

EVENING SITTING

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 — National Transportation Policy

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, just to go over a little . . . a few of my remarks before the supper break, I'd like to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Start from the beginning.

Mr. Johnson: — Well that would be interesting, but I won't go through everything there because some of the members that started on this particular debate, I think once over will be good enough for them.

Mr. Speaker, as I'd indicated previously, that this motion by the member from Saskatoon is one that impacts on the federal Liberal government's policies and especially on that policy in regards to funding the programs that they put forward.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that you can say about the federal Liberal government — and in saying that about the federal Liberals you also say it about the policy, about the opposition Liberals in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker — is that for the most part they are prone to moving towards policies which are very short term and in that sense cover up the lack of a long-term policy or program that they have.

One only needs to look at the infrastructure program that they started out with here a number of years ago, about four years ago, that to begin with was for two years and then when they moved on, they brought it in for only a single year. Whereas at the same time as they are bringing into the province of Saskatchewan a program that only cost them \$11 million, infrastructure, which I believe will mostly be used in transportation and road construction in this province, they removed subsidies through the Crow rate subsidy of something over \$300 million. So what it is, is it's a game of shuffling the cards around and always coming up with the card that is a short-term program card and less funds.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is something that indicates that we are not going to receive from the federal Liberals or haven't seen from the federal Liberal government any policies that have any length of time.

Now I have here, Mr. Speaker, two pieces of information related to news releases and it says, the headline on the one says, "Goodale promises backlog penalties" and in doing that he says, "Goodale said there is a need to be more responsive and accountability by all players in the industry."

I think that's fairly clear, Mr. Speaker. He isn't singling out any one group for any punitive action more or less than another group, and he isn't singling out any one group that would not receive it. But one day later, actually at 11 o'clock, it says officials in the office of the federal agricultural minister say Goodale's remarks have been misinterpreted when coming up with an account for what was really going to take place to bring the railways . . . and make the railways responsive and

accountable for what they are doing or not doing.

Mr. Speaker, we have here the minister saying that no, he was misinterpreted.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I find that that type of remark by the federal minister indicates where the whole Liberal government is on policy — nothing that is going to have any lengthy time; it's going to be something that is short term, keyed on votes, and then disappear shortly after. And the members opposite, in their remarks related to the resolution, have indicated that they think that that's the direction that the Liberal Party should go in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just to indicate . . . add a few more details to what has taken place related to rail transportation. The CTA or the Canadian Transportation Agency last week, I believe — I'm not sure of the exact date — made some changes that said that the railroads' cost of capital for hauling grain would be the same as the cost of capital for any other item. And in doing so, the adjustment would result in a maximum freight rate scale for grain increasing some 30 or 40 cents per tonne, impacting about 15 million on western Canadian farmers. And, Mr. Speaker, this comes under the federal Liberal policies, which are: number one, deregulating transportation; and number two, following the rules of . . . (inaudible) . . . Now, Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberals and their cousins here in Saskatchewan are prone to doing these particular things — short term and reducing the support for the agricultural community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this change then later on . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are indicating that what the federal government is doing is just underfunding their responsibility in rail transportation. And I agree with them that that's what they're doing.

If you look at the BNA Act (British North America Act) that basically is the constitution for the Canadian government system — both federal and provincial — the breakdown there says which of the government levels is responsible for what. And in this particular case the federal Liberal government is not accepting the responsibility, Mr. Speaker, that it has to maintain good rail service, and thereby keep the country together.

I could say that probably one of the things that kept the Roman Empire together, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that they built roads and all the roads led to Rome. Well, Mr. Speaker, this federal Liberal government is destroying the roads that were built, that did keep this country together, and you will see the support that is coming from the members opposite on this indicates that they are fully aware of what is happening and are supporting that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool is asking for is that they're calling on the railways to dedicate some crews, locomotives, cars, and track necessary to get the grain moving. And I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, the farm community needs someone to start doing that. It used to be that that responsibility could be tagged on to the federal government. After their abdication of what they were responsible for, there appears to be no one in the system that is responsible for maintaining a system in Canada that moves the

grain out to the coast.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we accept that the federal government is moving away from its responsibility in providing rail service to the farm community, then we should take a look at it and decide what is really taking place. And, Mr. Speaker, what is taking place in this regard is that the federal government is offloading that responsibility onto the provincial government and the local people in the community. And in doing so, they're transferring costs to the province.

Now it's indicated from the members opposite that this is exactly the same as what is happening in the province of Saskatchewan. But I'd like to disagree with the members opposite because what is taking place in Saskatchewan has been that when there was a deficit created and a huge debt with its interest payments of something over 800 million a year, there was less funds going to the municipalities and to the school divisions. And in that sense everyone was accepting the responsibility for paying some of the cost that the previous Conservative government left in this province. Everybody was picking up their share of the cost.

But in this particular budget, as the members opposite full well know, that now that there is some area or window of expansion in the economic conditions of the province of Saskatchewan, we are starting to put some money back in to that. Mr. Speaker, I don't see that taking place with the federal government. In fact what I do see is that they're continuing to increase the debt. And when they are taking away funding to the provinces in transportation, they're doing it in a manner that means that it will never come back that way because they're literally cutting off and getting rid of the rail transportation system totally and replacing it with simply short-term, single-year funding if they replace anything at all.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Highways . . . I should say, Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech debate on the throne speech, this government indicated that it was going to move a transportation strategy, an integrated transportation strategy, into place. And an important part of that strategy will be planning our transportation system in partnership with industry, communities, and local people to ensure that we have a system that will meet the needs of the future.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for this motion is that quite frankly the federal government in their movement away from regulating rail transportation did not do anything like that — to put in place a system that would meet the needs well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, sometime later on in this session we will be seeing a new transportation Act which will give some assistance to putting together this planning into the future.

As well we've made a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to put \$2.5 billion over the next 10 years into the highways and roads in the province of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, the member opposite indicates that he doesn't think that the numbers are very high. Most of the afternoon we heard some complaints from the previous speaker that they had a highway that had 56 or 58 vehicles on it per day and, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that there are some driveways

where you have two teenage kids in the family would be able to meet that particular number of vehicles over them in a given day and not be considered anything more than just a lane.

Mr. Speaker, what is taking place in the area of transportation is that as you move the costs away from the federal government onto the province, you will therefore impact very severely the economic conditions of the agricultural community.

(1915)

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite want a run-down of some of the last years of fuel tax. For two years, Mr. Speaker, there was no fuel tax collected at all which started some of the debt that this province has because they didn't collect it; and I realize that the member that brought this up is not of the political party that caused it; he's not a Conservative. But what he should understand is that when he looks at the revenues and that for the province of Saskatchewan and the impact on the expenditures of it — and I happen to have here, Mr. Speaker, the budget address that says *Investing in People* — indicates to me that the transfers from the federal government, the federal Liberal government, have dropped to \$650 million.

Mr. Speaker, in 1990 that figure was about \$1.6 billion. So quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, over a period of five years we've seen a drop of almost \$1 billion of transfer payments from the federal government, and it is those kind of funds, those drops in funds, have to be picked up some place else if we're going to maintain education and health care in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what the people in this province wanted the priority of money spent on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the backlog of grain that the deregulation and the offloading and the inability or the lack of desire of the federal government to meet their responsibilities continues on today. It's not something that can be blamed on cold weather. It's not something that can be blamed upon the farmers. It's not something that can be blamed upon the port handlers.

This particular lack of movement of grain, there's only one place where you can blame it. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that that is the federal Liberal government, who've decided that they want to deregulate and get out of the industry and out of the rail industry and get away from the responsibility that is inherent in the structure of this country, of the federal government managing and looking after the rails.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Wheat Pool has a news release out which says that since the grain handling companies implemented a seven-day-a-week operation at the Port of Vancouver, allocated the limited cars supply offered by the railways each week to high through-put and main-line facilities, and began trucking and loading programs to move the grain from facilities on the unused branch lines, they still haven't come up to speed of moving this year's crop.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you and to other members of the House that I'm going to be supporting this resolution and voting for it when it comes to vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in the debate this evening and listen to the hypocrisy come from across the floor regarding a national transportation policy as it relates to the federal government of the day.

I recall back in 1991 as we were sitting around the kitchen table one night on my farm with some friends, and we were listening to the then transportation — or the Agriculture minister of the day, Rosetown-Biggar — speaking of how he was about to pass retroactive legislation regarding the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program and the discussion quickly went to: looks like we have little to look forward to from this government over the next four years. Unfortunately that's turned into the second term and I don't think those opinions have changed.

The members' opposite narrow view of the transportation policy of this province is greatly reflected in this past budget, Mr. Deputy Chair . . . Deputy Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, is reflected in the last budget.

Again back to 1991 when almost everyone in the province, including all the farmers and most politicians — except I think those across the floor — realized that things were changing. We were seeing things change on the farm; we were seeing things change the way we transport our grain; we're seeing much less efficiency and coordination by the grain companies in moving our product to port, and certainly within the system within the province. To this day we're still seeing tremendous amounts of product being moved from elevator to elevator, which makes very little sense, Mr. Speaker.

The problem being there, of course, as I said, is the lack of coordination in the transportation system right from the small towns, the small elevators, through to these large cement elevators right to port.

So everyone recognized, Mr. Speaker, that there were problems a way back then. This government came to power in 1991, in the fall of 1991, and you would have thought that one of the first things that they would want to start working on would be a major transportation plan for the province of Saskatchewan. Coupled with that you would have thought they'd want to coordinate a plan, their plan from the province, with the federal government of the day. Did that happen? No, it didn't happen. And it didn't happen in 1992, it didn't happen in 1993, it didn't happen in 1994, and it sure hasn't happened in 1995 when they got re-elected and when I got elected.

And one of the first things . . . As the critic for Transportation and Highways, I called on the government to introduce a transportation plan for this province. And did they do it? No they didn't. They took some time to think about it. And now finally the government is saying, oh my heavens, my goodness gracious, we're in a problem. Our roads are full of potholes, people complaining from east to west, from north to south — what's happened to our highways. No commitment to the highways, no commitment to transportation, no commitment to anything, Mr. Speaker.

And now today we hear the members opposite talking about a national transportation plan. Of course a national transportation plan makes sense and we need that. We also need a transportation plan for our province, and we need leadership. And who do you think should provide it, Mr. Speaker? I would think that the provincial government should provide that leadership. But do we have that? No. We have the members condemning the federal government for a lack of a plan when indeed the province does not have a plan at all.

Mr. Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan everything we do is based on travel. We go to get the mail, we have to travel on a road. Whether it's a highway, whether it's a municipal road, we have to travel on a road. We're getting to the point, Mr. Speaker, where the farmers in my area are complaining because of people driving in the field because the roads are impassable. The roads are so rough that people are saying, I should drive on the field because it's much smoother.

Now that certainly isn't the solution. That's certainly not the one that I hope our Transportation minister is thinking about implementing and saying, maybe we don't need any roads at all.

So in rural Saskatchewan, everything is based on travel, based on roads, and still no commitment. As I look in the provincial budget, Mr. Speaker, I see \$56 million dedicated to total for construction of transportation system — 56 million. I think to use the minister's figures of a million dollars per mile, that relates to about 56 miles of highway in the province — not very much in a massive province like we've got with the massive problems that we've seen in road deterioration and the changing of traffic flows in this province.

Sure, some of that can be blamed on the federal transportation system . . . federal transportation plan, or lack of, and the federal government. But however, there has to be a commitment from within the province, Mr. Speaker, to a transportation system, to a province that so desperately depends on transporting their products to and from market and across the piece.

Now the whole issue of the change in the way we do things in Saskatchewan is not unlike many of the other provinces in Canada. Things are changing at a rapid pace and unfortunately this government is not keeping pace with changes.

Mr. Speaker, if I could, one of the things as well that I notice was missing from the budget was the lack of commitment as it pertains to a transportation strategy, and as it pertains to our railway system. Now we all know the massive miles of railroad that are being abandoned in this province, and we also know that once these rail lines are abandoned, that they come under provincial jurisdiction. So it seemed to be prudent for our provincial government to say, all right, these lines are going to be abandoned; we're going to take some action. Once they become abandoned, we're going to work with our people, our farmers, our elevator companies, our municipal governments, to come up with a plan as to where we're going to ensure that these rail lines are maintained, or where we're going to have to build some pretty massive, heavy highways.

Mr. Chairman, that isn't happening. And I mentioned in the

House a couple of weeks ago about the dangers of what can happen when some of these rail lines are abandoned. What happens to the communities that are affected by these rail lines and what happens to the people that live in these communities?

And, Mr. Chairman, if I might, I'd like to talk for a minute about a few of the communities that I'm familiar with where the rail lines are slated to be abandoned. The line that's called the Imperial subdivision of course really starts at the community of Watrous, which is in the riding of the present Agriculture minister's riding, and it flows on down through what used to be Amazon and to Simpson, which is still in the Agriculture minister's riding, and then it enters my riding at Imperial on down to Stalwart, to Liberty, to Penzance, to Holdfast, and eventually it ran to Dilke, which was abandoned many, many years ago.

Now this line has been slated for abandonment by Canadian National Railways. And for years and years my father and our older friends fought to save that rail line from abandonment from the rail line, from the tyranny of those dreaded national rail line companies.

The problem that we're seeing now with a lot of these rail lines, Mr. Speaker, is that we're not only having to fight the rail line companies, we're having to fight the elevator companies. The elevator companies are heading for the borders of this province, to the cement terminals, faster than fleas off a dead dog, if I may use that phrase. And so now our problem is twofold. How do we maintain, we maintain . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . But anyway our problem is twofold. The line is up for abandonment, and everyone wants to move off it, and the Canadian National is not interested, as I understand it, in transferring the line or selling it.

So what happens to the town of Simpson that's in the Minister of Agriculture's own riding, in terms of local property taxes? Mr. Speaker, in the town of Simpson, that community stands to lose about \$19,000 a year in taxes once the elevator companies have moved out of Simpson. How do they cope — small town of 300 people?

Mr. Speaker, in the town of Imperial we're going to see a loss of in excess of \$16,000 a year in property taxes. How's a community of 400 people cope with that loss of tax revenue? Move on down the line to my home town, Mr. Speaker, of Liberty. We're looking at about a \$14,000 a year tax bill loss.

We can move on down to Holdfast — and the list goes on and on — in Holdfast we're looking at 13, \$14,000 a year for one elevator that is still there of property taxes being lost.

Now if you look at the town of Imperial, Mr. Speaker, what happens when those elevators are gone. I think in the town of Imperial right now we have something like four families employed in those elevators. Of those four families, children attend our school in Imperial — six, seven children out of those families that will be lost. What happens, Mr. Speaker . . . in our town presently we have two grocery stores. When you lose four or five families, does that jeopardize one of the stores?

Of course we have probably the envy of Saskatchewan in a

health centre in Imperial that we fought hard to maintain and are maintaining and will maintain that as long as the need is there, Mr. Speaker, and I don't see an end to that. How long can we maintain that once we lose our drugstore because the communities aren't there, the people of the community are moving out. If we lose our doctor because there isn't enough business to keep him there, we lose the drugstore. It doesn't stop, Mr. Speaker.

(1930)

What happens to our manufacturing plant? If we lose a store, if we lose the drugstore, if we lose a doctor, if we should lose our health centre, will anybody want to come to Imperial to work in a manufacturing plant at Rite Way where there's no services? I think not, Mr. Speaker. The whole point of infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan is key to its survival and certainly the transportation system is one of those.

Mr. Speaker, most recently Canadian Pacific Railways announced some more abandonments and unfortunately one of those lines is on the west side of my constituency, and it's the line that runs from Broderick to Moose Jaw. Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many communities along that line as well that will be affected in loss of tax revenues if the rail line is abandoned. Now this rail line is up for transfer and hopefully that it can get transferred and that a short-line rail company will take a look at it.

But without some leadership from our provincial government to take a leadership role and say yes, we want to maintain that line; we're going to do everything we can; we're not going to let it be abandoned; we're going to ensure that those elevator companies are not going to be able to tear down their elevators and move out faster than we can stop, and thus would make a short-line rail very unfeasible — without that assistance, without that leadership, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be awful tough for communities like Broderick or Loreburn or Strongfield or Elbow or Marquis to maintain that rail line or turn it into a short-line feasible project.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I might, just to run through quickly a few of those communities and what a loss in tax revenue means to those communities as figures that I have been able to obtain and that some of the communities have provided for us. We look, for example, in the community of Eyebrow; there's about 37 or \$38,000 a year taxes, local taxes that will be lost if that rail line goes and their elevator closes. Hawarden, Strongfield, Loreburn, in excess of \$9,000 a year in taxes, Mr. Speaker.

Here's Elbow — now Elbow's a great place to talk about and I'd like to talk about Elbow for a few minutes. Now as you all know, Elbow is on the edge of Lake Diefenbaker and the Saskatchewan River. And of course, I'm sure that many of the members opposite have gone to the Harbor Golf Club near Elbow to golf, one of the most renowned golf courses in Saskatchewan, one of the best kept golf courses in the province. And so they realize the value to the community of that golf course. As well as the golf course, it's also a tremendous resort area.

Now I could quote you at length, Mr. Speaker, from articles

from the mayor of Elbow, from the surrounding RMs (rural municipality), from their business group, from their tourist group, talking about the lack of a commitment by this government to a road system to get the people, get the traffic, into the resort area available.

I hear horror stories all summer long, all last summer, of huge, expensive motor homes, boats, trailers, campers, you name it, coming in and vowing never to come back because they would not have to traverse the roads that they do to get there. The potholes — they just said never again, we'll not come back.

And this is a major concern to the people of Elbow and the community and certainly the business people there such as the mayor of Elbow, who runs the marina there. His livelihood is based on attracting people in — tourists into that community — and the roads are in such tremendously tough shape that they can't get there and so his business is declining.

Now back to the town of Elbow itself and the taxes that will be lost, Mr. Speaker. In excess of \$16,000 in business taxes that will be lost to that community if the rail line is gone, not to mention the same scenario as I indicated for on the Imperial subdivision line of businesses that will be lost, as well as people moving away because there are no services.

So why won't this government, why won't the minister responsible for Highways and Transportation, take some responsibility for what's happening in the province? Why won't he take a leadership role and say yes, I'm going to do whatever I can to maintain these services in rural Saskatchewan. I'm going to get out there, roll up my sleeves, and I'm going to fight with the mayor of Elbow, with the mayor of Imperial, with the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Arm River, from all those people.

So let's get to work here and let's get a transportation system in this province — a transportation policy that makes some sense — a transportation policy in this province that reflects what the people of the province want. Not what some bureaucrat wants, not what some political philosophy might dictate, but what the people of the province actually want and the people of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, I could go on and on about different communities. And certainly these are only two of the branch lines that are up for abandonment and there are many, many more right across the province. But I'll let some of the other members talk about their own particular instances. And I hope that the members across have the foresight to stand up and speak for their constituents, and how the rail lines affect, how the rail lines affect their communities and what the loss of them can mean.

But not to leave out the rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker — as I look at some of the rural municipalities that are involved in the rail line from Broderick to Moose Jaw — I see the RM of Rudy, the RM of Loreburn, the RM of Huron, the RM of Eyebrow, the RM of Marquis, and the total revenues for the taxes that will be lost there if this rail line should go is in excess of \$25,000 a year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you couple that with the devastating cuts that this government has made to municipalities right across this province, I'm not sure whether there'll be any of them left or not.

They talk about 30 per cent reduction, Mr. Speaker, in funding. Now we're gathering information daily by the dozens of municipalities that are telling us that the cuts are more like 50, 60 per cent. Our local municipality at home is being cut something in the order of 55 per cent of their funding. You couple that with these losses and I don't know how the municipality will survive. How will they ever build another gravel road to take the traffic that's getting off the highways because they're in such terrible shape?

One of the RM councils last year . . . When we were out visiting some of the municipalities last summer, one of the RM councillors from the RM that neighbours Highway 44 . . . and of course I'm sure the members all realize that Highway 44 runs from Davidson across to Loreburn to No. 19, and of course now it's half gravel — it's half potholes and half gravel. And so the minister is going to have to make a decision there as to whether he's going to completely rip up the road or whether he's going to re-blacktop the half that's gravelled.

But one of the concerns that the councillor that I talked to had, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that because of Highway 44 is in such disastrous shape, and the trucks were pounding it out, they were constantly moving on to the RM gravel roads. And as they moved to one road and pounded it out, Mr. Speaker, then they'd move a mile over to the next one and they'd pound that out, and they'd move over and they'd pound the next one out.

So my question would be to the Minister of Highways, is how — and this government — is how they expect the RMs to maintain the rural road system, the gravel road system, when they've slashed our funding by 50 per cent or more in some cases, by not taking a leadership role in ensuring that we have short-line railroads in this province where they'd make sense, to ensure that the tax base is not eroded once again.

And I'd asked the minister that sometime, Mr. Speaker, if he would stand up in Executive Council for the people of rural Saskatchewan and say hey, we need some roads. \$56 million is not enough — \$56 million for our crumbling infrastructure road system is not nearly enough.

However I do notice, Mr. Speaker, that as they continue to condemn the federal government I notice that in the budget of course that here again we have the Canada-Saskatchewan ag infrastructure program. Now I don't know who actually is paying Canada's share, but I think it must be those nasty feds — I'm not sure, but I guess they are. And so here's some money coming from the federal government — it's kind of like biting the hand that feeds you.

This government continues to criticize the federal government, and in the meantime their hand is out. They're saying okay; come, feds, send some money over. And the federal government, the great people that they are, are sending some money over. They're sending money, and here is another example in the Canada-Saskatchewan ag infrastructure

program, Mr. Speaker, of some more money, another \$11 million. That's about a quarter of the total construction budget this province has, Mr. Speaker.

Now if this government isn't committed to a provincial strategy, one that we've called for, one that I've been calling on them for since I got elected, one that brings together provincial government, of course the federal government, our municipal governments, the local communities, the elevator companies and the rail lines . . . and sit down and say okay, we need to have a plan, and we are going to come up with one. And if they're not prepared to do that — and they haven't been for the last six years since the NDP (New Democratic Party) have been in power — then maybe it's time they moved aside.

The people out there are certainly saying, hey if they're not capable of making a decision, putting a plan together, then move aside. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that in the next provincial election that we see that happen. And there are many people who are willing to work towards those ends I'm sure.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here tonight and as there are people from across this province watching the session tonight — certainly there are people from my constituency watching — I want the members opposite to know that what I'm talking about tonight is not just my own personal view. It's what people are telling me.

It's what farmers, whether it be from Loreburn or Broderick or Central Butte or Holdfast or Bethune or Simpson or you name it . . . (inaudible) . . . Yes, Simpson from the Minister of Agriculture's riding. They're talking to me saying, hey we have more input through you than we do through our own minister. What can you do? You got to get some sense into this government; that they have to come out with a transportation strategy, one that makes some sense, one that will help rural Saskatchewan survive.

So I hope that the members opposite will listen. I know the Transportation minister is very eager and willing to work with us, and I would challenge the government that now is the time to get out and come up with a strategy. Work with the municipalities. Work with the federal government. Work with the people of this province, and come up with a transportation strategy, Mr. Speaker.

And I would ask once and for all that if the members opposite would quit playing politics for once with the lives of rural Saskatchewan people and get down to the business at hand, we'd have a much better province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker. I'm glad to enter into this debate about the transportation. We have heard this morning from our Agriculture federal minister, Ralph Goodale, agree finally, that the penalties should lie on the transportation railroad companies.

But, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the federal minister's office is saying, sorry, the minister didn't really mean it. Mr. Speaker or

Deputy Deputy Speaker, we are not surprised. This is just part of the sidestep the federal Liberals are doing. The federal Liberals would sooner make farmers pay the demurrage charge for shipping their grain to port than they would have the railroad companies pay.

(1945)

On the other hand, the federal minister is saying that the railroad companies should be rewarded through bonuses for doing their job, but we know farmers are paying railroads enough to have their grains moved to ports now.

We do not believe, however, that the railroads are the only problems leading to the current situation. We feel that the legislative framework that the federal government inherited in the transportation Act could have a major factor in the current situation. All three prairie provinces made it clear when the CTA was introduced that they believed that the legislative . . . shift the balance of power far too much to favour the interests of railroads. We warned the federal government that there would be negative consequences to the legislation. Now we are seeing the results.

As such, we believe that rather than an ad hoc solution by the federal government, it would be better to hold an independent inquiry across all of the provinces in this system. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that the backlog in the grain-handling system clearly demonstrates that the federal move to deregulate the grain-handling system has been a failure. The four western provinces have called on the federal government to hold an inquiry into the grain blockage. Mr. Speaker, farmers cannot afford to let their grain sit in their bins. They cannot afford another disruption, and our reputation as a reliable supplier of grain to the world has already been tarnished enough.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the federal government to join with our provincial minister, come up with a national highways transportation plan — a long-term, national plan, Mr. Speaker. This is the only country that has no national plan. Also, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, we need to look at the short-lines, but the federal Liberals are abandoning railroads faster than the regional transportation system can get some consultation in their region. Yet the provincial Liberals asked the provincial government to . . . or the federal government to put a two-year ban on removing rail beds and siding from across lines.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Liberal members to talk to your brothers and sisters in Ottawa to hold off from railroad abandonment. Give the committees time to look at their local transportation. Mr. Speaker, the opposition will attempt to make the case that the Government of Saskatchewan is causing rail abandonment because of its restrictive labour legislation.

I am the member . . . I know the members from both the parties opposite attended the short rail conference supported by DHT (Department of Highways and Transportation), SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association). Unfortunately they didn't learn a thing when they were there. Had they stayed to the very end, they would have been around when Sinclair Harrison called for a vote on the question — on

Saskatchewan short-line rail friendly. But roughly a two-third majority, conference delegates, said yes, we are short-line rail friendly. After weighing all the evidence and listening to all the speakers, the delegates concluded that opposition was wrong. Why can't they accept that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — The members opposite continue to try to blame the government for the actions taken by their federal cousins. All three prairie provinces fought the federal government, government CTA (Canadian Transportation Agency) because they knew it would result in abandonment. August '95 the provinces made joint submissions to the House of Commons standing committee. March '95 appeared before House of Commons standing committee on transportation. April '96 appeared before the Senate standing committee on transportation and communications. What did the opposition . . . commented to the federal cousins on the wonderful job they were doing. You couldn't avoid your responsibilities on this one.

July 1, Mr. Speaker, the federal transportation Act proclaimed, making it easier for railways to transfer on unwanted rail lines. CN's (Canadian National) three-year plan identifies 300 miles of rail lines in Saskatchewan to be abandoned: Arborfield, Mr. Speaker, 19.4 miles; Big River 5.2 miles; Cudworth 46.6 miles. Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to say is this is just the start of the rail line abandonment.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I ask the federal government to listen to the provincial government, SARM, farmers, and quit pulling out lines until the committees have time to look at short-lines. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, it's going to be a hard act to follow the member for Saskatchewan Rivers but I'll do my best. The motion that's on the floor, Mr. Speaker, and when we take it piece by piece I think we, as a whole, support it.

I'd like to read through it though and just kind of break it down into sections. It says that this Assembly urged the federal Liberal government to develop a comprehensive national transportation policy. Agreed. That's where we're both . . . I think every party in here probably agrees it should have been done. Needs to be done. And we have urged them to get on board and do this, and we hope they take our advice and yours, and the third party's.

I would like to carry on though and it says, in cooperation with all levels of government. Now that one is really hard for me to bite because knowing that the Minister of Municipal of Government over there agrees with what I'm about to say — that there has never been much cooperation from the government on that side since '91 when it was elected, with any form of government in this province or country. And I'm talking about urban, rural, or whatever; there is absolutely no cooperation. Because if there was we wouldn't have seen downloading since 1991 before this year to the tune of 50 per cent of the funding that we're getting, and now this year on top

of that another 30 per cent. To me that would be like starving your kids and then telling them when they finally did grow up, I'm just trying to cooperate with you and see you get through. And they've just about starved to death. And that's what you people are doing to all forms of municipal government.

And then it goes on to say, and that it provide funding to the program. And doesn't it sound familiar from the members opposite? It will provide funding, and I presume "it" means the federal government because this government does not fund roads of any kind in this province. All we have to do is see the conditions of our highways.

The Minister of Highways would probably agree with me that it better fund something pretty quick because we're in bad shape when it comes to our roads. But I would say to the members opposite, if we're going to wait for ever for "it" to do it, it may never get done. Why don't we take the leadership role and do it ourselves in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when a government comes out and said they want to do something in cooperation with everyone else and they put \$30 million of new money in, at first I congratulate the Minister of Highways and the government. And then I look to see where it came from. And I look on the other side, and they took 29 million out of Municipal Government. So they actually put a million dollars into it, and with inflation . . . that won't even cover inflation. Actually it should be actually downright embarrassing to the Minister of Highways that he should even bother mentioning in the budget that they would put a whole million dollars of new money into highways.

To the people in Kamsack, Mr. Speaker, that drive No. 8 and 80 Highway . . . and when it rains their cars kind of float from one side to the other. Then you go from Wroxton to Churchbridge, and you don't have that problem because there's so many holes the water drains away. It doesn't sit in the ruts.

You go on from Churchbridge, and you go to Langenburg down to Spy Hill, and really neither problem happens because the road from one side . . . I'll tell you how bad it is, Mr. Minister, is that the highway truck that paints the centre line has got big curves in the middle of the road because his truck is so unlevel as he's trying to paint the line. That's how bad it is on that road.

Then we can go over then to a little place from Atwater, and they've got a paved surface out to 22 Highway, and it was impassable for about two months this year. So yes, I believe, to the member that presented this motion, we definitely need cooperation. But I would suggest it should start on the other side.

Maybe just to reiterate what I was saying here before . . . and I'd like to go through some numbers here from '91 and bring them right up to the date of this last budget. But the amount of money spent on maintenance and construction for highways was about 139 million, which represented \$15.63 million less than the year before. We go to '92-93 which was . . . it's down a bit, 113 million nine seventy-eight, down 41 million two ninety-eight, if you add the two together. '93-94, 124 million spent on highways, maintenance, and construction — 31.126 million more shortfall — and the list goes on. '94: 118 million.

And this just keeps going down and down and down.

And I guess the message I'm trying to get to the members opposite is that the million dollars of new money that you put into highways this year is a far cry less than the \$187 million you cut since 1991 when you came to power. You have a bit of a shortfall there of \$186 million. So don't wait for me to applaud the million dollars that you put into highways.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can see why, with the overall principle of the motion that was presented here . . . it has good merit to it, yes. The federal government should be getting on the ball here and doing something about this. But yes, this government should be joining with them, taking a leadership role, and — if nothing else — embarrass the federal government into helping you. But if you wait for them to do it, we may wait a long time. We're not sure, and we cannot afford to wait.

So Mr. Speaker, there's so many reasons why, I guess, we urge the government and the federal government to come out with a transportation policy. The short-line rails is a good example, and we've talked on that. And I think the Minister of Transportation agrees with us that a leadership role has to be taken in this respect. And if the rail line abandonment is happening, when they are abandoned, that falls under the jurisdiction of this government. And once again we are asking this government to take a leadership role. Don't wait for somebody else to do it. You do it, and let's help the people out there that are trying to start short-line rail companies.

And a few of the ways you can do that is to deal with the successor rights. That's one of the main problems.

Another one is the purchasing of the rail beds, which may be an impossibility if the rail companies feel that competition may be not to their liking and they want to put a high price on this. Maybe these people out there need your assistance to negotiate. So that's another area that they do.

I think another big area that we're falling down in this province right now is that companies like Sask Wheat Pool — for that matter, any big company out there — is coming along, and they're building an inland terminal or a brand-new elevator anywhere they choose in this province. And they're doing that for one reason — because we do not have a national or a provincial transportation policy. So what happens? They plop it in the middle of an RM that has no roads to that specific spot. And with the downloading that you've done to RMs, they have to come up with this money on their own.

Why don't we get a transportation policy that when some company comes out to build a new terminal or an inland terminal, that it has to fit with the policy we have in place and not cost the municipal governments out there thousands and thousands of dollars to build new roads into these facilities all because somebody wouldn't take a leadership role. And I'm afraid being the government, I have to point the finger at you.

So, Mr. Speaker, although I support the concept of what we're doing here and I feel there's a great need for it, I think there is a great deal of hypocrisy on the other side pointing the finger at

someone else. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(2000)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. The two preceding speeches were almost so good that a fellow could probably stand up and say ditto, but that wouldn't be in the best interests of good debate and of the parliamentary process that we're involved in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — As we did, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the budget, we took a look at it. We assessed it for what it was. We didn't try to read between the lines. We didn't try to judge it on what wasn't in it. We took it at face value, and we read what was there. We liked what we saw, and we supported it.

We take a look at this motion. We know there's lots missing. We know there's lots not covered. But we're not here to judge that. We're here to judge what's written on the paper for this particular motion, and we support that principle. We're not afraid to stand up in our party and support those things that we think are right.

However we do want to take this opportunity, because in this process that we are involved with we have the opportunity, to try to show to the government how they can expand their role and even do a better job. And we want to be constructive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is a subject that is near and dear to all of our hearts and will affect every person in a land-locked area of the world. Saskatchewan doesn't have an ocean front to give us cheap transportation, as much of the world has fought wars in order to achieve. Those European countries that were land-locked would have sacrificed armies in order to get a seaport, in order to have a piece of land, a tract to an ocean.

We haven't got that opportunity here. And besides that, we are not a warlike, violent nation or a violent people, and we won't go to war to try to take away somebody else's seaport. And even if we did, we'd have to get our farms all the way to the coast, and it wouldn't do that much good.

So what we have to do is deal with reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have to deal with the reality of how we can make our world work better and make our system work better, and in doing that, a national transportation policy is important, and it's good.

But let's face it, folks, we've talked about this for 50 years that I'm aware of. And I'm presuming from the stories I heard from my elders that the conversations in years before that were along the same line. We need transportation in this country. We need it desperately. We are land-locked. It's been a problem from the beginning of time in this province and it will always be a problem because we are what we are — we are land-locked.

And we will never be able to break out of this mode of being the hewers of wood and haulers of water unless we have not only a national transportation policy but alternatives to the present system.

And that's why we have talked about putting blame where blame should be. Who causes the problems that people in the mid-part of this country have? Who causes them? Obviously the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) and the CN are those vehicles that carry grain and produce, cars, whatever, to and from our coasts, to and from the lakeheads. So we can clearly identify that the rail system is key and important to us.

Obviously the highways are becoming more important as we go along because people are using bigger and bigger trucks — A-trains, B-trains, now C-trains. Who knows where it'll stop when we get these multi-powered engines, not even of the diesel vintage any more but the jet-engined trucks that can probably pull 10 or 15 or 20 trailers behind them. We could have trains on roads.

These are the realities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to deal with, and when we point fingers we have to point them at who is causing the problem. Obviously at the moment it is the CN and the CPR because we don't have these big trains or trucks yet. So we got to blame the reality on to these people. How would you solve the problem of these folks not moving grain?

Ask yourself this: we had the biggest surplus of grain last year, of high-priced wheat, in this country, the biggest carryover we've had in years. Why did we have that at a time when the world was hungry not only for grain but willing to pay a high price for it?

What were we doing in September when the crops were in the fields already ripe and many of them being combined and harvested and put into bins. We had a bumper crop on our hands; everybody knew it. The world around us knows that we are not such an inefficient country that we wouldn't finish our harvest. This is not Russia. People don't get drunk on vodka in harvest time and quit harvesting. They carry on with the job and they get it done. We knew the job would get done. We might end up with a few million bushels of tough grain but we were going to have a bunch of it.

But what does the CPR and the CN do? Who knows what they were doing. They surely weren't shipping grain. The trains sat idle. The grain sat idle. We could have filled the terminals up at both ends of the system and we could have had it in place and ready to go.

You know we've gotten so used to being pushed around and shoved around in this business, of being farm people in Saskatchewan, that today we have people saying there are only 10 ships in demurrage — only 10 — like that's pretty good. Well how about only one? We only need one lined up to get into port. We've come to the point where we expect that we should be taking less than perfect as being good enough. In fact half is good enough any more.

How many ships did we have in demurrage, paying them millions of dollars for paid holidays? How do you solve that problem? You put the responsibility of paying out of the pocketbook, you put that on the people that move the grain. If they got to pay the penalty, then they're going to definitely do a better job. Okay, CPR, CNR, they're the villains to start with.

Let's attach some cost to them for demurrage, a share of the demurrage they pay.

Who else in this system helps to create the movement of grain? The Canadian Wheat Board. A lot of folks are going to say, now he's going to go out and beat up on the Wheat Board. Well you're right. I'm not going to stand here though and say that we should abolish it. Obviously if it's supposed to be abolished, in time that'll happen. I don't think it's the thing that most people want. What they do want is for the Wheat Board to have some responsibility. And the people that make the decisions have to be tied to the cost of their decisions. If you're not tied to the cost of your decisions, you're not going to make a good decision. Or you're going to make one that does not necessarily benefit the people who need to have that system working.

So a portion of the demurrage has to be charged to the Canadian Wheat Board, and that means of course you have to charge it to the people who are the directors on the Wheat Board because obviously if you charge it just to the board, then it would be taken out of the price of our wheat and we farmers would be paying for it. And we have nothing to say about the decisions of what the Wheat Board does with that grain, or if they ship it in September or wait till January.

So you have to attach it to the individuals that make that decision, just as you attach it to the CPR and the CNR. A portion of this cost has to be transferred to those people that make the decisions of whether or not grain's going to move or other products are going to move.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are the things that we need to address here. These are the things that we have to include in this debate.

Another thing we have to do is to talk about alternatives. We cannot ever have a monopoly unless it is scrutinized by some authority that will work in the best interests of other people than those who control the monopoly. It doesn't matter what a monopoly is on. It will be bad for you if there's only one person doing a job, or one company doing a job.

If the CPR and the CNR have no competition — and effectively because they don't run in the same areas of the country, there is no competition — then the only alternatives are, either this — there are one of two — either we provide some mechanism for competition or else we have to have a mechanism that polices them or watches over them that has some clout. A price review commission kind of concept. The Americans have got it for their monopolies. They do it very stringently, much more than we ever have in Canada, almost an overkill down there in some places now. So we got to be careful we don't go too far, but at least we have to start, and we have to start by placing responsibility on those people that make decisions to pay some of the bills. Hit them in the pocketbook, or you won't hit them at all. They'll never care unless they start to pay some of the bills.

And the next thing is to provide true competition. Now if you can . . . (inaudible) . . . well whatever that word is. Think about the possibility . . .

The Deputy Speaker: —Order. Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Murray: — To ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my thanks to our colleague, the member from Cypress Hills, for this courtesy.

We have some young guests seated in the Speaker's gallery this evening. They are the Regina 86th Cub Scouts. There are nine Cubs and three leaders. The Cub Master is Tammy Henrie and Suzy Eras, and they are accompanied by a chaperon, Sean Bates. And I think Joëlle has taken them for a tour.

And we're happy to welcome them here, and we hope you enjoy the debate and the discussion that goes on, and we thank you for taking the time to come and see democracy in action in Saskatchewan. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 — National Transportation Policy (continued)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's truly good to have people watching our democratic process, and we want to talk tonight about transportation and the problems that we have with transportation in this country.

We are going to support the hon. member's motion. As we go through the evening, there is no question about that. However we do want to point out that there's more things that you can and need to do. We were talking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about competition as an alternative to get things working better. There is different kinds of competition. I mentioned that you could end up with big trucks with whole lines of trailers on, trucking grain back and forth.

But let's look at another real reality. How about north and south? North, we've got a railroad. It's already there. It's now been put into a short-line kind of a concept, a good idea. For years people fought against that, but here we have an alternative that at the last ditch, people have said we either lose it or we try something else. So we're trying something else, and I think that's good. We'll ship some grain up north. If that'll work, fine. That's some competition.

What's wrong with going south? People all of a sudden when you say we want to ship grain south, the hair on the back of their neck seems to stand up for some reason because somehow going south is against the grain of what people think in our country. And we've got to get over that. The natural flow of many things is north and south. Where do the geese go for the wintertime? They go south. Where does your grandpa go for the

wintertime? He goes south. Have you ever seen him go north? My friends, the reality of life is that there's a natural flow north and south as well as east and west. In fact it may be more natural. What's wrong with shipping some grain down the Mississippi and selling it to the Chinese or the Japanese or whoever, load it on a boat out of the Mississippi instead of at Thunder Bay.

You don't have to do a bunch of that. All you have to do is enough to create the impression that it can be done. Immediately competition is what it is. It kicks in. It shows the CP and the CN that they have got to get their act together or they lose the business, and then they'll compete. They'll be competitive. You don't necessarily have to ship a lot but you got to do some in order to prove the point that you're willing to take the extra step and the extra mile to do whatever has to be done.

The other alternative of course is to scrutinize it. And to scrutinize it with legislative review committees or that sort of thing becomes extremely complicated and difficult. And it has to be, in my mind, the last-ditch effort we try. I prefer competition. Competition will always work quicker and better. But if we can't get past that stumbling block then we have to look at this next possibility, and that is, my friends, that we have to have somebody that has some determination as well as some clout to say to these people: you get to work; you perform; you do it at a right and reasonable cost. And when you have ships lined up and you don't do your job, you pay the demurrage and you pay the costs.

The transportation issue is in crisis in this province. We are absolutely in crisis. We've been in crisis for a number of years, but we build into this crisis more and more each day. We have a committee formed in south-west Saskatchewan, and it is only logical that it would happen there first because we always experiment with a lot of things and have a lot of new ideas. But necessity is the mother of invention, and necessity is, right down there today, that we have rail lines that are going to be abandoned in places where you drive 40 or 50 miles already to find a rail line. And now they are going to take out even some more.

We have nothing against the inland terminals and the concepts of those things being built and allowing them to work. But at the same time there has to be some reasonable limits to how far people can and will go. And it is always going to be cheaper to roll steel on steel than rubber on pavement or gravel, unless they come up with some kind of new synthetic rubber some place that we haven't heard about yet. But at this time friction makes it an impossibility for us to totally compete that way.

Eventually, if we don't have to go too far or if we can put the kind of wheels on these trucks that'll last longer, and we can build our roads heavier and stronger, but these are things that need a lot of money and a lot of consideration. And here's where the provincial government comes into the play. We have seen the situation where the Crow's Nest freight rate agreement was dealt away. And we sold that for about \$84.6 million nationwide. That wasn't enough. We sold out too cheap. And in the end of course, the loss of the Crow may help us. That's true. We may become self-dependent or independent. We may

diversify and all of that might be better in the long run. But in that transition period we sold too cheap, and we sold too fast, and we never heard a word from these people saying anything to anybody.

(2015)

Even the National Farmers Union never said a word. Their best supporters never said a word. They were as quiet as quiet could be, like lambs going to the slaughter. Just let it happen; let it all drift over.

Should have had double that kind of money for the roads. Didn't fight hard enough; didn't fight fast enough; didn't even get into the battle.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, is less concentration on election rhetoric in these issues, and more concentration on solving what is an ongoing problem from one political party's time in office to the next. It passes past that in time.

We have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another crisis that plays right in with the one we've got with transportation and the rail line abandonment. And the member from Saltcoats used such a good list of numbers that I'm not going to go into repeating them all because he already did it and anybody that wants to, go back and check it in *Hansard*. But it's real. Those numbers are facts.

But the next crisis we've got is at the west coast and the east coast and it has to do, of course, with another thing that this political party that calls themselves the government in Saskatchewan can and should be doing something about — and that of course, is the ongoing labour unrest in this country.

The ongoing labour unrest that every time a farmer gets a bushel of wheat extra in his bins and thinks he's got a good market for it, these guys are off on some strike. And who supports them? The NDP.

And the whole system falls down and collapses. If it isn't the railroads not shipping the stuff when it should be going and allowing ships to line up, it's the labour unions on strike trying to get more out of the farmers' pockets.

And what does the farmer in Saskatchewan have to say about that? Nothing. Where do we have any input into it? We have no say about it at all. We are controlled by the forces of all of these mechanisms, and we're asked to pay the bill. That's not fair.

These things of labour unrest have led to such things as a lot of political debate. And you've heard the background music in the Assembly here tonight, and that's because the members of the government don't care for what I'm saying about their union buddies. And I don't blame them. They do vote for them so they have to defend them. That doesn't make it right.

But what is right — what is right is that succession rights within the union structure . . . And just for the moment, some people don't understand what that means. It means that when you have a short-line railroad that gets set up, the union

regulations that were set up with CN or CPR that owned that rail line before, the union rights are transferred over to the short-line.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Members will have the opportunity to enter this debate when the hon. member for Cypress Hills has completed his session. And I ask hon. members on both sides of the legislature to please allow the member to complete his speech in a manner that we can all hear.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I was pointing out, the problem of course has been clearly identified now because when we try to go to the short-line rail system, we had to find a way to operate those short-lines economically. And what was discovered? The succession duty rights of the union contracts that go from the CP or CN over to the short-line because of legislation of this government — nobody else — because of that legislation those costs are tied to that short-line.

And when the people that try to run these short-lines or try to take them over do a cost analysis — they hire experts to figure it out — they find that those are the costs that kill the chance for that short-line to operate — can't be done. What does that prove to you? That proves to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it will prove to the members opposite, that those costs are already real for CN and CP. Why did the price of moving grain go up then? Face the reality. If it's transferred over to the short-lines and that is the cost for them not being able to be economically operated, then it is the reason why CP and CN are having to up their rates for us right now. Think about it.

Also, you might think about this. There are some people who honestly believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the rail line is no different than a road. And we might have to consider at some point doing something as drastic as nationalizing the rail bed. Now I see my leader thinking of course that well . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Whoops, now the member from Cypress Hills has gone right over the hill. But I haven't because what we're saying here is that this issue is so important, so dramatically needing resolution, that we would have to consider every radical option in order to bring these people to their senses so that they will deal. The CP and the CN have got to be shown that either they're going to pay for their mistakes, or we'll take the railroad away, or we'll do whatever has to be done. But they've got to play ball and they've got to be right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, succession duties, succession rights rather, have clearly demonstrated — clearly demonstrated — that the contracts that we have with the unions in the CP and CN are causing the costs of transportation to go up unrealistically so that you cannot compete. We've proven that. Now we have to prove to CN and CP that we are also serious about them. We've done that in this argument. We've shown that we need to change the labour laws in this province. I know the Minister of Labour is listening carefully, and I'm glad to see that because it is he who probably drives the engine that will make these changes.

Now while you're changing those things that affect while you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh he wanted to get his other tie. Well that's all right; we'll get back to him.

What we really need to do is to be very serious about the fact that we have to lay blame where it deserves to be. We have to let these folks know that we are so serious that we would even say things that would excite my leader, and we have to do something to excite the Minister of Labour. We've got to get these people to take this issue seriously. No matter what we have to do, we've got to get them to take a look at changing the labour laws, at putting responsibility on the CP and CN, at putting responsibility on the Wheat Board, and we've got to have some changes. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will support the motion.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wish to offer some of my perspectives as the MLA for Athabasca in terms of the member's motion. In reference:

That this Assembly urge the federal Liberal government to develop a comprehensive National Transportation Policy, in cooperation with all levels of government, and that it provide funding to the program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's very important that we look at the whole issue of transportation. And I think that a key thing I want to certainly elaborate on and concur with the member from Cypress Hills is the fact that Saskatchewan is a land-locked province and that many occasions we tend to try and neglect our highways and forget our highways as the only means of transportation for a great many people . . . and of course the rail line industry in terms of the agriculture of Saskatchewan.

But what I wanted to speak about today in terms of why the provincial government insists on putting motions of this nature forth, in terms of trying to put all the pressure and all the responsibility on the federal government, the question we're going to have to ask at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite will begin to yell, the responsibility of Saskatchewan transportation also lies with the Saskatchewan province, the Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — And, Mr. Speaker, the most important thing that I've heard many, many times in this Assembly . . . and it comes from the third party. The common phrase that they use is, if the dog dies, the fleas leave. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to figure out what exactly is meant by that phrase. And I must indicate that . . . And they're probably thinking about all the different opportunity associated with Saskatchewan, in particular some of the problems associated with living in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question — there's no question in my mind — that we must make every effort, every single effort, to dedicate serious and continual dollars to maintain our transportation system. As I've said before, we are a land-locked province, so we have to do all we can to enhance our highway system and our railroad system.

Now let's look at some of the problems associated with the current NDP government in terms of the challenge of rural Saskatchewan, let alone urban Saskatchewan. In rural Saskatchewan . . . If you want to kill rural Saskatchewan, there's two things you do. First you shut down a number of their hospitals; then you decrease funding to their municipalities, you decrease funding to their school boards, you put in some VLTs (video lottery terminal), and you also again begin to neglect the highway system.

All of a sudden, bit by bit, by bit, by bit, by bit, we begin to have problems in rural Saskatchewan. So the fact of the matter is, after several years of this — four, five, six, seven years — we get up and we talk about transportation, a comprehensive transportation. And I can quote from the private members' motion:

. . . urge the federal Liberal government to develop a comprehensive national transportation policy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how about if we talk about the provincial government doing a provincial transportation policy — a policy that will dedicate real and serious dollars to the enhancement and protection of our transportation industry. Unless and until you begin to address some of the problems associated with our highway system and our railway system, then obviously we're going to continue facing challenges that have been holding this province back for years and years and years.

So we go back to the original statement that we make as we must dedicate serious dollars and a continual amount of serious dollars year after year after year, to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we have a very modern, up-to-date, well-maintained highway system. Once you begin to decrease dollars to the highway system, once you begin to decrease staff to the highway system, once you begin to decrease departmental allocations to the highway system, then what you're doing, Mr. Speaker, is you're putting another nail in the coffin. And that coffin, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time is rural Saskatchewan.

Now I'm going a lot out on a limb here to talk about a number of other problems we have in Saskatchewan as a whole. But I wish to also reflect some of my areas . . . in some of my areas of expertise and some of the communities that are involved with transportation in northern Saskatchewan. I know for a large example that some of the policies, Mr. Speaker, that is instituted with this current government in terms of transportation, is regional managers are sometimes enticed and enhanced to save money. Save money. Don't let that gravel truck go out one extra day, or don't let that grader go out for an extra half-hour. We'll save that money.

And at the end of each fiscal period and each budget, what happened, Mr. Speaker? Where does that savings go? Does it come back into Regina? Is it split up amongst the employees? Is it given to senior management? What happens with all these savings in the Highways budget? Where do the savings go? Well, Mr. Speaker, there should not be any savings. There should never be savings in highways. There should be more investment.

I want to talk about some of the things we're talking about in terms of the provincial economy and the reason why we cannot continue focusing the responsibility of a comprehensive transportation policy and a plan on Saskatchewan and simply on the federal government. It's got to be done by the provincial government as well.

First of all, on some of the VLT revenues, Mr. Speaker, that this government has currently made \$140 million; the GRIP claw-back from farmers, 188 million; the lower northern forest fire cost, 40 million; the Cameco sales, the share of some of this Cameco shares, 700 million; the interest savings as a result of lower interest rates country-wide, 45 million; the rate increases of some of the utilities, 13 per cent. And you talk about the sale of LCL Cable — 118 million.

You tally up all those points, Mr. Speaker. All of a sudden you have \$1.261 billion, Mr. Speaker, and we haven't talked about oil and gas industry. We haven't talked about uranium. We haven't talked about the commodity price increases, and we haven't talked about the gas tax and some of the other taxes associated with the transportation system of Saskatchewan.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, we have a whole pile of brand-new money coming into this province, a whole pile of brand-new money. And then we talk about the province getting up and saying for the next 10 years we will contribute \$2.5 billion to the provincial highway system. Well, Mr. Speaker, over 10 years 2.5 billion is peanuts. And I think the key thing here is you look at the whole situation of our earlier point: if you want to kill a province, you break their small communities. You break agriculture's back. You forget about the highway system. You forget about the railroad system, and you say this is not our problem. This is not our fault. It's the federal government's fault.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what is the purpose of a provincial government if they cannot address some of these problems? We live in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This is our province and every time that we have a problem we cannot say, well we'll blame the federal Liberal government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the time has come where people in this province are saying enough is enough. We've got to begin to dedicate serious and sustained dollars to our highways and our railway system so we're able to begin to develop a very, very exciting economy based on agriculture and the value added process of agriculture.

(2030)

Time is not on our side, Mr. Speaker. The next 5 to 10 to 15 years at the most, we will begin to understand the pressing need for a very aggressive provincial transportation system. We have no choice.

And last year as I was sitting here, the Liberals gave me the honour of making three different speeches on agriculture, and my background is not agriculture. But bless their hearts, these Liberals are very kind, caring, charismatic, and intelligent people and they have asked me, would you make an effort to learn about the agriculture system, the agriculture of Saskatchewan. And I said, as always, if I am willing to sit here

and learn from you guys, as long you're willing to teach me, I will make every effort to learn.

However, Mr. Speaker, I may not be an agriculture expert, but I know one thing is, that if the dog dies the fleas will leave. And the point of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is if agriculture is not developed and not enhanced, if we're not looking at a comprehensive Saskatchewan lead role in developing our transportation systems, then obviously we're going to lose a lot of opportunity with agriculture and a lot of other opportunities in mining and forestry. And the list goes on and on and on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the federal government contribution, I do not wish to speak on their behalf. I cannot speak on their behalf. But there are many occasions where they have made various statements in this House saying that your federal cousins . . . So if I can say a few words on behalf of the federal cousin in terms of what they're trying to do.

Well first of all, Mr. Speaker, you look at some of the examples that we have and some of the contributions that the federal government has made in terms of transportation. You know they had the foresight . . . Again, not being an agricultural background, you know they can hold me accountable for some of my statements in *Hansard*, but I'll always have the old cop-out where, well I'm not a transportation nor am I an agricultural expert.

But what they have done, with the demise of the Crow Rate, is they have given, they have given the Saskatchewan people and the Saskatchewan producers, an opportunity to value add all the commodity, all the benefits associated with agriculture. They can value add, Mr. Speaker, instead of transporting raw products to foreign soils, and they can again begin to develop a very diversified economy in Saskatchewan.

All of a sudden, you're talking about canola plants, you're talking about pasta plants, you're talking about cooperative efforts in every regard in terms of agriculture; so the whole vision at that point in time is somebody in Ottawa said let's do away with the Crow Rate because we are simply transporting raw products out of the prairie provinces. That's not helping our federal economy. So let us try and do something to help out the farmer. And in essence, Mr. Speaker, doesn't that make sense? Doesn't that make sense? To do away with the Crow Rate so the people of Saskatchewan can have some money in their pockets to kick-start a value added process campaign when it comes to all the agricultural products.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Now I am again not an agricultural expert, but I know one thing. In order for this process to begin to work, in order for us to assist the farmers that are now using our roads more than our railways is we can't argue the benefits and the merits of the Crow Rate at this point in time. That's history, Mr. Speaker. We have to look 5, 10, 15 years from now and we have not got, Mr. Speaker, very much time. The opportunity and the window of opportunity is fast closing and again, if the

dog dies, the fleas will leave.

And, Mr. Speaker, continuing on with some of the specific points I wish to make in terms of the federal contribution. We heard last year that Mr. Ralph Goodale, the federal Minister of Agriculture, announced 85 million for rural roads. Several years ago, the federal government announced a major infrastructure program for all of Canada and roads were a part of that. And again, this year again, the second phase of the infrastructure program.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the federal government is making some effort, not all the effort, but some effort in terms of getting a provincial transportation policy in place for Saskatchewan people. And I think it's high time that this provincial government start to begin to dedicate serious and real dollars to match at the very least some of the effort being made by our federal counterparts.

Now again, I go back to some of these points, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan. Now I'm not going to belabour some of the points of the federal Liberal contributions to the province because that's not what they're about. I'm not going to expound on some of their values and virtues in terms of their contributions to Saskatchewan because again, I go back to my earlier point, is we are provincial people. This is a provincial responsibility as well. It's not a total federal responsibility.

So coming back to our point we say, okay what should we do? What should we do?

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan I can almost challenge the Minister of Highways that if you take away the forestry companies' contribution to the provincial plan, you take away some of the Indian bands' contributions to some of the northern roads, you take away some of the infrastructure program dollars from the federal government, some of the contributions by the RM, the municipalities, and you take away some of the gas tax that was paid by a great number of our motorists, and then you could really ask, how much has the province contributed for road construction in this province of Saskatchewan? How much has the provincial government actually contributed to the highway maintenance system, the railway system in the province of Saskatchewan? And, Mr. Speaker, I can almost tell you that amount would be zero.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we are in support of calling on the federal government to do more transportation, the challenge again goes back to the provincial government. If we are going to encourage them to help us build a very aggressive and stable transportation system, which is needed and desired and required and all the people of Saskatchewan want, then we have to put our money where our mouth is as well, Mr. Speaker. We have not got a choice.

Now going back to some of my earlier points in terms of my specific area, Mr. Speaker — my specific area of northern Saskatchewan, the Athabasca constituency — there is a number of highway problems. And I have over the next period of the next few weeks going to be presenting some petitions on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca talking about transportation

problems of a Saskatchewan region, Saskatchewan region, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll give you some of the names of some of the communities who have been desperately . . . and who have been asking time and time again for a transportation policy from the provincial government. And are these people asking for 30,000 kilometres to be fixed? Are they asking for 300 miles to be fixed? Mr. Speaker, they're asking for less than 300 kilometres.

And this is what we talk about when we talk about transportation, is we want some commitment to transportation policy in Saskatchewan so we can build an economy in northern Saskatchewan as in southern Saskatchewan, western Saskatchewan, and eastern Saskatchewan.

Canoe Lake needs 30 kilometres of work redone. Garson Lake, a small community in Saskatchewan, wants to be connected to the province, needs 40 kilometres. Patuanak, who is often six weeks, eight weeks isolated from the province of Saskatchewan because of wash-outs and very, very poor roads, they need 80 kilometres. Dillon, again, very poor roads, they need 60 kilometres. St. George's Hill and Michel Village, they need 20 kilometres. And, Mr. Speaker, you look at those amounts — you have 60 and 40 is 100; 80, 180, 200, 230 kilometres of road that is required to serve one, two, three, four, five, six communities that have a population of roughly 5 or 6,000 people.

So, Mr. Speaker, how long has this problem been going on? This problem has been going on for as long as these communities have had roads. And this, Mr. Speaker, is not an excuse for the provincial government to say, well what are the federal government doing? Well it's high time that the province owe up to what they have been telling people for many years — is that we'll deliver benefits; we'll deliver roads; we'll deliver health care.

So we're looking at those five areas that really need and desperately call for a better road system to serve their people.

And Black Lake — there's a road being planned from La Ronge into Black Lake. And of course Stony Rapids is also connected to Black Lake. So Black Lake and Stony Rapids in the far North will also have a toll road that will connect them to the rest of the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, what did the province put into the whole contribution for a road to connect our far northern communities? They contributed \$1.5 million, Mr. Speaker — 1.5. And what did the federal government, along with some of the Indian bands, contribute? They contributed \$5 million, Mr. Speaker — \$5 million to the Canadian Coast Guard and the Indian bands.

And that leaves the other part of the equation now. What happens to Uranium City? What happens to Fond-du-Lac? What happens to Camsell Portage? Mr. Speaker, once the barge stops taking supplies to the far northern communities and what you're going to have is you're going to have some problems in terms of making sure that people of the far North are continued to be served with products and services that they need to

survive.

And obviously, has there been much consultation? Has there been much effort? Has there been a comprehensive strategy developed for those people up in the far North to ensure that there is better service, and to ensure that freight doesn't kill any hopes of any industry being developed or enhanced in the far North, and also to make sure they get food products and fuel products at a reasonable price?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that that comprehensive strategy or plan has been done by the provincial government and therefore it makes no sense to me why they would propose to have this responsibility transferred to the federal government. Well, Mr. Speaker, they're putting in \$5 million already, and yes, they should put in more, but, Mr. Speaker, they should put in more. But the province should put in an equal amount and then you'll begin to see some movement in terms of northern economy and in terms of northern people wishing to help and participate in some of the provincial economy and jobs.

Continuing on, Mr. Speaker, the Cumberland House bridge . . . You look at what happened at the Cumberland House bridge; \$2 million of the \$6 million cost come from the community itself as part of the SaskPower settlement, \$2 million came from the federal government, and after both groups come up with their money that literally forced the provincial government to come up with their 2 million. If they did not do that, then that \$6 million project would never happen.

So in that sense, the federal government and again a small community of 1,300 people with the Indian bands and the municipality, put their money together and challenged the provincial government. All of a sudden, action happened. The Cumberland House bridge was built.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, we're talking about a serious problem in Saskatchewan. We're talking about major implications on our economy. We're talking about agricultural challenges, we're talking about northern challenges. And let's not even mention some of the problems associated with the mining sector in the far northern communities. Let's not talk about the forestry sector in the far North.

At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, I can say with every confidence that the forestry companies probably spend more money, if not 10 times more money, than the provincial government do on maintaining provincial highways in northern Saskatchewan; than the forestry companies do on maintaining their forestry companies.

And some of the serious questions we've got to ask, Mr. Speaker, some of the serious questions we've got to ask is, we can find money to develop roads in the North to extract all kinds of resources, be it in mining or forestry. We can find money for that. But to service Highway 155, to service Turnor Lake, to service Patuanak, to service Garson Lake, to service Dillon, to service Black Lake, St. George's Hill, Michel Village — there's no money, there is no money. But, Mr. Speaker, if there is money to extract resources, then there's got to be money to serve people.

And once again if we do not begin to address some of these

problems, what you're doing is you're taking away from the economy of the province of Saskatchewan. And this is where the critical argument that we have in terms of as an opposition, we get up and we say yes, we'll support your call to get the federal government to develop a national transportation policy. It's nationwide, it'll help.

But we better start doing something here within the province of Saskatchewan because this window of opportunity that we have is not going to wait — is not going to wait. If we don't again begin to commit serious dollars — and not smoke-and-mirrors dollars — but serious dollars to the problem, addressing some of the transportation challenges of Saskatchewan, then what you're going to end up happening in 10 to 15 years from now, Mr. Speaker, is you're going to have, again, people shipping out the raw product simply because they cannot afford to develop a new economy.

And, Mr. Speaker, roads are just as important as education, as health care, and a roof over your head. You've got to have access to the markets.

(2045)

And again we hear time and time and time again, Saskatchewan is a land-locked province. Well if we are a land-locked province, then we're destroying the very link that could build a bright future, not just for you and I — but for our children and our grandchildren.

So the investment's got to happen now. The investment's got to happen now. We have got to commit serious dollars — serious dollars — to road construction. And we've heard reports time and time and time and time and time again, that if we do not begin to redress and address the deterioration of our transportation system — and the example I'm using is roads — then what you're going to have happen, as the deterioration gets so bad, to the point it may cost us three or four times more as short as two or three years down the road.

So, Mr. Speaker, the highway system has got to have much, much attention placed on it. There is no question in my mind that unless we begin to address these issues, then we are in deep, deep trouble. This is not fearmongering. I notice most members on the opposite side are quiet. They begin to understand that some of these points are right — some of these points.

And the member from Regina South speaks. And, Mr. Speaker, he's probably got about two kilometres of paved road to come from his office to this office here. How about some of those other people that have 200 kilometres to travel on roads that shouldn't be travelled on? Or how about the thousand people in Patuanak that are isolated for six weeks because of wash-outs and ruts? How about the people of Dillon that can't travel because of wash-outs and ruts? How about the people of Turnor Lake? If they had two miles of paved road to travel on, they wouldn't be complaining, Mr. Speaker.

But the problems of highways does indeed exist. This is not a figment of the opposition's imagination, Mr. Speaker. This is not. This is a serious problem.

And again, if you want to build up rural Saskatchewan, build up this province, then you've got to stop hurting their schools; you've got to stop hurting their municipalities; and you've got to start building their links and connections to these highways and now to this . . . to the rest of Saskatchewan, by developing up and building up their highway system and a transportation system.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we speak in support of this motion, we also have to point a finger at the provincial government. You get the gas tax, you get the gas tax, you get the gas tax. So you get moving on a provincial highways plan, you get moving on a provincial highways plan, and you get moving on a provincial highways plan. Now I've said it three times in a row, Mr. Speaker, so they can't accuse us opposition of never ever expressing some of the concerns when it comes to highways.

They have cut highways back and back and back and back, until all of a sudden we're now a bare-bones highways budget. So what does that do, Mr. Speaker? It kills the transportation of this province. And when you kill the transportation, again you kill the economy. So therefore, while I can speak in support of the motion, I must add the province has got to do more than the federal government in regards to this problem. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — I rise to speak on this motion because I want to mention to those who may be listening and also to the members in the House that this issue of transportation in Saskatchewan is important not only for rural Saskatchewan but it's also important — a matter of fact it's critical — to urban dwellers. And I want to speak from the urban dwelling point of view just for a minute or two to bring out that point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, no matter where you live in Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan, transportation — modern transportation — is an important issue. Our whole livelihood and the way we make our living is dependent on it. The motion that we are dealing with here urges the federal Liberal government to develop a comprehensive national transportation policy.

Mr. Speaker, we are undergoing a change in transportation patterns here in Canada, in Saskatchewan, now which I think will, if you look back in time, it will be comparable to the kind of change that Canada underwent when the railways first went through Saskatchewan and through the west.

It was a major effort that was needed to change the face of the country, and at this stage we also need a major cooperative effort between the federal government and the provincial government and private industry in order to restructure our transportation system so that we can continue to compete and thrive into the future.

Mr. Speaker, we all want the services of schools and hospitals and the good things that we have. In order to have those we have to be able to pay for them, partly from our own pockets, but partly through taxes. In order to have taxes you have to have a good economy. To have a good economy you have to have

jobs in industry. To have jobs in industry you have to have a good, solid transportation policy.

Everybody in the city will thrive and thrives more when we are able to ship our grain, our raw products such as mining products, our forestry products, fishing products, the manufacturing products out to the markets. If we can't get our machinery sales and our manufacturing out of the province, we lose jobs, and as a result the cities themselves would be in a decline.

The transportation policy does not only deal with industry and agriculture and mining and forestry and fishing. It also deals with one of the biggest growing industries now, Mr. Speaker, and that is tourism, which is managed by a lot of people who work from the cities and from the urban centres.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to be able to add those few comments to the comments which have been made, and some of which I've really appreciated, from members of both sides of the House. I will be very pleased to add to the numbers that will be supporting this motion and I expect we will be taking this vote very shortly.

The division bells rang from 8:48 p.m. until 8:55 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 30

Flavel	Johnson	Whitmore
Lautermilch	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Koenker	Trew
Teichrob	Hamilton	Murray
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Jess	Langford	Murrell
Thomson	McLane	Gantefoer
Draude	Osika	Bjornerud
Belanger	Hillson	Aldridge
Boyd	Heppner	Goohsen

Nays — nil

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After that unique display of unanimity in this House, I think it is time that I would move that this House now adjourn.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Assembly adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

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