges we face in an ever-changing technological world.

And I believe our post-secondary system is one also to be very, very proud of. We have regional colleges, we have SIAST, we have our universities, all providing a major role in training and education of the people of Saskatchewan.

I am also impressed with the number of programs that the Southeast Regional College delivers to the south-east part of Saskatchewan. The Southeast Regional College must be commended for how responsive they are to the needs of the community and the people in our area.

Mr. Speaker, education is a top priority of the throne speech; it's a top priority for Saskatchewan.

I can see that the time is coming close, that I should be adjourning then the debate at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

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