

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from residents of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis which we are currently experiencing.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures come from the communities of Lampman, Kipling, and Stoughton. I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

These petitions come from the Carievale, Gainsborough, Carnduff, Fertile areas, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, with petitions as well to present to the Assembly. Reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

This petition is signed by individuals from the Regina, Weyburn areas. I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are the communities

of Gainsborough and Oxbow. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. 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 put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

And these are signed by the people from Gainsborough. I so present.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens petitioning to save the Plains hospital. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Fairlight, Arcola, Carnduff, Oxbow, and Alida.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

People that have signed this petition are all from Gainsborough.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have a petition to present to the Assembly today dealing with the moratorium on the closure of the Plains hospital. This petition, Mr. Speaker, comes from the Lampman area of Saskatchewan and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the towns of Indian Head, Qu'Appelle, Montmartre, and Wolseley. I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I once again rise to present a petition, and the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Fort Qu'Appelle and Indian Head, and I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned about the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Those who've signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from communities such as Fort Qu'Appelle and Indian Head and Glenavon. I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also present a petition on behalf of people of Saskatchewan. I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

The signatures are from Indian Head and Balgonie. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition this afternoon from citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about our crumbling health care system, and especially with the impending closure of the Plains hospital. The petitioners come from Indian Head, Montmartre, and Balgonie. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues today in bringing forward petitions in regards to preventing the closure of the Plains hospital. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petitions there, there's a flood of petitions coming in from the Indian Head meeting where it was very successful, large . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The hon. member, of course, will want to avoid debating when presenting petitions.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to present today a petition sent in by people that have taken time out from their spring seeding:

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 with or without federal assistance.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

From the communities of Gull Lake, Saskatchewan; Abbey, Cabri, and of course, from Medicine Hat in Alberta. I'm happy to present them today, 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 of the province petitioning the Assembly to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre, and petitioning the Assembly to act to save the Plains Health Centre.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 34 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: what do you intend on doing in the ongoing appeal in the Alberta Court of Appeal with regards to Bill C-68, the federal gun control Bill; what position will you be taking now that it has been clearly shown that the federal Department of Justice has committed perjury in the presentation of the falsified RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) documents and statistics?

I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 34 ask the government the

following question:

(1) What facilities and programs are available in Saskatoon and area for youth who suffer with addiction to alcohol and/or drugs; (2) why was the Whitespruce Youth Treatment Centre closed, and where did the clients then receive treatment; (3) has a comparison been made of success rates between youth treated at Whitespruce Treatment Centre and youth treated in other programs after the closure of Whitespruce; if yes, what are the results; if no comparisons have been made, why not; please state the criteria used to measure success.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you a group of students from Campbell Collegiate who are accompanied today by a group of exchange students from Quebec. They are seated in your gallery.

This is part of an annual exchange that goes on between Campbell Collegiate . . . You can see them waving up there. And I understand I'll be meeting with them at about 2:30 for what is usually, at least in past years, a fairly lively debate. So thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you and to the members of this Assembly, in the west gallery a former member of this Assembly that I'm sure a number of members may recognize. Mr. Gordon Dirks served in the Assembly — served very well.

He's also joined by, I believe, Ron Waschuk. I'd like the members to welcome Gordon and Ron to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to draw your attention and that of the members, to a group of students who are seated in your gallery. This is a group of 15 students who are enrolled in the ENCORE (exceptional needs creating options related to education) high school program in Regina. They're accompanied by their teachers, Rand Teed and Lisa Briere. This group of students, these young men and women, are renewing their commitment to education. And by welcoming them today let's show too that we appreciate this commitment that they make to education. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Meeting on Plains Health Centre Closure

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night more than 300 people came out to express their anger and frustration with this government's arrogant decision to close the Plains. I can honestly say I don't think I've been part of a more raucous public meeting.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, these people were mad when they got there and they were even madder when they left. And all that anger was directed towards the Minister of Health and his cabinet cronies.

Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't listen to a word those people had to say. Even worse, the minister sent one of his flunkies from the Regina Health District Board, who I understand was the former campaign manager for the Environment minister, to deflect the heat from himself.

Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't listen, so let me tell you what the people had to say. They said, you are running a health system on the edge and people are scared for their lives and the lives of their loved ones. For years they have watched your government decimate health care in rural Saskatchewan and now they see the Plains as all they have left. For a moment you gave a glimmer of hope that you were committed to improving services in regional centres such as Yorkton and Swift Current. But when somebody asked the question, the future of the Swift Current hospital, you replied that you were not interested in debating the future.

Well, Mr. Minister, one thing is certain about the minister's future. If he doesn't change his mind about the closure of the Plains, the people will ensure his future will not be in this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Organ Donor Awareness Week

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday morning I had the pleasure of speaking at the Saskatchewan Coalition for Organ Awareness to help kick off Organ Donor Awareness Week. Although organ donation rates have remained stable throughout the '90s, the need for more donors is still present. I believe if more people knew of this vital need, more people would become donors.

Making a personal commitment to organ and tissue donation is so important because it can extend and enhance the quality of life of others. Although we should be especially cognizant of organ donation this week, it is something we cannot let ourselves forget in weeks and years to come. Organ donation is a decision an individual should make in an open discussion with family members. It is a decision that has the potential to save lives.

I would like to congratulate the efforts of the members of SCODA (Saskatchewan Coalition for Organ Donor Awareness) for raising the profile of organ donation and urging all fellow citizens to consider this important issue for their families. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Acute Care Bed Reduction in Living Sky Health District

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, with the snap of the finger this NDP (New Democratic Party) government has slashed the number of acute care beds in the Living Sky Health District down to 16 beds — 16 beds for an entire district.

Today we received a letter from the local president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses in the district. Susan Kotzer writes, and I quote:

It is obvious that our government does not share in our vision of keeping rural Saskatchewan viable. Rather they seem intent on closing us down. We believe the minimal acute care services left in the district is just a stopgap measure before the service and the hospitals will be shut down completely.

We will continue to fight for decent health care in the Living Sky District. We will continue to fight against bed closures. And we know the residents of our district support us in our campaign. We believe the residents of the district are interested in keeping viable acute-care service in the district. We believe they will be disappointed and angry when they hear of this loss.

In closing, Mrs. Kotzer writes, again, quote:

We do not hold the health board absolutely responsible. The Department of Health continues to cut the budget. The department is responsible to the minister who in turn is responsible to the government, and we believe that the buck stops there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Training of Metis Economic Development Officers

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Economic and Co-operative Development minister, along with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan president, Clem Chartier, announced an \$80,000 grant to help train 12 Metis economic development officers.

The Dumont Technical Institute in Saskatoon will train the 12 officers in targeted areas ranging from business planning to public relations. The program will include specific training in Metis economic development issues and a four-month internship.

The project will cost between 250,000 and 300,000, with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan contributing all but the \$80,000 that the Economic and Co-operative minister committed. MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan) president, Clem Chartier, said, and I quote: "We are taxpayers too, and the more people we have working, the more taxpayers we have and the less we will have to pay."

Mr. Speaker, all involved in this initiative see it as a crucially important step towards the developing of economic potential of aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan. We as a government are committed to developing the potential of all people in Saskatchewan and to ensure that everyone shares in our economic success in a more equitable manner.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Carlton Trail Regional College Marks 25th Anniversary

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month Carlton Trail

Regional College in Humboldt celebrates its 25th anniversary. Over that span of time, the college has delivered a comprehensive range of programs to meet the adult education needs of the 1980s and the 1990s. Thousands have taken advantage of and benefited from its offerings.

The hallmark of the Carlton Trail College has been its flexibility and adaptability to meet the changing requirements of a fast-changing economy and the delivery of quality service and programs to rural Saskatchewan.

True to form, Carlton Trail College is looking ahead and is commemorating its 25th anniversary by participating in a three-day conference at Manitou Beach, April 29, 30, and May 1, billed as Saskatchewan's number one business education conference of the year. It is a conference that looks ahead to the 21st century and a new and evolving global economy.

I commend the college staff for its valuable contribution over the first 25 years and wish them continued success in the next 25 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Credit Union Central Elects Board President

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently delegates chose Elwood Harvey, a constituent and former colleague of mine from our days as Saskatchewan Wheat Pool delegates, to take on the top responsibility of the credit union system. That's when they elected Elwood as president of the board of directors of Credit Union Central.

I want to extend my congratulations to Elwood and to his family for their support of him, not only in this undertaking but also in the additional farming responsibilities that they shouldered with Elwood making this major commitment to the credit union and its membership.

Elwood Harvey is a community-minded cooperator who has served in many positions with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the credit union system, and other community organizations. We are all fortunate to have Elwood Harvey as president of the board of directors of Credit Union Central, as well as a friend, a neighbour, and a community leader. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Liberal Health Policy

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's obvious the NDP government is losing its ability to care about Saskatchewan people. While I question whether they care, Mr. Speaker, until recently I never doubted their ability to listen. Now they might ignore newspaper articles from Swift Current about bed closures, but I did believe that they read the newspapers.

Before me, Mr. Speaker, is a November 24, 1997 *Leader-Post* article. It lists the policies recently adopted by the Saskatchewan Liberal Party. Included on the list is one which notes we voted to uphold the principles of the Canada Health Act to ensure publicly funded, publicly administered, universal

medicare.

Even though many of them read of our party's unequivocal support of medicare, the NDP members still try and suggest we support a Tory/Saskatchewan Party policy like two-tiered medicine. Not only do we reject the two-tiered Tories, we took this resolution, which originated in my constituency, to the national convention where it was made party policy by Liberals across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the NDP members will not let me down. I believe they're still able to listen. They know what our policy is — no two-tiered medicine. If they don't care, they can at least show they're listening by getting their facts straight. And just to help, I'll send them some copies over.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Women's Programs Gain Internet Access

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I'd be the first to admit that I'm not an expert on the Internet. I'm still not convinced that a web page on Tallulah Bankhead is an improvement on the human condition, but I do believe that an on-line program sponsored by the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat is doing more than a little good.

Yesterday morning I was happy to attend a program during which 18 Regina area women's organizations were presented with grants from the on-line program to enable them to access the Internet and to train members to use these new communications technologies.

The non-profit groups will use this money to purchase the relevant equipment and to organize training for members, staff, clients, and volunteers.

The 18 groups range from the Girl Guides to Sofia House to the YWCA to the Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan — names I selected as representative.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good use of modern technology. Through the Internet these groups will be able to better break down isolation, their ability to assist client groups will be enhanced, their travel time and expense will be greatly reduced, they can save time and money on communications, they can share and increase their access to information.

I congratulate the Women's Secretariat and the minister for this useful, modern, and helpful program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the minister responsible for SaskPower.

Mr. Minister, this morning the allegations of wrongdoing in Channel Lake got a lot more serious. When Ken Christensen and Larry Kram finally got around the other day to reading the contract they signed one full year ago, they discovered that the contract they signed on behalf of SaskPower was switched before it was signed by DEML (Direct Energy Marketing Limited).

Mr. Minister, this is no longer just a couple of guys with SaskPower forgetting to read a contract. This appears now to be a criminal matter. It's fraud and it's very possibly a conspiracy.

Mr. Minister, in light of the new evidence, what action are you taking? Will you immediately be referring this matter to the RCMP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I, like the member opposite asking the question, was not at the meeting this morning. I want to make that clear. But it is my understanding, having been briefed by members who were at the meeting, that Mr. Ted Priel advised, and I quote: "I caution the committee do not draw conclusions after having heard only a small part of the story."

And at that point the committee went back to work, all members agreeing — all members agreeing including the members from the Conservative caucus who you represent — agreed to continue with the work, taking the advice of Ted Priel in saying to the committee: "I caution the committee, do not draw conclusions after having heard only a small part of the story."

So you, sir, I would urge that you be cautious, listen to the testimony, hear all of the testimony before you jump to conclusions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, Mr. Kram said that the adulterated version of the contract was accomplished by removing and inserting pages to the purchase agreement after it had been signed by SaskPower. That appears to be very clear evidence of fraud. You have sworn testimony from two senior Power officials to that effect and now you have the documents to back that evidence up.

As minister responsible for SaskPower, you should immediately take this evidence to the RCMP. The only reason you wouldn't is if your government had something to hide. Mr. Minister, what are you waiting for? Why would you not, in light of the evidence this morning, why would you not turn this matter over to the RCMP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite that it's my understanding that your member on the committee, the member from Melfort — your leadership contender for the Conservative Party — agreed to the fact that the committee would continue its work on the advice of Ted Priel, and that the member from North Battleford, being a

lawyer, also agreed that we would continue the work.

Mr. Speaker, the members yell and holler from their seats. I can understand how if the member from Kindersley has anything to do with this investigation it will be chaos because all he does is cause problems, yell and holler from his seat.

I say to the members opposite, I say to the members opposite that the committee is doing its work. Your member from Melfort agreed that the committee would continue to do its work. And I say to the member opposite if he would consult with the other members of his caucus, get in touch with the reality of what's happening in the committee, he would know that there was an agreement to continue the work of the committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously was not there because he doesn't understand what was going on. The committee can continue its work. There's clear evidence of potential criminal activity and it was clearly said that if that is clearly the case, citizens of this province are obligated under good conscience to report that, and that's what's being asked for.

Mr. Minister, I want to direct your attention to another bit of contradictory evidence that came out this morning. In your statement of March 10 you clearly said that, and I quote:

According to CIC officials, the management and board of Channel Lake apparently undertook these gas trading activities without the authority from the board of SaskPower and indeed contrary to the mandate given by the SaskPower board.

Well today Mr. Ken Christensen, SaskPower's vice-president of finance and a member of the Channel Lake board of directors, said he disagrees with you. He testified under oath that gas trading activities were within the mandate . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Now the hon. member has been extremely long in his preamble and I'm going to ask him to go directly to his question now.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is, who's right — you and your statement or Mr. Ken Christensen in his testimony?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again to the member opposite, who I gave also on March 10 a document delivered to the Assembly, on page 20 by Deloitte Touche, and if he would turn to page 20, if he would turn to page 20 and read item no. 1, the mandate for Channel Lake was clear, and the move into arbitrage activity was outside the mandate as given.

It goes on to say, as noted in the record of its April 22, 1993 meeting, the SaskPower board made it clear at the outset it did not want the corporation to get into the gas business beyond activities necessary to provide security of supply and predictability of price. That says that arbitrage was not approved by the SaskPower board.

So I say to you when Mr. Grossman, Mr. Jack Grossman from Deloitte Touche comes to the committee, ask him where he came to the conclusion that arbitrage was not in the mandate of SaskPower's Channel Lake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister makes my point entirely. You clearly said that you believed that there was no mandate for Sask . . . or Channel Lake to undertake the arbitrage trading. And yet today, in clear testimony, it's shown that a senior vice-president of SaskPower clearly disagreed with you and said clearly that they had a clear mandate to undertake any of these activities as they saw fit. The directors of Channel Lake were three SaskPower employees and Jack Messer.

Mr. Minister, who's in charge over there? You, or Jack Messer and Ken Christensen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say again to the member, who apparently didn't read the document, this is not a debate between myself and Mr. Christensen. It's a debate, it's a discussion between a report that I commissioned, that our government commissioned with Deloitte Touche, who said clearly the mandate for Channel Lake was clear . . . And the move into arbitrage activity was outside the mandate given by the Power board.

Now you are going to have obviously a discussion in the committee with Mr. Kram and Christensen and with Mr. Grossman, who represents Deloitte Touche. And as I said earlier, there will be differences of opinion, and obviously this is one.

But for the member from Melfort to jump to his feet as if he had found some new evidence, when it was reported in the House on the March 10, these people interviewed Mr. Christensen and came to this conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, with the yelling and hollering that's being allowed in the House it is extremely difficult to deal here in the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not disagreeing that this is clearly outside of the mandate of Channel Lake. What you have is not me disagreeing with you, but seeing your SaskPower officials disagreeing with you. And, Mr. Minister, if you're not prepared to take charge of your own officials, will the Premier get someone in charge of this whole portfolio who will? Maybe the Premier should get rid of you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, not to be personal — but to be personal, the Conservative Party got rid of you over the weekend. I can tell you that loud and clear — and with good reason. And the reason that they got rid of you is because you can't be trusted. You weren't trusted as a Liberal and you're not

...

The Speaker: — Order, order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. All hon. members will come order — order — and allow the minister to conclude his remarks if he wishes.

Hospital Bed Closures

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Health or his designate. Mr. Minister, we found out yesterday that you are planning to close down another 25 acute care beds in rural Saskatchewan — this time the Living Sky Health District.

Let me see if I have this straight. The NDP's health care strategy is to close down beds and hospitals in rural Saskatchewan and that puts pressure on regional hospitals.

But then the NDP is downsizing services and budgets in our regional hospitals — that is putting pressure on hospitals in Regina and Saskatoon. And now the NDP is closing down the Plains hospital and that is putting pressure on the Howard Johnson Hotel.

Mr. Minister, will you finally admit what everyone already knows — the NDP health reform process is not working and people in rural Saskatchewan are paying the price.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Health, the member refers, I believe he refers, in his opening comment to decisions that have been made by the Living Sky Health District, which decisions, Mr. Speaker, include — include — a major enhancement of home care services for their health district; which include, I am told, a major enhancement to nursing services for their long-term care facilities. So they'll be moving to a 24-hour, round-the-clock nursing service for their seniors, their pioneers in that district, Mr. Speaker. And that, I believe, will be welcomed in those communities.

Now that member and the members of his caucus will stand in this House on a daily basis listing, as they see it — and in some cases not too accurately — but listing as they see it the problems facing health care.

What they do not stand in this House and suggest, Mr. Speaker, are solutions to the problems. They're not very quick at volunteering their solutions to the problems.

But when they make the slip, when they make the slip and some of their solutions become part of a press dialogue, we find out that one of their solutions is to start cutting insured services in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the people in the Living Sky Health District aren't taking much

comfort from the current answer that was just given to us. Unfortunately, non-answers are part of this NDP government when it comes to fixing what's wrong in our failing health care system.

Mr. Minister, you are closing beds in the Living Sky Health District and people are going to be hurt by it. You're closing the Plains hospital in Regina and people across the southern half of the province don't believe that adequate health services will be there in time of need.

Mr. Minister, don't you think it's time to swallow hard and admit what you are doing with the health care system is failing the people in the Living Sky Health District and everyone else in Saskatchewan? Isn't it time to stop the bed closures and the hospital closures until you figure out what went wrong and start to fix it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think I need to but I will remind the member again of the commitment of this government in this most current budget to health care in this province.

Two years ago, if I recall, Mr. Minister, we added 40 million new dollars to health care. Last year another 57 million new dollars. In this budget another 88 million new dollars, Mr. Speaker, which represents an increase to every health district in our province. Now that, Mr. Speaker, is in the face, in the ongoing and continuing face of cut-backs from the federal Liberals, Mr. Speaker.

Now in terms of each of our health districts, the elected and appointed boards work very closely with their communities. I know the Living Sky board — I heard reports of it myself — conducted community meetings. They have assessed their needs. They know that their needs are for their seniors and their pioneers and they're providing new and improved services for that generation of our Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Plains Health Centre Closure

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, day in and day out the NDP government accuses the Liberal opposition of fearmongering about health care. Well the Premier would know better if he had been among the close to 500 people who joined the Liberals at the Save The Plains meeting in Indian Head last night . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We hear 300; we hear 450; we hear 500. Take your pick. The hall was packed, but the Premier was not there.

Mr. Premier, because you haven't given people a voice in the proposed closure of the Plains hospital, the Liberal opposition is. And last night people expressed serious concerns about the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Now the Chair's having some difficulty being able to hear the question being put. Order. Order. I'll ask for all hon. members to allow the question to be heard.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier would know how many people were there if he had the intestinal fortitude to come to one of those meetings and listen to the people. Last night they expressed serious concerns about the proposed closure of the Plains and they shared health care horror stories.

Mr. Premier, the Liberal opposition is sponsoring another Save The Plains meeting tonight in Weyburn. Will you shed your political bubble and join us at that meeting, and speak to the people and be there and count the numbers yourself?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this is a question from the Liberals, who a few days ago in this House asked questions surrounding the Swift Current District Health region. And it was reported in *The Southwest Booster* of Swift Current in a headline which says “Comments Alarm Provincial Liberals.” You were here, Mr. Speaker, in the chair at the time when the Liberals made accusations about the bed closures.

Well it then took the district health board in Swift Current just a matter of days to reply, to say the following:

The Swift Current Health Board wishes to assure the public the reports suggesting dramatic reduction in hospital beds are false. Future plans will maintain the role the Swift Current hospital has as a service centre for the region. Recent controversy has been based on a misinterpretation of information presented at a public meeting and at a brief to Saskatchewan Health.

That’s what you’re doing at every one of these meetings — misrepresenting the truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier keeps pointing his finger about what we’re doing. Mr. Premier, what you’re not doing is listening to the people. Come on out to Weyburn tonight. In a snap of the finger more than half of the acute care beds in the Living Sky Health District have been eliminated, people in the district were informed last night — 25 acute beds. Now do you have the clippings of that? Because that is fact. They’ve been slashed in Lanigan, Watrous, and Wynyard, leaving only 16 beds in the entire district.

What leaves many people frustrated and upset is the fact that the Minister of Health promised only a few weeks ago that there would be no more bed closures. The minister said he was comfortable with the number of beds. He added that slashing any more beds would be inappropriate.

I would ask the minister or the Premier, Mr. Speaker, do they have short-term memory loss? Why are you allowing further closures to take place when you promised there would be no more bed closures?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I repeat again, this has been stated not only by me but by people in the health business, that what the Liberals are doing, in gentle words, misrepresenting the question of health care. It not only pertains

to Swift Current, as I said in my previous answer, here it does with respect to the Plains.

In the *Leader-Post* of Saturday, April 18, 1998, the *Leader-Post* April 18, 1998, the spokesperson from the Regina District Health region says that what the Liberals are saying is, quote: “an inaccurate perception,” in their words. That’s what you’re doing.

What you’re not telling the people of Saskatchewan however, is that your Liberal Party in Ottawa has cut funding to medicare in Saskatchewan from 50-cent dollars to 13-cent dollars. What you’re not telling the people is that we back-filled every penny of that and have added to that money to the extent that the Minister of Social Services said.

And what you’re not telling the people, and you should be telling the people, is that once that we’re completed with consolidation and improvement at the General and Pasqua, services in Regina and the South will be the best ever that they’ve been in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, last summer this government announced that it would be conducting a review of hospital bed closures which occurred under the first phase of what this NDP government calls health care reform, the wellness model. The aim of the study is to examine what impact the closure of almost 1,000 hospital beds had on the health care system.

Mr. Premier, this study is not expected to be completed until this summer, yet you continue slashing more hospital beds, like those in the Living Sky Health District. How can you allow more bed closures to take place? How can you allow the Plains to close before you even know the effects of your initial study on the health care system and the lack of beds?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, you know now why these people say that the Liberals misrepresent the facts on health care.

The hon. member’s question is predicated on the assumption that there is going to be bed closures in Regina when the Plains shuts down in October of 1998 and the new General and Pasqua additions are added on. Nothing could be further from the truth. There will not be one bed lost, but the whole question is based on bed closure.

There won’t only not be one bed lost, there will be an improvement in all kinds of areas of health care — renal care, cardiac care, a variety of areas, and we’re doing . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. Order. Order. Now the Chair is having a great deal of difficulty being able to hear the Premier’s response over the shouting from the members of the third party, and I’ll ask the House to come to order and to allow the Premier to conclude his response.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I’ll simply conclude my response by saying that they have an allergy to the truth, the

Liberal Party does. That's why they do so much cat-calling and yelling, and the truth of the matter is that what they are saying is inaccurate and misrepresented.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, you can't have it both ways. The NDP claims to be carrying out a review to determine how the first round of bed closures impacted the health care system. Yet before the review is even completed more beds are being slashed.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, how can the people of Saskatchewan take you seriously if you're slashing more beds before you even have a report indicating the impact of previous closures? Is this because you know the review is a sham?

Will you give the review a little bit of integrity at the least by putting a moratorium on any further bed closures and the closure of the Plains until this review has been completed and we know the findings of it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know how it could be said more plainly or more clearly to the Liberal Party and to the people of Saskatchewan than I've put it. When the Plains closes down sometime in October of this year, the beds at Regina General and Pasqua will be on stream. I have personally surveyed the sites and what is taking place there.

In the net result there will be no bed reduction. Mr. Speaker, no bed reduction. Mr. Speaker, no bed reduction. And the finest health care services for all of southern Saskatchewan. Those are the facts.

They won't accept that because in their desperate attempt to outdo their opposition to the Tory Party, they continue to misrepresent the fact that the Liberals have stopped funding medicare nationally and that you, sir, that question . . . or believe in two-tier medicine. Not us. We do not accept your position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Investment in New Zealand

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the minister in charge of SaskTel . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my question is for the minister in charge of SaskTel. The people of Saskatchewan have said they don't want their Crown corporations going on any more globe-trotting boondoggles. Your Saturn partner, UIH (United International Holdings) Asia Pacific of Denver, Colorado lost \$138 million and \$91 million the year before that.

Mr. Minister, the people of Saskatchewan are on the hook for some \$63 million and still counting.

My question to the minister responsible today for SaskTel . . . says it will reach a positive cash flow in 1999. But in a letter to the Chair of the Crown Corporations Committee from you just six months ago, you stated that SaskTel will still face losses for a few more years.

Mr. Minister, when will you learn that the people of Saskatchewan are tired of your business boondoggles. How much will the total losses be? And when will they end? In 1999? Or more, as your letter stated. Or will it take another special committee of the Crown Corporations Committee meeting to bring out the truth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, this transaction was reported to the Crown Corporations Committee. There was a debate about it; that there is no surprise. In fact a headline tells the story, "SaskTel on course." It's clear, it's clear that when you do an investment, and the member opposite may even have some experience with that, that when you're doing a new investment, that you don't instantly start getting a return on your investment.

But if you look at the investment that SaskTel made in Leicester Cable in England, if you check that out, and I'm sure the member does know that over a hundred million dollars was returned to the coffers of SaskTel that helped keep the rates lower, and in fact some of the lowest in Canada.

And when it comes to truth, sir, you share part of the problem as the rest of your colleagues do on health care. Why don't you be honest and realize that if you were truthful, you'd be congratulating the men and women in SaskTel who do an excellent job of providing service, and through SaskTel International have returned millions of dollars to the coffers of SaskTel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Funding for Victims of Family Violence

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that yesterday I announced that Saskatchewan Justice will be providing \$350,000 in new funding to respond to the effects of family violence among aboriginal people in cities across the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This new provincial initiative demonstrates our government's response to the serious issue of family violence and our further commitment to respect the needs of aboriginal people.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement comes as a direct result of consultations we have had with the aboriginal people living in urban communities in order to determine how we can better meet the needs of aboriginal victims of crime. Aboriginal service organizations and crime victims said that in the aboriginal community, family violence and sexual assault are

the crimes of greatest concern to them. They also regard them as the most common crimes committed against aboriginal people. Unfortunately statistics also support this view, showing that 8 out of 10 aboriginal women have been abused or assaulted, or expect to be abused and assaulted.

In our consultations we also heard about the need for cultural sensitivity. We heard that concern and we agree that there should be more aboriginal people involved in responding to the needs of aboriginal victims of crime.

Mr. Speaker, this funding will help community-based aboriginal organizations offer a holistic approach to stop the cycle of family violence. Victims, children, offenders, other family members, and the community will all benefit from these programs.

I welcome the participation of the council members of the Circle Project and the board of directors of Peyakowak. Each of these Regina organizations will receive \$45,000 to respond to the effects of family violence.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, these initiatives are another example of this government's commitment to addressing the serious issue of family violence. Seven government departments have come together as partners to deliver this government's family violence strategy. Justice, Social Services, Education, Labour, Municipal Government, the Women's Secretariat, and Health are all making a contribution to this important initiative.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, recognizing and responding to the needs of the victims of family violence is an essential part of dealing effectively with this serious problem. The provincial government is committed to addressing family violence and protecting vulnerable people. Across the province this new initiative will help provide direct assistance from aboriginal people to aboriginal victims of family violence and their families, assistance that will be given in an appropriate and respectful manner to aboriginal people.

I look forward to announcing other Justice initiatives to address the cycle of family violence in the near future. Over the next several weeks, I will be in Battleford, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Yorkton to announce more programs to respond to the effects of family violence among aboriginal people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To respond to the statement that was made, I think to the effect that you're addressing the needs of the victims, I think that's a very positive move. I think too often, and too much in the past, we've addressed only the perpetrators and left the victims out of it. And I think that emphasis is to be commended. However, there are a number of questions that I have and I would like to pose a few of those right now.

In the \$350,000 of new funding, you are spreading this out among numerous organizations. And I guess the question is, how much of this is actually going to end up resulting in solutions and care for people and how much of that will just end

up in organizational dollars? And by the time that's been filtered down to those various groups, I suggest very little real impact is going to take place as far as helping the victims that are out there.

The other thing that this move does not mention anything about is what are you doing to end violence. Now it's fine to go ahead and deal with the victims, but you are not addressing how are we going to end this cycle of violence that you say is there. You're responding to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I just want to remind the hon. member of our rule 28 which requires that debate be directed through the Chair.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the statement that we've just heard, Mr. Speaker, says nothing to addressing an end to the violence and I think that needs to be there or we'll just be throwing more money and more money continually at the victims, which is a necessary component but it definitely is not a solution.

And I think we need to have something in this whole part that's going to address the perpetrators of the violence — who the perpetrators are, Mr. Speaker, and what has caused that. And there's nothing in here that's addressing that at all.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is very frequently made note of that aboriginal persons are unfortunately overrepresented in our court and prison systems. What is less frequently noted is that, tragically, aboriginal persons are also overrepresented as victims. And I congratulate the Minister of Justice because it seems to me that today's initiative underlines and acknowledges that basic fact.

We also know that, possibly because of the impact of residential schools in past generations, and other government intervention, that aboriginal families in particular suffer from tensions, and perhaps at times, weaker ties, that have given rise to more serious social problems in native families. And we want to return the sense of strong family and community membership that will, as the member from Rosthern has said, get to the root of the problem as opposed to simply dealing with the difficulties of assault and other such attacks after they have happened.

However I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that while I am basically pleased with the announcement today, I am not convinced that separate facilities for aboriginal people are always necessary or desirable. I am pleased that apparently my home area of the Battlefords is included in this initiative. But I want to say that in the Battlefords we have the Interval House, the women's shelter. We have the Sexual Assault Centre and we have victims' services, as do most other larger communities in the province.

All of these services, Mr. Speaker, welcome aboriginal and non-aboriginal clients alike. Surely, Mr. Speaker, this is as it should be. And native persons should be welcomed both as staff and service providers, as well, of course, as clients.

We have to acknowledge that sensitivity to the culture and special needs of aboriginal people is required if we are going to

deal with some of these issues. However, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that I simply am not convinced that separate programs are necessarily the proper way to go.

We are all citizens of this province and we all share a common destiny. Government policy should acknowledge that basic truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — By leave, Mr. Speaker, I would comment briefly.

Leave granted.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am happy today to hear of the announcement that the minister has made. It is truly a compliment to him and his government to address this very serious issue. And to think, as we listen to the comments, that 8 out of 10 people in a community find themselves subject to the same kind of problems, the same type of assaults, and the same type of criminal activities being perpetrated on them, is not only astounding, it is totally shocking, and certainly it needs to be addressed.

I understand that there's a need to for cultural sensitivity as was mentioned in the next paragraph. And certainly we don't want to offend anyone. However, Mr. Speaker, we have to say that when we throw money at a problem we have to be careful that that money is going to solve the problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I'm going to suggest is some alternatives. We heard people say earlier today, we want to hear some alternatives. I think you have to remember that we also have in our core cities a very high percentage of people on welfare. And unfortunately, that does include the native folks that are in our communities, and that is where we have to solve the problem.

What happens when we have crime? Usually it's perpetrated by people who have too much time on their hands — idle hands are the devil's workshop. And quite simply put then, you have to put those people to some useful activity, whether it be recreational or whether it be job related, and if you put money into education you have to also educate them then to have something that relates to a job or some activity.

And I'm suggesting to the minister that you have to go a step further with this. You've got to provide people with some activities, some jobs. You've got to provide them with jobs that pay enough money to be attractive and reasonable so that they have some dignity to do them. They can't be expected to be the street sweepers and the pit diggers all the time. We have to allow them to have some dignity and respect in terms of jobs that are creative.

(1430)

And so while I appreciate the fact that the minister is doing a good job here to try to solve the problem, I think they are too narrow in their approach. Most certainly help for victims is necessary, but we need to do another step and that is to take a look at Indian bands like the Nekaneet Band in Cypress Hills,

where these kind of problems have been very greatly minimized over the years, because this was a small band that integrated themselves into the community and they have worked with the community to solve their problems.

They're not all solved but they certainly are an example to the rest of the province, and I suggest that the minister take a look and have a talk with the chief down there and the folks in that area to find some solutions to these problems.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I understand there's been an agreement by all parties to move to condolences.

Leave granted.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my brief remarks I will be introducing a motion seconded by the Leader of the Opposition.

I want to rise, Mr. Speaker, and say a few words in tribute to the passing of Mr. Lawrence Yew, a former member of this House and a former colleague in our party. Lawrence Riel Yew died on April 18 in Edmonton after a courageous battle with ill health, including heart and lung surgery, and he leaves to mourn his wife Vicky and daughter Jolene. Amongst other things, a trapper and a fisherman, Mr. Yew was a member of this Assembly for the riding of Cumberland from 1982 to 1986.

While I never had the privilege of actually serving in the House with him at the time, I do know from my observance of the proceedings, he stood up repeatedly in this legislature to courageously defend the interests of his constituents — and I would say indeed all residents of northern Saskatchewan — and to call for cooperation, accommodation, and dialogue and communication.

He was one of the first, if not the first, member to address this House in the Cree language, connecting this place of the people, the Assembly, to that particular group of citizens, in a most profound and important way to them.

After leaving his service in the legislature, Mr. Lawrence Yew continued to act as an advocate for his friends and neighbours in northern Saskatchewan in many, many ways, most recently acting on the negotiations committee for the Metis of north-western Saskatchewan in the dealings with Ottawa over the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range compensation matter.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the House, I think it's fair to say that Lawrence Yew did not travel an easy road in his life. But he travelled that road with the courage and the dignity that he possessed in his being and that he carried out in his day-to-day activities and that he brought to this legislature. And he came to the end of that not so easy road with the very same courage, the very same dignity.

Lawrence Yew cared very deeply and passionately about his constituents and about the North that he loved so well. And he

brought that passion to his service on their behalf — service that will not and should not be soon forgotten by those constituents nor by those of us left behind to carry on his work.

Lawrence Riel Yew had a distinguished record, Mr. Speaker, of public service: an administrator in Pinehouse; working with the fishermen's cooperative in Canoe Lake; three-term elected member of the northern municipal council and as its Chair; and of course as a member of his family . . . of this Assembly; and of course as a strong family man.

This Assembly avails itself of this opportunity to record its tribute of respect to a former member and express its most sincere sympathy to members of a saddened community of Canoe Lake and to the bereaved family.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the best that I can do is to offer them the words of the great Chief Seattle of the Suquamish Nation. Chief Seattle said that, quote, "There is no death, only a change of worlds." There is no death, only a change of worlds.

And though Lawrence leaves behind a world that is sadder and poorer for his passing, we must remember to take solace and strength from his memory, which will ever serve to remind us of our shared obligation to defend the principles of fairness, justice, and cooperation as vigorously as he did.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

Lawrence Riel Yew, who died in Edmonton on April 18, 1998, was a member of this Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Cumberland from 1982 until 1986. He was born on January 17, 1942 in Beauval, Saskatchewan. He married Victoria Elizabeth Iron on October 27, 1964, and together they had a daughter, Jolene Vanessa.

Mr. Yew was involved in his community and had a resolute desire for the betterment of northern Saskatchewan and its people. His life as a northern trapper and fisherman had a profound influence on his understanding of northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Yew served as administrator in Pinehouse and was actively involved in the fishermen's cooperative in Canoe Lake where he resided. Mr. Yew also served on the Northern Wood Producers' Board and was an executive assistant to the minister of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. He served for six years as a northern municipal councillor.

Mr. Yew entered provincial politics in 1982 when he was elected to this Legislative Assembly. He served his constituents until 1986 as a member of the opposition. Mr. Yew's concern for northern Saskatchewan and its citizens did not end when he ceased to be a member of this Legislative Assembly. He continued to promote the

interests of his community and the people right up to the days immediately prior to his passing on April 18.

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

I so move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege on behalf of the official opposition to say a few words in regards to the motion presented by the Premier — a motion which I'm sure each and every one of us sitting in this Assembly just a few days ago would not have thought we would be addressing at this time. And it was an honour to have Mr. Yew come to the Assembly, I believe it was Thursday of last week, and I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, it was quite shocking when I had heard on Monday morning that Mr. Yew had passed away.

While I was not a member at the time when Mr. Yew was a member, Mr. Speaker, everything I've heard from colleagues that I was involved with, my colleagues, and certainly as the Premier has indicated, colleagues who were in the Assembly at this time, everyone certainly did speak highly of Mr. Yew, and acknowledged his involvement with, as the Premier will acknowledge as well, a small caucus at that time.

And his compassionate plea for more consideration for people of the North, the aboriginal community or even all peoples of the North, and certainly the services that many times we take for granted that may not be quite as readily available in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about members of this Assembly who have given of themselves, and we all know that to spend time in the Legislative Assembly in the province of Saskatchewan or in any Assembly, certainly does take away from family. Takes away from many of the other opportunities a person could involve themselves in. And as I have read about Mr. Yew and as I've heard about his activities and his involvements, Mr. Yew it appears certainly did commit himself to serving his constituents with honour, and certainly indeed representing the issues that were very important to him and the constituency that he represented.

And so, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition we want to extend to Lawrence's wife and his daughter our sincerest condolences at this time of your bereavement. And we trust that you will find comfort in knowing the loving God, the God who created you, does care.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, and members, it is indeed with great emotion and honour that I will speak and share a few words on behalf of my friend Lawrence.

As was mentioned, Lawrence was born in Beauval in 1942. And he was married to Victoria Iron on October 27, 1964 and they had a daughter, Jolene. He was elected of course in 1982, was an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Cumberland, and we know he has passed on, on April 18, 1998, this past week.

I knew Lawrence, Mr. Speaker; I met Lawrence back in 1973. We were both in Ile-a-la-Crosse to deal with the issue of northern local control of education. He told me that that was his first public speech in a political forum, and I remember listening to his passion in regards to the issue of northern control.

He was also a man of balance, that in midst of the seriousness of the debate that there was also the humorous side of the question. He knew that there was a lot of tension in the community at that time, and as he spoke he intermixed his speech with some humorous stories. That's how I got to know Lawrence.

He was a strong person in regards to the idea of a northern unified control, and we saw that at the next stage of his development, as I listened and heard that he was running for — I was at the university — and he was running for the northern municipal council in 1973. The people had a lot of faith and trust in Lawrence and he was re-elected three times running. And amongst a leadership of five that were representing the northern municipal council, he was chosen by his peers to be the Chair of the first-elected, publicly elected northern municipal power structure.

And he became to be recognized all through the debates of the evolution and development of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan, dealing with issues of employment, social development, environment, with the Missinipi committee, the damming of the Churchill. He dealt with a lot of these issues; that I saw him often in the public meetings and the public forums.

I thought I would try to look back at some of his speeches, you know, later on when he became elected, to capture the essence of this northern control element, this idea of participatory democracy for the North. And I thought that his speech on the throne speech on June 24, 1982, sums it up because he saw the evolution over time from the trap line on to the department of DNS (Department of Northern Saskatchewan) days.

(1445)

He said that, page 257 of *Hansard*:

In the last decade, Northerners have achieved some gains envied by all other northern regions in Canada. In less than 10 years we find Northerners controlling, through their own elected representatives . . . school boards . . . local government councils.

Northern people also operate their own institutions and self-help societies . . .

I thought that this comment captured the essence of Lawrence as he worked on later on to become the executive assistant for the minister of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan.

He continued the work that he had pursued with the development of the municipal structure in the North with the NMC (northern municipal council). And as an EA (executive assistant) he worked and consulted with Northerners under what became known as the Options 80 proposal which then defined

what we now currently know as the northern administration district and an Act that goes along with it for the municipalities.

So we saw him playing a key role as a EA and working to get the consultation and making sure that the democratic input and the decision making of Northerners was part of the development.

As I saw him later on in 1981, I got to know him a little bit more closely because I became his campaign manager for the nomination. We were looking around for somebody in the Cumberland constituency to run. We looked around the North and we agreed that although Lawrence was not from Cumberland constituency, that his home was in Jans Bay on the west side, we agreed in Cumberland constituency at that point in time that Lawrence would be the best person to represent Cumberland constituency.

I, as the campaign manager, along with others, set up an organization which came to be I think in northern history one of the great developments of northern political involvement. Because even in that nomination convention, Mr. Speaker, when Lawrence ran for the NDP nomination, over 1,700 memberships had been sold in that constituency. It is still the record in that constituency.

We had over 600 people at the nomination convention in Cumberland constituency. It was an example of political participation in action. And it was a great moment to be part of that development that Lawrence led, you know, in that period of time.

And as we moved on of course he became elected in 1982 with one of the highest percentage in the province and he then came to the legislature. He had talked to me about it and he was worried about moving into a situation and moving into the city life and coming to the city representing his people. But I knew that he had the gumption to be able to continue what he passionately believed in.

I remember on his . . . going back on his throne speech, what he sort of worried about in one sense. But on June 24, page 256, he said this in *Hansard*, "It is my sincere hope that all of us will be fair, tolerant, and understanding." As he came into the House he had to meet up with a statement that one of the members had mentioned about himself doing a rain dance. Well indeed people could argue whether or not it was racism. He did not see it as a point of respect. He saw it as a point of put-down.

And being who he was, he stood up to challenge that view, and that was the type of man he was. He challenged that which put down his own people and that's how he lived his life. He, in many ways, when he spoke the first time . . . (Cree). He spoke in Cree right away in the legislature because he felt proud not only of his people but the language and the culture. And he always had his moose-hide jacket as he made his speeches here in the legislature and outside, because he respected, you know, his cultural symbols and way of life.

And as we saw him move on. Mr. Speaker, he continued to work in many areas because we know he had worked with fishermen and women, the co-op, the northern wood producers and he also became an administrator with Pinehouse.

And lastly we saw him when working with Metis people and which he had done a lot of work before with Metis society in the early '70s onwards, and was still dealing with the Primrose Air Weapons Range.

As I watched him on his visit to the legislature, I mentioned at that time that on April 15 that he had had a lung and heart operation. While we watched him sitting there on the wheelchair with an oxygen tank, a lot of people did not know that he had just gone through pneumonia.

But the important thing is that as I went to talk to him, he wasn't talking about himself. When you tried to ask him about, you know, how he felt, he would try and steer you away from that. He would try and steer you back to the issue of the Primrose Air Weapons Range or the North.

He was a selfless individual in the true spirit of his culture in the North. And as I tried to capture this thing in regards to how he felt that things in the North should run, what his vision was, and I thought that this captured a lot of the essence of what he talked about.

Again, at the throne speech on June 24 in 1982 on page 259 of *Hansard* this is what he said:

True development . . . only takes place when people do things for themselves, in co-operation with government and others, rather than depending on others to do things for them.

And this was the essence of Lawrence Yew, that indeed he saw the development in terms of a self-determination of people, not only as Northerners but as aboriginal people and Saskatchewan people. That we had to do it in a united fashion but also be able to do it with yourself as well, that you couldn't depend solely on others. You had to work in cooperation with others for the betterment of self and others. And that is what I thought epitomized his legacy of courage, his legacy and spirit of the true self-determination of a Northerner.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words in Cree in regards to my friend, Lawrence.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to again express my deepest sympathies for a great man of northern Saskatchewan and a person who carried on the vision that, hopefully as we move forward, we carry on his vision. We give our sincerest sympathy to Vicky, Jolene, the rest of the family, and friends of Lawrence Yew.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

(1500)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to extend our condolences and sympathy to the family of Lawrence Yew, in particular his wife, Victoria, and daughter Jolene. And I appreciate the other members, particularly those of the Liberal Party, who gave me the opportunity to speak.

And I want to say first of all that, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to serve in the Assembly between 1982 and 1986 with Lawrence, and during that period, although I didn't know his history or family before that, I got to know Lawrence quite well. And he was a very interesting and fascinating individual in many ways.

And of course being in a very small caucus — I think from time to time we had seven or eight members, having been soundly defeated, as I mentioned, in 1982 by the then Devine government — Lawrence was a brand-new member and came to the Assembly with all of the vim and vigour and wanting to do what was best for his constituents.

And he carried out that job in a very able manner, given the fact that he was new in the legislature, and being only one of seven, initially, members of the opposition, he had to carry a fairly big load and having critic area for a number of different portfolios, including northern Saskatchewan.

But I say that in carrying that heavy load — and I mentioned it when Lawrence was here last week and we had a chance to visit with him — I was commenting that Lawrence was one of our secret weapons that we used as the opposition of the day. And the then Speaker, Mr. Herb Swan, was forever calling us to order for repetition because we had to make lengthy speeches in order to keep the House going.

Well Lawrence was very able at giving a one-hour speech in English and then giving it again in Cree so the Speaker wasn't able to tell whether he was repeating his speech or not. And I know it infuriated the Speaker a little bit, but Mr. Swan, being a gentleman, tolerated our ambition to keep the House going and to give very, very lengthy speeches.

Now during the period when he was speaking in Cree, my colleagues would cheer "hear, hear" for Lawrence. And after his speech he lectured us saying, look, you don't know when to, you don't know when to cheer me — you're doing it at all the wrong times. And he said, from now on I'll give you the signal when it's time to do the hear, hear. And so we got along famously.

The other story that I wanted to relay that shows some of the character and fun nature of Lawrence was in those early days of course, being House Leader, I got an opportunity to speak to the press almost as often as I do now on Channel Lake. Every day after question period the page would come to me and say, it's time to go out for a scrum. And I would go out and an hour later or half an hour later I would come back.

And after about a week of this, Lawrence said to me, he said, Link, what the heck is a scrum? And I thought it interesting that all of those things that work in the House, that Lawrence brought an interesting perspective about the way northern Saskatchewan and people work in that part of the world — the camaraderie, the friendship, and in travelling in northern Saskatchewan.

You don't have to be up there very long to understand at least in a small way why Northerners are different in the way they approach life. I think there's a closeness and closeness of community out of necessity, because of the hardship they face

both in climate, distances, lack of transportation, all those things that we take for granted.

But I want to say that it was a very, very interesting time with a small group of caucus members led by the former premier, Allan Blakeney, and Lawrence and people like Norm Lusney and others, that we were able to put together and cobble together what I think was, after some time, not a badly effective opposition to the then Conservative government that had a huge majority, I think something like 54 or 55 seats. And they had more members sitting on our side of the House than we had in opposition.

And to start with it was a very daunting experience, but with the help of Lawrence and other members we made it through those four years.

Having said that, I want to say again in closing, to the family of Lawrence Yew, that we will miss him, with the family, a great deal. And I want to, on behalf of my colleagues, join with the Premier in extending condolences to the family — to Victoria, wife of Lawrence, and also his daughter Jolene — and extend best wishes to the family.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to make a few statements of the life and times of Mr. Lawrence Yew. And there are so many things we can say thank you to Mr. Yew for. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the entire community of Canoe Lake, Jans Bay, and of course the neighbouring community of Cole Bay.

The entire community and the aboriginal people of the North have contributed and have shared with us the efforts of people like Mr. Lawrence Yew. And I want to say unequivocally to all the people that are out there that have given us one of their native sons, thank you so much for the effort and the work and the humble attributes of a man like Lawrence Yew.

As I rose yesterday to pay tribute to him, I rose with a heavy heart. There's no question that personally it's a huge loss to me. Mr. Yew was a constituent of mine and it was a great honour to serve as his MLA, and on occasions we did have time to talk on the various issues.

I know that simple words will not convey the deep remorse and the sadness that all people have at this point in time. We've lost a great leader, and we know that the family — his brothers and sisters, his parents, his wife, Vicky, and his daughter, Jolene — will be at a greater loss than most of us. And I want to say that I also thank them for sharing Lawrence with us because it is so important to have him on our side.

Lawrence was a fisherman and a trapper and many are amazed, including myself, at the trail he blazed from Canoe Lake right to here in the Legislative Assembly. And to me I think that — and I say this with all honesty, with all integrity, and with all my heart — that Lawrence Yew, the hon. member from the Cumberland constituency, was and will always be the most prominent aboriginal MLA to grace this Assembly.

Allow me very briefly, Mr. Speaker, to explain to you why. When I was a fairly young lad growing up in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Lawrence would often visit our community, and being at that

young age, we didn't know who he was. But all we knew, that he was an aboriginal person and that he was someone important. And very early, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to be like him. I wanted to be an aboriginal person that was important.

And I can say to this day that, in all honesty once again, that I could never be a Lawrence Yew. But in the very effort of trying to accomplish what Mr. Yew has accomplished, I hope somehow I could be half the MLA that he certainly was.

We could say the end of a legacy. And certainly the word "legacy" is fitting, but the end certainly is not. Lawrence's work will continue. And I dare say that we'll not be able to find another individual with as much passion and as much commitment as Mr. Yew had to such efforts like the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range.

I know we brought him here one day to speak on the frustration of the people involved with this particular issue, and at times we weren't too sure if we should invite Lawrence because Lawrence was the Chair of this committee — he worked very hard — but Lawrence, as you're aware, Mr. Speaker, was quite ill and we left it up to him to decide. And we knew that he would rise to the occasion, and is an occasion that we understood and appreciated.

And I must say that to his wife and to his family and his child, that in any way that we may have strained Lawrence in that trip or our constant telephone calls to him, we apologize. By the same token, we know that many people in the North did count on Lawrence and we all have benefited from his great, great work.

Lawrence was a man known to fight the fight for northern people. And I know, in spite of the challenge to his health, he never lost sight of that. He never deviated from that goal. And I must say to his family and to the entire people of Canoe Lake, that even myself as the MLA, when I was feeling depressed or tired, it's as if Lawrence knew because he'd phone me and he'd talk to me. And even though we're from different political stripes, he always offered encouragement and he most certainly was very appreciative of the effort and the work that all people in this particular position offered to our jobs.

In the final years, Lawrence once again showed leadership and commitment when he organized, Mr. Speaker, a small group of chronically ill people of the north-west. Many people didn't know that Lawrence sat with these people, himself realizing the challenges to his health, to talk about the chronically ill — challenges of northern Saskatchewan.

And to me this was the purest display of compassion. There was no fanfare; there was no press release; there was no interview; there was nothing. Lawrence done this type of work because he simply cared. And I think again for all people in northern Saskatchewan, in Saskatchewan and this world, that we'd perhaps learn the example of humanity from a man like Lawrence Yew.

Lawrence was a very noble person. He often spoke to elders, to young people, and whether he was working in Green Lake, or whether he was working in Pinehouse, or whether he was working for the northern municipal council, or whether he was

working with the fishermen's co-op, or as an MLA — and the list can go on as to who he worked for — he always had one thing in mind, and that was to treat people in a fair and consistent manner.

And this is what we all have to begin to learn, Mr. Speaker. In this Assembly he spoke with compassion, he spoke with pride, and he spoke with dignity. And I want to say again to the community of Canoe Lake and his family, that I sincerely thank you for Lawrence's work and Lawrence's effort in blazing the trail to this particular Assembly so that people like myself, and I know the hon. member from Cumberland, can now today stand up with the same pride and dignity that he fought hard for and afforded us.

I share with the Assembly as well, a clipping from May 16, 1984 in which Lawrence Yew is quoted as saying, "Residents of the North don't want jobs some day," Yew said, "they want jobs now." And a quote that I hope to use in the Assembly from here on in is a quote that he is, quite frankly, known for. And the quote is: "Northerners want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem."

And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what Lawrence personified. He showed all aboriginal people and all northern people what we could become. He showed me the way, as I know he's shown other people the way.

So it gives me great pleasure as the MLA to say that on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca. I say to his wife Vicky, his daughter Jolene, his family, and his home community of Canoe Lake, Jans Bay, and Cole Bay, that we sincerely thank you for sharing Lawrence with us. His wife shares with us that, and I quote:

He was our friend. I was proud of the things that he'd done, but he suffers no more. And I thank all the people that have helped throughout his illness and his final days.

Vicky should also be commended, Mr. Speaker, because his wife was always there for him. Through thick and thin, through illness and health and all the challenges, Vicky stood by Lawrence and certainly was a great help to him. So Vicky should be commended and recognized as well.

And as well, Lawrence also had a young daughter named Jolene. And when he was first elected to represent Cumberland, they moved here in 1982. And often Vicky and Jolene would come watch the proceedings and watch Lawrence do his work, the good work that he'd done. And Vicky shares that while he was up speaking, his daughter (Cree) in the Assembly, is what the mother says. And what that means, Mr. Speaker, is that she was a handful.

So I know he was a strong family man and when I bring my family here, an example of Lawrence Yew bringing his daughter here, and I hope that legacy lives on with them.

And I would like to assure the family that after all the accolades have faded, his plaques and achievements stored away, Lawrence's memory will always be with us.

And I urge you all, when times go tough, to remember

leadership and what it's all about. Lawrence Riel Yew showed us how it's done. And that will for ever be in my mind. Thank you very much.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Canora, by leave of the Assembly:

That the resolution just passed, together with a transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

(1515)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — In keeping with the tradition of providing open, accountable, and responsible government, Mr. Speaker, I hereby submit the answer to question 49.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 49 is tabled.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Reduction of Child Poverty

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I am pleased to take my place in the Assembly this afternoon and to move at the end of my remarks the following motion:

That this Assembly applaud the government's determination to reduce child poverty, building on the introduction of the action plan for children and the Premier's national leadership in developing the National Child Benefit, by introducing the "building independence: investing in families" strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by just reminding people about the action plan and how it came about.

In June of 1993, the Government of Saskatchewan invited people, organizations and communities, to join together in addressing children's issues. The paper, *Children First: An Invitation to Work Together* — Creating Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children was sent to more than 1,200 groups and organizations. The paper proposed a policy framework, including vision, beliefs, principles, and goals for improving the well-being of Saskatchewan children.

The invitation paper described the opportunity to give renewed emphasis to preventive actions. It also outlined the challenge of ensuring that actions meet the needs of children and families, and use available resources in the most effective manner.

Groups and communities were invited to respond to the policy framework and to expand partnerships on behalf of children both provincially and locally. Responses urged a collaborative, long-term approach that concentrates on prevention and provides a more holistic way of providing services for children and families. It was as a result of this consultation process that Saskatchewan's action plan for children was developed.

Just what is Saskatchewan's action plan for children? The action plan for children is a key part of the government's social policy agenda. The action plan promotes and sustains an important emphasis on issues affecting children, youth, and families, and contributes to awareness of these issues and actions across all sectors.

It is a policy framework and multi-year strategy through which community and government programs for children and families are initiated, developed, and expanded.

The action plan acknowledges the importance of strong support for children in their early years. It promotes the development of prevention and early intervention services, and encourages collaborative approaches between communities and government to address the needs of children.

Six government departments and one secretariat are involved in the action plan, Mr. Speaker, as well as hundreds of Saskatchewan communities, agencies, and organizations. Government partners include Saskatchewan Justice, Municipal Government, Health, Social Services, Education, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, and the Women's Secretariat.

The action plan was one of the first areas in government where departments began to develop an inter-sectorial approach to the programs and budget development processes. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that they cooperated. Various governments and departments cooperated and worked together.

And, Mr. Speaker, the work of this government through the action plan is being recognized. Saskatchewan was privileged to be the only province in the country to be presented the Champions for Children award by the Child Welfare League of Canada and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies in November of 1996 at the Canada's Children: Canada's Future conference. The award was presented to the province of Saskatchewan and its people for the development and implementation of Saskatchewan's action plan for children, which is built on some of the same principles called for in the Child Welfare League of Canada's 1991 conference.

And that's not all, Mr. Speaker. In the spring of last year, Saskatchewan was awarded the Canadian Association of Community Education's Institution of the Year award for Saskatchewan's community schools program. It was the first government to receive such recognition. The program serves the needs of over 8,000 children in the province's inner-city schools. Community schools use a holistic approach to help students who are facing barriers to learning caused primarily by poverty.

The community schools program promotes shared responsibility and is culturally sensitive in its approaches to

education. Active parental and community involvement is also fundamental to the program.

And, Mr. Speaker, in the Council of Ministers of Education newsletter, which I just received, they talk about the Saskatchewan action plan. I quote:

The Saskatchewan action plan for children, the integrated school link services program, and the expanded community schools program involve government and community members working together to address the diverse needs of children in holistic, responsive, and effective ways.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what has the action plan accomplished. Since its inception, Saskatchewan's action plan for children has resulted in some significant achievements. Many programs and services have been developed under the action plan including: an Office of the Children's Advocate to give a voice to children under 19; the Saskatchewan Council on Children which is a forum for discussion and direction to government; the integrated school link services; early-intervention pre-kindergarten programs; a family law division of the Court of Queen's Bench which handles family members; numerous Indian child and family service agencies providing child welfare services on reserves; a new northern community schools program; prevention and support grants; and the associated entities fund.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, funding for programs under the action plan has increased every year since the plan's inception in 1993. In fact in the 1994-95 budget, funding for programs and services under the action plan totalled \$4.4 million. This year, ongoing funding for programs and services has risen to \$53 million.

The action plan is proving to be extremely successful and I believe that success is largely due to the partnerships that have been made between government and communities to address child and family issues. Through the action plan we are investing in our greatest resource, our people. Or more importantly for our future, our children.

And in this budget we are continuing that investment. We're investing in vulnerable children and families and taking a leadership role in the country by introducing a series of unique programs which will redesign Saskatchewan's social assistance program. We're making changes that will provide opportunity rather than dependence for many low income families and families presently receiving social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, work is the best way for low income families with children to leave poverty. The majority of people want to be independent of social assistance. We need to change our system so that people are encouraged to work and are rewarded for their efforts. As a community, we have a special responsibility for our children. Saskatchewan people want the social assistance system redesigned. And we are doing that, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to mention a few initiatives under our social services redesign — the Saskatchewan employment supplement for instance. The supplement ensures that families will be better off working than they would be on social assistance. It will

assist families in making the leap from dependence to the workforce by helping parents with the child-related costs of going to work and it will support their decision to work.

It will work to prevent parents in low wage jobs from falling onto social assistance as a result of a family or household crisis. And this service will be delivered through a user-friendly telephone call centre. With the supplement we are making work the right choice for families again.

I've talked before about the Saskatchewan Child Benefit which will assist low income families with the cost of raising children. It will help parents remain in the workforce rather than falling onto social assistance because of their children's needs. Through the benefit we are building a strong, healthy society in the future by investing in our children today.

The family health benefits are an important part of our social services redesign, Mr. Speaker. Healthy early childhood development has a long-term impact on a healthy, productive society. The benefits will help to improve the health of children in lower income families by providing health services to those families. The family health benefits will reduce barriers to work for families on social assistance. Again we are investing in our children today for a healthy future tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — And, Mr. Speaker, on Monday, April 6, the Minister of Social Services announced some more new spending under the child action plan. Some of the 1998-99 spending announced by the minister includes \$4.5 million to help students with social, behavioural and emotional difficulties; \$1.3 million to help community groups respond to the problems of children, youth and families; and another million dollars extra, Mr. Speaker, for early childhood education and day care.

Through the action plan, communities, agencies, and governments across Canada are making significant efforts to address child and family issues. I want to commend the hundreds of communities and agencies from across the province that are involved in the action plan. Without your enthusiasm, commitment, and hard work the action plan would not exist to be providing these important services in communities across Saskatchewan.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we all strive to be known for a skill or some expertise. Some provinces or countries strive to be known for their banking skills, others for their military might, and still others for their technological expertise. We would wish that Saskatchewan be known for the way it treats its children.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by my colleague, the member from Lloydminster:

That this Assembly applaud the government's determination to reduce child poverty, building on the introduction of the action plan for children and the Premier's national leadership in developing the National Child Benefit, by introducing the "building independence: investing in families" strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I so move. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1530)

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise and support this motion today because I really do believe in children, and children are the future of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan always has believed that for our country to have a strong future we need to continue to work at the national level and the provincial level towards the development of a national child's agenda. This is something that not just a provincial government can do, but hand in hand, provincial and federal government, we can move towards eradicating poverty in our country. And this government has been dedicated to doing so, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan has taken a leadership role in the development of a national child's agenda which will build on the experience gained through the child's action plan for children. When we introduced this and pioneered it in 1993, I do not think that any of us even on the government side realized the implications that it would have throughout Saskatchewan. And I think it will be far into the future, Mr. Speaker, when people will realize what the child's action plan has actually done for us.

The Saskatchewan action plan for children is a key part of the government's social policy agenda, Mr. Speaker. The action plan promotes and sustains an important emphasis on issues affecting children, youth, and families.

Often you will hear, especially from the Saskatchewan Party, reference to the family. Well I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, being a mother, a teacher, and a grandmother, there is nothing more important to me than my family and my constituents' families. It always has been an important part of my life. My decisions have been made geared towards the family.

The one thing that I noticed during the '80s, that talk is cheap, Mr. Speaker. We can talk about the family, but if we take every bit of support away from the family and it starts to crumble, what is the use of the rhetoric, Mr. Speaker?

You have to put your money and your actions where your mouth is. I believe in families. I believe in supporting my family, and I do it; I believe in supporting the communities, the families of the people in my constituency and my community, and I do it. And I believe that our government believes in families because we are doing something to help and support and move families to independence. And I believe that we do believe in families.

This is more than just rhetoric, getting on a platform and saying that you believe in families; this is actually action and doing something about families.

The action plan promotes and sustains an important emphasis on issues affecting children, youth, and families. It is a policy framework and multi-year strategy through community and government programs for children and families. And I'll tell you, I don't think many people understand the initiative. And I have tried to, in my own constituency, get as much information

out as I can and that is why I have asked to speak on this issue.

The action plan acknowledges the importance of strong support for children in their early years and promotes the development of prevention and early intervention services, Mr. Speaker. In 1998-99 the government will commit 29 million in new funds under the child action plan to strengthen early childhood development.

I can tell you, being a teacher, that the die is cast by the time the child has reached grade 1. That does not say that improvements can't be made, but it certainly is more preferable to help a child when they are three and four years old and even younger.

In fact we know now it is even vitally important to help a child when it is in the womb, to give parents education on what they must eat, what they must drink, or cannot drink, when they are carrying a child so that the woman delivers a healthy, wonderful baby.

And I can tell you that this government does believe in that. And we have more work to do, Mr. Speaker, starting right from the time of conception until that child is graduated from post-secondary education so they can take their place in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's anything more important that a person can do as a job than helping a child become an independent, useful human being.

I have had young women ask me — children that I taught — ask me about my accomplishments. Well I never think that I have had such wonderful accomplishments in my life. They see, I suppose, getting elected as an accomplishment; being the first woman on the Waseca Credit Union board as an accomplishment. But I can tell you, I have been very honest when I have said my greatest accomplishment is raising two wonderful daughters and now having two wonderful sons-in-law and having four wonderful grandchildren. And that is a great accomplishment.

And if we can help our parents to be decent parents, if we can help them to raise children decently so that we have good, healthy children, there's nothing more of a joy for me to go back to school, to go to schools, to see the bright, young faces and see how they love learning. And those are the things that are important to me, and I know to most of my colleagues in the government.

So since the inception of the child action plan the Saskatchewan government's contribution to new or enhanced programs and services for children and families under the plan will exceed \$53 million annually, including 18 million towards the Child Benefit and Saskatchewan employment supplement. And I will take some time in trying to explain these two programs because I don't think some of us understand how they are working. And I think others of us don't even give a damn, to be blunt, Mr. Speaker, about how they work.

The Deputy Speaker: — I must remind the member that you're very close to unparliamentary language; in fact you are using unparliamentary language and I would ask you to retract that statement.

Ms. Stanger: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I realized it the minute I used the word. I withdraw the remark. Thank you very much for your patience with me.

In 1996, Saskatchewan received the prestigious national Champions for Children award from Canada's children's council. It's called — I'll read the name properly — the Canada's Future national conference sponsored by the Child Welfare League of Canada and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.

The award was presented to our Premier and to the government and to the province of Saskatchewan and its people for the development, implementation of the action plan. So I'm very proud of that.

Now having said that, that does not mean our work is done, Mr. Speaker — it goes on. On behalf of the seven cabinet ministers involved in the action plan, I'm very pleased to be able to provide you with the details of new initiatives we're funding this year in Saskatchewan's award-winning action plan for children.

As you know, funding for programs under the action plan has increased every year since the plan's inception in 1993. In fact as I mentioned previously, we will be adding \$53 million, Mr. Speaker.

The action plan is proving to be extremely successful. And I believe that success is largely due to the partnerships that have been made between government and communities to address child and family issues.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important to note here that a government alone cannot do these initiatives. It takes many, many dedicated people, some of them paid, a lot of them volunteer, and people that believe in the same things as the government does; people that will work towards making life better for families and for children.

Through the action plan we are investing in our greatest resource, our people. Or more importantly our future, our children. In fact Saskatchewan is leading the country through the work that it's doing on children's issues.

The national child's agenda, which is presently under development by the first ministers, will be a national initiative that will build on the good work of the Saskatchewan action plan for children.

This year in Saskatchewan we are committing 29 million in new money to new initiatives for children and families. And we are redirecting the 6 million we put into one-time funded programs last year, for a total of more than 34 million in new initiatives for 1998-99.

These new initiatives include, for instance, a 4.5 million grant to assist school divisions in meeting the needs of children and youth who require additional supports in order to benefit from education; more than \$1 million in new funding through the associated entities fund to assist communities in responding to the needs of children, youth, and families.

And one of the groups that will be receiving this money is Big Sisters. It's a group that is dear to my heart because at a time when I lost my husband and was really feeling down, I joined Big Sisters in Lloydminster and I had a little sister. And this group has always meant a lot to me. And the Big Sisters will use the grant to address the needs of at-risk female children and youth related to family violence.

The violence prevention program will work to decrease or eliminate risk factors for children and youth through support, education and alternative choices. And when I listened to the independent member from Cypress Hills today, he said money was not enough. This is true.

There also . . . And this government is doing the support, education, and other choices for people. Money alone cannot do it. The member was absolutely correct. We have to work with people to give them a hand-up but they must do much of the things themselves and communities must help also. And a portion of the activities that the Big Sisters will be doing will be scheduled based on family support service centres and programs. Independent components of the program will be scheduled through the Big Sisters and I'm very proud that we are going to be able to do this for Big Sisters — not for Big Sisters; we'll be doing it for the children — we will be assisting Big Sisters.

There'll be an increased \$249,000 to prevention and support grant funding to communities, and 300,000 for the development and delivery of family literacy projects. And literacy of course is another field that is dear to my heart. My daughter, when she was employed for five years in Ottawa, worked on literacy. There was a definite correlation between people that, that end up in jail and the ability to read. Many of the folks that she worked with were ex-convicts and their reading ability was very scant — a grade 1 or a grade 2 level.

And we have many people in our communities that can't go ahead and get decent jobs because they can't read, Mr. Speaker. It's as basic as that. They hide it well, but there are many people that cannot read. And this is a very good work, working with people in literacy, and something a person should consider doing after they're retired I think, part-time, is helping adults to learn to read.

In addition, as part of our commitment to addressing family, child and family poverty, we've committed \$20 million in new funding this year to the Saskatchewan Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan employment supplement and the family health benefits programs. Those are three programs I'm going to endeavour to give you a little bit of detail on after I'm finished, at the end of my speech. These programs will come into effect in July.

Our children's overriding right is to have the opportunity to be contributing members of our community and our society. They have a right to know that as a society we can be concerned about the conditions they are growing up in and the right to be nurtured and cared for. Through the action plan committees, agencies, and government across Canada, across Saskatchewan, we are taking significant efforts to address child and family issues.

I want to commend the hundreds of communities and agencies from across the province that are involved in the action plan. Without your enthusiasm, commitment and hard work, the action plan would not exist to be providing these important services in communities across Saskatchewan.

You know we all strive to be known for a skill or expertise. Some provinces or countries strive to be known for their banking skills, others for their military might, still others for their technology expertise. I would wish that Saskatchewan would be known for the way that it treats its children.

(1545)

Two of the benefits that I have said in the beginning that I would try to explain, I would try to explain some of the Saskatchewan Child Benefit, which is going to be giving 6.9 million to Social Services. And just an explanation of this because I think it's important that we know what it does.

The Saskatchewan Child Benefit is a significant new program that will provide a monthly allowance to assist lower income families with the cost of raising children. It will help families remain in the workforce rather than falling onto social assistance to meet their children's basic needs. So often this happens when a person is getting upgrading, still haven't got their training complete. They'll be working in a low income job and then they slip back into the system because they can get some of those medical needs for their children.

We want to prevent this. We want people working and we want them taking school. The Minister of Post-Secondary Education and others have a work strategy that I wish we could speak to today but it would take too much time. But again this will help people, because again just throwing money at a problem isn't all the solution. It's helping people to help themselves.

The Saskatchewan Child Benefit, we're investing in children and building a better future for the province. The benefit will be combined with the national health benefit by the federal government and the Canadian child tax benefit and paid to low income families based on the number of children under 18 years of age and their family . . . and their family income as reported to Revenue Canada for the previous year. For families on social assistance, the combined Child Benefit will replace your children's basic allowance. This program will come into effect July of 1998.

The Saskatchewan employment supplement, 11.1 million in Social Services. The Saskatchewan employment supplement is a uniquely monthly employment support program that will supplement income earned from wages and child/spousal maintenance payments by lower income parents. The supplement will assist parents with the child-related costs of going to work and will support their decision to work. For families of social assistance, it will help parents in making the leap from dependence on social assistance to the workforce.

And this is what I think is so important. When I think back to the 1960s — and I have always been involved in the political party that I represent — but I met, as a young mother and staying at home with my children, two women that were struggling on our block to become independent. They both were

single parents; one with a set of twins and one with two young boys.

And I can remember them both saying that with the hand-up they got one became a teacher — has remained a friend of mine for 38 years, is just retiring this year in Saskatoon. She was able to raise her children, able to complete her education, and said to me that I will always, always vote for your party because they gave me a hand-up when other people in other provinces weren't getting that. And I have become a taxpayer and I'm proud of it.

The other one got secretarial training in a business college, and again has said that to me. I was able to become a worker, raise my children, and become a bona fide taxpayer which, when you look at it, that's what most people want to do in our society. That's what gives them the, well the self-concept to become a person that is self-actualized. You can't do that if you feel every day that you're not worth anything.

I think that if you look at a human being, self-worth is the most telling thing about a person and how you feel about yourself. And you can't get that if you . . . you can't get that if . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you for the assistance of all members. I appreciate your comments.

Anyway the Saskatchewan employment supplement ensures that families will be financially better off working than they would be on social assistance. It makes work a realistic choice again for families. The amount of the supplement is based on the amount of employment, self-employment, or child/spousal maintenance income under the number of children under 18.

I didn't comment on some of the comments that I heard from across the way because I didn't want to really lose my train of thought. But now that I'm just about finished, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that I am sick and tired from the insinuations from the opposition that somehow this government and this party is a party which does not believe in working hard, getting ahead. I am sick and tired of the insinuations, Mr. Speaker. And I have been a CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and a New Democrat since I can remember. I have always worked hard for everything that I have gotten.

The people that I know in our party and in our organizations are hard-working, determined people. They are not people with their hand out, as we have tried to be labelled by the people opposite. But we do have a heart and compassion to help people that aren't maybe as well off as we are.

I'll tell you that the sign of a good society is how we treat people that are less than we are. The sign of a good society isn't how much money we can make or how much power we can have, the sign of a good society is how happy and healthy most of the people are in that society.

And I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to be able to speak on this. I am very proud of our government and I'm sick and tired of dwelling on issues that don't affect my constituents. I want to talk about the things that affect my constituents.

I want to talk about social assistance; I want to talk about roads;

I want to talk about education; I want to talk about post-secondary education. I want to talk about the health care in my area and some of the things that are happening. I want to talk about the schools. I'm sick and tired of political power tried to be gained but only in one way, to defeat a government. Give us some good ideas; we'll work with you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to speak briefly to this government's commitment to child poverty and to respond to the comments that we've heard from the members opposite today.

But I'd also like to move an amendment to this motion, because clearly the government has chosen to ignore completely some of the most poverty-stricken people and children in Saskatchewan, and that is the first nations people on and off the reserve.

It seems to me though that we've spoken about this exact same motion last year. The government spends more time patting themselves on the back, and their Premier on the back, for promises they have not kept and the serious problems they have treated in superficial ways.

In fact the one statement this government has forgotten, and that may be they never knew this statement, is the best social policy is a good job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since 1989 there's been a number of changes in the child poverty situation. Since the government's vow to eliminate poverty the number of poor children has risen 46 per cent. Poor two-parent families have risen by 39 per cent; poor single-parent families have risen 58 per cent. Children in families experiencing long-term unemployment is 44 per cent.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I would ask all members, you will have the opportunity to debate the motion. Right now the hon. member from Kelvington-Wadena has the floor and I would ask for you to give her your attention.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think there is a couple of these numbers that members opposite maybe didn't hear so I'll repeat them. The number of poor two-parent families in Canada has risen 39 per cent. Children in families experiencing long-term unemployment is up 44 per cent since 1989. Children in working-poor families is up 17 per cent. Children in families needing social assistance is up 68 per cent. Children in unaffordable rented houses is up 60 per cent; 20- and 21-year-olds without high school diplomas is up 15 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, jobs alone will not eliminate child poverty. Over one-half of Canada's poor children live in families in which their parents had some work. Fully one-third of poor children live in families where the parents had equivalent of full-time employment but they were still poor children.

A poor child in Canada is worse off financially than a poor

child in any one of 10 other industrialized countries. The gap between privileged and disadvantaged children in this, the world's wealthiest nation, is among most . . . is trained in the industrial world.

Without government help, a child in France and Canada are . . . (inaudible) . . . at the same risk of poverty. In France, government action has slashed that risk by three-quarters. Canadian government help reduces it by less than one-half.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1991 this government promised to eradicate child poverty. And they said that food banks would be a thing of the past. Well it's 1998 and there are still 10 food banks in the province. And I don't think the members opposite are even arrogant enough to say that we've eliminated child poverty.

Today the government speaks proudly of the revolutionary welfare reform. Well they've been talking about reforming the welfare system for over five years, and finally we've seen some very small steps. If welfare reform was not such a serious issue it would be almost amusing.

During the NDP press conference to announce their welfare reforms, the Premier proudly stated that developing these reforms meant engaging in revolutionary thinking. Getting people off welfare and back in the workforce is not revolutionary thinking for anyone but an NDP government. It's what the people of Saskatchewan, including people on welfare, have been saying for a very long time.

Unfortunately the government has missed a very important variable in the welfare reform equation. The goal is to get people off welfare and back into the workforce. But in Saskatchewan the quality jobs for them to go to are few and far between.

The point can also be made that the government just yesterday doled out \$144,000 to women's groups in the province for access to Internet. Now that in itself is probably a good thing, but I don't think that you're going to find very many of the poor people out there thinking that \$144,000 for Internet is actually going to help them. It doesn't help children who are hungry, it doesn't help children who don't have the appropriate clothing to wear, it doesn't help women who don't have transition homes to go to.

If you were to ask the women in this province if this is an appropriate expenditure of funds, given all the other priorities such as child poverty, what do you think the answer will be? The Prince Albert women's shelter is potentially closing down because of a lack of funding from the provincial government. For every woman who goes into this shelter in crisis, she brings at least one child with her. And last year, for every child that was taken into that shelter there was one turned away.

And do you know what it would cost to keep that shelter open? — \$70,000. That's half of what we just gave to women's groups on the Internet. Last year when I met with the minister and we talked about this important program, we said the Women's Secretariat finally has some money to spend; what can we do that will best address the problems women face in this province. And I thought, great, we have a chance to face

some of the things that people in all the province and especially people in rural Saskatchewan say they've needed — and we've been neglected badly.

And I met with the minister and gave her a number of suggestions and she said great, I think this is a good idea; let's work together. And for one of the first times, let's see if we can't have an all-party agreement on some way to spend money that will help everyone. And we had a number of meetings and we were all very excited about it. And all of a sudden the minister came back and said no, we're going to spend it on Internet. That's the best way we can spend money in the women's programs in Saskatchewan, best way; \$144,000 is going to go to Internet training.

We only needed \$70,000 in Prince Albert to keep that shelter open, but that wasn't important. Children in this province need our help. They need social support and their parents need anger management to stop the cycle of abuse, yet shelters don't receive funding.

(1600)

Just as we see this government is not concerned about youth crime and violence, and they're not concerned about the child poverty either. Rather they have left society's most vulnerable to fend for themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of the reserves in this province have talked to us and asked us to take their very many concerns to the floor of the legislature because they don't have a voice. They don't have a voice in their own system, they don't have a voice in the province, and they definitely don't have a voice federally.

So we have been trying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to talk about some of these issues and we've been told that it's not in their jurisdiction; it's not their responsibility. Mr. Deputy Speaker, somebody has to take responsibility for these children, and somebody has to take responsibility for the conditions that they're living under.

I think if we have . . . it's about time that if the majority of the money that's being spent is coming from the federal government, then let's take our concerns as a province to the federal government and say, what are you going to do about this? We've got a lot of money out there but we have a lot of children and a lot of people that are living in next to third world conditions, and it has to change.

Quite clearly the government is not serious about improving the lives of children who live in poverty or they would be doing everything they could to improve the conditions of the first nations people on and off the reserves. Some of our very poorest children come from a first nations community. The number of aboriginal youth is growing. In Saskatchewan aboriginal children account for 20 per cent of all youth under the age of 15 and the national average is 5 per cent. Provincial figures are expected to rise by 25 per cent by the year . . . to 25 per cent by the year 2016.

More than one-third of the children on reserves live with single parents. Many first nations children in Saskatchewan are going

hungry and they're dealing with substance abuse and they are being prostituted on the streets for survival. And this government buries its head in the sand because it's scared of racial implications. Given the level of funding provided by the federal and provincial governments to first nations band councils, there is absolutely no reason for children to be living in poverty.

But I know, and the member from Athabasca knows, and all the members opposite know, that too many times this money's being stymied at a band council level. This money is not getting to the children who need it and the government either (a) refuses to believe it, or doesn't care, or they're scared to do something about it. Somebody has to speak up.

Last month when the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs met with the Coalition for Accountability of First Nations People to discuss the events that were unfolding on their reserves, they were not impressed. They felt that nobody was listening to them. They felt that their issues were not taken seriously and they didn't have any feeling that there was going to be any changes made.

After the meeting the minister told me that he didn't believe the conditions were as the people described them. And why would they come all the way into Regina and meet with the minister and not tell him exactly what's going on? There's a serious problem out there and somebody has to start listening.

Since that time I've spoken to many more individuals with similar experiences and I would like to share some of them with you. But before I do, I'd like to reiterate that the reason these individuals are so concerned about the lack of accountability in the first nations communities and the mismanagement of funds is because all around them they see children living in absolute squalor. They see children being prostituted on the streets in Regina and it almost breaks their hearts. They see the entire episode happening while a few very select people are getting rich.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to ask the question, why would native people move off the reserve if it's so great there? The number of aboriginal people not living on the reserve now is nearly half; and as soon as the first nations people move off the reserve and are on social assistance, they are now the provincial government's responsibility. And that makes them our responsibility — you and I as taxpayers.

We often talk through the media or on coffee row about the mismanagement of funds, but we seldom link it to what is important. If the money is predominantly going into the pockets of one or two people, then everyone else is going without and that means the children are going without.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sure that in rural areas many of the members opposite have had . . . get the same kind of calls that I do from reserves saying, do you know anybody who can donate clothes to the reserve; do you know anybody who can donate extra food; we need help out there, will someone come out and talk to us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had calls from parents who say, I have children who'd like to be involved in the powwows and

some of the traditional heritage programs that are going on, but they don't have the funds to be able to attend these events. And we all know that the only way you can make a whole person is to not just feed their . . . to feed them with food, but to also treat them as a whole person, a whole individual.

Unfortunately for many of these people they have nowhere to turn. The federal Department of Indian Affairs often turns a blind eye; and it reportedly told individuals not to take it personally because these problems are happening everywhere. They have a provincial government here in Saskatchewan who won't get involved because they're scared to step on federal turf. And they have native leaders who don't believe it's a problem.

Last year Phil Fontaine said the national assembly would not get involved in band controversy. He said that if a band perceives a problem with its leader, it's up to the members to vote them out. What he's neglected to say is that in some cases the grass roots people have been stripped of their right to vote. For example, urban Indians belonging to the Pasqua Indian Band just out of Regina are not permitted to vote for the band council leadership even though band monies are determined by the total band population, the majority of which are urban Indians.

Everyone in Saskatchewan is a resident and we all have our rights. And the government has a responsibility to look after everyone.

Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned about poverty; we're all concerned about child poverty; and we are concerned about all children. Mr. Speaker, I would therefore like to move the following amendment:

That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

condemns the provincial government and the federal government for their utter lack of concern for those children in Saskatchewan who are the most poverty stricken — those who are living in first nations reserves throughout Saskatchewan — and urges the Premier to take some responsibility for this disgrace and begin to work with the federal government to ensure that all funding provided to first nations in Saskatchewan is used for the benefit of all people on the reserve and not just a select few; and that this Assembly further condemns the NDP government for policies instituted since 1991 that have led to greatly increased use of food banks and the highest number of people on social assistance in the history of this province.

This motion is seconded by the member from Moosomin.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to enter into the debate on the motion put forward by my colleague because it allows me to expand upon the comments I made in my return speech to the throne speech.

It will also give me an opportunity to speak to the amendment by the member opposite. I'm sorry then to hear that she has crossed over to work with a group of people who in the past,

from 1982 onward, developed the need for the use of food banks, and now has the nerve to stand before this Assembly and single out aboriginal people in need when we're talking about an action plan for children, when we're talking about initiatives that will help all people in this province, but in particular will come to the aid and assistance of children.

The first new social program in 30 years in this country and all we can hear from the members opposite is gloom and doom about issues that she knows full well in this Assembly we can speak about. But certainly when we're talking about native peoples, that it certainly be it . . . the federal government who is the one who steps in and administers all of the programs and services.

She knows that, Mr. Speaker. She tends to leave those things out and tends to want to say that she doesn't want to highlight any of the important initiatives that we do have the power to control, and that we do have the dollars set aside in our budget to act upon and deflect, that to try and say that somehow we should usurp the federal government.

What that did to us, Mr. Speaker, she herself states is to see the federal government drop into the laps of the provincial government responsibility for off-reserve native people, and the responsibility alone of the provincial government and the assistance rolls. She knows full well that's the reason why our social assistance register shows more people than ever before.

She, Mr. Speaker, also wants to leave out the fact that we have the lowest unemployment rate anywhere in Canada. And as I would quote from my throne speech . . . return speech to the throne speech that:

The new initiatives announced will help even more families and (in particular even) more children. They will help by providing the kind of support that builds opportunities instead of dependence for individuals, that provides supports to help people become independent. We need to break the welfare trap that our social structures have so neatly set.

Mr. Speaker, our opposition doesn't want to speak to those social structures and provide the structural changes necessary to move people into independence. They instead want to talk about is there some place in our hearts that we can give more clothing. Perhaps we can say to them, as the members of the Tory government before them said, grow a bigger garden and somehow this will alleviate the poverty and the need for food in our communities.

This is not what we're about, Mr. Speaker. We're about changing the welfare trap, setting welfare on its head so that we can allow people to escape the welfare trap that so neatly had been set by the social structures that have grown up. And in particular have not only grown up, but become a strong brick wall during the '80s when we saw things that were in place during the Tory era, where it was blame the victim and bash those people who, through no fault of their own, couldn't access jobs in this province.

Today I would like to support the comments of my colleagues instead of those of the members opposite. I want to do that with

a sense that it's a completion of a journey that I began on city council. And I can see for the first time that, although in each of our budgets since 1991 we've put money in programs or stabilized programs to address concerns for those greatest in need — anything from child care to trying to look at programs and initiatives that would spur jobs in our economy — that finally after a number of years we have been able to put forward the building to independence initiatives, investing in families that was talked about during my years and we're able to now see it bear fruit in this session of our legislature — a fact that I'm very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

It gives a sense of completeness to know that we have now started the next leg of our journey — not only maintaining those supports, but significantly changing our structures to remove the barriers to independence for so many people in our province. While many other jurisdictions are addressing barriers to work in the social assistance program by simply cutting the amount of assistance to these families, Saskatchewan however, in stark contrast, will attack these barriers with a multifaceted approach. Much has been said about it, but I think, Mr. Speaker, that many people need to hear what the approach looks like in its entirety.

It begins with the redesign of the social assistance program with the strategy called "building independence: investing in families." There is an integrated, multi-department initiative pioneered in 1993 — and many of my colleagues have stated — have won national award, named the action plan for children. And it's all bolstered, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the Premier's continued leadership on the national scene with the first new social program in 30 years, the National Child Benefit, because our concerns for children knows no boundaries.

So in addition to the \$15 million we've committed through the National Child Benefit on an annual basis, we'll be investing an additional \$37.5 million in new money making Saskatchewan one of the only provinces in the country to be taking such strides. We're turning the welfare system on its head, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're making changes that provide opportunity rather than dependence for many lower income families and families presently receiving social assistance.

These changes will have an impact on thousands of children and families across the province.

(1615)

Many say a society is judged by the way they treat those people who are in greatest need. The women and the children of their communities are a measure of how the rest of society is addressing the concerns of the day. These changes certainly speak to the way my colleagues and this government want to be spoken about and remembered in the future.

And in that in fact, more than 31,000 children currently rely on social assistance to meet their basic needs. Studies show that across Canada one in five children live in poverty — a fact that the Catholic bishops have called nothing less than a damning indictment of the present socio-economic order. It's this government and initiatives that we've put before us that are willing to take those steps towards changing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and say that we're ready to put our money where our

mouth is.

The existing social assistance program we all know has not worked well in encouraging and supporting families to leave social assistance. And why is that? When you consider for them, Mr. Speaker, the cost of child care, the travel to work, and work-related clothing, many individuals are better off on social assistance than they would be working.

Besides these barriers, another glaring one we found was the one that said if you work, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you begin to enter the working community, then your income is taken off your social assistance cheque.

Families may also be forced to stay on social assistance because of the health needs of their children. Presently, families on social assistance receive supplementary health coverage that disappears when they move off.

The time that I served on city council, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I saw many, many people who were taken off rolls of assistance because they had for some reason had a chance to gain a little bit of income, or they received a bit of remuneration from somewhere, and they were put into an appeal process that was never ending. There were 300-and-some ways that they were taken off social assistance by the Tory members opposite and would have to go through an appeal process before they would have their social assistance reinstated. And by that time of course, they were at the food banks and they were at the mercy of the charity of institutions that were, through our society, trying to organize to meet that flood of demand.

Mr. Speaker, I don't hear that kind of information coming out of the member opposite. Instead, she picks on one segment of society and says that we now need to look at that and not talk about any of the positive initiatives that are now occurring.

When we talk about the on-line programs that received some monies from this government, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to highlight another contrast in our society. The contrast of a group who during the '80s would line up women's groups to speak in contradiction to each other, to drive wedges between those groups, and to divide and conquer in conflict.

They didn't do that only with women's groups. We saw that with urban people and rural people; they drove the wedge. We saw that with working people versus people who needed assistance of any kind. And we saw it with a number of the church groups they would line up together and have them present their opinions. In every way possible they drove wedges in our community.

Some of the women that talked about the need for their groups to get together and coordinate and to share information so they would have an approach to women that was integrated, some of them say this:

Access to the Internet will revolutionize our organization by making it possible for our members to speak together on our concerns — the alienation and victimization of Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan. We are scattered across the province, many in isolated pockets, lacking the access to resources other women take for granted. We are

most often the victims of poverty, violence and social problems we have been powerless (in the past) to overcome. We cannot regularly meet. We cannot economically reach out to each other or form concerted efforts to overcome pressing problems because of the physical distances among us . . . The Internet can change that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have a government that is set on a course to help people come together in community, to be able to reach out together to each other, to stop that feeling of being isolated in victimization.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, that's what we believe in. That's the steps that we're taking as we press forward to change the social fabrics of our community.

Mr. Speaker, we found that many families that are forced to stay on social assistance because of many reasons. One of them is the health needs of their children. It's something that the women on-line talk about. But it's also something that we saw as a necessity if we were going to change their role of dependence to independence.

We know presently families on social assistance receive supplementary health coverage and it disappeared the minute they moved off of assistance. As well, many individuals with lower skill levels have trouble accessing jobs without retraining — again, information that they can access when they become on-line individuals.

Through the new building independence strategy, we're making significant changes so that people are encouraged to work and are rewarded for their efforts. They will then maintain people in the contributions that they make to our society in the work force rather than to lapse back into the cycle that has become almost multi-generational.

The new program will ensure that families will be financially better off working than they would be on social assistance. It will assist families in making a leap from dependence to the workforce, help families remain in the workforce rather than falling into social assistance, help with the cost of raising children; improve child health in lower income families; provide training and employment opportunities for individuals and parents; and link youth to education and employment opportunities.

We have created a Saskatchewan employment supplement, a Saskatchewan Child Benefit, new family health benefits, and we're building on the good work of three other initiatives — the provincial training allowance, the Youth Futures pilot projects in Prince Albert, and the department's enhanced accountability measures.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment put forward, in my mind, is an atrocity. When you see all of these things happening in our community, in partnership with our communities, and the member can stand up and nit-pick here and there about the things that are left undone when we all know that we need to join together and work on these, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder

that she can stand up and take the narrow view because she doesn't demonstrate the long view. And the overarching view of all of these interconnect. All of these things come together.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we know these aren't the final answer, but they're a first major step. It's that first major step that I can look at and say this is what was contemplated when people came to our task force at the city council level and told us their stories. They told us their stories in the hope that we would one day be able to have an impact on the provincial government. It fell on stone during the last . . . the '80s generation or the Tory era. It fell on deaf ears during that era.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have heard them. We heard their stories. We've taken them to our heart with compassion and with strength of our communities behind us. And as a result, the strategy will help at least 27,000 families.

In addition, families on welfare who work will keep more of their income. Single parents will benefit more from maintenance payments. Many low income families will receive assistance to help with the cost of raising their children. And all low income parents will have the opportunity to benefit from work.

In the longer term, we expect these programs to reduce poverty and dependence on social systems and improve child health in lower income families. In the meantime, coupled with the new initiatives under our child action plan, we believe we are truly laying out the foundation for a brighter future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Many have spoken to you this afternoon about the initiatives this year under the child action plan, but I think it needs to be said that this government is committing nearly \$35 million to new initiatives to strengthen early childhood development. And my colleague eloquently talked about the need to help children as early on as possible in their development. And we would see that there will be early childhood programming in day care services targeted toward children who are greatest at risk — about a million dollars there.

There's about \$4.5 million to assist the school divisions in meeting the needs of children and youth who require additional supports. And the list, Mr. Speaker, I think many have talked about, goes on. All in all, for 1998 and 1999 the total provincial funding for ongoing programs and new initiatives under the action plan for children will exceed \$53 million.

Saskatchewan's strong and innovative programs for children will play a key role in developing a national commitment to fighting child poverty. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we need to go after the federal government and say, what are you doing to help first nation peoples to be in a role of governing themselves and looking where their dollars are going.

But we think that when we present the building to independence strategy, investing in our families, we fought for our Premier at the national level, fights for the first new social program in 30 years, the child benefit, and we now couple that with further initiatives under the child action plan, we know that we're

providing a national commitment to fighting child poverty.

The development and implementation of this strategy is an extremely significant achievement for this province and this country. Through these programs Saskatchewan is taking a leadership role in investing in children and families to build a strong society today, and in the longer view a better future. It is an investment in the quality of life for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close in stating that it's been a long journey to this moment when I can say truly that the people who spoke to me at city council level when we did the inquiry into hunger, who shared their stories and risked the wrath of the previous government to do that, Mr. Speaker, have now been heard and we are taking action. It's also in that journey the first step toward that action, looking toward a time where we can see a future that has everyone actively involved in the economy of our province.

It's with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, that I speak out against the amendment presented by the colleague opposite, and it's with that in mind and heart that I stand in support of the motion before us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to take a little different slant at this problem which we have in this country of ours. Of course I spent . . . many of my working years were spent in the education field and I'm going to take a look at child poverty and how it affects with the education system.

The Premier mentioned one time that we believe that quality public education is the cornerstone of success in the modern economy — and I don't think anybody can argue with that — and also that lifelong learning is the path not just to employment opportunity but to personal fulfilment and quality of life. And truly our public education system is the cornerstone of our prosperity.

Because of this, our education system must give all children, not a select few but all the children the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge they require to live happy and productive lives regardless of the challenges they face. But when a child comes to school in the morning, especially in the winter, without a hat, without mitts, without socks, without breakfast, that child faces significant challenges. There's not much energy left to meet the challenge to learn. The child of poverty has very little readiness to learn. An empty belly is not conducive to learning.

All of us would like to believe that child poverty is rare. Statistics were stated just a little while ago by the member opposite and we know that it's rising in Saskatchewan by a rate of about 7 per cent. Tory Alberta has an increased rate of 34 per cent. But then when we look at Tory Ontario, 99 per cent increase — 99! And guess what that province is going to do. They are going to privatize, privatize the welfare. And the company that's going to look after it is looking at making \$118 million on the back of the poor. Great plans that they have.

(1630)

The Canadian conference, of course, of Catholic bishops has reported to the blight of child poverty. They call it a damning indictment of one of the richest societies in our history and we have to agree with them. It indicts our whole society, and our whole society must work together to address this problem.

Addressing the scourge of child poverty requires that our communities and our country work together. We must respond as a community because it is a community responsibility, a shared responsibility. The idea of shared responsibility is the foundation of Saskatchewan's action plan for children.

In responding to poverty we must help people to independence. We must address poverty and the causes of poverty without creating a new dependence. Helping those who need our help is an act of friendship and community, but we must fight against the cycle of welfare dependency. Our response to child poverty must be proactive.

For those of you do not know about the history of the Saskatchewan child action plan, allow me a few minutes to briefly go over it. The crisis of child poverty required action. In Saskatchewan, beginning in 1992, we developed an action plan for children. The action plan grew from the realization that the challenge of child poverty required a coordinated response.

The action plan for children has been a partnership from the beginning. More than 1,200 groups from across the province were invited to be part of this process. And out of this collaboration came, first, a shared vision that all Saskatchewan children — not some but all Saskatchewan children — will grow in environments that support their well-being and enable them to reach their potential.

Secondly, that children have equal and intrinsic worth as individuals in our society. Families and care-givers must be valued and supported as they care for children. And individuals, families, communities, businesses and governments all share responsibility for the well-being of children.

The development of the child action plan was a partnership. The government has provided leadership, support, and funding as appropriate. But the delivery of services has been community driven, and businesses and business people have been a vital partner in many of the initiatives.

When we announced the new plan, "building independence: investing in families" strategy, this will provide help to tens of thousands of Saskatchewan families.

The new strategy builds on the success of our child action plan, a new Saskatchewan child benefit which will extend support to low income families, encouraging future independence by removing children from the welfare rolls entirely; a Saskatchewan employment supplement which will provide low income working families with the extra support they need to stay in the workforce; and finally family health benefits for low income working families.

We are turning the welfare system on its head. Before this when a parent on welfare found a job they would be hit with day care costs and work-related expenses. They would lose their health benefits. They would find themselves worse off than before.

This new initiative will help low income families avoid getting trapped in this social manner.

I'd like to tell you just one story about a child action plan initiative in my home town of Swift Current. The Ultimate GAP — which stands for games, activities, and programs — is a summer drop-in program for at-risk kids. In the summer of 1995 about 1,400 young people took part in the program. In 1996 there were 2,000. In 1996 there were more than 3,000 participants.

The original program was developed by a committee which included the school boards, the city of Swift Current, the government, the RCMP, and community based organizations working with youth. In the first year, local businesses were generally supportive of the program. After the first summer they were more enthusiastic.

In the first summer there was one young fellow. At that time he had about a grade 7 education. He was one of those kids who was always in trouble. Some people approached him about being involved with Ultimate GAP. I'd never be a part of something like this, he said. But he did become involved; he became a regular. Some of the staff took him under their wing and began involving him in planning the program. Eventually he was one of the leaders helping to organize activities and filling in when staff were sick or away.

So here was this kid whose only contact with the RCMP was when he was in trouble, working with the police to solve a problem. Before he became involved with Ultimate GAP, no one would have believed it. That fall he was asked to come to a city council meeting; he thought he was in trouble. The city presented him with a certificate and an honorarium to thank him for all he'd done for the program. Now this is just an example of one person who has been helped by this. There will be many people who will be helped by this program as we go through.

Mr. Speaker, addressing child poverty is about investing in the future, investing in our communities, investing in families, and investing in children. And this investment will pay tremendous dividends in thriving children, strong families, prosperous communities, and in a bright future. I challenge all to make this investment. Not only to invest money, but to invest our time, our energy, and our influence.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the amendment made by the member opposite, but I wholeheartedly support the motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker or Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a few comments in regards to the amendment before this Assembly and indeed the motion as well that's been presented by the ... presented to the family in regards to the National Child Benefit plan and the action plan that's been talked about by this government, and that was recently introduced by the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at poverty in this province, and we look at the welfare rolls in this province, there's no question that we have seen a major increase in the welfare rolls

of the province. And for the government to stand back and say that it really isn't their responsibility is certainly something that they cannot do, that they do not have the ability to do.

And now some of the members are arguing that they're not saying that. Well I'm pleased to hear that they are acknowledging that it is a problem and that they do have a responsibility. After all they were elected in 1991; that was seven years ago. In fact they made this promise to Saskatchewan people that they were going to eliminate poverty. Well they're well into their second term and we still have poverty.

And the unfortunate part is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have some of the . . . Saskatchewan has had some of the best times. And if the government wants to argue that it's all because of the '80s, take a look at what the economic times of the '80s were, not just here in Saskatchewan or not just here in Canada, but even worldwide, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And when you look at the numbers that have changed in the province of Saskatchewan, when you look at the welfare rolls, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can see why they've grown in some ways. Because this government in the past, and the NDP Party in the past, has basically promoted the area of welfare. And they've suggested they would be the be-all and the end-all for all people; that if people were in need that the government would look after them, that they would bring in programs that would basically look after people and provide for them.

In fact I find it somewhat shocking to hear the member from Regina Wascana Plains, I believe, talking about the fact of . . . and it may have been a member . . . I believe it was the former Social Services minister who did make the comment about growing gardens, and ridiculing the idea of having a garden.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think if you looked around the province of Saskatchewan, you would find that there are many people, even the individuals, two income families, who enjoy growing a garden. And a garden certainly can provide for individuals. I find it . . . and what I find, the people I chat with, the people I talk to, certainly in my constituency, find it very annoying when the people are looking for some help in time of need and yet are unwilling to take a little bit of time to even provide for themselves through the growing of a garden.

What I found very interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the comment and the fact that not too long ago there was a gentlemen just up the road, on No. 11 Highway, set aside four acres of property; in fact, he had grown four acres of potatoes and vegetables, given them to the food bank . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Regina Wascana Plain is arguing . . . had given this produce to the food bank to be used to meet the needs of hungry people.

The following year, as a result of being a somewhat older individual, had prepared that piece of property, had asked the food bank to send up some individuals, to plant the potatoes, to put in the vegetables, to hoe them, and they could have the produce.

Guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? No one came — no one came. They expected him to provide it all by himself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's wrong with people doing a little bit to help themselves? There's nothing wrong with governments being there to meet the needs of those individuals who, due to circumstances beyond their control, need to look to government for some assistance. But to provide programs or suggest that programs are going to be there for everyone, regardless of whether you're willing to help yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the taxpaying public of this province are not willing to accept that.

People are just becoming very disappointed and very disillusioned with this province when the taxes in the provinces . . . And for the member from Lloydminster, who can drive across to Alberta any time and get tax-free products, for her to complain and continue and to debate in this Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . that member certainly had the opportunity to debate before, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm more than willing to get into a further debate but I realize I'm supposed to enter this debate and speak through the Chair. So I will continue to do that.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at the motion and while I will commend the minister responsible for Social Services, I respect the minister and the work he has done, I have to . . . I find it a little abhorrent to listen to some of the ridicule that his colleagues place in this Assembly, and how the remarks . . . the disparaging remarks they make when we bring up some of the issues and concerns that we as opposition members, and I'm sure that they, face on a daily basis when they talk to their own constituents.

When you talk about poverty in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, poverty is more than just not having enough to eat. Poverty is a factor . . . what is some of the major problems for poverty in this province? Some of the major problems we find, and the reasons we find that people find themselves in a situation where they still do not have enough finances available to meet their very basic needs, come as a result of high taxation in the province of Saskatchewan; they come as a result of a policy that discourages business development in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They come as a result of a government that's more intent on patting itself on the back with how well they have done rather than a government that's willing . . . ready to sit back, and willing to recognize they have failed in a number of areas and begin to sit back and really realistically address some of the issues and concerns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the action plan that was released by the government attempts to address some of these concerns, and as I say and indicated earlier, while I commend the Minister of Social Services . . . because I notice some of the initiatives he's taken have come from some of the comments and suggestions I have been making over the past number of years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's time we begin to recognize the fact that people themselves do have a real value, and they do have a desire to get out and provide for themselves. But because of the way the programs have been built through the years, any initiative that people had to try and provide for themselves was discouraged because of how our whole welfare program and network was developed.

And so in that regard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I see the government talking about the fact that if a person finds a job, that they're not going to take and just eliminate all access to welfare, that they will supplement a person's wage rather than forcing them to go off welfare completely, I think that's a positive move.

Because what it says to an individual, it says to a couple who are maybe living in a small community in rural Saskatchewan where the only job that may be available at the moment is a part-time job . . . you know and I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that even if it was a full-time job, at the current minimum wage it would not provide the assistance that a couple can get on welfare. So why would they work?

And yet I find most people would like to work. By working, they feel better about themselves. By working, they feel that they're giving something to society. And by working, it just creates a more comfortable environment and they have a lot more pride in their abilities. And so in this regard, in that regard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I commend the Minister of Social Services for some of the reforms that he's brought forward in his new social services benefit program.

As the government said, it's supposedly building independence and investing in families. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hope that indeed will encourage and build independence.

(1645)

But building independence isn't just putting more money into people's pockets. Building independence is creating an environment whereby they learn how to provide for themselves as well. Not just relying on it. It's not just going out and getting a 10 or a 15 or a \$20 wage and finding out that they still can't make the end of the month with their payments as a result of the fact that maybe sometimes some individuals in our society do not know how to handle their finances.

And so some of the initiatives as well that need to be brought forward are means whereby we can encourage and help people to understand how to manage their finances and how to provide for themselves and how to build for their futures.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at poverty in the province of Saskatchewan, we look at the welfare rolls, we see the numbers rising from 52,000 in 1991 to over 81,000, almost 82,000 in 1996, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how the government would like to argue that it's always the problem of somebody else, that it's always the offloading — especially when it comes to social assistance — the offloading of the federal government.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will acknowledge that yes, in some cases some of the problems that have arisen here — not just here in Saskatchewan but across this country — are as a result of the Liberal government in Ottawa. And one would have to ask where in the world are the Liberal members of this Assembly? What are the Liberal members of this Assembly doing to address some of the issues that are being put on the backs of Saskatchewan taxpayers as a result of the initiatives being taken by the Liberal government

in Ottawa?

We would ask where in the world is the only federal Liberal MP (Member of Parliament) from Saskatchewan? What is he doing to address some of these concerns? You would think that the federal member, the Hon. Ralph Goodale, would at least go back to Ottawa and to his federal counterparts and raise some of the concerns that are being directed towards him as a result of the federal initiatives that are offloading some of their responsibility on the province of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government cannot hide behind the fact that they want to blame somebody else all the time. The government needs to start looking at itself. It needs to realize that every time they point a finger, there's three fingers pointing back at them in most cases — pointing the finger back at them, that they have to accept some responsibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at, whether it's health, whether it's social assistance, whether it's social services, whether it's health care, whether it's agriculture, whatever the issue in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has to accept responsibility for their actions as well.

And the initiatives taken in the family benefits package and the new initiatives of investing in families are part of a step. But whether or not they address all the concerns that are out there, we have to wait and see. We have to wait and see and determine whether or not the initiatives that they're taking are going to address a number of the concerns out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena has raised the issue of child prostitution and that's a concern we've been talking about for a number of years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One asks, while the government talks about coming down harder on individuals who would take advantage of child prostitutes, the question has to be asked, why do we have young children on the streets selling themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And in order to . . . In many cases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we're finding and what we're hearing, they're doing it because they are either . . . whether it's a family need or their own personal need of something to eat, some clothes to wear. We need to address some of those concerns.

Whether or not the program that's been initiated by this government will address that concern, we'll wait and see on that. I don't know if it will address it. And I haven't heard any one of the members stand up and say this program will address some of those concerns; this program will eliminate young children on the streets who would be selling themselves in the area of prostitution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would hope it would. But I haven't the heard the members . . . I haven't heard even the Minister of Social Services talk about the fact that his new program is going to address that concern and that need out there. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we need to look and work together to find ways in which we can reach out to meet the needs of young people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in situations where they are prostituting themselves just to survive.

And it's unfortunate and it's tragic.

And we all have, we all have families; we all have young children at home. Mine are growing up into the teenage years but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a parent it certainly bothers me when I see and when I hear about some of the things that take place. And we as, we as elected members in this Legislative Assembly need to look at how we address some of the concerns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the concerns of child poverty also go beyond just the city of Regina? And my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena is right as well. Some of the issues that have been raised with us most recently by people from the aboriginal community, the concerns they have in regards to the fact that the funds that the federal government are putting into the hands of their bands, in many cases don't necessarily always reach out to meet the needs of those, of the aboriginal peoples of that band, a specific band.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to say that it isn't happening would be burying our heads in the sand. We've seen headlines in the paper. Not just concerns that have been raised by the Saskatchewan Party caucus, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but aboriginal people themselves coming forward. The federal government's beginning to recognize the need to look at this, look at the question. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we're going to address the needs of poverty in the area of the aboriginal community and aboriginal children, we need to look at that very, very carefully.

And it would be appropriate for the government, for the current government, to go to the federal government and really press this issue. And ask the federal government what they are doing to address the concerns that I'm sure are being presented directly to the federal government by aboriginal peoples themselves, concerned about how finances are made available and their access and how they are allocated to on reserves, and the fact that so many people on reserves are living in dire poverty.

When you look at the numbers, they should not be. They should have . . . and in fact they shouldn't have to rely on other agencies to provide the services, to meet the needs that they are facing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about poverty in Saskatchewan, this government likes to talk about food banks. I look at the number of food banks that we have throughout the province. I look at the number of agencies that continue to provide services. And despite the sound economy, the economy that we have had over the past number of years, it's appalling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's appalling to think that we still rely on food banks, and that food banks on an ongoing basis are continually asking for more supplies for the food banks.

And why are they asking for more supplies, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They are forced to ask for more supplies because of the demands that continue to fall in their lap — demands for services, whether it be in the area of clothing, whether it be in the area of food or other services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that doesn't speak well. And, Mr. Speaker,

it doesn't speak well of the programs and of the commitment that this NDP government made in 1991 when they've said that it would eliminate poverty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think these motions presented to this Assembly . . . and I'm going to read the motion:

That this Assembly applaud the government's determination to reduce child poverty, building on to the introduction of the action plan for children and the Premier's national leadership in developing the National Child Benefit, by introducing the "building independence: investing in families" strategy . . .

This motion, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, when you look at it very carefully, I find it interesting that on an ongoing basis we find the government has to applaud themselves because no one else apparently is giving them any credit for the benefits that they keep telling that they are giving us.

Every time we turn around, they're . . . In fact one begins to wonder how long they're going to be able to reach over and pat themselves on the back or whether or not they're going to go into . . . end up in contortions trying to reach around to keep patting themselves on the back, they've patted themselves on the back so long.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think motions themselves do not necessarily meet the needs out there. Motions themselves will not do anything for that child who's hungry today. Motions themselves will not do anything for the parents who go to the cupboard and find that the cupboard really doesn't have a lot in it, and they have to turn to their children and say we may have to do without tonight. Motions will not address that. Action is going to be needed to address that.

And this, some of this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well the member I think just hollered across the floor, that's called an action plan. Well I would suggest to the member, let's see some action. Let's see whether or not there's going to be any . . . whether or not that's just a hollow word in a motion or whether or not there will be real action, whether or not the government is going to address the issue of poverty, not just in our community but even in the aboriginal community, whether or not . . . And in dealing with that issue it goes beyond just provincial politics. It does enter the area of federal politics as well.

And I believe this motion brought forward by my colleague from . . . the member from Kelvington-Wadena, I'd be surprised that the members did not support the motion. And in recognizing the fact they keep telling us that the federal government has to accept responsibility, but what the motion . . . what the amendment to the motion does is indeed ask the members, the government members themselves, to recognize the fact that the federal government needs to accept responsibility.

And this amendment invites the government to go to Ottawa and ask the federal government to certainly take the time and recognize their responsibility. And I think it would be only appropriate if the members would do that, realizing that the Saskatchewan taxpayers have just reached the limit. It's time.

It's time we recognize the fact that we all have a part to play.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Saskatchewan taxpayer in this province, well they've said yes and they show on an ongoing basis . . . We saw that in the recent Telemiracle's telethon. We saw how Saskatchewan people are willing to give of themselves to meet the needs of individuals, and I commend them for that. In fact I believe this province is noted for its voluntarism. This province is noted for its giving.

However it's interesting to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a recent — I believe it was a recent headline and I don't remember exactly where I saw it — but in regards to people giving over \$100 in charitable donations, I believe it was StatsCanada. I was really appalled when I saw the figures. I believe the figures are just over 25 per cent, 25 per cent of the taxpaying public only contribute more than \$100. And in Saskatchewan at least we can brag about the fact that, I believe, we were around 27 or 29. I don't remember; we were one of the higher numbers.

But when you look at that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does it say? When I looked at that number I was just amazed that, while we do recognize the willingness of people to give and we acknowledge how people in Saskatchewan have given through the telethon, we acknowledge how people give through . . . to agencies such as reaching out to meet the needs of muscular dystrophy, or the Red Cross, or any of the other numerous agencies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Speaker, when you look at that very carefully, it's interesting to note, and it boggles my mind to realize, that it's just a small portion of the province that is really doing that; that is, really, really reaching out to meet that need.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that the members of this Assembly recognize the fact that we all need to work on this together. And I would encourage the members not just to pat themselves on the back and suggesting that they're going to take some action because, Mr. Speaker, I would be disappointed if next year at the same time we roll around and the motion before this Assembly reads the same as the one that we have before us right now, basically saying that they failed again.

I hope the government really has a plan in place that will address the real needs out there. That the motions that are being presented to this Assembly are not hollow motions, and that the government members as well will not just write off amendments as being nothing, and because it was presented by an opposition member it needs to be overruled.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that, and I would invite the members to vote with the opposition members in accepting the amended motion, in accepting the amendment that has been brought before this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as you can realize, there are so many things that I could offer and enter into this debate on at this time. However, Mr. Speaker, I find that the fact that there is so much to present, it would just . . . we just wouldn't be able to confine it to the time that is limited to us, so therefore at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Krawetz.....	669
D'Autremont	669
Toth	669
Bjornerud	669
Heppner	669
Gantefoer	669
Draude	669
Boyd	669
McLane	669
Belanger	670
Aldridge	670
Osika	670
Hillson	670
McPherson.....	670
Goohsen	670

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk	670
-------------	-----

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Goohsen	670
Haverstock.....	670

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Thomson	671
Toth	671
Van Mulligen.....	671

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Meeting on Plains Health Centre Closure	
D'Autremont	671
Organ Donor Awareness Week	
Whitmore.....	671
Acute Care Bed Reduction in Living Sky Health District	
Osika	671
Training of Metis Economic Development Officers	
Kowalsky	672
Carlton Trail Regional College Marks 25th Anniversary	
Julé	672
Credit Union Central Elects Board President	
Jess	672
Liberal Health Policy	
Aldridge	672
Women's Programs Gain Internet Access	
Murray.....	673

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inquiry into Channel Lake	
Boyd	673
Lingenfelter	673
Gantefoer	674
Hospital Bed Closures	
Toth	675
Calvert	675
Plains Health Centre Closure	
Osika	675
Romanow	676
McLane	676
SaskTel Investment in New Zealand	
McPherson.....	677
Lingenfelter	677

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Funding for Victims of Family Violence	
Nilson	677
Heppner	678
Hillson	678

Goohsen	679
CONDOLENCES	
Romanow	679
Toth	680
Goulet	680
Lingenfelter	682
Belanger	683
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	
Kowalsky	684
PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS	
Reduction of Child Poverty	
Murray	684
Stanger	686
Draude	689
Hamilton	691
Wall	694
Toth	695