The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I present petitions on behalf of many concerned citizens of Saskatchewan about the practice of night hunting. The prayer reads as follows:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders and wildlife and sportsmen organizations in the province of Saskatchewan in an immediate effort to end the destructive and dangerous practice of night hunting in the province for everyone regardless of their heritage.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present to this Assembly regarding the night hunting issue. And I'll read the prayer:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders and wildlife and sportsmen organizations in the province of Saskatchewan in an immediate effort to end the destructive and dangerous practice of night hunting in the province for everyone regardless of their heritage.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitions I am handing in this morning are signed by individuals from Porcupine Plain and Saskatoon, Spalding and Quill Lake, Watson, and many other communities in the province. I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I also have petitions to present to do with the twinning of No. 1 Highway. The prayer reads:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project.

The people are from the communities of Broadview and Grenfell, Mr. Speaker.

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

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project.

Signed by people from Swift Current, Avonlea, Saskatoon, Simmie, and pretty well across the province. I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present on behalf of citizens discussing night hunting:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders and wildlife and sports organizations in the province of Saskatchewan in an immediate effort to end the destructive and dangerous practice of night hunting in the province for everyone regardless of their heritage.

People who have signed these petitions are from Quill Lake, from Kelvington, from Melfort, from Wadena — all over the province.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned about the escalating incidence of youth crime. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Parliament of Canada and the legislature of Saskatchewan enact legislation and policies to deal with the problem of youth crime.

The petitioners are from throughout the province: from Muenster, from Humboldt, from St. Gregor, from Warman, from Annaheim, Lake Lenore, Leroy, and Lanigan, Carmel. I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens throughout the province concerned about the twinning of the Trans-Canada highways. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial and federal governments to meet immediately and conclude a cost-sharing agreement on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that twinning of the remaining portions of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan can begin at the very earliest possible date.

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, some 6,000 names here are from throughout the province. I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present petitions, and I'll read the prayer:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

> Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial and federal governments to meet immediately and conclude a cost-sharing agreement on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that twinning of the remaining portions of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan can begin at the very earliest possible date.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from — primarily the front pages — Lafleche, Saskatchewan; and we have 6,000 names drawn from various areas of Saskatchewan. And I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too stand to present petitions today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reading:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial and federal governments to meet immediately and conclude a cost-sharing agreement on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that twinning of the remaining portions of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan can begin at the very earliest possible date.

Mr. Speaker, I have about 6,000 signatures here, ranging from Regina, Moose Jaw, Davidson, Outlook, Swift Current, Gull Lake, all across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise with my colleagues to also present petitions on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan, and the prayer reads:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial and federal governments to meet immediately and conclude a cost-sharing agreement on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that twinning of the remaining portions of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan can begin at the very earliest possible date.

Signatures once again, Mr. Speaker, some 6,000 from virtually every corner of this province and every community, small and large. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and join my colleagues in the Liberal caucus in bringing forward petitions regarding twinning of the No. 1 Highway. The prayer reads as follows:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial and federal governments to meet immediately and conclude a cost-sharing agreement on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that twinning of the remaining portions of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan can begin at the very earliest possible date.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this stack is near 10,000. It brings the total here today of over 30,000 signatures on this issue, and they range all over Saskatchewan. There is no particular area. It's really the wish of the people that these go forward and be dealt with. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to add more names to the pile. And I read the prayer:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial and federal governments to meet immediately and conclude a cost-sharing agreement on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that the twinning of the remaining portions of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan can begin at the very earliest possible date, with or without federal assistance.
>
> As in duty bound, your petitioners will humbly pray.

I'm happy to present these on behalf of the people from Maple Creek, Golden Prairie, Fox Valley it looks like, and Gull Lake and surrounding communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

> Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to enact legislation to completely ban the practice of night hunting; and
>
> Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; and
>
> Of citizens petitioning the legislature to enact legislation and policies to deal with the problem of youth crime; and
>
> Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to act to save the Plains Health Centre.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 9 ask the government the following questions:

> To the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs: in the past years consultation between the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan regarding Canada's negotiating position on a multilateral agreement on investment, (MAI), what areas of the Saskatchewan economy has the Government of Saskatchewan demanded be exempted from foreign investments?

And I so present, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — I would like to preface my introduction with a question. What is the definition of a gentleman? A man who

knows how to play the accordion but doesn't. What is the definition of an optimist? An accordion player with a beeper.

Not so in the case of Canada's Polka King, three time Grammy winner Walter Ostanek. Walter's touring schedule includes over 250 dates a year in Canada, the United States, and Europe. And tonight he is in Regina, appearing at the Regina Ballroom. Tomorrow and Saturday, Walter takes his show to world-famous Danceland at Manitou Beach. Walter is seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, along with his wife, Irene, and saxophonist, Allistair Robertson of Birmingham, England. Please extend a warm Regina welcome to our very famous guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, five constituents of mine. They are here in Regina attending the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention: Hugh Otterson, the administrator; Eric Jensen and Sharon Banks, who are the . . . who are councillors for the Canwood RM (rural municipality); Darlene Bradley and Eugene Swanson, both councillors and reeve for the RM of Big River.

These two municipalities almost cover half the boundary of the P.A. (Prince Albert) National Park, and the federal government hasn't seen yet to allow an entrance from these RMs into the park and they'd like it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish you well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to present to you and to the members in this legislature, a noted Prince Albert musician and entertainer, Barry Scaife. He's seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Barry is on the board of directors of both the Saskatchewan Country Music Association and the Prince Albert Country Music Association. And he's here in Regina today to promote the Saskatchewan Country Music Association's ninth annual country music weekend and award show in Prince Albert, March 18 to 22.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly, four members of the RM of Leask, No. 464. And I'd ask them to stand, please: Real Diehl, Joe Brad, Art Gampe, and Rick Poole.

Of course the RM of Leask, normally the member for Redberry would have introduced them, except it's my old stomping grounds, Mr. Speaker, and that's all I'll say about that. Please welcome our guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well would like to introduce several guests that I have from my constituency. Seated in your gallery is Isabelle Jasper. Isabelle is the RM administrator of Frenchman Butte. And beside her also is Lenora Eaton. Her husband, Doug, is the Reeve of the RM of Frenchman Butte. I had the pleasure of visiting with them last night at the SARM banquet, and I would like all members to welcome them to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the legislature, one of my constituents, Mr. Gary Carlson, sitting in the west gallery. As many of you know, Mr. Carlson is an able spokesperson on behalf of the home-based businesses in Saskatchewan, along with many other organizations. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — I would also like to ask members of the Chamber to welcome the group from Leask. And now that I know that not only are they well aware of the member from Carrot River's background, but I understand Mr. Diehl is a cousin of his, I will be informing the caucus as to some of his history. Thank you, gentlemen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

1997 Citizens of the Year

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, volunteers are the backbone of rural Saskatchewan. Today I would like to bring to your attention three individuals who have been recognized in their communities as the 1997 citizens of the year.

The town of Rose Valley recognized Larry Bjerland as the Citizen of the Year at their winter festival. Larry has spent countless volunteer hours working for the betterment of his community.

Bill and Shirley Chyz of Watson are recognized for their work in initiating Sunshine Manor, a single-level apartment complex for seniors. If you're driving through Watson, you'll see another major accomplishment of the Chyz family and the community — the Santa Claus statue. Retirement has just meant that Bill and Shirley have spent more time in their community.

I would ask all members to join with me in thanking Bill and Shirley and Larry for their involvement in their communities and the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Opening of Employee Career Development Centre

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, the hon. member from Regina Centre, at a ceremony held at the University of Regina announced the launching of a joint human resources initiative, an announcement which includes the

opening of the employee career development centre on both campuses. This development is a key part of how we are investing in people by investing in training and development for the new century.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this initiative is another impressive example of our university's commitment to cooperation and revitalization growing out of the MacKay report. The minister commended the universities and all members would like to join her.

The two centres will assist individuals in assessing their career potential and opportunities, helping them analyse current and future job requirements, meeting the training needs for the future. They will also help senior administrators, university department heads, and directors to manage more efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Speaker, we often forget that work and learning are two sides of the same coin. This initiative is committed to creating a culture of lifelong learning, to the ongoing development of knowledge and skills needed to spur our economy and enlarge our lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding to Support Medical Research Projects

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus is pleased that the government has provided bridge funding to support medical research projects at the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine. The NDP (New Democratic Party) government is implementing the first part of our Liberal policy on medical research funding as announced by our leader, Jim Melenchuk, on February 13.

We hope that the government will also implement the second and third point of our Liberal platform. We will be watching the budget to see if there is an increase in the dollars allocated to medical research to 1 per cent of the health funding. That is our second point and it was also the recommendation of the government's own task force on health research collaboration.

The third part of the Liberal commitment is the introduction of a limited provincial income tax credit for monies raised for medical research here in this province. This tax credit would match the federal government's commitment to medical research under the federal Income Tax Act. The Canadian medical discoveries mutual fund, for example, is ready to raise and invest new funds in this province for research.

And we are pleased that the NDP government is following our constructive suggestions and hope that they will implement other Liberal ideas to spur medical research here in Saskatchewan. Let's be leaders and not followers in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Emu Farming

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member for Cannington is too modest to mention a local success story, so as his neighbouring MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) I will.

There is a growing diversity in the provincial economy driven by the invaluable efforts of the men and women of Saskatchewan. Two such people are Jim and Carolyn Shirley from the Carlyle area.

The Shirleys are farmers of a special sort. They raise and market emus and emu by-products. Emu fat is condensed into oil; the oil is bottled for sale to 35 health food stores. The oil has many uses — the treatment of sunburns being one of them.

The Shirleys also market the meat, infertile eggs, and feathers of emu. Emu meat is low in cholesterol and is an excellent substitute for those on low-cholesterol diets. The eggs are used in arts and crafts and the feathers are used by fly-fishing enthusiasts to make lures.

Mr. Speaker, the economic climate in Saskatchewan is blowing a favourable wind across the prairie province of ours. The good people of Saskatchewan are responding with hard work and ingenuity. It is this hard work and ingenuity, Mr. Speaker, which has helped to ensure that the Saskatchewan economy continues to thrive. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teacher Receives Agribition Award

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a teacher from the school at Bruno, Mr. Garry Sibley. Mr. Sibley was the recipient of an Outstanding Agricultural Ambassador Award at an Agribition ceremony held in Regina last November.

The award is based on teachers integrating agricultural content into their classroom teachings. Mr. Sibley, who is the vice-principal at Bruno School, integrates agriculture into his grade 7 and 10 science classes and grades 11 and 12 biology classes. Some of his teachings include grain seed experiments, soil tests, field trips, water tests, and lecture topics on bio-technology, food safety, crop protection, genetic engineering, and prairie grasslands.

Mr. Sibley was also instrumental in starting the Carleton Trail Regional Science Fair.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Sibley and ask the members of the Assembly to do the same. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Visitor Services Nominated for Award of Excellence

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I once asked one of the legislative tour guides what was the strangest question asked by a visitor to our wonderful place of business here. She thought a moment and then said, a school student asked "How much does this building weigh?" Too much obviously, given the work to be done.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know the question was answered with the

courtesy and consideration given all due to his questions and the quest for information by our excellent staff of Lorraine deMontigny, Linda Spence, Arnold McKenzie, and Diane Normandin. They make our visitors welcome and they coordinate our own special constituency visits with great efficiency, as we all know.

There is a phrase we are fond of using: "Things don't just happen; they are made to happen by people who know what they are about."

I am happy to report to the Assembly then that our Visitor Services staff have been nominated for two awards at the upcoming Tourism Saskatchewan Awards of Excellence gala to be held in Saskatoon this Friday. The whole staff has been nominated for the Customer Service Award of Excellence. And Arnold McKenzie, the man who knows where all the bodies are buried and secrets hidden in this building and much, much more, is nominated for the Saskatchewan Welcome Award of Excellence. We all know that they should win, but even not . . . even if not, we know and publicly appreciate all they do to make this truly the people's legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Court at Beardy's Reserve

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Experience has taught us that community-based solutions to local problems are always successful. This government is seeking to establish more of these types of solutions.

On February 2 a new Provincial Court was established on the Beardy's Reserve. The court meets in a local senior citizens' centre twice per month and makes use of the traditional aboriginal justice approaches. This latest cooperative venture between the province and Beardy's Reserve is proof that this government is committed to improving the lives of citizens in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the members of the Beardy's First Nation as they take another step towards self-government. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Safety Week

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, March 11 to 18 has been designated Farm Safety Week for the province of Saskatchewan. With the help of many local sponsors, the Department of Labour has issued a farm safety calendar which is illustrated by young artists from throughout the province.

In particular I would like to congratulate 13-year-old Sara Shulmacher and 14-year-old Travis Suchan from McLurg High School in Wilkie on their illustrations being selected for the months of November and December in the farm safety calendar.

On another note, I would also like to make mention of the fact that the Flying Fathers will grace Wilkie and area for a charity game versus Team Cey. Proceeds will go towards renovating the windows at the Wilkie Community Centre.

As many of you are aware, the Flying Fathers were here in Regina the other night. I just wanted the people in Wilkie to know what they're in for. Sixty-four-year-old goal-tender Father Quinn was quoted as saying:

> I can't see the puck, so I close my eyes and listen to it. I listened to the puck the other night and I took shot on the nose.

In victory over a local celebrity team from Regina, the Flying Fathers were awarded 6 points for a touch-down. Father Quinn told the crowd that the Fathers wouldn't kick the point after because the Fathers are Catholic priests and don't think it's charitable to kick converts. Quinn was also quoted as saying: "We always win — we cheat."

The game starts at 7 o'clock p.m. tonight, but let's face it — Team Cey doesn't have a prayer. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SaskPower President's Severance Package

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). Mr. Minister, you've got to be kidding. Jack Messer's negligence and incompetence just lost taxpayers $10 million — $10 million, Mr. Minister; $5 million because he forgot to read the contract. He failed to properly report the purchase of Channel Lake; he failed to properly report the sale of Channel Lake. He lost millions of dollars because he failed to read a contract and what does the NDP do? They give him a big fat severance payment that will add up to almost $300,000, Mr. Speaker. You shouldn't be paying Jack Messer, you should be suing Jack Messer.

Will you immediately cancel this obscene severance payment and launch legal action against Jack Messer to recover the millions of dollars he lost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, just to correct the member opposite, who once again is off base with his numbers, but to quote from today's *Leader-Post*, to quote from today's *Leader-Post*: "Assistant provincial auditor . . ."

Mr. Speaker, in today's *Leader-Post*, and I quote:

> Assistant provincial auditor Fred Wendel agreed with the (provincial) government on a cash-flow basis (that) SaskPower made $2 million more than it originally invested — but noted all financing and administrative costs are not included.

So first of all, sir, I would ask you to get your story straight.

As to the issue of the settlement . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I'll ask all hon. members

to allow the question to be heard with the same graciousness with which the question was able to be asked, intelligently.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite in a quote from the press release, the media statement issued today by the Vice-Chair, Mr. Milt Fair of SaskPower, and I quote:

> "I was given the responsibility as vice-chairman of the Board to resolve the issue of severance for (the) former president and chief executive officer, John R. Messer. I have officially advised the Minister Responsible for the Crown Corporation earlier today that we have reached an agreement with Mr. Messer, based on the advice of legal counsel, that provides for a severance of fifteen months salary with benefits. Additional severance provides an option for three months further if Mr. Messer has not obtained appropriate employment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say, on behalf of CIC, we have received from Mr. Milt Fair his advice that a settlement has been reached.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, this is unbelievable. Jack Messer just lost the taxpayers $10 million. How on earth can you justify giving him 300,000 more taxpayers' money as a reward for his negligence and incompetence?

Mr. Minister, this is a slap in the face to every taxpayer in the province. It's disgusting. It's obscene. It's wrong. You should be suing Jack Messer and putting a lien against his fly-free farm, not giving him severance.

Will you answer the question, Mr. Minister? Will you immediately cancel this obscene severance package and initiate legal action?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The members opposite say that we shouldn't have politics on the boards of our Crown corporations, i.e., SaskPower. So when the severance issue of Mr. Messer came up, I referred it to the new board, to Mr. Milt Fair, to Mr. Milt Fair who went outside and got legal counsel.

Mr. Member, this is a legal issue, not a political issue. And I say to you, come clean. You're saying we should involve ourselves in a political way, and I say to you that is wrong. This is a legal issue, and Mr. Messer should be treated in the right way — the way Mr. Milt Fair, with legal counsel, has brought about a solution.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister tells us that there's been a thorough investigation of the Channel Lake deal. Yet in today's paper he makes the incredible admission that he still doesn't know who signed the contract. In other words, he still hasn't read the contract himself.

He still doesn't know who signed the botched deal that gave away $5 million of taxpayers' money. Mr. Minister, this is a critical question in determining liability. Did Jack Messer sign the contract? Did Jack Messer fail in his responsibility to present proper information to the SaskPower board and cabinet? If so, why on earth are you giving Jack Messer severance? Why aren't you suing him?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — If the member would read the Deloitte & Touche report — if you would read it — you would find all of the clauses, including the fact that members of the management of SaskPower were responsible for the issue that we're dealing with.

And I say to the member opposite that you should come clean with the people of the province. Read the document. Read the document; not try to twist the truth on whether there was a profit made or not. The auditor speaks to that issue here. Why don't you come clean and tell the truth here in the Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, on Tuesday we heard you trying to sound contrite. You said: we made a mistake; we learned our lesson; we're sorry; we're going to make changes. Mr. Minister, you've learned nothing and you're changing nothing. You're still paying off your buddies no matter how badly they've messed up. And you're still using taxpayers' money to do it.

Mr. Minister, there's only one change that's going to make a difference, and that's when the people of Saskatchewan throw out your government and elect a Saskatchewan Party government in the next provincial election. And today's pay-off of Jack Messer just brought that day one day closer. Mr. Minister, when will you learn? Are you going to cancel this obscene pay-off?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Let me get it straight again. The member says that the arrangement made by Milt Fair, with legal consultation in a non-political way, should be cancelled and that I as the minister, the politician, should take that deal and scrap it. That's what you're saying.

I would ask you to get your story straight. Do you want the old-style boards with politicians making the decision or do you want what . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Order. Now all hon. members will recognize that the Minster for CIC is not that far away from the Speaker and I'm having difficulty being able to hear — order — and I'm having difficulty being able to hear the answer being provided. I will ask all hon. members to allow the courtesy of the minister to be heard in providing the response.

Next question.

First Nations Financial Accountability

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tuesday when I called on the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to meet with the first nations accountability coalition, I was accused of playing partisan politics. Later, after throwing me out of his office, he

basically dismissed the native group by saying it was a federal problem. The poverty they are living in was not his responsibility.

This government has a plan for poverty, a plan for child prostitution, for fetal alcohol syndrome and so on, yet it is the natives who suffer the most from these problems.

Native people are telling you two things — there is enough money in the system but the system is failing the need of native people and the programs for these problems are just band-aid solutions because the government refuses to address the big issue.

Why did you spend thousands of dollars to deal with the national unity question when it was not necessarily your jurisdiction, yet you refuse to take responsibility for the aboriginal portfolio?

Mr. Minister, will you commit today to work with the first nations people and an all-party committee to develop an action plan for aboriginal poverty and accountability?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker. If the member is suggesting that the national unity of this country is not something that this government and all of us should be concerned about, I can only say that I have to disagree with the member; it is a concern for us.

And with respect, Mr. Speaker, to any funds within provincial jurisdiction, our processes are good. And although we don't provide much by way of direct funding to Indian bands, when we do, we demand, Mr. Speaker, full accountability and full auditing with respect to those funds. And in the event that there is no full accountability and full auditing, Mr. Speaker, we stop payment. That's what we do.

There is no problem with respect to the . . . any provision of a small amount, in rare instances, of funds to Indian bands. I say to the member, the member well knows that Indian bands are funded by the federal government and we join with the member in saying that the federal government too should demand full accountability. We have no disagreement with the member in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care System Review

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, six years into the NDP's health care reform program and what have we today? We have chaos — doctors leaving, hospitals closing, waiting-lists growing. Mr. Minister, it's clear your health strategy is on life support and it's time to do something about it.

Mr. Minister, the Conference Board of Canada has called for a full and thorough review of the health care system across the country. Today after question period we will be introducing a Bill that will be calling for and allowing for that procedure to be completed.

Mr. Minister, will you join with us and will you indeed commit yourself to a complete and full review of health care in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the question from the member from Moosomin, in Saskatchewan, as the member knows, over the last five years we've been proceeding with the help and assistance of Saskatchewan people in developing a health care system that in fact is going to be compassionate and caring and accommodating and reflects the needs of all Saskatchewan people.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have 30 health care boards in this province, in the southern part, and two now in the northern part of this province, who in fact are delivering a comprehensive series of health care services for which the public are grateful for. In the days to come, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work with those district health care boards to enrich, as we have, one of the richest health care programs in the province. And we'll continue to work with the district health care boards to ensure that that continues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, last week we saw Tom Crosby, an elected member of the Regina Health District Board, speak out about the need to keep the Plains hospital open. Now a second elected board member, Dr. Borden Bachynski, is indeed speaking out. He's a respected physician in the province . . . in the city of Regina.

Mr. Premier, yesterday you told SARM that you were calling for a moratorium on branch line abandonment until a federal grain transportation . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now once again all hon. members will recognize that the hon. member for Moosomin is not seated all that far away from the Speaker's chair and is unable to be heard in putting his question. I will ask all hon. members to allow the hon. member to be heard and put his question.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and to the Premier: yesterday, Mr. Premier, you called for a moratorium on branch line abandonment until the federal grain transportation review is completed.

Mr. Premier, will you today now walk the talk, and will you indeed do the same thing and call on your Health minister to call for a moratorium until a full review of the health care system in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to reinforce a statement that I made yesterday when I spoke to the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention and was asked the very same question. And the member from Moosomin knows full well — at the SARM convention, excuse me — the member

knows full well that over the past five years there have been three district health boards that have now acted on the recommendations. And there have been two recommendations and two studies that have been completed.

Those recommendations have said that in the city of Sask . . . of Regina and for southern Saskatchewan, we will have two health care facilities. And these two health care facilities are going to serve not only the city of Regina but are going to serve the southern part of the province, in an efficient and an effective manner.

Associated to that, Mr. Speaker, will be the inclusion of additional equipment — a new MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), a new scanner for . . . a new CAT (computerized axial tomography) scanner, and there'll be additional new equipment for the cardiology department.

So today we're going to have more advanced technology and we'll have more services for people today than we've ever had, and we're associating our work around services to people and not to the retention of buildings, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Multiple Sclerosis Drugs

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House we urged the Minister of Health to adopt the Liberal opposition's Made in Saskatchewan solution to the current problem that the victims of multiple sclerosis are facing. As we pointed out, the present arbitrary criteria is preventing many MS (multiple sclerosis) victims who might benefit from Betaseron or Copazone access to these drugs. Mr. Minister, you're picking winners and losers.

Following question period yesterday the Minister of Health indicated to the media that if people are being turned down simply because they are not ambulatory, then the criteria is flawed. Mr. Minister, you admit the criteria is flawed; what are you prepared to do about it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member from Arm River yesterday, is that we have a panel in Saskatchewan that is providing the kinds of services that are consistent with the assessments and evaluations in final decision-making of the three other provinces that have insured both drugs for people who are MS victims. In Saskatchewan today three-quarters of the people who have in fact . . . 75 per cent of the people whose applications have been submitted to the panel have in fact been approved.

Yesterday I said, Mr. Speaker, and confirm again today, that if there are people who have in fact been inhibited or in fact their claims have been of concern because they were not ambulatory at the time that they made their submission to the panel, then in fact that particular piece of the, of the review, that particular piece needs to be reviewed. And the panel will do that.

But to date, Mr. Speaker, there have been no applications that have come to the panel in where somebody has not . . . where somebody has not been ambulatory because they're in a wheelchair. We have not yet received any of those, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we heard yesterday how people are being victimized by your policy; you saw them here in this House. That should be enough visual for you to make a change.

The criteria to access these drugs is not fair and it must be changed. But what concerns these people even more is that a government which is supposed to represent them is discriminating against these people. This government is turning a deaf ear on their concerns. This government is refusing to provide them with hope — what these people need — so that these drugs might help them live a normal life.

How can you continue to support arbitrary rules which are preventing MS victims from accessing drugs which will let some of them lead more active lives, more normal lives? Why won't you support these changes, Mr. Minister? Is it because you need the money to back-fill your fiascos in the Crown corporations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say to the member opposite that in Saskatchewan today, we've made a commitment. This government has made a commitment to support people who have MS in this province and are putting into the pharmacare program a significant injection to ensure that people are covered off. Unlike, Mr. Speaker, six other provinces and two other territories in this country who don't insure any medication for multiple sclerosis.

But for the member from Arm River to be talking about our financial commitment to the province of Saskatchewan is a joke compared to what he's done in terms of assisting us on the federal cut-backs across this country.

Mr. Speaker, today in this province, we are . . . we've picked up every penny of federal cut-backs. And in this recent budget, we've seen a significant reduction again to our programs and services, a greater enhancement. Has the Liberal member stood forward, stood up, and recognized the losses that we've had from the federal government? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. They have not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Twinning the Trans-Canada Highway

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce the Minister of Highways to Joan Kortje, her husband, Jim, and other family members and friends who have joined us in the legislature today.

Madam Minister, the Kortje's daughter, Jennifer, and granddaughter, Michelle, were killed during the Christmas holidays, both travelling on the single-lane stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway near Gull Lake. Since this tragic

accident, Joan has helped the Liberal opposition with a petition drive aimed at convincing you that 49 deaths on the single-lane portions of the Trans-Canada in the past 10 years is too many; that the time has come for a commitment to twin Highway No. 1.

Madam Minister, are you prepared to make that commitment today?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always tragic any time there is a death on any roads in our province. And I really do have sympathy for the family that faces that kind of tragedy.

And I am pleased though that our government has been able to make a commitment of $2.5 billion over the next 10 years in Highways and Transportation, make a commitment, make a commitment to twinning over the next 15 years.

As I was saying, it is always tragic when there is an accident and it is incumbent on us as a government to do the very best we can to make our roads safe, to make sure that vehicles on those roads are safe, and that the people driving those vehicles are safe.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Supplementary to the Minister of Highways, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Joan Kortje and the Liberal opposition are not alone. More than 30,000 people have now signed petitions calling on you to get to work. To date we've heard nothing but feeble attempts aimed at shirking your provincial responsibility.

Madam Minister, your government says you'll get to it in 15 years. In spite of the fact that 49 people have died and more than 2,000 accidents have occurred on the two single-lane stretches of the Trans-Canada in the past 10 years, it doesn't appear in the department's top 20 list of priority projects.

Madam Minister, the Premier often speaks about finding Made in Saskatchewan solutions to problems but surely part of that solution has to include your government caring. How many more accidents must occur? How many more people must die before you develop a Made in Saskatchewan solution to this issue?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Like I said previously, we've made a commitment; we're going to be putting money into the highways in this province and into the twinning.

But I would like to say that we also . . . this is a national highways program, that we have been at the table. We've put our money on the table and the response that we've got from your federal cousins has been zero. And so we have taken our responsibility very seriously. We have made a commitment to it. I'd like to know where the federal government is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, in next week's budget, one week from today, you'll have the opportunity to do what you should have done a long time ago. You have the opportunity to return most of the $187 million that you've taken from the Highways budget since coming to power to ensure that the Trans-Canada can be twinned now, not in 15 years.

I invite you to meet the Kortjes in the rotunda following the question period so they and the Liberal opposition can present you with petitions containing 30,000 signatures. Will you meet with them? Will you make a commitment to the Kortjes to show that their daughter and granddaughter didn't die in vain?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Yes, I'd like to thank you again for that question. We have made our commitment — our dollars are on the table. I certainly hope that you're also making the same letters . . . the same concerns made to the federal government. Because if we could get cost sharing, we would certainly do this in half the amount of time.

I certainly will . . . I would certainly meet with the family. I will certainly be interested in the petitions that come in. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sale of Channel Lake

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, we've now heard that we've coughed up a quarter million for Jack Messer so that there won't have to be a court case that might get a bit sticky. But what about Lawrence Portigal? He's the guy that the Deputy Premier told us in December had simply quit and got another job. And now I understand he's giving interviews in Calgary saying he never did work for SaskPower in Channel Lake; he was a consultant. Did we in fact pay any severance pay to Mr. Portigal?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to make it clear to the member opposite when he raises the issue of the severance package, and because it was so extremely noisy in the Assembly and I know you're just returning from the press conference, I want to read an important part into the record because I'm not sure it was all carried. But I want to quote from the press release in which Mr. Milt Fair says:

> I was given the responsibility as vice-chairman of the Board to resolve the issue of severance for (the) former president and chief executive officer, (Mr.) John R. Messer. I have officially advised the Minister Responsible for Crown Investments Corporation earlier today that we have reached an agreement with Mr. Messer, based on the advice of my legal counsel.

It goes on to say:

> In undertaking this assignment to determine severance, on behalf of the new SaskPower Board, I engaged the services of Rob Garden, a well-known employment lawyer with McPherson, Leslie & Tyerman in Saskatoon.

I say to the member opposite that this was the best deal that could be arranged by Mr. Fair on behalf of the shareholders of the province of Saskatchewan. As to the role of Mr. Portigal

that you raise, I want to say to you that Mr. Portigal was on contract with SaskPower on a month-to-month basis. That contract ended on June 4, 1997.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, with leave, to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I note in your gallery a gentleman who just joined us following the introduction of guests, Mr. Randy Rapitta, who works in the Kipling hospital. In fact he's an orderly in the hospital. He runs and manages the Kipling & District Ambulance Service and, Mr. Speaker, he certainly does a fine job. I think he's a person that anyone could count on. And so I'd like the Assembly to recognize Mr. Rapitta, who's joined us this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Lorje: — Leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, another gentleman joined us, in your gallery, after the regular introduction of guests and I would like to introduce to all members of the Assembly, Mr. Maurice Werezak.

Mr. Werezak is a key person in the United Food and Commercial Workers all across this province, and is leading the Maple Leaf boycott in this province. And I would like members to welcome him to the chambers.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1 — The Arts Board Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, The Arts Board Amendment Act, 1998, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 2 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 2, The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 1998, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 3 — The Public Utilities Easements Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, The Public Utilities Easements Amendment Act, 1998, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 4 — The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 4, The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 1998 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill 206 — The Community Associations Residential Telephone Rate Designation Act

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move the first reading of Bill No. 206, The Community Associations Residential Telephone Rate Designation Act.

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

Bill No. 208 — The Legislative Assembly Public Presentations Act

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Bill, An Act respecting Public Presentations to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 209 — The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 1998 (Health Care System Review)

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 209, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 1998, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 213 — The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1998

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to move first reading of Bill No. 213, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, be introduced and read the first time.

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

(1430)

Bill No. 217 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1998 (Sessional Dates)

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that a Bill to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act respecting the termination of sessional dates be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 221 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1998 (Duration of Assembly)

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that a Bill to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1998 (Duration of Assembly) be introduced now and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 233 — An Act to amend The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Amendment Act, 1998

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move first reading of a Bill — Bill No. 233 of 1998, An Act to amend The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Amendment Act.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I request leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you. I wish to introduce in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, to the Legislative Assembly, two people from the RM of Weyburn. The Reeve, Phil Barbiarz, and Councillor Ron Lutz. And I'm really pleased that they're here today and I'll be meeting with them shortly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — I request leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Glenn Tait in your . . . in the Speaker's gallery, a councillor from the RM of Meota . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, and a former NDP candidate. So welcome him here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Ms. Hamilton, seconded by Mr. Ward, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Krawetz.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to make a few comments yesterday and I just didn't quite finish so I would just like to, I would just like to make a few more comments, if I could, before I close my comments on the debate.

Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, and repeat today, I'm very proud to stand here and to wholeheartedly endorse the throne speech and a speech that invests in people and builds on our common values. I'm very proud of that theme.

And of course, I'm more proud of the substance in that theme.

And investing in the future, investing in building on our common values, well, what does that really mean? I just want to recap. That means investing in jobs; it means investing in families, investing in health care, education, transportation — not just highways but a transportation policy in a comprehensive way, within a fiscal framework that's responsible. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of those priorities.

Now with regard to investing in families. I think every member of this House would agree that the level of family poverty, child poverty, family poverty, children live in families, is unacceptable in Canada. It just simply is a blight on everyone. And we need to remind ourselves that we are committed to the United Nations declaration — the elimination of poverty. And that isn't just a slogan. We have to deal with it, treat that very seriously. We have to walk the talk as my colleague from Saskatoon Southeast says.

And we believe . . . Although we would certainly appreciate a little more federal support, but we can't wait on that. We have to try and do what we can ourselves, as Saskatchewan people have done many times over the years and have a proud record of leading in innovative and creative ways.

From our point of view, we believe that the Child Benefit which now the federal government has agreed to join us on . . . I want to give a lot of credit to lots of people, but certainly we know that our Premier is at the forefront of this discussion as a Premier in Canada, as a national leader, and has been promoting that alternative, positive agenda for some time. And that program will make a big difference to many low income families, Mr. Speaker. And I know that all members of the House would support that. I would hope all members of the House would support building on that kind of a program.

In addition to that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that's right. We have to make sure that we're vigilant in ensuring everyone does.

Secondly, the Saskatchewan employment support program. Again that is . . . I know that all members are legitimately concerned about raising everyone up. We have to be. That's our responsibility here — supporting families, raising them up and giving them opportunities. But the employment support program does just that. It does just that. It's an innovative program. As it unfolds during the budget speech and the Minister of Social Services talks more about that, I think people will see that it is an innovative program like we haven't seen for 25, 30 years. It's of that magnitude. It'll make a big difference.

Of course we know, Mr. Speaker, that there are low income families who are worried at times about their ability or inability to cover certain health care costs. Now we believe that we're pioneering in Canada on this front too. Now that's a matter of public record. We'll be pioneering in Canada on this front while we provide health care benefits to low income working families who are not on assistance. And we're very proud of that.

In addition, of course we already are providing training support to families with our training strategy based on their needs, their family needs, and the number of children and so on, so that it's a realistic amount to live on.

So when you take that package as a whole, when you take that package as a whole, with a buoyant economy within the good fiscal framework that we've been able to build in the province, a partnership with government and communities, I think that bodes well for the future.

And so we're very proud of the investment in families part of the throne speech. We're very proud of the economic activity around the province. We're very proud of the job numbers. It's a credit to the Saskatchewan regional economic development authorities and to the small-business sector, to the co-op sector, to the partnershipping that's occurring around and within the province of Saskatchewan.

There was a representative here today from the home-based business association; an explosion in Saskatchewan perhaps like no other province. Which again shows that if you create the right climate and provide the right supports, Saskatchewan business people are creative and innovative and will rise to the top. That's been our history in that area too.

But certainly on the job front, the research and development initiatives that will be announced shortly, certainly the innovation, the market capability — we're already tapping world markets in many important ways, and this throne speech builds on that expansion. And it certainly builds on the rural job creation focus — which is not unrelated to what I've said to this point — but there will be certain initiatives as well that will complement that in the budget. And of course strengthening the co-op sector, which is critical. That's one of our trademarks in Saskatchewan, is how we work collectively together. This is why our theme of building on our common values is sort of an integrated part of that whole package.

The third investment we're making in the throne speech — investing in education and training, which sort of go hand in hand. Education doesn't stop when you sort of finish grade 8 or grade 12 or SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) or university or whatever. And that is the key to getting out of poverty.

Lifelong education is the key to best position our Saskatchewan, not only our young people — but certainly our young people — but all people, all people, to give them the opportunities for advancement and to compete and to continue to expand the tax base, which is what everybody wants to do and which is happening in Saskatchewan. We're very proud of that. We've got more people working today than ever before in the history of this province. And I think Saskatchewan people should be — but they are — proud of that. And we just need to continue to build on that.

So investing in education and training. We have a training strategy. We will see in this session and of course in the budget the continued strengthening of the university and the SIAST sector, the technical sector. You'll see an expansion of the JobStart, Future Skills programs, and the aboriginal development programs in terms of, given the demographics of the province and the position of many aboriginal people in terms of the lack of opportunities. This is another important partnership that is vital to the future health of families, aboriginal communities, and of course the province as a whole. And of course the expanded — another part of that — the expanded apprenticeship program.

And I might say as a matter of public record, as businesses know, we pretty well let our apprenticeship programs go by the wayside in the 1980s. And that was I think, partly because the economy was in a downturn and people simply fled Saskatchewan to go to other provinces for jobs. Fortunately many of those people are coming back and we've been building the apprenticeship programs back up again and we will continue to do that. And again, it will be strengthened in the budget speech, I'm sure.

Health care, Mr. Speaker — the fourth investment in the throne speech. Very precious, always, in Saskatchewan. I might say, if I can, very precious within the movement that I'm proud to be associated with — the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation)-NDP movement.

Health care has been a sacred trust that has been moulded and shaped with Saskatchewan people under the governance of our kinds of philosophy and government. And I won't say anything about those who opposed it. I think that's pretty clear in the minds of Saskatchewan people — who you can trust and who you can't trust with the health care file.

But this budget will strengthen that to make sure that health care will be there, good research and development will be there, and the kind of security that people feel that has been eroded by the national $7 billion cuts to the health care budget in the last two years. We think we can. We'll have to restore it without federal support, because it's obvious that the federal government . . . Mr. Chrétien is saying that the medicare system in Canada doesn't need any more support.

Now we don't agree with him on that, and I think that most Canadians don't agree with that. I know that the provincial Liberal Party agrees with the Prime Minister that health care in Canada is adequately funded. We don't agree with that. And we're hoping to convince our colleagues of this — in the

Liberal Party — to join us, that health care in Canada is not adequately funded.

But as we had to in medicare initially, we went it alone, and we'll have to do it here too, if necessary. We'll do that, Mr. Speaker, but I would urge, I would urge the Leader of the Opposition, or the Leader of the Liberal Party, third party, who I know is very concerned about the health and well-being of Saskatchewan people, to take Mr. Rock's invitation to write to the Prime Minister and say that health care does need some more money. And that would also be a big help to us in Saskatchewan. But we'll continue to build alone anyway.

(1445)

Of course, Mr. Speaker, transportation is the fifth piece of investing in people. And I think the Minister of Transportation did a pretty good job today by saying that this is another area where the feds are getting off the hook.

I mean when you think about the, you know, the No. 1 Highway, the Canadian highway that sort of links east and west from sea to sea, but somehow the federal government all of a sudden, unilaterally, says that we don't have any responsibility here when historically that's been the case. And again I have to say this — and I hate to say this; it hurts me to say this — but the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan lets them off the hook. And they know that that's been a national highway system.

They didn't say anything when the Crow left. They're letting railways be abandoned left, right and centre. And the Saskatchewan government just simply can't, on its own, support the kinds of responsibilities that Canada as a country is obligated to assist in — and it has traditionally done that.

And that's one of my concerns about the federal government, is whether it's highways or health care or a social program, including health care programs, or the aboriginal treaty rights, they simply walked away unilaterally from their responsibilities.

In the area of . . . And they've even walked away, they walked away when they've had legal responsibilities not to walk away. But I think that's very serious, Mr. Speaker, and we just simply can't . . . you can't run a country that way, you simply can't run a country that way.

And it's no surprise to me, it's no surprise to me that the people are looking across, are looking at what the national symbols are when we continue to dismantle the national symbols, like the threat to the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), the national highway system, the Crow rate, and of course we abandon the health, education, and income security programs. You can't keep a country together when you don't focus on the symbols that have held us together over the years.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's not the way Canada was built. That's not the way we're going to pull together as a country in the future.

So, Mr. Speaker, that all comes within a physical framework. All of that package comes within a good physical framework. A sort of, the mess of the 80's is still with us. That mess, that Tory mess of the 80's, which is the same Saskatchewan Party, that mess will be with us for generations. It's a sad legacy on the Devine Tory era — that is the same party — and future generations are going to pay for that.

They are going to pay for that because they've got to pay down the debt. Young people are going to have to pay their own way more than they did in the past because there isn't going to be the money. They're not going to perhaps have the same opportunities, especially if the federal government keeps pulling out of education and health care and so on. And that's putting young people on their course, accumulating high debts in terms of their student loans. That's created a lot of anxiety amongst our younger generation, and of course our older generation as well because they see the erosion of the national programs that they built and thought were in place. I guess that shows us that you can't take these things for granted.

Once they're in place you have to be vigilant and always fight to make sure that governments don't come along . . . Now this started, much of this started under the Mulroney Tories, as it did the Devine Tories in Saskatchewan. But the problem with the current federal government is they promised to do something different and they accelerated these dismantling processes that were started under the Mulroney administration.

Mr. Speaker, we believe — well we don't only believe, we know — we're in step with Saskatchewan people on investing in jobs, in families, in health care, education and training, in transportation. Given Saskatchewan's geographic make-up and economy and the importance of highways and transportation, we have to view that as an investment. That is in sync with Saskatchewan people, and of course within a good physical framework.

So we believe we're in step with Saskatchewan people. We know we are. We just have to ignore the calls of the opposition and say that those are the wrong priorities. They're just fundamentally wrong. And we'll keep building. We'll keep with Saskatchewan people, providing some hope and opportunity. And the future prospects do look bright.

That's why when I look at the amendment that the Leader of the Opposition . . . I want to highlight this because I think that the House Leader will feel a bit embarrassed about this after what I've just said.

When I go over these six priorities that . . . I know he's a family man and he knows he supports families and he's a health care critic. And so I know that investing in those things would be important to the Opposition House Leader.

But then his colleague, his leader, says . . . makes an amendment to the motion on the Speech from the Throne. He says, the official opposition:

> regrets the lack of a new vision and direction of the government and calls on the government to change this course through meaningful consultation with Saskatchewan people through a re-examination of the real priorities of taxpayers; and further, calls on the government to adopt the policies of grass roots voters as reflected in the policies of the Saskatchewan Party.

Well I don't know what the grass roots policies of the Saskatchewan Party are. So that's like saying, give us a blank cheque and we'll fill it out. And I don't know what that means because, Mr. Speaker, there's a valid . . . I would like to see that grass roots policy statement, because I think Saskatchewan people would like to see that statement because . . . And they say that this is a new approach.

Just criticizing to criticize is not a new approach in politics. That's not like a breath of fresh air. That's as old a style of politics as you can get — just to condemn something because you're opposition. That doesn't make any sense.

Now the Leader of the Opposition was up yesterday and he didn't say one thing . . . Or I stand to be corrected. He might have said one or two things, but nothing of substance that the Saskatchewan . . . the Conservative Party stands for. All he did was criticize the current administration for investing in people, for investing in jobs, for investing in agriculture and roads. That's all he did. And then he gets this negative amendment that he makes when we don't even know what their policies are.

What we do know though, what we do know is that the Conservative Party by any other name, which is the Saskatchewan Party now, they are going to be negative and they are going to be cynical. And they like to . . . I know that my good friend doesn't like to hear this — but the Tory Party in the '80s and into the '90s is divisive; they like to pit one group against each other.

There are many examples of that. I'm not saying this; people are telling me this. They like to pit many examples, whether it's urban/rural or whether it's different groups within communities or different groups across the province.

And they want privatized medicine. We know that. So they're clear about that. They want privatized medicine. At least the Liberals only want two-tier medicine. You want privatized medicine all the way — Alabama-style medicine. At least the Liberals only want two-tier, so at least we can work on that.

And they want . . . So that we do know, and I respect that. If the Saskatchewan Party says that we want privatized medicine and we want to sell the hospitals and we want profit-creating health care, at least they're honest about it, and I can respect that. I don't agree with them but at least they're honest, and that I respect. I respect it less when we see the federal Liberals campaign on one thing and do something else.

Now I can only assume that the provincial Liberals, if they ever had the opportunity, would do what Liberals have always done — they've campaigned on one set of agenda, one platform, and then they change it to another. In fact in 1995 — and the member will know this, your leader will know this — the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan started campaigning on one thing about economic development and they thought: well 4 per cent growth isn't enough; we're going to raise it to 8 per cent. So we rubbed out the platform and put in 8 per cent, and then they didn't know what to do.

So now the current Leader of the Liberal Party is saying, well it can't be 8 per cent, that's not realistic. But the point is, their record is campaigning on one view and doing something else. So if they believe in two-tier medicine, I'd like to know what that second tier includes. And I think it's up to . . . the Liberal's have to explain what they mean by what should belong to that second tier.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do is to hear more about what the Liberals really stand for, because again my good friend from North Battleford — now he was very complimentary to me so this sort of hurts me to say this — but my good friend from North Battleford, apart from complimenting me, he criticized this government on every front. Like if you read that speech, which I did today . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I got the press. Because he reads . . . but it isn't that bad. Saskatchewan people . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Don't do that. Saskatchewan people are not that depressed. But he criticized the government, which is fine, but he didn't offer, he didn't offer any alternatives. And part of a government-in-waiting, which he says he is, says you've got to offer alternatives, and he didn't do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, they've never . . . And I would say that the Conservative Party, trying to rename themselves the Saskatchewan Party which, by the way, a lot of Saskatchewan people are quite offended about, but you'll have to deal with that in the polls. But the Conservative Party, along with the Liberal Party, these are nice, very nice, caring people, but the record shows — the record shows — in the House, that they have not voted. They have not voted. And I don't know if all members realize this, but the record shows that they have not voted for things that would lift people up.

They voted last year against a budget that gave support to low income people, that gave support to aboriginal people, and that gave support for better housing. There were housing initiatives — social housing initiatives — announced in 1997. You did not support those. They did not support those, and yet they say they're concerned about social housing, especially the member from the North. And he did not support, he did not support a budget that supported . . . And not only that, he let his federal counterparts off the hook by pulling out of social housing. I don't know how he justifies that, and then says that he's interested in representing his people in the North, Mr. Speaker. So he's got to spell out what he means.

So, Mr. Speaker, all we know to this point is that the Conservative Party has to have two-tier health or they want to phase out the health care system for private health. They want to privatize the Crown corporations, and at least they're honest about that. They're honest about that.

They want to phase out unions and they're on record — if not saying it directly — all of their votes would indicate that that's their position.

And what offends me, and I think offends a lot of people, is a Saskatchewan Party continues to criticize aboriginal organizations. They continue to, and then do the political manoeuvring that they were trying to do today to somehow pretend that they're supporting aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people have a very clear idea that the Saskatchewan Conservative Party does not support their initiatives. And there's no mistaking about that. And they know. And we've got

no lessons to learn from the member from Kelvington on this front, who is lecturing us today about what we should learn regarding working with first nations and Metis people.

And the final thing we know about them, is they want to lock up young people and throw away the key. And I just simply don't support that kind of simplistic approach, which was why we're in the mess we're in today, is because that's what approach they used 12 years ago.

So apart from those things, I don't know how they're in step with grass roots Saskatchewan people because they haven't said.

Now we're not quite finished with the Liberals yet because we know that they . . . because their positions are even less clear. And I would say that there is less frankness from them on this, therefore.

Now the member from . . . my good friend from Melville — he is a very good friend — he says that we're stealing your ideas; that the government is stealing the Liberal ideas on health care research. Well I hope he can send a few more over because we would like to see what they're thinking; because Saskatchewan people don't know what they're thinking. They just don't know what they're thinking.

And I would say that we are open; this is the openness we've had. Yes, we're open to any good ideas. They've got some good ideas; we'd love . . . because that's what partnership, that's what building on your common values is all about. So have you got any more good ideas? We'd love to hear them, and we'll work together.

But we do know that you support two-tier health care. We know that you support two-tier health care and I think your leader is going to have to explain what he means by firing elected health boards, because he's not come clean on this. Firing elected health boards and replacing them with people who know what they're doing. That's what he's saying. I assume he means, my medical friends. I don't know what he means by that.

(1500)

And I think there's some anxiety around that. There's also a fair amount of anxiety, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that the provincial Liberals are totally letting the federal Liberals off the hook on every front — social housing, the aboriginal programs, the treaty rights, the social assistance offloading, the health care offloading, and the transportation offloading. And they're not saying anything about it. I just don't understand that. Why you would let several hundreds of millions of dollars slip away, that Ottawa is taking, and somehow you believe that you're supporting Saskatchewan people. You know you can't just be a cheerleader for Mr. Chrétien, especially when he takes away money from the areas that are precious to Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Speaker, we don't know what their plan is on economic development. I'd like to know that, what the Liberal plan is on economic development other than 8 per cent growth per year. Now maybe that's a good goal but is it realistic? I don't know how they plan to get there.

Now to the fairness, to the credit of the current leader, he's saying it couldn't be 8 per cent, so we respect that. But how would he try and get to 4 per cent or 3 per cent? What would he do? What would they do regarding training and education? It's fine to say, it's fine to say, well give the University of Saskatchewan $100 million for buildings and $50 million — and just pull numbers out of the air — but you can't do that realistically when you're being reduced by the federal government.

So where are they going to get the money? What's their strategy on training and education? What's their strategy on . . . Sorry, what's their poverty strategy? At least we have one out front. And we're saying look, if we can build on that we will do that.

Yesterday the member from North Battleford, who knows about this area — I know he does; he's a legal-aid lawyer and a person concerned about social policies and family violence, and all the things that poverty . . . all the social ills that poverty creates — he didn't say whether he has any positive suggestions or any positive ideas or views about our strategy to enhance opportunities for low income people and unemployed people. And I know he would have an important perspective on that. That's the kind of dialogue that we need with the opposition.

I don't know what the Liberal policy is on transportation. I don't know. I don't know what their policy is on deficit reduction, because if we take . . . I assume there's not a policy worked out yet on managing the debt and the deficit, which is fine, which is fine. I realize they lost half their caucus and they can't do everything at once, but they're going to have to be prepared to say what their fiscal policy is going to be, because so far I think their promises add up to several more hundred million dollars and would put us back where we were out of the Conservatives in the 1980s. So Saskatchewan people will need to know that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would close by saying that I'm very proud, as I've tried to say, about the theme, investing in people, building on our common values. I just can't see how that's out of step with Saskatchewan people.

And also it's got substance in each of the six areas that I've mentioned. I think it's clear but progressive. It's a continuation — you don't do this in one year — it's a continuation of what we've tried to do for many, many years; what Saskatchewan people have tried to do and have told us is their priorities.

There are improvements. We've got a long way to go, but there are good indicators. And it's a positive approach which is successful, and you can never go wrong when you're working with communities and supporting communities. We know that strong families and strong communities go hand in hand.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can only surmise that the reason that the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party are concerned about the throne speech and the motion, and why they've got this goofy, negative motion is because you can't take issue, you can't take issue of these kinds of priorities because they reflect the priorities of the Saskatchewan people.

So from my point of view, I'm proud to support the throne speech. I am proud of all of my colleagues, and the people of

Saskatchewan. I'm privileged to continue serving, having this be my 10th year in my constituency in Saskatoon Eastview.

And I guess we'll have to drag the opposition into this century as we and the Saskatchewan people move into the next century. That's just the way it is; they're about a hundred years behind and that's just the way their philosophy takes them, right. So we've done it in the past, and we'll do it again, and we'll just keep moving forward. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to enter the debate this afternoon and make some comments in regards to our party's view of the throne speech that was presented.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, just a recognition of your role as Speaker. We certainly appreciate the way we've been able to work with you in the past and we look forward to that good working relationship continuing into the future.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, just to acknowledge the fact that the program of visiting the schools throughout the province of Saskatchewan has certainly been well received and I commend you for that and wish you well. And I hope that this is a program that is continued on, that future Speakers continue that program. It's certainly a good educational program and format for young people to hear about how this Legislative Assembly operates. And I was pleased to have been involved in one of the first ones that we had in this province. So I thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to the member from Saskatoon speaking a few moments ago, and if he'll just give me a moment, one of my colleagues has just gone to get one of our policy manuals and we're going to send it across to him just so he can fill himself in and find out that a number of the policies that the Saskatchewan Party has currently developed certainly are coming from grass roots people — coming from the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting as I was listening to the member from Saskatoon and his speech. And at one time I was tempted to ask for a refund on that tape he had sold me, but actually the funds that he was collecting went to a good cause so we certainly won't do that. I'm not exactly sure whether the tape was better than the speech but I want to commend the member for his comments. However, I have to add that I have to take issue with some of the comments he made.

I think if the speaker was talking about being negative and not being negative, it seems to me that he could have certainly made some more positive comments rather than running down the other parties. And the fact that he took direct aim at the Saskatchewan Party would indicate to my colleagues and I that they have a right to take direct aim at us. They must be hearing a lot of the same things we're hearing.

Even at the SARM convention just recently, as I was talking to delegates and we talked about the throne speech that was just presented, some of the comments from the SARM delegates were basically: well that really doesn't sound like there's anything new; it doesn't sound like there's a vision there.

Certainly I've been hearing it from constituents. Indeed the day the throne speech was made, I had a number of calls on my answering service — my only regret is that people didn't leave a name and a phone number — raising a number of issues and basically reiterating the fact of what we were suggesting, that there was a lack of substance in the current throne speech.

One of the other things when you talk about this throne speech and that it really didn't have anything new, was the fact that even at the SARM convention yesterday when the Premier was speaking, a number of delegates not only talked about the lack of anything new in the throne speech, they . . . Some of the comments coming from some of the delegates were: it seems to me I know that speech; I think I've heard that for the fifth year in a row.

So I think even SARM delegates are beginning to think that we're hearing the same thing, that it really isn't anything new — nothing that gives us any reason to believe that this province is listening to the concerns that we're raising or that the Premier or that his cabinet colleagues are even listening.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to stand here. And I see my colleague has brought in a bit of our platform, "A New Vision for Saskatchewan's Future." I'd like to send that over to the member from Saskatoon Nutana, I believe, at this time.

Mr. Speaker, as well, the member talked about . . . Unfortunately he brought up an issue that I take a little bit of an offence to. And while I acknowledge where my roots are and where I came from, I certainly don't see the Saskatchewan Party representing anything different than what the people of Saskatchewan are looking for.

But I take offence with the fact that the member would suggest that during the 1980s, the '80s was such a period where government made some very difficult decisions and yet it took the province down a slippery slope to a place of doom.

If the member would just look back a little bit, he would begin to realize, even as the member from Regina Dewdney who was the first Finance minister in 1992, acknowledge the fact that the only thing that was really doing anything for the province in 1992 were issues like changes, like the Saskferco company, like Weyerhaeuser, like the upgraders.

It's very interesting. That was one of the first comments that was brought forward by the former Finance minister when he took over the portfolio following the 1991 election. And he admitted and said directly at that time that initiatives created during the 1980s were creating a benefit and were a positive factor to the economy of this province.

And it's unfortunate that the member fails to acknowledge that. It's unfortunate that the member fails to acknowledge that the '80s certainly were a difficult period. I would like to ask him, if he was in government at the time, whether they would have been able to address a number of the questions any differently considering the fact that many of his colleagues were in opposition and were calling for major, major, major changes that, when they came to power in 1991, said oh, well we can't

do that for you. Sorry, folks; sorry, folks; sorry, folks. We can't do that because we made all these promises and now members in the back row are calling, talking about the province being bankrupt, but maybe they should go back and look at the budget of 1982.

Look at the fact that the minister of Finance . . . I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, if the government would have been re-elected in 1982, we'd have had the same scenario that they had in B.C. (British Columbia) — present a budget in, I believe it was March of that year, saying we've got $123 million surplus. If they had been re-elected I think they would have been saying after the election, oops, it's not quite as rosy as we thought it was out there; the numbers aren't quite the same.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, how the members like to get involved with the debate. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, I thoroughly enjoy this so I hope the members continue to get involved because that's one way of just drawing back and reflecting on the past.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, it would be a fallacy to say that in some difficult times the government of the '80s did everything right. Certainly that has been acknowledged. Even the former premier acknowledges that there were decisions made at that time, in difficult years, that could have been done differently. But I think at the same time let's acknowledge that there were a number of issues, a number of decisions that were made, a number of initiatives that the province is benefiting from.

And certainly I would like to thank the Premier of this province and his government for the fact that they didn't change the oil royalty structure. Look at the revenues that have been coming in as a result of oil development in this province. In fact just recently this government realized that they had to even do a little more to continue to encourage oil, and the enhancement of oil development in this province — because that was one of the major injections of cash to the treasury of this province — in order to provide the services.

However, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the record of this government since 1991, there are a lot of things to be questioned. There are a lot of . . . a number of decisions that the government made, a number of issues that they have entered into and, Mr. Speaker, when you look back at it prior to 1991, the expectation that people had of the change, how health care would change, more funding for health care, more services, more doctors, more nurses, more education, and in some of the other fields.

And, Mr. Speaker, what do we have? I think when people look back and they say we've been hoodwinked, Mr. Speaker, they basically look back and see what they thought they were going to get in 1991 and they ask themselves, what did we really receive? Because have we received more? We certainly don't have more.

And I like . . . The member from Swift Current that's just cropped up again. That 19 billion . . . actually he's wrong. It was 21 billion I believe, the province . . . the Provincial Auditor was pointing out — $21 billion. And if you looked at it, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, he would begin to realize that more than half of that is directly attributed to his government prior to 1982, and certainly since 1991.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the *Public Accounts*, take a look at what the auditor is pointing out. It's very interesting, Mr. Speaker. How I enjoy the involvement and the participation of other members.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the two parties, when we look at the current government, I think you would find, as we found even talking to delegates at the recent SARM convention, even delegates were bringing up the fact that they are beginning to see a worn out and a tired government, a government that really, as I indicated earlier, is devoid of any new and real ideas — ideas that certainly, as the member from Saskatoon talked about . . . carrying us and dragging us into the 21st century. I'm not exactly sure if there are any ideas that would really do that.

I think, Mr. Speaker, if the government were to listen to the people of Saskatchewan such as the Saskatchewan Party members would have, they would come up with some new ideas that we could really look forward to the year . . . to the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And I like the minister's comment, the Minister of Labour — certainly we do have a lot of new ideas, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, his comment about the old Tories, it just shows you, Mr. Speaker, how afraid they are of the Saskatchewan Party and the fact that they're trying to link . . . they've done this for time and a day, to link a political party or link an individual with some other enterprise rather than realizing the mistakes that they're making. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, the Channel Lake agreement is something that they're probably not all that proud about.

The announcement today of the $300,000 severance package to Jack Messer — I'm not exactly sure if the ministers on the front bench are really proud of that today, because there are many people across this province who are facing difficult times, such as the group of aboriginal people that were in this Assembly the other day. And, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I was truly appalled when we were sitting down and talking to the delegation that had come in. I didn't realize that there are circumstances that a number of our aboriginal community are facing that are even worse than third-world countries in many cases. I didn't realize that. It seemed to me, Mr. Speaker, that . . . and I think most people in Saskatchewan would think that every one of the aboriginal community are living in luxury. Well that is not so.

Mr. Speaker, this is another issue that this government needs to look at. I don't think it's fair to just blame the federal government. Certainly there are issues that the federal Liberal Party and government are responsible for when it comes to aboriginal questions. There are federal issues but there are also provincial issues. And as well, the aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan are looking to this government to give leadership in addressing some of those concerns, making sure that they are taken to and addressed with the federal Liberal government; so that they in turn indeed receive the due benefit for what's supposed to be coming to them. Mr. Speaker, so many of these

issues.

Mr. Speaker, since this government was elected in 1991 we have heard continually that health care is a priority. We heard that health care was a priority in the year that the government closed 52 hospitals. And we look at 1998 — nothing has changed. Again in the Speech from the Throne, health care is a priority.

In 1998 we are again being told that health care is a priority, even while this government is closing more hospitals. And certainly the one that we all think of — the Plains health care centre.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here today to tell the members opposite that the people of this province may have believed you in 1991; they may have believed you in 1995 when they said, trust us. These cuts may hurt for awhile, but we are making these changes because we know what is best for you. I think people want to have some involvement. They want to have some say. I believe people have risen beyond just letting governments do everything for them. I certainly hear that from many people in my area.

But if we just hang in there for a little while, the government is saying, if you just hang in there for only a little while, we will be able to cut health funding to a manageable level but we will be left with a new and improved health care system. I would suggest to you that there are many people across this province don't see our health care system as new or even improved.

Mr. Speaker, if this is new and improved, if the wellness system we have today is this government's example of the best health care system in the world, if the members opposite believe that, I think it is about the time they opened their eyes and, more importantly, they start listening to what Saskatchewan people are saying.

That's the Saskatchewan Party's alternative throne speech outline. We will be introducing, and in fact we introduced today, Mr. Speaker, a private members' Bill that calls on the government to do a total review — a full review — of the health care system.

And our Bill, Mr. Speaker, doesn't just talk about a full review of the current health care system. Our Bill has provisions for an ongoing review every so many years so people can have some involvement in discussing health care and whether or not they see the health care program providing the services and meeting the needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to bring that forward. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, however, that the Minister of Health would not make a commitment to that view. And I guess time will tell as to whether or not we will even have the opportunity for that Bill to see the light of day in this Legislative Assembly.

And if this government and its ministers and its members and the Premier, as he says, are really being open and accountable, if they are listening to the people of the province, they will take the time to look at our Bill. They will take the time to allow for debate on the Bill, and for that Bill to see the floor of this Assembly for second reading. And I certainly ask the Minister of Health to allow that process and the Premier of this province.

Because, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, as the Premier was addressing SARM, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, yesterday, the Premier really spoke quite strongly about the transportation system in this province. He spoke out about how the fact that his government has been lobbying Ottawa and asking Ottawa to rethink its transportation policy . . . And yesterday he called on the federal government to put a moratorium in place until a review of the transportation . . . the Justice Estey report was done so that we could, all people of Canada and certainly western Canadians could have a better idea and see whether or not there should be more rail line abandonment. And the Premier of this province called for a review. And I believe that is appropriate.

If you are going to review a system, it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that you would take the time, that you would take the time to review totally and not continue to displace or remove from that system, that you would indeed leave the system alone until you have decided whether or not you should be cutting rail lines.

Well it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that health care is certainly another case. And in this case in particular, the Plains health care centre is an ideal situation that the Premier could look at and ask and give some direction to his Minister of Health and to the department to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains health care centre until there was a full and impartial review of the health care centre and of its need and of the services it provides to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of the Plains health care closure . . . and it's interesting to note how many calls just in the last few days have arrived in my office, have arrived in my constituency office, calls that were left on my car phone, on my answering service, individuals. As one lady, one individual indicated, she said, her comments were, when you go to the General there's so many nooks and crannies you don't know exactly where you're going; there's no parking. And that's one of the issues that has been brought forward on many, many occasions. It's not easily accessible.

Certainly a letter I have here from a gentleman says: "If your government stands by and lets the Plains be closed, it will be a sorry day for our health care and may well be a sorry day for you also."

And he expresses the same things about many of the problems he sees with the closure of the Plains health care centre. Problems that are brought out in a letter to the editor today written by Mr. Borden Bachynski, a respected surgeon in this city, working in the health care system and a Regina health board member. He says:

> I think Darlene Sterling, who previously served on the Regina Health District Board, in a letter to The Leader-Post a few days ago, stated it was probably more correct saying save health care meant the same as saving the Plains.

Now I realize, Mr. Speaker, as we've indicated in our caucus and indicated the other day, there are more questions to be

asked rather than just saving a building. But I believe we need to answer those questions. We need to answer questions like: it's an old hospital situated in an older . . . or the comments by the chairman of the Regina District Health Board, talking about Saskatchewan being an old hospital, he said:

> It amazes me that the same government, some 15 or more years ago under then-minister of health Walter Smishek, in going over the (health) problems, wanted two centres of excellence in the city and the following facts are as true today as they were then. Smishek's consultants felt that the Regina General Hospital should be closed and either another hospital built or a second tower at the Plains erected to maintain a tertiary-care hospital as being a centre of excellence and to continue our teaching program as part of the University of Saskatchewan. The reasons (were) given . . . for the closure of the General were . . .

And this is back 15 years ago, that it's "an old hospital," it hasn't changed other than the construction that's been added to it. It's inaccessible. It's:

> . . . situated in a flood zone . . .
>
> The accessibility to the hospital is poor because of the narrow streets . . .
>
> . . . lack of parking space . . .

There are so many reasons here, Mr. Speaker, that Regina General should not . . . or that the Plains health care centre should not be closed. Reasons that go beyond just the individuals who work in those facilities. Go beyond the doctors; go beyond the specialists; go beyond the health care-givers, the nurses, and even beyond the patients, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when you see the number of people who are raising the issue, it appears to me that it's a strong argument to review the whole process.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess it would be easy to say, well the Regina Health District made that decision; that was their decision, so therefore they should answer to it. And that's what the government members are saying; that's right. My guess, Mr. Speaker, is the Regina Health Board had no alternative.

Number one, when the district boards were formed the district boards were made up of what? — elected individuals there to speak on behalf of the people they represented? No they weren't. The member from Regina South obviously hasn't been around long enough to know . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now all hon. members will recognize it is inappropriate to be shouting across the floor of the Assembly. And I acknowledge that hon. members may have statements that they feel very strongly and would like to put on the record, and I encourage them to do that in the course of the debate on the response to the Speech from the Throne. In the meantime, I'd ask for the cooperation of the members of the House to allow the hon. member from Moosomin to be heard.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the Plains health care centre, and certainly I've had the privilege on many occasions of visiting at the health care centre. I've had the pleasure of talking to care-givers in the centre; I've talked to patients in the centre. I've talked to patients and care-givers in the Regina General health centre, and certainly in the Pasqua health centre as well.

And you can see, Mr. Speaker, that many people are doing their best to provide the best form of care that they feel . . . or adequate amount of care. But what I hear time and time again, is that people are beginning to feel tired, beginning to feel burnt out, because there just isn't enough . . . number one, there aren't enough staff people to cover and to provide for all the services that are needed in the health facilities.

Now the government might argue, well where are you going to find the extra dollars, if you will? I believe the Liberal opposition today talked about putting more money into health care. Well maybe more money is not the answer, Mr. Speaker. Maybe looking at how we're spending the current dollars that are allotted might be the answer. Maybe we need to look at whether the current allocation of funding is being allocated properly.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, I remember back when the government talked about reducing spending in health care, and their reasons for closing the 52 hospitals across this province and the numerous jobs that went with that. And one of the reasons for their move to close the Plains health care centre was to cut and to save some money. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the audited statement from 1991 to today, Mr. Speaker, you will find that we didn't really reduce any expenditures.

We were expending $1.56 million in 1991; we're spending $1.57 million, almost 1.6 . . . or billion dollars, pardon me, in health care today. Which tells me, Mr. Speaker, for all the cuts that were being made we really didn't save anything as far as any real monetary savings to address the budget.

But what we have done, we've created a lot of problems for people in this province in the area of health care. Let me give you one, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about some of the problems people are facing in health care.

The other day, Mr. Speaker, it was brought to our attention that a young woman by the name of Jill Miner, a 26-year-old young lady with so much potential to be an active member of her family and the larger community, is in desperate need of a kidney transplant. She has known this for a number of years, for a good period of time. She's been on dialysis three times a week since last April. And in December of 1997, hope appeared on the horizon. The Miners received some good news that her sister was a match and she was prepared to give her sister the incredible gift. Jill was told that the transplant would take place in January. Then she was told it would happen in February. It's now March and she has not had her surgery. As a matter of fact, she is not scheduled for surgery until June 27.

So, Mr. Speaker, what do we have here? We have a young girl, young lady, who needs a kidney. She has a donor lined up. The doctor's ready to go. But there are no beds allocated for the surgery. So let's talk about money. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker?

It means that here's a young person who has to wait. And when

you talk about funding, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that Jill has to wait for this kidney to be donated and for the operation means that she continues to be on dialysis, which is a continual cost to the province of Saskatchewan.

It means that her sister, who would be able to or had the opportunity to find employment, now cannot take the job because of the fact she doesn't know when they may be called, and then she has a time period that she's going to have to recover from her operation. So in the meantime she is forced to look elsewhere for her finances.

And so when you look at it at the end of the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a result of the lack of beds — and a closure of the Plains just means fewer beds in this province — we have this young, vibrant lady, is forced to wait longer. It means an added cost to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, to the taxpayers.

(1530)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's just a solid reason, one of the reasons, why we believe the government should reconsider and rethink and review and relook at the closure of the Plains health care centre. It may be a means of providing for Jill or other patients in her . . . such as . . . who are facing the same types of scenario. Mr. Speaker, it's not just the Jill Miners of this world. There are many people in this province who are facing the same problem; many people who are on waiting-lists.

And one of the other . . . another problem that arises, and it happened to a neighbour of ours just recently who was sent up to the city. This gentleman happens to have Lyme's Disease, and there's not too many people in this province . . . In fact, as I begin to understand it, there really isn't a lot of knowledge in regards to Lyme's Disease. But it's a very disabilitating disease and it really takes away a person's ability to really have a very functional and positive existence.

And this gentleman was sent up to Regina for some tests — a specific time, a specific date. They came up with his wife the night before because they had to be in early. They booked a motel room, to be available, because of the fact that driving any distance is not easy for him. They get down to . . . And this happens even in the Plains health care centre, I believe, where the tests were done. He got down to the health care centre for the test and was told, we can't do your test today. Why couldn't they do the test today? Because they didn't have a bed to put him in. Well his wife became a little annoyed, in fact somewhat annoyed, and I don't really blame her because they don't really have a lot to operate on because of the fact that the disease he's afflicted with, a lot of the medical costs are laid on his shoulders as far as the drugs he is taking. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, not only are they facing a challenge on their meagre income because of the drug costs, but they're also facing the challenge of having had to drive up here, stay overnight in a motel, and then told to go home and come back in, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, for those individuals living in Regina that's easy to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's unfortunate that members of this government do not understand the problems that people are facing. Fortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the centre finally realized that yes, this couple had faced quite a traumatic day and they indeed at the end of the day worked in the tests and they were certainly appreciative for that.

But the other problem that arises now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that there's very little knowledge of Lyme Disease. There is a doctor in Vancouver who has done extensive work on Lyme Disease who has come up with a number of alternatives. The unfortunate part for the patient that we're speaking of right now is the fact that if he were to go to Vancouver, everything would be on his shoulders. He has no help in Saskatchewan, and the Department of Health will not even assist him to go to another jurisdiction to receive care under the care of a physician who has done a lot more research and certainly may be able to provide . . . I'm not saying he's capable or will or has all the answers, but who knows? He may be able to provide the assistance that would help that patient.

So I certainly ask the Minister of Health if indeed he will take the time and talk to his officials and make sure that they are indeed meeting the needs of the patients of the province of Saskatchewan, and if it means going out of the province to assist in those circumstances . . .

So, Mr. Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, when you look at this budget and when you look at what the government's so-called commitment to health care through the years . . . and the fact that health care has such a priority on their list, one has to question just by what we have seen and the changes taking place, how much of a priority that is.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to look beyond just government. We need to look beyond the fact that the Department of Health just sets out the criteria. We need to look, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and allow the public input into their health care system.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the members across the floor would take some time to listen to people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they would begin to understand that there are many individuals in this province who have some sound ideas. And it's not . . . they're not necessarily always asking for more money, but they have ideas of what . . . you can put more services and make them more available.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at what people can do for themselves, I just raised the issue of the integrated facility in the town of Wawota, a facility that was just added on. And when the local group that was put in place to look at the idea of integrating their hospital onto their care home and tying the facility into one, thereby saving costs by the fact that you don't have two kitchens, that you don't have two heating units, everything is under one roof, it's more easily accessible, and you can use . . . you can use labour back and forth and in between. I commend the people of Wawota for doing what they did and taking the initiative.

But I know when the Wawota board went to the health district, the health district came up with a proposal that was much higher than what the board thought it should be. But also they were going to up . . . The health board was suggesting fewer services in the integrated facility, to which the local community said no, we do have . . . people have made a commitment; we've got a foundation grant here. We had a bequeath of a

significant amount of funds and the bequeath was made on the basis that there be services allowed in this community.

And if we're going to bring a doctor . . . If we've got no acute care beds in this community, what good is trying to get a doctor to the community? A doctor will not look at Wawota if it doesn't have acute care beds; if he doesn't have access. His closest available acute care beds in any direction were at least 40 minutes away.

So what the community did themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is they had . . . they brought an engineering firm in that looked at the old health facility and they came up with a proposal that would move that old structure, the older structure to the . . . in a position right beside the care home; that they would add on to it and would upgrade it and they would do it for a substantially less sum of money than what the board was suggesting in building a new facility.

What they have come up with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for less than $700,000, is a nice, integrated — in fact a beautiful — integrated facility that continues to provide acute care services, some emergency services, and 24-hour observation care. That came about as a result of involvement of local people who felt that they had something to offer the health care system.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look across this province you will find that there isn't a place in this province where there aren't many good ideas that could be used.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the severance package that was offered today to Mr. Messer, I would suggest to you that the MS sufferers in this province could certainly have benefit from that type of funding. If you want to talk about funding, if you want to talk about putting some money into the health care system, there were some funds to use.

If you want to talk about meeting the needs of extra beds, or even this kidney transplant, there's an area where you could look at some funding or so many other areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we could look at. Even this individual who's being sent . . . they've sent out to Vancouver, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The problems with that individual could certainly be met immediately just by looking at how this government is spending its funds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at the — if you would call them initiatives — I don't know if you could call them initiatives when you look at what the province lost in its SaskTel deal in the United States; when you look at the more than a million dollars spent deciding whether or not they should go to Guyana and build a power plant; or when you look at the Channel Lake; or when you look at some of the other endeavours that the province is looking at getting involved in.

Number one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest to you that if the companies, if the companies like SaskPower or SaskTel or Sask Energy were doing that, if they were private companies, that would be a choice that their ratepayers or the owners of that company would make. But who are the owners of the Power Corporation? Who are the owners of the Crown utilities? I believe it's the people of Saskatchewan. We are all owners of these utilities. The utilities were not made to gouge the people of Saskatchewan to higher rate increases on an annual basis and then turn around and spend the money outside of the province.

I believe these utilities were put in place originally to provide a service to the public of Saskatchewan. If the government wants to expand out of the province maybe they need to take a look at some of the services and some of the companies and allow private companies to work outside of this province.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at what the Saskatchewan Party is suggesting, the Saskatchewan Party is suggesting a total review of Crown corporations. That doesn't necessarily mean, Mr. Speaker, that Crown corporations will be done . . . like SaskPower, SaskTel, will be done away with, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I certainly believe there are some Crown corporations in this province . . . that all the Crown corporations should have a total review, especially when we look at the fiasco in SaskPower.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by doing a review the government may find that there might be other ways that they can utilize their money and utilize it more efficiently to meet the needs of the public of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . and the member from Lloydminster is saying, show it to us . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I would remind the people that the hon. member from Moosomin has the floor in the House. Now his own members behind him are across at the government members and nobody can hear the hon. member that has the floor.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you talk about reviewing, like our Bill in regards to reviewing health care, what we're asking for is a review process that allows the public input. A review process of the Crown corporations would allow public input. The public would tell the member from Lloydminster, do we need a company like the Saskatchewan Transportation Company that's a major millstone around the government's neck? I don't know. Let's review it, let's take a look at it.

Is it possible that a service like bus service in this province could be provided by the carriers that are already operating in this province? Do the people of this province need to continue to fund a utility that continues to be a drain on the coffers and the finances of the province of Saskatchewan?

Those are the types of things, Mr. Speaker. How do we know until we take the time to review thoroughly to determine whether or not. And the public will decide; you allow the public some input. They after all are the individual care-givers and caretakers of this province. They've put their trust in us as elected members to act as their servants not as their masters.

And I think maybe that's something the government needs to recognize: that they are servants, government members are servants; they're not masters in their health deals and their education, in a number of the issues that they've been raising, the way they've been acting. They've been acting like masters, not servants. And then they turn around if the issue isn't going well, such as in health care — they've formed health district

boards and they've put the blame on the health district boards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's time the government took responsibility for its own actions. I think you would have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the comments I have made today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have to agree that the throne speech that has been presented just a few days ago really doesn't have . . . It's devoid of a lot of any new ideas. It's basically a throne speech that's been presented by a lacklustre and ageing government, a government that the people of Saskatchewan, I'm sure in the not-to-distant future, will get a time . . . have the opportunity to judge.

And I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that from the many people across Saskatchewan already have decided how they are going to judge this government, they've found it wanting.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity of having been able to stand in this Assembly and to speak out on a number of issues that not only affect the people across this province, but certainly speak out on issues that even my constituents have been raising, such as transportation, Highways and Transportation, certainly the educational system.

I would like to end on this note, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the people of Saskatchewan, certainly the people of Moosomin, for the way they get involved, for the input that they offer, and certainly for the voluntarism and the efforts in volunteer work.

And in that regard, I had the pleasure just last weekend of being at a recognition ceremony in the community of Glenavon for the Glenavon Housing Authority, recognizing one of its members who had given 20 years of her life to the Glenavon Housing Authority — Agnes Shiplack.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Agnes just exemplifies many of the people across this province who donate of their time to work and provide for their community and for their area. And I think we need to certainly recognize volunteers such as Agnes.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the privilege of being a judge at a regional 4-H competition. And I would have to suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you sit down, you sit back and listen to young people in this province involved in the 4-H movement and the way they can get up and speak and speak with conviction, certainly it is heartening to know that there are young people who are willing to . . . and down the road we can look at, at giving real leadership in the province of Saskatchewan.

So while there are many areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we can find want when it comes to government as well as individual MLAs, there are many areas too where we may find where it becomes . . . Their job of being an MLA may become tedious, maybe find it . . . Sometimes you wonder if you're really accomplishing anything. But there are certainly many occasions too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you feel proud. When you look at the people around you and the people who come up, pardon me, and acknowledge what you've done and thank you for speaking out on their behalf. Whether or not you answered their question or need, they recognize that you endeavoured and you tried your best.

(1545)

So I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity of addressing the Assembly today, and I say I look forward to continue to represent the people of the Moosomin constituency.

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of the Speech from the Throne and against the amendment.

This speech says it all. We have reached a point in our mandate and in the life of the government where we can take hold of the agenda and once again respond to the social conscience of a proud people. The serious damage that was done to the people of this province in the 1980s was something which had to be dealt with, and deal with it we did.

We have had a series of balanced budgets to prove that we can manage this province and care for Saskatchewan people as they deserve to be cared for. The Devine years were a grim reminder that whatever a government deficit finances, it has to be paid back, and the poorest in society pay the price regardless of how it is done.

That was what the Tories did to us. They abused the poorest in our province. Now we can set an agenda to deal with the social needs of the poor once again.

My congratulations go to the mover and to the seconder of the Speech from the Throne. The member from Regina Wascana did an excellent job, and is justly proud of our government's record, as well as the outline of the future projected by this speech. The member from Estevan is also to be complimented on his words of wisdom on the throne speech.

The success story about the Estevan area is typical of what has occurred and is continuing to occur in this province.

In my constituency, besides the twinning of our portion of the Yellowhead, I am pleased to say that the community of Rabbit Lake has established a personal care home in the old nursing home facility. This conversion is proceeding very well, and the local people are to be commended.

Several new and expanded businesses have increased the economic activity of the region. The farmers of my area have received the changes to crop insurance with open arms, as this is one area where the cost of insurance has actually gone down, and they are thankful to the government which has their interests at heart.

In my part of the world, there is interest in the expansion of the game farming industry, as well as a great deal of interest in pigs and feedlots. Many of the farms are converting to elk and buffalo production. Saskatchewan farmers have proven themselves to be very adaptable over the years, and now is no exception as they adjust to the new post-Crow era.

This change costs the average Saskatchewan farmer about $25,000 annually. And let's not forget that the Liberals did that to us. And we should not forget that the Liberals across the Chamber defended the move.

I was sitting in here yesterday and looking across at the opposition benches where I see alongside of the official opposition, or unofficial Tories, the remains of the Liberal Party. I couldn't help but reminisce for awhile about what I had seen happen over there since 1991, when they had only one member, only one Liberal — the member from Greystone. Then it became two when she took a major problem off our Premier's hands.

Then of course their numbers increased to three with a by-election. By the end of the ballot counting in 1995 they had increased to 11, which became 10, followed by a drop to 6 — or was it 5? — which is now 6 or 8 or perhaps 5 or 9. I found it all very confusing until I tried to explain it to my son. He managed to clear it all up for me when he said: Dad, you of all people should know better than to make that kind of a mistake. All the people of this country, Saskatchewan in particular, should know better than to count Liberals, let alone count on them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — He's right you know. It was the Liberal government that killed the Crow, and with that one piece of legislation it financially crippled thousands of Saskatchewan farmers. It was the Liberal government that totally cut funding to transportation. You Liberals and Tories along the Yellowhead and No. 1 Highway should ask yourselves — if you really want twinned highways — and why, if the Liberals paid 50 per cent of the cost of Alberta's twinning, now say it to Saskatchewan, just go your own way. Once again Liberals have proven you can't count on them.

I am pleased to say that the people of Redberry Lake now have a twinned highway on the Yellowhead from one side of my constituency to the other. Incidentally I thank our Minister of Highways for continuing to upgrade the system, and I support her and all other MLAs in their efforts to complete the twinning. If Ottawa would just do its share, the rest of the twinning in other constituencies, not just in Redberry Lake, could be completed in a few short years.

But of course these kinds of deals from Ottawa are not unusual. The health care funding for instance. In 1967, Saskatchewan health care costs were funded 50 per cent by the federal government and 50 per cent was funded from our provincial treasury. In 1997, 13 per cent is being funded by the federal government while the provincial government's funding is 87 per cent.

Now we hear in this Chamber the Liberal two-tier system or the Tory three-tier system. Either would result in a lot more tears.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — In this particular case the Liberals — and for that matter the former Tories — have failed, not just in a financial way, but failed the people, not only of Saskatchewan but also the entire country.

We need a strong central government which is dedicated to the well-being of Canadian people, not Tory-type Liberal governments that are totally corporate oriented. If this kind of unfairness continues, the country as a whole and all Canadians will be the losers. In fact we may lose our country over this approach.

It could be amusing, if it was not so sad, when I see the remnants of the former Devine Tories and the others who rode the Liberal wagon into the legislature trying to talk about such things as accountability — accountability — when they don't even use their Conservative name any more, a name that their predecessors in that party destroyed, damaged, to the point at where this group is ashamed. Yes, they're ashamed to be known as Tories, but Tories they are.

Granted they are sorry Tories, but Tories just the same. Now that they don't want to be called Conservatives or Tories any more, we are supposed to call them the Saskatchewan Party. Well we have a situation where these guys are trying to gain credibility by using the good name of our province in an attempt to escape the damaged Tory label. Much like a criminal returning to the community under a different name, this Tory group has returned under an alias.

Well we know that the Devine Tories raped this province, and now these folks would have us look the other way while the Tory rapists move back into our community under an alias and rape and plunder some more.

Investing in health care is one of the key items of the throne speech and it is a major commitment of any responsible government. And just how major is indicated by the fact that health care funding is actually increased in this province even though Ottawa now pays only 13 per cent instead of the 50 per cent that medicare received at one time.

No further proof is needed to point out the fact that if the Liberals or Tories were in charge, medicare would be on the chopping block. Fortunately for us, our government is investing in health care as part of our program of investing in people. Home care improvements, first responders, ambulance service, and the 911 all have helped and are helping to better provide health care needs in rural communities.

Investing in transportation. This is a crucial area of the throne speech as transportation and transportation costs are being transferred onto provincial governments, rural municipalities, Saskatchewan farmers by uncaring federal government and railway companies who have no commitment to service. My government is working with rural municipalities, local communities, as well as cash-strapped farmers to develop the best transportation system possible without the required federal support.

Investing in people. I like the sound of it. It not only indicates our commitment as individuals and as government to improving the lives of Saskatchewan people, but also it indicates that it is truly an investment, and we are, as Saskatchewan people, well blessed with the return on that investment.

Investing in families will no doubt provide the greatest returns of all as our government revamps the social assistance programs to create a situation where work is rewarded and assistance is just that — an opportunity to carry on and to improve . . . for the lives of you and your family. It is not to be a future that holds out no hope. And of course that is why these changes to

the welfare system are so important.

We are once again, giving families in crisis the most important item of all, and that is hope.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — Investing in jobs. Our province in recent years has the best record of employment in the entire country. As was stated in the throne speech, more people are working in Saskatchewan than ever before. Employment opportunities outstrip the number of workers in many communities, and the trend continues.

Our government will continue to work with all sectors to enhance economic development and employment. In Redberry Lake my government is working with local people to encourage the comparatively new concept of the new generation co-ops. This is a system where people with few individual resources can band together to create job opportunities and enhance economic development in rural Saskatchewan.

Investing in education and training. The key elements in this area cover a major number of young people. But our interest in education and training also reaches out to many not so young that require retraining and adult education. I am pleased to announce that well over — pardon me — I'm pleased to announce that well over 200 students in rural areas are receiving practical agricultural training through the Saskatchewan Green Certificate Program.

(1600)

Our record as government on fiscal responsibility over the last six-and-one-half years speaks well for the final initiative in investing in people by undertaking all of these initiatives and doing it in a responsible manner by delivering one balanced budget after another.

I believe the throne speech says it best where it states, and I quote:

> All of these efforts, all of these initiatives, all of these plans, programs and proposals are possible because we will maintain our hard-won financial freedom.
>
> My government is determined that this province will never again return to the days of carefree fiscal irresponsibility. My government will not borrow from our children's future.
>
> Together we are still managing a bitter inheritance from the recent past. The third largest expenditure of our provincial budget is still wasted on interest payments on inherited debt (from that Tory group that is trying to re-establish itself under a different name).
>
> But things are getting better. Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of the Saskatchewan people, we are on the path of declining debt.
>
> Earlier this year my government had the pleasant duty of consulting the people of Saskatchewan on how they would like the province to reinvest our modest projected future surpluses. My government listened carefully and will respond in the upcoming provincial budget.

I am proud to stand in my place in this Chamber and indicate that I will support the Speech from the Throne and vote against the amendment and continue to be part of this government, a government that truly services the needs of the people and believes in humanity first. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just want to take a few minutes to, first of all, pay a special tribute to a number of communities that are now watching the legislative channel in northern Saskatchewan, and probably for the first opportunity is going to be having to watch their MLA speak about northern Saskatchewan and some of the northern challenges that we face as northern and native people.

I guess the key thing I want to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the purpose of my getting up today and speaking on some of the challenges facing northern Saskatchewan people is that the throne speech did in no way, shape, or form give any indication or any type of level of support to some of the challenges and some of the issues that we have been hounding this government on for the past three sessions that I've been MLA for Athabasca.

And part of the thrust of my presentation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that I want to, first of all, expound on some of the successes of the Indian-owned businesses in northern Saskatchewan as well as some of the great work of some of the communities like La Loche, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows, Beauval, Pinehouse, and so on.

And I also wanted to give, for one minute, the members in opposition a perspective of all this federal Liberal bashing that they have done as the only strategy that they have for their complete lack of commitment to northern Saskatchewan and the rest of the Saskatchewan people that are desperately wanting some kind of government support and recognition of some of their problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm certainly here to provide the voice of the northern Saskatchewan people — something that I wish the member from Cumberland would do on a consistent and regular basis. And we have found time and time again, as indicated in the December vote, when we voted for revenue sharing and he voted against, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We need to make sure that people get that information and make the point to all our leadership in the province that the North cannot and will not be denied.

Mr. Speaker, I want to pay a special tribute to the aboriginal people, as a non-aboriginal people as well throughout northern Saskatchewan, but in particular the aboriginal people, because we've seen some of the attacks of the Saskatchewan Party, some of the innuendo, and certainly some of the misguided information that they're dispersing throughout this great province of Saskatchewan.

At first I thought that I really wanted to make a lot of effort and bring tons and tons of information here, but we're not going to

try and kill the clock, so to speak. We want to bring some very precise and some concise information for all the members opposite in their deliberations on how do we deal with the northern and the native situation.

Mr. Speaker, I share with you a publication that was actually produced by a Professor Joseph Kalt of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at the Harvard University. And why Harvard, Mr. Speaker? It's a world-renowned school for excellence. And in fact this article actually includes excerpts from a written statement prepared by Professor Kalt for presentation to the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on September 17, 1996.

And in the report Professor Kalt pretty well summarizes what the intent of the report is, and I quote:

> . . . the Harvard Project have been working for almost ten years for and with tribes and tribal organizations. Our primary objectives have been to try to get a handle on what is working in Indian Country when it comes to sustained economic development and socially successful reservations . . .

And just as I mentioned, he followed a number of tribal organizations to try and see what they're doing that would, I guess in essence, help the U.S. (United States) government to try and deal with this whole situation.

And I credit the Harvard University for doing that because at the very least they're taking 10 years of consultation, 10 years of study, and 10 years to try and figure out what they could do to again alleviate some of the challenges of the aboriginal people in the United States. And I hope that Canada and certainly the province of Saskatchewan follow suit.

And I quote again, Mr. Speaker:

> . . . there are a number of reservations that are sustaining growing economies and breaking the cycles of dependence on federal programs. Mississippi Choctaw, for example, is now the fourth or fifth largest employer in Mississippi. More than a thousand non-Indians migrate onto the reservation every day in order to work in the Choctaw's manufacturing, service, and public sector enterprises. At Fort Apache in . . . (the) state of Arizona, the White Mountain Apache Tribe's forest products, skiing, recreation and other enterprises make it the economic anchor of the economy of northern Arizona.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why I'm expounding on some of these values is that Professor Kalt at the Harvard University has simply stated that the aboriginal community, the enterprises associated with the aboriginal community are very, very successful in the United States. And they're primarily successful for one reason, and that primary reason, Mr. Speaker . . . and he makes the point as well, and I quote again:

> Simply having resources —natural, human, or financial — does not account for what the relatively successful tribes have been able to achieve. To be sure . . . But just having resources is not *the* (only) key — or even *a* key — to getting the reservation economy going.

I continue quoting:

> The relatively successful tribes in the U.S. all have three indispensable ingredients in common. These are (1) sovereignty, (2) capable government, and (3) a match between the type of government a tribe has and that tribe's cultural norms regarding legitimate political power.

Now what that's saying in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, is what the northern Saskatchewan people have been saying for years, is that we want some control over our lives, we want some control over the economy of northern Saskatchewan, be it in mining, be it fishing, be it in tourism, be it in forestry, and all the other opportunities that northern Saskatchewan has at their expense.

But time and time again, control over the northern people through systems like social housing, through systems like the welfare system, those disincentives have continued to squelch, and in fact, that have continued to kill any desire that is out there to develop a very strong economy on behalf of the northern people.

Mr. Speaker, while the legal status, and I quote again from the report:

> While the legal status of Indian sovereignty waxes and wanes with federal court decisions and legislation, it is still the case that an assertive and capable tribe can take primary control of many economic decisions . . .

And I continue on, Mr. Speaker. Again, a professor at Harvard University:

> We cannot find a single case of sustained economic development where the tribe is not in the driver's seat . . . A tribe laying claim to the right of self-determination must be armed with capable institutions and self-governance.

And what that is saying, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what I alluded to two seconds ago, is that the NDP government must begin to recognize the huge potential that northern and native people have to offer this particular part of the world, in particular, Saskatchewan.

Now all throughout the presentation by Professor Kalt, there is some incredible, incredible statements on the innovation and the excitement that the aboriginal people have in the States. That is very apparent in northern Saskatchewan, and it continues being a very sober spot in this government's hide when you continue talking about helping out northern native people, and the North in general, yet nothing seems to be done and I get up and I point that out. That I know certainly hurts.

And again, Mr. Speaker, this document is fairly thick. It's really, quite frankly, a very informative document. And in fact, as Liberals always are — we're very fair, we're very forthright — I'm going to send a copy across to the member from Cumberland for his perusal. So he can get some idea of what northern Saskatchewan needs and what northern Saskatchewan wants. That's exactly what he needs to know.

Now Mr. Speaker, again, the things that they've done when you talk about the development and the evolution of aboriginal

people and northern people and the economy of Saskatchewan, some of the things they talk about here in the report is, again I quote:

> An indispensable foundation is a capable, independent tribal judiciary that can uphold contracts, enforce stable business codes, settle disputes, and protect businesses from politics.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to me that is vision. To me that is innovation. To me that is excitement. And, Mr. Speaker, the people and the aboriginal people in the United States have led it, and the aboriginal people in Canada and Saskatchewan have been trying to lead it but this government has not responded to that initiative.

Mr. Speaker, my one final quote from this article, and I quote:

> In a study of 67 tribes for which comparable data are available, we found that tribes with constitutionally-based, strong chief executives and strong legislature governments consistently outperform general council governments. Moreover, independent judiciaries promote economic well-being under all types of tribal executive and legislative systems.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what that says to me is these people, again as I mentioned, have vision. And I will again share the report with the Minister of Northern Affairs so he is certainly aware of what is happening and what is needed to be done. And that's part of our fairness.

And, Mr. Speaker, again we can talk at great lengths about that report, but I want to show the people that in other countries, in fine universities, at the Harvard University by professors — if they don't believe the northern people perhaps they'll believe some of these people — and what we've been calling for for a number of years. We want to empower communities, ideas and people to make a change in northern Saskatchewan for the better.

And to bring it closer to home, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to share some of the examples of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council — the accomplishments. And I go to financial management. Full disclosure of all expenditures. That's news for the Saskatchewan Party. Return of taxpayer's investments. $1.7 million of federal funding was invested into MLTC (Meadow Lake Tribal Council) forestry and interests which resulted in $10.7 million paid in corporate and withholding taxes over the three-year period. 250 direct jobs and 750 indirect jobs created.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, this is success here. Delivers high quality education and health services. Third-party evaluation of health programs reveal improvement in health conditions overall. That's from the Meadow Lake Tribal Council.

Now we talk about the PA (Prince Albert) Grand Council; you can talk about the tribal council out of North Battleford and area; and you can see that they are indeed a political and economic strength in this province. They are not downtrodden and they are certainly not abusing the system to the point to where the Saskatchewan Party said they are.

Now I'll be remiss in my responsibility to also not respond to some of the comments and some of the suggestions by the members opposite in this fed-bashing effort. I think it's important that the people of northern Saskatchewan understand that there are certain things that the federal government had done, and we're not trying to defend it. It's not within our interest to defend what other political parties do in other regions of the country, but we want to explain for a minute.

We have been sitting back and we have been listening to some of the fed bashing and the Liberal bashing that's been happening across the way here, and we want to make sure that people that are out there listening and watching this Assembly, that they be made aware of a few facts. Not those necessarily as people that have some dollars in the North associated with the highway construction, and I've mentioned the Cumberland House bridge, Grandmother's Bay, and other areas in the North that have received funding — there's federal dollars attached to that. The Black Lake road all the way up to the far North. But here's a majority of dollars are coming from federal coffers — we won't talk about that either.

We won't talk about the remote housing program in which a family that are working can finally work free of having to come back every few minutes and telling the government what they make so they are able to charge 25 per cent. We won't talk about that.

We won't talk about the aboriginal head start program. Don't talk about the millions of dollars put in, invested in job creation to the pathways program and certainly to the head start programs.

However, I'm going to use quotes again, when this government talks about the lack of commitment by the federal Liberals to anybody in Saskatchewan and I only do this on one premiss — so people out there know the facts. And, Mr. Speaker, I will quote from an article of the *Leader Post* dated March 9, l998. And quote:

> After years of painful cuts and tax increases, Martin (federal Finance minister) was finally able to declare victory in the battle against the deficit.

And here, Mr. Speaker, not more than two years ago this government stood up and said we have eliminated the deficit and the people of Saskatchewan were proud. And so they should be. And they're saying to this day that no other level of government are allowed to eliminate the deficit? Is that what you're saying to the Saskatchewan people? The Saskatchewan government, NDP government, is the only ones that can eliminate deficits? Nobody else can? The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, the federal government had no choice but to eliminate the deficit in the same manner in which the Saskatchewan government had to do it as well.

And I will quote, Mr. Speaker, and I will quote:

> He doled out $7 billion worth of tax relief over three years . . .

How much tax relief has the provincial government doled out? It's a good question. And another quote, Mr. Speaker:

> . . . he increased spending to education with his $2.5 billion Millennium Scholarship Fund and rescinded $1.5 billion worth of cuts in transfers to the provinces.

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, we have to look exactly what the situation is. And you talk about the lack of commitment in health care and education, and I quote again from the same article, which is an interview, and I will share that with the members opposite if they wish.

> Clearly, 80 per cent of our spending (federal spending) was on health care and education, and I think everybody would agree that both of those areas require it.

This is the federal Finance minister, Mr. Speaker.

And then we continue on with some of the other quotes so the people out there know exactly what is happening here, so they know the truth. The question that was posed to Mr. Martin was:

> How do you respond to critics who say the health system is in crisis and that you should have restored all the $6 billion in cuts to health and social transfer payments?

And the response that the Minister of Finance gave back and I quote:

> The provinces may come along and say, 'Look, what you've simply done is restored a cut.' And that may well be. But every province budgeted on the basis of not receiving that money and now they will. And I would really hope that the provinces put that money into health care and education.
>
> It will be very interesting to see if in fact that occurs. It will be interesting to see if hospital emergency rooms get more money as a result of that. I would certainly hope so . . .

And now we'll go down the interview a bit further, Mr. Speaker, and again the Finance minister indicated, quote:

> The fact is provinces are declaring surpluses, or provinces are cutting taxes. Saskatchewan cut the sales tax in the 1997 budget. They made a political decision . . . But don't say then that they were forced into making hospital closures.
>
> In Saskatchewan's case, they started closing hospitals before we took office . . . Therefore they made a political decision and they should be prepared to stand behind that political decision.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can continue on in saying why should we allow the federal government to continue tackling the deficit. I will continue on reading from the same article, Mr. Speaker. Quote:

> The provinces are still in better financial shape than we are . . . When we took office, we spent 36 cents out of every dollar on debt service. We still spend 30 cents out of every dollar on interest. The provincial average is 14 cents.

So, Mr. Speaker, the deficit in the whole country had to be addressed. And the tough steps that were taken, there's no question that Saskatchewan, as the rest of the country, had to cover this cost. We had no choice but to bite the bullet.

And the reason why, Mr. Speaker, why should we worry about what the federal government does in terms of meeting their deficit? And now I'll quote, okay. Why, why should we worry about the federal deficit? Why should we worry about how the federal government is measuring up against us? Here's a direct quote:

> The federal government should be in better shape than anyone else, not in worse shape. Because we're the ones who set interest rates for the country; we're the ones who set the tone of optimism for the (entire) country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason why I share that information is I want the people that are listening and all the people out there to say one thing: is that if you want to fed-bash, then you ought to know that there will be some rebuttal from this side. And we will continue holding this government accountable for their lack of commitment.

And the only reason that they have given us the last three years when we get up and speak is they say, well your federal Liberal cousins. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the entire Assembly and to members opposite and to all the people that may be listening, that every time one of their members gets up and says, your federal Liberal cousins cut this, what they're really saying to you is they're saying, we're using them as an excuse for not doing anything here in Saskatchewan. That's the real answer, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Now I don't want to just pick on the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker. I feel they've had a great history and they can continue contributing to the province.

I want to take a special aim and a special shot at the now-established Saskatchewan Party. The Saskatchewan Party, they call themselves, as I mentioned before, are just recycled Tories. And we can never forget the legacy of debt that the Tories have left this province in. And if eight members now want to take credit for each . . . a portion of that debt, they are more than entitled to do so.

And I want to say that I was, quite frankly, appalled at the efforts of the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena when she brought aboriginal people here who were quite concerned as to how the finances of any Indian band, in particular theirs, was being handled. To me that was the most blatant use of people that I've ever seen in my entire existence. That they believe for one minute, that the aboriginal people believe for one minute, that the Saskatchewan Party, the old PC Party, has any use for them or has their best interests at heart, I will tell the aboriginal people that they are being fooled by their efforts — completely and totally.

And I urge all the tribal councils, all the aboriginal people — Metis, Bill C-31's, non-status, and the like —to watch very carefully on what these guys are trying to do to you.

And now I'll go to yesterday's or the day before's *Hansard* here, Mr. Speaker, and you tell me of the tone of the statements of the member from Kelvington-Wadena who's indicating to the people here that she's concerned. Here's her tone, Mr. Speaker:

> . . . believe that millions of dollars are being mismanaged by band councils and . . . (are) not getting to ordinary band members.

Quote:

> We spend millions of dollars a year yet there is no accountability as to where . . . (the) money is going.

Another quote:

> . . . Indian bands don't need more money.

Other quote:

> . . . to write a cheque and turn your back while funds are mismanaged . . ."

The final quote:

> . . . dozens of examples of mismanagement and corruption by band councils.

Now you tell me, Mr. Speaker, and the members of this Assembly, that that is complimentary towards the Indian bands and the aboriginal people in this community. And I say to you with all energy and all vigour, I say not — I say not.

And the reason why we know, Mr. Speaker, is we have a lot of evidence that the Saskatchewan Party is simply using the aboriginal people to further their very, and I must add, their very feeble effort at trying to displace, and I might add, one great party; but there's other great parties as well, but are trying to displace a great political party that have a long history except for the Tories.

Now I take a page from the Saskatchewan Party platform, Mr. Speaker. One point here it says, quote: "Gradual reduction and eventual elimination of the PST as the province can afford it."

And then we'll amble on down to the very next section where it says, quote, "Requiring natives to pay the PST for off-reserve purchases."

So on the one hand they want to reduce the PST, want to eliminate the PST . . . (inaudible) . . . the people. But hold it. The PST will apply to the Indians. That's what we'll do.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've said it once in this Assembly and I'll say it again: that this has got to be the most misinformed and miscalculated effort by the Tory Party to try and diminish the importance and the role of the aboriginal people in this province.

And the question we ask is, what are you going to tax? What are the Tories going to tax? The aboriginal people for years have been living in economic squalor and dependency on senior governments. What are they going to tax?

So I make the point to the Saskatchewan Party, is that don't play politics with our people. Don't use the aboriginal people to further your very arrogant agenda. There's absolutely no room in this day and age, 1998, for that type of style.

Now I want to share some information, Mr. Speaker, on this first nations' taxation, again, for the purpose of all the people that are here. And this is a letter from myself, and I won't quote because if I'm quoting myself, I may run into copyright laws here, so I'll continue on. The position taken by the Saskatchewan Party, "Tory Party," seems to be taken out of political desperation as opposed to a genuine concern, responsible governance, and resolution.

There are a number of points that must be made and a number of factors that have to be considered in any sensible discussion of this pressing issue.

Number one, no Saskatchewan political party can impose changes to the treaty signed and agreed upon and enshrined in the Constitution of Canada.

Number two, many first nations communities and reserves are not receiving education and health services from the provincial government treasury, and so they have a good argument as the reason why they're PST exempt. After all, the PST is called the education and health tax.

But if these people pay, had to pay the PST, even for off-reserve purchases, then the provincial government would have to deliver those services. And I can assure you that if the member from Kelvington-Wadena had done her math, she would find out that the cost would be incredibly high for Saskatchewan. At this point in time we can enforce it. And what are you enforcing the collection of, which is the provincial or federal jurisdiction, and that is the delivery of education and health.

Number three, it must be recognized that many first nations businesses, joint ventures, partnerships, do pay taxes to the provincial government. Furthermore, significant numbers of non-treaty people are employed by these enterprises and they pay taxes on their income and on their purchases. And I talk about the Chotaw Nation in the United States and I talk about the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in northern Saskatchewan. We pay our share. And for the Saskatchewan Party to be so desperate out there to go around telling everybody: they don't pay anything; they're getting a free ride; that is political desperation at its worst level, Mr. Speaker. And I continue on.

Four. There are a number of large, non-aboriginal businesses that . . . which take advantage of special tax breaks, exemptions, rebate programs, remission, and other tax credit programs offered by the provincial government. These include exemptions for paying the PST, in many cases. So there is some exemptions for PST, not just for the aboriginal people, but other organizations as well, Mr. Speaker. That needs to be also expressed.

And number five. Many off-reserve purchases made by the first nations people are for items that are tax exempt for the non-treaty population — things that we buy that we don't pay tax — things like food, children's clothing and children shoes; the list goes on. Those items — children's clothing and food — account for a huge amount of the first nations' spending. And are you trying to tax them and not tax the others? Well I think it's ludicrous and, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a shame that they continue pushing that down people's throats as a desperate effort to gain votes.

And number four . . . or number six. The most important thing is that in many towns and in many cities — and they'll hear this — treaty people make a significant contribution to the economy, as do the Metis people and the other aboriginal groups, by making their purchases from local businesses.

If a provincial party tried to impose the PST on off-reserve purchases, the result would be that most treaty people would start buying almost everything on the reserve as opposed to off the reserve. This would have a detrimental effect on communities like Prince Albert, Regina, Meadow Lake, Saskatoon, La Ronge, to name just a few.

Certain businesses would consider moving out of towns and on to reserves and, Mr. Speaker, that's just the tip of the iceberg. The fact of the matter, it could have some profound challenges and changes to all Saskatchewan communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say to the members from the Tory Party that you should not try and utilize or use the aboriginal people for your benefit and to try and pretend you care when, in fact, your agenda is to try and use a minority of people in Saskatchewan for your political purpose. The message will be heard, the message will continue being said, and allow me to again say, do not use the aboriginal people for your desperate political purposes. We are very clear on that.

And now Mr. Speaker, I think the point is I can go on and on about the Tory Party, but I'm not going to waste my time here talking to the whole issues of what they're trying to do. We know they're not going to fly. They can talk all about the polls and how well they're doing and everything is going great.

But the fact of the matter is the people of Saskatchewan will decide in the next election whether the Saskatchewan Party, which quite frankly is made up of a band of misfits, should be representing the people of Saskatchewan as opposed to true parties like the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — And Mr. Speaker, let's turn our attention now, if I may, to some of the work being done by the northern communities, the Metis communities, and the non-aboriginal communities that work cohesively and work together.

In Ile-a-la-Crosse, for example, we have the Sakitawak Development Corporation which is doing a tremendous job. They've got ventures, joint ventures in northern trucking. They've got catering . . . sorry, a security and custodial contract at Cluff Lake. And they're also getting involved with joint ventures with the neighbouring communities of Buffalo Narrows.

Then in La Loche, you have the Methy Construction Company, and they're also looking at building a road up to a number of other communities including Garson Lake. So they are really actively and aggressively pursuing economic opportunities and employment.

And, Mr. Speaker, you would be proud to say that you are a part of that community when you see some of the work being done by people that really are empowered. And how are they empowered? They took the bull by the horns. And these are people that do not get millions of dollars in grants from any government. These people started by pulling up themselves by their bootstraps.

And that is the Saskatchewan way we talk about here. The Premier talks about the Saskatchewan spirit. Well these are Saskatchewan people in northern Saskatchewan and they have a spirit that's alive and burning and strong.

And I point that out, Mr. Speaker, because many of them are now starting to see the fruits of their labour. Many of these corporations are taking off. They're doing what is necessary. And I talk about the examples from the United States in the Choctaw Nation — I talk about all the different examples — and the clear thing that this professor mentioned, Professor Kalt from Harvard University, is sovereignty, capable governments, and a match between the type of government a tribe has and that tribe's cultural norms regarding legitimate political power.

So I say to the people in the Assembly here, and especially to the Saskatchewan Party, do not . . .

An Hon. Member: — The Tory Party.

Mr. Belanger: — The Tory Party. Do not use the aboriginal people in the light that you have been using them. They are very successful people but for years they have been denied, for years they have been denied adequate resources, and they certainly have been not respected for some of the work that they're trying to do.

Now at the last mini session that we had just before Christmas, I sponsored a resolution calling for revenue sharing. And the records show, and the record shall be known, that the Minister of Northern Affairs, the hon. member from Cumberland, voted against the revenue-sharing proposal. And this was in spite, Mr. Speaker, in spite of this draft that we took from the *Canadian Fact Book on Poverty — 1989* in Ottawa, where it says the percentage of the population poor in Canada.

And they have different shades of grey. And there is one area, Mr. Speaker, one area that's black. And that area, Mr. Speaker, happens to be the constituency of Athabasca and the constituency of Cumberland. The entire northern part of Saskatchewan, quite frankly, has the highest percentage of the population poor.

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker . . . the fact of the matter is the people in the North aren't poor. They have the vision; they have proven themselves in terms of building their economies. What happens is they've got poor commitment from

this government to deal with a number of issues that have been affecting them for years and years and years. And to further substantiate what they talk about when they blame the federal Liberal government — this will be my last point on the federal Liberal government — but when they blame them, allow me to explain that, yes, the transfers have hurt all the provinces in this country and all the provinces have the same federal government. And I want to point out, and I quote from an article of Thursday, February 26, 1998, in which the columnist Murray Mandryk writes:

> So Saskatchewan can justify its off-loading because it's really just passing Ottawa's off-loading on to our own municipalities, schools, hospitals, etc.?
>
> "Sure," Cline said. "And I think it's a fair justification."
>
> Well maybe not.
>
> One huge difference between a federal government off-loading on a provincial government and a provincial government off-loading on a local town or city has to do with the capacity to recover money through revenue creation.
>
> Towns and cities have extremely limited capacity to generate additional revenues. Schools, hospitals and highways, obviously, have none.
>
> But a provincial government, as this NDP administration has shown since 1991, doesn't always have to suffer.

And let me give you some example of their additional revenues, Mr. Speaker. In 1991 Saskatchewan collected $1.988 billion in provincial taxes. In 1997 the province's tax take was $3.125 billion. Liquor and gaming revenue in 1991 totalled 297 million. By 1997, it was 700 million.

Meanwhile, natural resources revenue — 437 in 1991 — exploded to $927 million last year.

> The point isn't that Saskatchewan shouldn't have raised taxes or cut spending or off-loaded to balance its book.

And I unquote.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's saunter on down to northern Saskatchewan now. And I've made this statement again: 3 per cent of our provincial population live in northern Saskatchewan, which is half the land mass of the entire province. For every man, woman, and child, there's 80 to 90 square kilometres of opportunity, and yet we continue suffering the indignation, as I've talked about, of unemployment, of poor housing, of poor roads, and the list goes on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, we have talked about all kinds of ideas in this Assembly since the day we walked in here. We've given all kinds of ideas. We've come up with resolution. We've complained, we've spoken, we've given them stats till they're red in the face, but nothing continues sinking in.

Mr. Speaker, for one minute let us talk about what the North contributes. For one minute, let's talk about what the North contributes to the whole provincial economy besides the thousands of jobs created for people living in southern Saskatchewan. For one minute.

Mining. I've talked about the different mines and some say as much as 3 billion over the next 10 or 12 years that this government will receive in royalties and benefits.

Let's talk about SaskPower. Would you know, as I mentioned before, 43 per cent of the total hydro needs of SaskPower comes from northern Saskatchewan? The three power generating stations in the North — Cumberland House, one up in the far North, and as well, the one in Sandy Lake — contribute $374.53 million for SaskPower.

And then you throw in the fact that the Cameco shares, whose operations are all over northern Saskatchewan, we see the huge amount of benefits when they are sold on the market. And who got the money? It wasn't the federal government. It wasn't the northern people. It was the current NDP government.

So, Mr. Speaker, you combine mining, you combine forestry, you combine hydro, you combine tourism, you can combine corporate and personal income tax, like the Meadow Lake Tribal Council as an example, and they have all the other people that contribute income tax to this province. You can see when the Minister of Northern Affairs gets up in a meeting and says, for every dollar we take out of the North, we put a $1.60 back in. If that was the case, we would be multi-billionaires in northern Saskatchewan. Yet, Mr. Speaker, you walk down the streets of Ile-a-la-Crosse or Pinehouse or Beauval or any community in northern Saskatchewan, you will see that there's no billionaires there.

And that is the problem that we have to begin to address. That if you want commitment from the people, then that commitment has got to go back. And I say to the people again: in the event that this government points their fingers at the federal government, be very well advised that they eliminated deficit — as the federal government done — be well advised, Mr. Speaker, that they have also contributed or reaped a huge amount of benefits provincially. And be advised, Mr. Speaker, that the North has contributed a great amount of dollars to this provincial economy and they can't deny it. And that's what people are going to remember in the back of their minds.

Now as I mentioned, we spoke about plans. People talk about a Metis Act, people talk about a northern Act, but then do we even give ideas to this government? And again, I'll share with the Minister of Northern Affairs if he'd like. We have a northern community development model. It has all kinds of nifty ideas and we identify sources of revenues as well, Mr. Speaker.

And we talked to them about where can we get the money from? And we go on to indicate, well, the money can come from a number of sources. The sources are all identified here. And all it takes, Mr. Speaker, is commitment.

And I say loud and clear to this day, that they can talk till they're blue in the face. They can blame the federal Liberal government. They can blame the lack of support from all kinds of different sectors in terms of their financial means, but the fact

of the matter is as long as we have substandard housing, as long as we have poor roads, and as long as we continue having the social problem that northern Saskatchewan has, then the Minister of Northern Affairs and this government should not be believed.

Mr. Speaker, we need action. We need dynamic, exciting, and innovative action from this government and we are simply not getting it. Now again if he wishes a copy of this, Mr. Speaker, I will most certainly forward all the information to him. And he's got staff — staff can help. And we're just doing this certainly from the bottom of our hearts and certainly on behalf of northern Saskatchewan and particularly the Athabasca constituency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in closing I think it's very important that people begin to realize that we will not be used. And I talk about this government's need. Since they're the governing body, since they have the power, since they can decide what decisions are best for the North, that you put some serious policies and some serious effort working hand in hand in consultation with the northern people. Unless and until we see that commitment, then we're not going to believe you any more. We have believed you long enough.

Mr. Speaker, further proof in this party's apparent lack of innovation and excitement is quite frankly revealed in an article entitled, *The Third Degree*. On page 10 of this magazine I quote:

> Critics say the government has been too focused on public administration in recent years and has lost its penchant for policy research, analysis, and initiatives necessary to meet the challenge of both the immediate and long-term future.

(1645)

In this same article statement, I also pick up this quote: "Once considered the best public service in the country, thanks to its innovative policy initiatives and programs . . ." And the final quote, ". . . some of the brightest minds in the province have left."

So what that says, Mr. Speaker, is it proves that innovation, excitement, and dynamic approaches are not being taken and have not been explored in any way, shape, or form. This is exactly what I speak about when we say we need a new approach to our northern and aboriginal people.

The question I have is: why can't this be done? Why have we waited all these years? Why can't somebody get up and take responsibility for what is happening here today?

In the North, many of us are held back. There's a system of disincentives and a system of control that is out there. Some of the ideas are archaic policies in housing that hurt working families. Mr. Speaker, working people cannot afford the housing in northern Saskatchewan. They are being kicked out of housing in northern Saskatchewan simply because they can't buy that house at a decent market value and simply because the bottom line is they're working.

Entire communities are still hauling water in 1998 — Stony Rapids. Trailers lumped together to act as a hospital. A road system that is literally falling apart. An education system that is held together on the backs of the teachers and the local boards. Many of the elderly people talk about the high costs in power bills — some bills as high as 3, 4, 6, $700. Cost of medicine. And their list goes on. And the lack of recognition of 400-plus disabled people living in extreme hardship in the North and elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, the northern people have been patient long enough. The northern people have believed this government for so long and now it is time that this government believe in a northern people for at least a moment in time.

Mr. Speaker, the northern people are full of pride. They have always prided themselves on helping themselves out. They want jobs for the young people. They want decent homes, decent roads, and decent services. That's all they want. Take all the resources but give us our fair and equal treatment. That's all they want. Mr. Speaker, they do not want special treatment, or they do not want to be viewed as only wanting hand-outs as a party . . . as the Tory Party indicated at Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, the northern people have their hand out in extension of friendship and the request for respect. We want respect. They want equal treatment. They want social and economic justice. And above all else, they want to be heard for our problems and our challenges.

While this government has treated the North as a third-world country, the people of the North have contributed back to this province first-class profits in mining, forestry, hydropower, tourism, personal income tax, and the list goes on. The northern people have given financial commitment. We have given political commitment for many years. Now our patience is wearing thin.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, there are many problems facing northern Saskatchewan. I've spoken on those problems on many occasions — housing, health care, social development, economic development, infrastructure needs. The government has it all. They know what the North needs. They've known that for 20 years. And I have a list of recommendations here that I wish to read very quickly.

Recommendation to the government, number one. That your government work in cooperation with the aboriginal community to co-design an aggressive and bold new strategy in dealing with these Saskatchewan people. The Saskatchewan institute on public policy could be the vehicle for the initial thrust in data collection.

Number two. Work aggressively to remove the barriers and a system of disincentives associated with living in northern Saskatchewan communities. Higher utility rates stifle growth. Lack of training discourages employment amongst the youth. The lack of a clear strategy in economic and social development severely limits our future. And the lack of innovation in housing, as policies discriminate against the working people, the high cost of food, medicine, and gasoline all adds stress to the family. These disincentives, coupled with a lack of services in health care, highways, and now education, are proof that a new approach is needed now.

Number three. Recognize the need for the northern and native people to develop their own systems, to operate their own systems, and of course allow for growing pains in the development of these systems. Yes, the communities and the native groups are in the capacity-building stage, but rest assured they will deliver. We have talked about the marriage of a community development model; the marriage of working within a band council system; the marriage of a Metis Act; the marriage and premiss of revenue sharing; the marriage of being inclusive of all people in the North, which include aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike.

Number four. Recognize that aboriginal means treaty, Metis, off-reserve, non-status, Bill C-31, etc.

Number five. Do not pose the federal versus provincial jurisdictional argument when dealing with a new aboriginal planning. As in Alberta's example, page 3 of the Alberta Metis Framework Agreement on August 16, 1993, states under section 5.1:

> The parties agree that nothing in this agreement shall be construed so as to derogate from or abrogate the roles, responsibilities, principles, and covenants of the tripartite process agreement or the constitution.

Number six. That no community or aboriginal group will act against their interest; so approaches cannot be taken at the expense of these parties.

Number seven. Respect the relative comparison of the North versus the South. The North does not have the economy of the South — the infrastructure, the post-secondary educational systems, or the financial means — to develop our economy and our infrastructure on our own.

Number eight. I understand as well that many first nations are also assuming more and more responsibility for management of their bands from the federal and provincial level. And as mentioned, the capacity-building stage, more time must be given to develop those systems.

And number nine. The provincial government should not say that they will not make promises that they cannot keep, to the aboriginal and to the northern people, with the disclaimer is the federal versus provincial jurisdictional question. If you can't make true commitments without improvising and compromising the constitution, then don't make any commitments at all.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned time and time again in this Assembly, I cannot support the Speech from the Throne. We are waiting in anticipation to see what the final details of the budget is; what the final level of commitment to northern Saskatchewan is. We have talked about the housing challenges, highways, hospitals, young people, infrastructure needs. All that information, Mr. Speaker, is in the hands of the government. What they do not have is a plan and what they do not have is commitment.

So in the end, Mr. Speaker, I say on behalf of my Liberal caucus colleagues, is that number one, the Saskatchewan Party known as the Tory Party is not the answer for aboriginal people. It never was; it never will be. And number two, and as far as northern Saskatchewan is concerned, this government had better get off your duff and start working hard and heavy, otherwise the northern people are going to come back and they're voices will be heard.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, hear us, respect us, and treat us as equals, because the northern part of Saskatchewan and the people I represent certainly demand it and they extend their hand in trying to accomplish it. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I'll be saying more in regards to the North at budget speech time, but at this throne speech I'd just like to make some quick comments. Because, number one, Mr. Speaker, when I was in opposition, the Tories didn't know anything about the North, they didn't have their facts. And when I listen to my other member from Athabasca, I thought he would have his facts in regards to the North, being that he lives in the North.

But I would say this much quickly in regards to the federal issues that he raises. As in regards to the central issue of economic development and jobs, I would like to report to the people of the province that for the first time in the history of northern Saskatchewan, 50 per cent of the people from northern Saskatchewan are working in the mines.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — For the first time in the history of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we do have people who are working at the level of over 1,000 jobs in those mines, of which over 200 jobs are in the apprenticeable trades in regards to the areas of carpentry, electricians, etc., as well as the technical trades such as chem lab technicians and so on.

So when you are looking at the situation, Mr. Speaker, we also know that in economic development we need the contracts in the North. When you look at the history of contracts, right from 1991, Mr. Speaker, we had approximately $20 million worth of the contracts in northern development. I would like to report that this past year we had approximately $150 million worth of contracts to the northern contractors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — So, Mr. Speaker, when you are looking at the facts, the facts point out a very different situation from what the Tories will have to say and what the Liberals will have to say. I think that they forget. They think only in terms of the social welfare mentality that they both have.

I think that they should look with pride at the Northerners who stand up to be counted on the jobs, the over 1,000 that work in uranium mining. When you total all the mining in northern Saskatchewan, it's over 1,600. And I think they should be standing up in good pride with these people who put food on the table for their children on a daily basis. That's what they should be about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to say as well in terms of the conceptual framework on the self-determination of people in northern Saskatchewan in regards to how the member from Athabasca alludes to, I would say this much: it was our government in northern Saskatchewan, the NDP government in the ’70s, who brought in the elected municipal government in the North and the Northern Municipal Council. And that indeed they formed a basis for control by Northerners.

When you look at the issue of education, the fact that the elected boards in northern Saskatchewan for northern school board leader on Northern Lights School Division, Ile-a-la-Crosse board, were done during an NDP government in the ’70s.

When you look at Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, when you look at the history of NORTEP (northern teacher education program) and teacher education, when you look at the history of education and aboriginals controlling this province, it was done during NDP government times.

So when you look at what happened with the Tories who are sitting . . . those old Tories who are now calling themselves the Saskatchewan Party, of all things. They are doing and destroyed a lot of what we built in the ’70s. By the time . . . I have an example in the mining area. Fifty per cent employment and we had it drop to about 20. We had to bring it back up when we got back into government.

So they may talk a good line in terms of accountability and so on, but these old Tories, don’t look to them. They put this province into debt by $15 billion. It’s the same old Tories that were talking about accountability with aboriginal people yesterday. Don’t believe them. They are not for aboriginal people or for Saskatchewan people, for that matter.

So whether you look at it, Mr. Speaker, whatsoever, a quick response in regards to the comments by the member from Athabasca, and look at the fact that we have to have pride in the people of the North, pride in aboriginal people on the building that is being done, on the proactive stance that is being taken, and in fact say yes to the education-type of successes that they’ve had; yes to the economic successes and moving forward.

This negative-type criticism that we hear from the Tories, that’s all I heard. The same old gloom and doom in regards to running a province or in regards to running the ability of first nations people and the Metis in this province. They should look at the fact that indeed, even in regards to the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) there was improvement in terms of accountability and expenditures at that level, same at the Metis level. They don’t say nothing about that. They just only want to listen to the negativity that is there. And I think that they’re going to have to start looking at some of the positive things, not only for aboriginal people but for all people in the province of Saskatchewan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that being near five o’clock, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

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