

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present petitions from some 2,500 to 3,000 people of the province of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the sexual exploitation of children through the child prostitution trade. The petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to enact provincial legislation that would:

Inject a “stay away from” order, restraining anyone who interferes with the healing process of victims of child prostitution. Anyone (pimps, etc.) who threatens in any way the healing while it is taking place is subject to a large fine;

Provide police with the authority to search a place where they believe a child is being held by pimps or perpetrators of this crime for the purpose of engaging in child prostitution activities.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from some communities or many communities throughout the province. They are from Arelee, Saskatchewan, Assiniboia, Barthel, Biggar, Cactus Lake, Candle, Carmel, Central Butte, Codette, Carlyle, Colonsay, Conquest, Cudworth, Cut Knife, Davidson, Delisle, Dodsland, Drake, Eatonia, Englefeld, Estonia, Foam Lake, Fulda, Glidden, Goodsoil, Kuroki, Lake Lenore, Landis, Lanigan, Laird, Leader, Loon Lake, Luseland, Lucky Lake, Macklin, Macrorie, Mantario, Margo, Mayfair, Mendham, Muenster, Netherhill, Nipawin, North Battleford, Outlook, Paradise Hill, Perdue, Peterson, Pilger, Prelate, Primate, Pierceland, Prince Albert, Rosetown, Rosthern, St. Benedict, St. Walburg, Saskatoon, Scott, Spalding, Tramping Lake, Tisdale, Wadena, Watrous, Wynyard, Wilkie, and North Battleford.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m happy today to present a petition on behalf of folks in the Southwest.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately start work on the rebuilding of our secondary highway system to provide for safe driving on what are becoming known as pothole roads, to enter into negotiations with SARM and SUMA for a long-term plan of rural road restoration reflecting future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as new trucking regulation changes safety factors on all of these roads.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will humbly pray.

These, Mr. Speaker, come from the community of Robsart and Consul, with also signatories from Walsh, Alberta, as well as Maple Creek and surrounding communities and they were sent by the municipal people over at Robsart and I’m happy to present them today.

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of people who are concerned about the terrible state of our highway system in this province.

The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of the fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

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

Those that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Swift Current, Success, and Stewart Valley.

I so present.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m proud to rise again today to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so that the Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed from the good folks in Balcarres, Ituna, Lemberg, and Fort Qu’Appelle.

And I so present.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present petitions. The prayer of relief for which reads as follows:

Your petitioners humbly pray that Highway 40 and Highway 16 intersection be relocated in order to alleviate the unsafe congestion at the entrance to the city of North Battleford.

Your petitioners come from North Battleford, Allan, and Whitkow.

I so present.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues in bringing forward petitions today. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of

the fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that signed the petitions are from Regina, Pilot Butte, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege once again to rise on behalf of parents, teachers, and concerned citizens who are wanting to have specific learning-disabled children receiving more appropriate services in Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide essential funding and ensure the delivery of scientifically proven, diagnostic assessment and programming for children with learning disabilities in order that they have access to an education that meets their needs and allows them to reach their full potential.

All of the signatures today are from Pelican Narrows.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters:

To cause the government to increase its road construction and maintenance budget;

To call upon the provincial and federal government to take steps to end world subsidies;

To call upon the provincial government and SaskTel to take steps to provide cellular coverage to areas of Willow Bunch, Rockglen, and Coronach;

To cause the government to end its unfair tendering policies under the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement;

To have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended to reinstate benefits and pensions to disenfranchised widows;

To call on the federal and provincial governments to dedicate fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance;

To relocate Highway 40 to alleviate congestion at North Battleford; and

To cause the government to provide essential funding and diagnostic assessment and programming for children with learning disabilities.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

To the Minister of Finance: will the minister provide the total cost estimates his department has received in regards to the Plains closure, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) move and conversion, and the renovations and upgrading of the Pasqua and General Hospitals.

And, Mr. Speaker, if I may continue, I also wish to give notice that I shall on day no. 9 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation): will the minister provide the total capital and construction costs and the most recent estimates for any part of the Plains closure, SIAST conversion and move, and the renovations of the Pasqua and General hospitals, that their department is responsible for.

Thank you.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 9 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Municipal Government: how many RMs have amalgamated over the past year; how many RMs have shown an interest in amalgamation; is there a plan to provide incentives to RMs to amalgamate; is there a guideline for the number of people living in a rural municipality in order for it to be maintained as a rural municipality; is there a minimum dollar value for a tax base in a rural municipality which they must have in order to continue to exist.

I so present.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join with me in welcoming His Excellency, Roberto Nigido, the ambassador to Canada from Italy who's seated in your gallery. Along with the ambassador, His Excellency, is the Consul General of Italy, in Vancouver, Dr. Rodolfo Buonavita, who is with us as well today, as well as is Dr. Piero Tarantelli, who is also here in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, the ambassador is visiting Regina today and he is meeting with the Lieutenant Governor, with you, Mr. Speaker, I understand, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, as well as the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, mayor of Regina, and also with a number of companies, including Sask Wheat Pool.

And I might add as well, at a wonderful lunch that we had earlier today, His Excellency, being a former economic development individual in Italy and my being a former minister of Economic Development, several arrangements were being talked about, about the processing of pasta for export to other

parts of the world.

So I want all members to join with me and if the members would join with me in welcoming His Excellency here to the Assembly, and best wishes for your stay in our province.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition we too would like to welcome the entourage from Italy, the ambassador, and all of the dignitaries.

We hope that your visit to Saskatchewan is rewarding and that indeed not only rewarding for Italy, but also rewarding for Saskatchewan and Canada, and we hope that you have a very pleasant stay. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal caucus would also like to welcome the delegation from Italy and hopefully that they can give us some good news on economic development that our ministers here of the Crown might take into account and institute in Saskatchewan. So we welcome you to the province.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Langford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I have 33 grade 5 students from Birch Hills, a beautiful town of Birch Hills, which now we can see the proceedings in the House from home there. And I want to welcome them here.

They are accompanied with their teachers, Valerie Turgeon, Alan Ruder, and seven chaperones. I will be meeting with them at 2 o'clock after question period. So, looking forward to being with you and have a safe trip home.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my note of welcome to the folks from Birch Hills as my cousin's son Kenny Olsen is here and I'd like to wish him a special welcome.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Gold Medal Winner at Canada Winter Games

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Nicole Watt of Melfort will certainly remember the 1999 Canada Winter Games. This 13-year-old figure skater captured the gold medal in the ladies singles, pre-novice category. This was Nicole's first visit to the Winter Games, and also a first for Saskatchewan in the ladies singles.

Despite Nicole's rheumatoid arthritis she describes her win as "the biggest accomplishment of my career." She has to take medication for her condition but doesn't let it affect her training

or obviously her accomplishments. Miss Watt's coach describes her as hard a worker as he has ever trained and her medal was very justly won.

This young lady has demonstrated to herself, to her family, her coaches, and her community what dedication and commitment are all about.

Would the Assembly please join me in congratulating Ms. Nicole Watt and wishing her many more years of success in her career.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

##### High Dose Rate Brachytherapy Program

**Ms. Murray:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of today, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the first province in Canada to provide a high dose rate brachytherapy (HDRB) program for prostate cancer patients. Though the program will operate out of the Allan Blair Cancer Centre in Regina, the co-operative efforts of the Regina Health District and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency have ensured the program is available to men from across our province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Murray:** — The HDRB is less invasive than surgery, has fewer treatment-related side effects, has equal or better outcomes, and when used in combination with beam therapy reduces beam therapy by two to three weeks. Up to 50 patients in this province will benefit from this procedure annually.

We all know someone who has been struck with cancer — a friend, a relative, a co-worker. So we must continue to battle this disease which has taken so many people from us. The Throne Speech emphasized that our government is determined to ensure Saskatchewan residents have access to quality cancer treatments and prevention programs. Individually and collectively we will continue the fight against cancer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

##### Women's Role in Politics

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in this Assembly to comment on women's role in politics. Yesterday I was amused to listen to the most disenfranchised female in the NDP (New Democratic Party) caucus use the familiar NDP tactic to attack an individual for political gain.

How many years has this member sat in the legislature waiting . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order, order, order, order. Order. Now the hon. member will recognize that statements by members are not to be debated and I'm sure . . . Order! Order. And I'm sure that she'll want to phrase her remarks in her own statement in such a way that she doesn't engage in debate on another member's statement.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As one of the female members who started the Saskatchewan Party, I know that the guiding principle of equality regardless of age, gender or culture is not just given lip service.

Mr. Hermanson, our leader, has spoken openly about the hundreds of women who would like the choice to stay home with their children but instead must go out and work to pay for the taxation appetite of this government.

He has also talked about the disdain many women and men have for the antics of politics. Most women, including myself, do not like conflicts. I prefer to bring about change through diplomacy and respect for individuals. Maybe this is something that the female members opposite do not know because they believe that socialism is better founded than individualism.

The female members of the Saskatchewan Party not only carry our banner but we also help decide in what direction to carry it.

Mr. Speaker, I should also like to include my former Liberal colleagues in this statement, remembering that they started out with three females and now have managed to chase them all away.

The NDP has used their female ministers as mouthpieces. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party's female members not only believe in this party's politics, they believe in the province and they believe . . .

**The Speaker:** — The hon. member's time has expired.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Z99 Radiothon

**Mr. Trew:** — Mr. Speaker, C.C. and Lorie Lindsay are at it again on Z99. C.C. and Lorie, in addition to earning their livings in Regina, know what generous and caring people their listeners are. That's why each year C.C. and Lorie give to their community through Z99's radiothon.

C.C. and Lorie are giving of themselves and their listeners are responding once again. This year is their twelfth annual radiothon and it is raising money to buy an oscillatory ventilator for the neonatal intensive care unit at Regina General Hospital. The oscillatory ventilator is one more piece of advanced equipment that will improve health care for babies in southern Saskatchewan.

It was my pleasure to modestly help the cause earlier this morning by dropping off my donation at the Cornwall Centre where C.C. and Lorie are broadcasting live.

What's the bottom line, Mr. Speaker? Well Z99 is doing its part. C.C. and Lorie are doing their part. The Hospitals of Regina Foundation need our support to continue improving life saving health services, in this case for babies.

I've done my part. Please do yours. A special thanks to C.C. and Lorie and Z99 and all of the generous people who make things happen in Regina.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Job Creation

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, no one would argue that job creation is a problem in Saskatchewan, including the NDP government. However this government which prides itself on being a friend to workers, is sending a message which is at odds with what it has been telling the public.

In the October and November issue of *Trade & Commerce* magazine, an advertisement from SaskTel urges people to set up call centres in Saskatchewan because, and I quote, "they have among the lowest employee benefit costs in North America."

Well is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, we have problems recruiting nurses and health professionals and other workers when the image we're sending through our Crown corporations is — come on up to Alabama north — where with government help, workers can get exploited free of charge.

This government prides itself on being a friend of labour but it's no friend of labour when it proudly tells companies that workers have the lowest benefits here than anywhere else in North America.

This is something we're used to seeing in southern United States where exploited workers are a way of life, but not here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Clearly this isn't the case. This spring as the unions refuse to support this government with either money or workers, perhaps it would do well to heed its own advertising by its Crown corporations when it asks itself, Mr. Speaker, how did it get so out of touch with workers in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Biggar — Home of Champions

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to share with my friends in the legislature one more time the good news of Biggar, Saskatchewan, the home of champions. Biggar, the home of Sandra Schmirler and the home of the world record Hanson buck is now the home of the 1999 Saskatchewan girls' curling champions for this year.

This is the first time since 1981 when Sandra Schmirler was the champion of Saskatchewan that a girls' team from Biggar has won that championship and I congratulate them.

But additionally I want to congratulate the community of Biggar for having put on this competition. A town the size of Biggar needs a lot of heart and a lot of energy to host a provincial competition. They did it with class; they did it with appreciation from across the province; and they did it in a way that showed the heart of Saskatchewan to all the rest of their guests from across the province as during the snowstorm during the competition they put people up for the night who couldn't get to their hotels.

So in conclusion I want to extend congratulations to coach Sean Friesen, team members Teejay Surik, Brett Barber, Lesley Ann

Hallberg, Erin Sherbino, and Jamie Lamont, two grade 10's and three grade 11's — going to be champions for a long time. Congratulations.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Lakeland's Citizen of the Year

**Mr. Langford:** — Mr. Speaker, Saturday evening I will be attending a dinner in honour of a very special citizen of the village of Lakeland in my constituency. Noreen Dochylo is Lakeland's citizen of the year. And just like those chosen before her she is an outstanding citizen completely worthy of this recognition.

The list of her community events is longer than my arm, even longer than the Deputy Speaker's arm. She is on the Legion executive, the Anglican church choir, the senior citizens group, the exhibition association, and a volunteer at the local arts and crafts show. She does that before lunch, Mr. Speaker.

She was a teacher, a board member, and a mother of seven. This is enough for 10 citizens of the year, and I congratulate Noreen for 70 years of active, worthwhile living. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### National Social Work Week

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The week of March 15 to 21 is National Social Work Week. Today I'm pleased to acknowledge on behalf of all members the valuable, challenging, and often stressful but rewarding contribution made by social workers across our province.

Social workers are on the front line performing a precarious balancing act between supporting families while protecting children; assisting youth in conflict while recognizing the rights of the community; providing financial support for families while working with them to become self-sufficient.

In my town this week, Mr. Speaker, to celebrate the Social Work Week the Prince Albert branch of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers put on a one-day humour workshop.

At first glance this may perhaps be an odd way of marking the week but as the more than hundred people who attended the presentation by Cathy Fenwick learned from the quote, they learned from the quote: "All people have it within themselves to find humour and joy in their lives despite of where they work, play, or hang their hat." The association wanted to show in light-hearted ways in which people can promote individual wellness which is beneficial to workers and clients.

This applies to us as well, Mr. Speaker.

I salute the workers and staff in communities across the province in health districts, Indian child and family service agencies, correctional services, community-based agencies, and workers in private practice.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Court Ruling regarding Teenage Cancer Patient

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Social Services. Do you agree with the decision to deny Tyrell Dueck's right to have his parents present while he receives chemotherapy?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I first of all want to thank the member for raising this issue in the House. I know this is a matter of intense public interest. I want to let the House know and the public know why it is that the Department of Social Services has acted in the way that it does, and it's because we have an Act of the Legislative Assembly, The Child and Family Services Act. And that Act states in part, Mr. Speaker:

A child is in need of protection where . . . medical, surgical, or other recognized remedial care or treatment that is considered essential by a duly qualified medical practitioner has not been or is not likely to be provided to the child;

It is pursuant to this law, our law, that my department has acted.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Protection for Children at Risk

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, it must be an election year. First the NDP finally realizes that surgical waiting lists are a problem. And now after eight years they finally admit that the abuse of children through the sex . . . child sex trade is a problem.

For three years, Mr. Speaker, I have been urging the government to introduce and accept new and meaningful legislation to deal with this issue. And for three years they have done nothing. Meanwhile, children's lives have been destroyed, many of them in the Premier's own riding.

According to Egadz, in 1998 there were about 90 children under 15 years of age enslaved in the sex trade in Saskatoon and an additional 230 children between the ages of 15 and 18.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a shameful lack of drug and alcohol rehab spaces in Saskatchewan for youth. Largely due to the NDP decision to close Whitespruce . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order, order, order. The hon. member has been extremely long in her preamble and I'll ask her to go directly to her question now.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, why has it taken you so long to act? How many children could have been helped if you had acted sooner?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question. I think that most people in Saskatchewan recognize that complex social problems are not readily resolved in simple, clear ways as much as we would like them to be.

Since this government was elected in 1991, Mr. Speaker, we have moved expeditiously, in my view and in the view of many, to concentrate our attention on the needs of children in Saskatchewan through the implementation of the children's action plan. And lately, this year, we have also made a significant contribution to reducing some of the causes of poverty in Saskatchewan. In the long run, Mr. Speaker, we feel that is the appropriate way to go.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to reply to the minister that for many children they have waited much too long.

Mr. Minister, if you are really sincere about dealing with this issue you have to give Social Services and the police the tools they need to make a difference. The Alberta government has done that. They are also rescuing children in danger from the streets and making spaces available for them in safe houses and providing ongoing comprehensive treatment.

Right now there are only three spaces available for children or youth in the Calder Centre. Just recently two Saskatchewan girls being sexually abused on the streets, who were in great danger, begged police and social workers to get them into a safe house. There were no spaces available for them in Saskatoon so Social Services sent them to the Poundmaker's Lodge in Edmonton at a cost of \$60,000 to Saskatchewan Social Services.

Mr. Minister, wouldn't it make more sense to have that treatment provided here. How is this new Act going to work effectively to help these children if you don't make provisions for space and targeted treatment programs?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not able to comment on specific cases as such but I do want to indicate that we've invested over \$9 million a year on treatment and therapeutic programs for children and teens in areas such as therapeutic foster care, Ranch Ehrlo, and the new Saskatoon children's centre.

Mr. Speaker, I might also say that sometimes there are situations which mean that as opposed to being able to safely care for children in our province, such as where children are being threatened by their pimps, where sometimes in those cases, placement outside of the province is the appropriate thing to do.

I might point out that the legislation which I'm proposing a first reading of today attempts to deal with this in so far as protective intervention orders are concerned, and I do hope the member will support that Bill when it comes forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Minister, it's easy to write up a new piece of legislation but it's only going to work if you give police the tools they need to assist the children off the streets. Have you done that, Mr. Minister? Have you developed policies to give police clear direction on how they are supposed to deal with these situations? Have you given police the right to step in and take children off the street if they are in danger?

The Alberta law has protective intervention provisions for the police, allowing them to remove children from dangerous situations, put them into a safe house for assessment, and then give them the ongoing treatment and help they need. Does your Bill do that, Mr. Minister?

Have you given police the tools they need? Have you made provisions for ongoing healing treatment? Or is this just more empty NDP rhetoric?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, we have taken the approach that this is an issue that is of a severe . . . is a severe problem in some of our cities. We have attempted to work with the various community groups in those cities to ask them to discuss with them what they think is the appropriate solution in those particular instances. We have followed their advice and that advice, at least in terms of legislative tools, will be forthcoming in the House later today.

But it's more than that. It also requires financial resources to be able to support those groups, to provide the kinds of outreach services that are going to be necessary to help those children. We want to help those children, Mr. Speaker, not just for a period of three days. We want to help them to get on in a productive way with the rest of their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Hospital Bed Shortage

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Madam Minister, yesterday the government released a report explaining that Saskatchewan has the longest hospital waiting list in Canada because of NDP doing a lousy job of managing the health care system.

Madam Minister, your failing health reform process is taking its toll on the health of thousands of Saskatchewan people. Regina Bull of Meskanaw is one of these people. Regina underwent serious surgery at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon last Thursday to remove the centre lobe of her right lung. Her doctor told her she would be kept in the hospital for at least a week following surgery. But on Tuesday Regina was suddenly booted out of her bed and discharged with no discussion and without notifying any family members.

Madam Minister, Regina Bull was discharged early after major surgery because of a shortage of beds. What is the minister doing about the shortage of beds in Saskatoon that resulted in this action being taken?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank this member very much for the question. As the member will know that under the information and privacy Act it is not possible for a minister of Health to comment upon any individual case. To do so would be really a violation of the legislation. So I'm not able to answer your question directly.

What I can say to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, is that shortly after becoming the Minister of Health in September along with the associate minister, we made a commitment to the people of this province that we are going to tackle the issue of waiting lists and waiting times in the province of Saskatchewan. We struck a task team of three well-known physicians in the province of Saskatchewan to provide us with a blueprint, Mr. Speaker, of how we do that.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday that task team reported. That task team has made 23 recommendations to the people of this province, to the government, and I can assure the members of the legislature and the public of Saskatchewan that we are going to implement those recommendations in order that we can reduce the waiting times of people who are waiting for surgery.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker, Regina Bull's husband Rudy had no idea his wife was being discharged from the hospital on Tuesday. He was coming into Saskatoon from the family farm to visit his wife, not to take her home. But when he got to St. Paul's Hospital he was told his wife had been discharged and taken home by a family member.

Rudy spent the next several hours frantically looking around Saskatoon to find out where his wife had been taken. But he didn't find her because she hadn't actually left the hospital. In fact she was sitting on a chair at the end of the hallway with her suitcase for over five hours, waiting for someone to take notice of her. The nurses were so busy they had no time to deal with her situation or ask her why she was sitting on a chair outside of her room. Madam Minister, is this the kind of health care that this government has allowed to happen in Saskatchewan. How are you going to explain to Regina what happened to her situation, and how are you going to prevent it from happening again?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, one of the recommendations that the task team makes that I think is extremely important is to have a better coordination between the big health districts like Saskatoon and Regina where major surgeries are performed in this province, and other districts that surround the two big centres, because that's where about 40 per cent of the people who come for surgery come from.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to coordinate our activities in a more substantive way, and we believe that that's going to reduce the amount of waiting times that people have in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, we're going to fund more operating room hours. We're going to fund more surgical equipment.

We're going to provide clear information for patients about how surgical waiting lists operate. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to set up a provincial advisory committee to make sure that the system is transparent and accountable.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that people want those people who operate the health system to be accountable for their actions, and I think that that's at the end of the day what we're going to see.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Parental Visitation Rights

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would again like to ask the question to the Minister of Social Services that I asked a few minutes previous. I asked him the question if he agreed with the decision to deny Tyrell Dueck's right to have his parents present while he received chemotherapy.

This is after the treatment. He gave me the answer about the child protection Act and we all agreed. But what we are asking you is during this treatment — afterwards does his parents have the right to remain with their child while the child receives chemotherapy?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, what we are dealing with here is a ruling of the court, and I'm somewhat reluctant to discuss the appropriateness of the judge's ruling.

I would say though, that as Minister of Social Services our role is to protect the health and well-being of children in Saskatchewan. And while we try resolve these issues . . . while we try to resolve these issues, Mr. Speaker, through discussions with the family to mediate, if you like, sometimes that is not possible and under those circumstances we make reference to a third party, in this case the courts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Hospital and Diagnostic Waiting Lists

**Mr. McLane:** — In the barriers to access report that we released yesterday, but that the Minister of Health commissioned, it says that roughly \$24 million is needed in the next six months in order to reduce the several-year gap that exists between Regina and other more advanced health districts.

Yesterday the minister said she is prepared to commit money to the problem. Madam Minister, are you prepared to commit the roughly \$24 million needed to fix the waiting list problem identified in your own report to reduce all waiting lists in Regina?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I want to make clear to the public, because I'm not sure it has been made clear, is that in the barriers to access task group report which was a group of people struck within the Regina Health District to look at a number of issues around surgical waiting times and surgical waiting lists . . .

Now yesterday the Liberals as you know, released the report to the public and at the time the Liberals indicated that there needed to be another 73 beds in the system. I want to make it very clear to the public that the 73 beds that this task group is referring to are long-term care beds and long-term care beds for senior citizens, long-term care beds for mental health people, and also convalescent beds, all of this is about long-term care, not acute-care beds, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** — Yes, Madam Minister, yesterday you did produce a report on waiting lists. The problem is that you have as yet . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Now the hon. member will recognize that the appropriate way to engage in debate in the House is directing questions through the Chair and I'll ask him to conduct himself accordingly.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister is yet to tell the people of Saskatchewan the truth about the problem. The only numbers that appeared in that report are the page numbers.

Madam Minister, obviously you know how many people are suffering on waiting lists. Will you release the numbers today or have you something to hide?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question. What I want to say to the people of this province is that we are moving to reduce waiting times in the province of Saskatchewan. I indicated yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that on March 26 — when the Minister of Finance releases his provincial budget for 1999-2000 — in that provincial budget will be funds available to begin to reduce waiting times in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about it; we're going to do it, Mr. Speaker. We're going to fix the issue of waiting times in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister won't release the waiting numbers for the whole province then we'll help her a little bit. We'll start with East Central Health District.

Mr. Speaker, in the east central district as of March 1999, 1,877 are suffering on surgery waiting lists — 1,877 people, Mr. Speaker, are languishing on waiting lists in that district. That's a disgrace, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister once again to tell us the number of people that are suffering and dying because of long waiting lists in this whole province.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, you know we have a lot of doom and gloom by the members opposite. We have a lot of negativity that are coming from the members opposite. Mr. Speaker, what we're doing is doing something about it. We're

not simply identifying the problem and have no solutions, like the members opposite which is being reported in the press. We are going to do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we are going to implement those 23 recommendations. We have indicated that on March 26 when the Minister of Finance provides his budget for the next fiscal year, we're going to have money in that budget to begin to address waiting times in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we're not getting up and talking about it, Mr. Speaker, we're doing something about it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** — Mr. Speaker, almost 10 years ago in this House, the NDP member for Regina Coronation Park spoke of a conversation he had with the minister of Health in the Allan Blakeney administration. He noted that the minister had been called on the carpet by their premier because the waiting list had surpassed the 2,000 mark, something Mr. Blakeney found unacceptable. The member explained, and I quote:

The Premier gave him a limited number of months to get the situation in hand. To get the waiting list down below 2,000 or else the premier of the day would simply find a new health minister.

Well I know the Premier is running out of choices for new health ministers, but in only one health district, the east central, Mr. Speaker, we already are almost to that number of 2,000.

Madam Minister, did the Premier give you an ultimatum to fix the waiting list or he would boot you out of office? Or, Madam Minister, did he just tell you to play politics with peoples' lives?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, in 1997 . . . or 1987, in the province of Saskatchewan, about 77,000 operating room procedures or surgical procedures were done in this province. Some ten years later, over 92,000 surgical procedures done in the people of this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, we spend \$1.8 billion a year — each year — on health care in the province of . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Now hon. members will recognize I'm sure that the Chair is having much difficulty being able to hear the Minister of Health provide her response to the question. And I'll ask for the co-operation of all hon. members of the House.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, ten years ago there were about 77,000 surgical procedures in the province of Saskatchewan — ten years later, 92,000 surgical procedures. I think that's phenomenal.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, each year in the province of Saskatchewan over 4,600,000 visits to a doctor. Each year in



the province of Saskatchewan over 925,000 visits to specialists. Mr. Speaker, 72,000 road ambulance trips. Mr. Speaker, over 46,000 CAT (computerized axial tomography) scans, over 5,000 MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging), over 1.4 million lab tests.

Mr. Speaker, we're spending \$1.8 billion a year in the province of Saskatchewan, and we're providing a phenomenal amount of services. We can do better and we will do better.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, in your report you only dealt with one part of the waiting list problem in Regina and Saskatoon. There is also the diagnostic waiting list problem which is part and parcel of the wait for surgery in this province.

Again, in the East Central Health District there are 277 people waiting for diagnostic treatment. These are people who may need surgery but they won't know if they do until they're finished their diagnostic treatment.

Madam Minister, what is your plan to deal with this waiting list on diagnostic treatment in the province of Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, as you know, presently in the province of Saskatchewan we have one operating MRI. The Regina Health District has just installed a second MRI and it will soon be functioning and ready to start doing testing. Mr. Speaker, another MRI is going to be installed in City Hospital in Saskatoon.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have a new CAT scan in North . . . or in P.A. (Prince Albert), which is providing diagnostic tests. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Swift Current and Moose Jaw areas are talking about a CAT, a CT scan. Mr. Speaker, I think that's going to assist people in the province in getting more testing done.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Special Needs Programs for Students

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon will be for the Minister of Education.

In the 1970s I had the privilege of establishing all self-contained classrooms for learning disabled children through the Saskatoon public Board of Education. And many services for children with various special needs in Saskatoon were so successful, Mr. Speaker, that groups travelled far and wide — in fact from Europe — to learn to duplicate these programs.

That's not happened with the same frequency for a very long time in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, my question for you this afternoon is, does your department have a means of measuring what programs are in fact successfully serving Saskatchewan children with special needs?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon, I want to say to you that there has been over the last several years a tremendous investment, as the member knows, in special needs programming across the province.

And on an annual basis through the school divisions, there is a report that's provided to the department in concert together to extrapolate the number of children who might require into the future, special needs services in various different parts of the province. So it's an ongoing process that we have today.

The member has indicated, Mr. Speaker, rightfully so, that in this province we have probably one of the best special needs programs in the province and I must say, in the city of Saskatoon, some of the leading special needs programs in our province because of the innovative work that's being done by school divisions in that community and by the progressive work that's been done by people who work in the education field and other professions to assist in the development of special needs programs.

The member knows that within the next six months or eight months we'll have the report of the special needs review committee that's around the province today and we'll be able to address in a broader way some of the needs the Saskatchewan students have in the special needs areas.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister's own education advisory committee has reported that grants for special needs children have not kept pace with the increasing demands. Furthermore it reported, and this is a direct quote: "In some cases school systems are developing programs to meet the funding criteria and not the needs of students."

Mr. Minister, what are the specific steps that you and your department are taking to ensure that some of the province's most vulnerable children are assured of receiving the educational programming that they require?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, first I want to say to the member opposite that in the last year and a half or two years now, the Department of Education has made a concerted effort to provide additional resources to the areas of children that are of special needs or disabled or need further educational services that may be outside of that that can be provided in the regular classroom system.

As the member knows, over the last couple of years there's been an increase in the number of community schools that we have in this province which I think, Mr. Speaker, addresses some of the special needs that children require in this province in areas of which teachers can't provide all of those services on their own, and integrated services help provide that.

The member also knows that in the next, as I've already said, in the next six to seven months in this province we're going to have a report by the special needs committee who are going about the province, who are trying to get a better appreciation and understanding of the diverse kinds of needs that special needs students have in this province.

And as that report makes its way to the Department of Education it will make its way to this House. And collectively the Department of Education and the stakeholders in the province will look to enrich the level of services that we have for special needs kids in the province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Mr. Speaker, a week from tomorrow is budget day and many, many people in the province are going to want a tax break. Group after group wants more money from the budget for their particular needs. Appropriate financing is very significant but in this case it most certainly is only part of the answer.

Mr. Minister, it's very important that this happen. And I ask you specifically, have you directed the Department of Education to really do its homework regarding special education services? And does the department, which it should have as an ongoing regular thing to do, does it have a means of collecting data showing what programming does and does not work in the different areas of exceptionality for the children of this province?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, as you know, within the next few days we're going to have the Minister of Finance in this province deliver the budget. And within the budget address we'll identify and highlight the kinds of incentives or initiatives that will be available not only for education but for all of the departments within government.

And I want to say to the member opposite that through consultation that's ongoing with the stakeholders in education, the Department of Education does have an appreciation of the kinds of broad needs that are required, not only for children who have special needs, but in the areas of technology and the areas of additional curriculum enhancement, and the list goes on in terms of the kinds of pressures.

The answer to the question as to whether or not we have an ongoing tabulation of the number of children who require special needs in this provinces is continued to be collected through the individual school divisions and school boards, and we pay attention to that. And we'll enrich that upon the recommendations at the end of the day from the special needs committee.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests at this point.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and all of the legislature, Canada's ambassador to the Ukraine, Mr. Derek Fraser, who is in the west gallery, accompanied by Irene Janz, the assistant chief protocol officer.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I'm especially pleased to introduce a fellow graduate of the University of British Columbia law school who has served our country well in many portfolios including ambassador to Hungary from 1988 to 1993, and ambassador to Greece from 1995 to 1998, and now presently the ambassador to the Ukraine. We welcome him here to Regina and we know that he's working with many of our officials and also people within the community to help him in his job in the Ukraine.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill No. 1 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

##### Bill No. 206 — The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 206, An Act respecting the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution.

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

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### SPECIAL ORDER

##### ADJOURNED DEBATES

##### ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me again to rise in the Assembly to give a reply to the Speech from the Throne. I think the Throne Speech outlined a direction again set out by this government and we will be following that, as we have others, to continue the legacy of reducing taxes while providing essential services and at the same time lowering the enormous debt in this province.

Mr. Speaker, most of my . . . a lot of my talk today is going to be about agriculture. I want to touch on a few subjects like the AIDA (Agricultural Insurance Disaster Assistance) program — the farm aid program, the new round of safety net discussions that are coming forward, and things like the Estey report.

I also will be giving some credit to the opposition today, Mr.

Speaker. I'm going to give the opposition a lot of credit today and I think . . . because they deserve a lot of credit on some issues, and I'll explain that to them in a minute.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the folks at home want to do some skill-testing questions, but I've got a series of skill-testing questions here. I'll give you an example of one short one here, so get your pens out. All you've got to do is write down the answer. And if you decide that you know the answer, you may want to contact the person and ask them if this is true.

And the quote is: "I was elected in Melfort-Tisdale as a Liberal and I will continue to represent Melfort-Tisdale as a Liberal." Guess who said that? In 1996, April 9 of 1996, that was in the *Kinistino Post* gazette. Maybe folks can figure out . . . I can give you the initials — it's R.G. And that might help you.

So as we go along we'll have a series of these skill-testing questions, Mr. Speaker, and maybe the folks at home can play along. And like I say, if they do figure it out, maybe they can call him and say, did you say that really, and then maybe ask why he changed his mind and walked away from the people — walked away from the people who elected them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the farm program. This is a long debate but I'll shorten it up for purposes of today because I know others will want to speak.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me go back to last year when we started to have co-operation and I thought we started to have co-operation from the opposition in terms of farm programming. We had a motion from all members of this House that we sent to Ottawa saying that we want some farm aid in Saskatchewan.

We had a trip later on with a couple of the opposition members, one from each of the parties and myself going to Ottawa, talk to the federal minister. And I can see, Mr. Speaker, then that there was some . . . I thought there was some hope because the federal minister I think was quite impressed that the three political parties came along and in unison did two things to promote a cause in Saskatchewan and in western Canada and indeed all of Canada.

Unfortunately that solidarity slipped aside, and I can tell you that over that period of time that slipping aside certainly hurt this province. It hurt this province in many ways. For example, we had some money in safety nets left over from previous years which we finally did convince the federal government to put into topping up the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program which we announced not too long ago, a couple of weeks ago.

(1430)

Basically we had agreement on that last November. But every time one of these so-called Saskatchewan farm people representatives, Tories and Liberals, stood up on their feet and said, just put your money in, Mr. Speaker, that made the Ottawa position stronger and the Saskatchewan position weaker, very much weaker, to the point — if the members would listen, I'm giving you a little history here of what happened — to the point where the federal government basically said if you don't participate in this program we're going to take that money away

from you.

**An Hon. Member:** — Not true.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — That is exactly true. And this is the help, this is the help that these people put into it. No matter how long and hard that we argue, no matter how long and hard that we argue, Mr. Speaker, that 3 per cent of the population of this country which reside in this province of Saskatchewan cannot, and cannot finance 40 per cent of the land base in terms of agricultural assistance.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. All hon. members will recognize that we have much time ahead of us and the opportunity to put remarks on the record. And I encourage all hon. members to put their remarks on the record and to cease from shouting them across the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Maybe the folks at home can tell me another skill-testing question: who was the member for Kindersley that was leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and then wandered in the middle of the night over to the new Saskatchewan Party and betraying his constituents? Maybe that's the next skill-testing question. B.B. are his initials . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And no wonder he gets upset. No wonder he gets upset because I would be a little bit shy about that too, a little bit sensitive I guess. Because when you walk away from your constituents, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, just let me say something parenthetically here.

The Bill we brought forward, The Respect for Constituents Act in this province, why do you think it was brought forward for the first time in the history — for the first time in the history of this province. We had people cross the floor in legislatures lots over the years, one at a time . . . you know, shouldn't say lots, but there's always a handful of those people who run from their convictions.

But the reason we had to bring this in was because people were demanding it. Because they said it is obnoxious that someone can say to the people who elect them that I represent you on the basis of what you elected me on, on my philosophy, then holus-bolus turn around and say, now I'm doing something else.

One or two over a period or a handful over a period of years crossing the floor can be tolerated. But it's an insult to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, for 10 members to throw away the convictions that they preached to get elected on, and walk in the middle of the night over to a party that has one — one — ambition in mind only, and that is power. And that is power.

I know they get upset when they hear this. And let me go back to agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Every time one of those members get up . . . and I've got some clips here I can show you — I can show you.

Here's the Liberal, Mr. Member from Arm River. He's got some MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) reports that I try not to read but read once in a while. On January 27, 1999, MLA report in the paper: "Time for NDP government to pony up, says the member for Arm River."

February 3, if you were wondering whether Saskatchewan can afford farm aid package, here are a few points to ponder. And he goes on saying why the government should put their money in.

February 10, a week later, time for Premier Roy Romanow ponied up, is the quote from the MLA report from the member for Arm River. Well not only was he justifying . . . not only was he justifying the actions of his Liberal cousins in Ottawa, but he was also jeopardizing the position of every Saskatchewan person, every Saskatchewan person.

And if you want to go on, Mr. Speaker, the leader . . . the leader of the Tory Party, Mr. Hermanson, he too is in the paper saying, Saskatchewan government just be quiet and put your 40 per cent in. I've got the clip here somewhere and I'll find it sooner or later.

And every time they said that, the Liberals and the Tories, every time they said that, they put in jeopardy the position of the tax base in this province, 40 per cent of the people who get their income from agriculture. They were telling the people of Saskatchewan . . . they were telling the people of Saskatchewan that yes, you can fight the treasuries of the European and the US (United States) on your own. That's what they were saying. That's what they were saying. And I just begin now to give you a little bit of credit — giving credit where credit is due.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Order. Order. Order, order. Now I think . . . I think the House has seen a bit of the impact on the parliamentary debate when members from both sides of the House either on their feet or from their seat engage in comments questioning the motives of other hon. members. And I think all hon. members will recognize that it doesn't serve debate of this Chamber well to engage in that kind of speculation either on the record or off.

And I'll ask all hon. members to keep the guidelines for good quality parliamentary debate — Order! — in mind and to keep that in mind when engaging in debate on their feet or engaging in comments from their seats.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know they are very sensitive on this point and I'm going to get to the reason why. I'll get to the reason why, but before we do . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Order, order, order. Now the Chair just made an appeal to all hon. members to avoid engaging in reference or inference of character in debate, and I think it would serve him well if the minister would just move along without commenting on the subject of the Chair's intervention and — Order! — I'll ask him to do so.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've just taken this time, this little break here, to look up another skill-testing question. And further . . . here's a quote:

As a further sign of my loyalty and that of my caucus colleagues, we have each signed a document in which we unequivocally deny any intention of joining any other party.

That was April 10, 1996 in the Langenburg *Four-Town Journal*.

**An Hon. Member:** — Who said that?

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Initials are B.B. You might want to find out who that is and phone him if he really meant that.

Mr. Speaker, I move back to the help and the credit that we're going to give the opposition in terms of what they have done for the people of this province. I've just said that every time they stood up and told Saskatchewan government to put their money in, they supported Ottawa's position and not the 3 per cent of the taxpayers in this country.

And I'll tell you what happened to the leader of the Tory Party over there, Mr. Hermanson. A little history. We've got a little quote from November here in the *Leader-Post*. This was after the Minister of Finance . . . his mid-term report. On agriculture Mr. Hermanson said the Sask Party . . . I quote:

The Sask Party leader, Elwin Hermanson, agreed with Klein that Ottawa, not Saskatchewan, should be providing help to cash-strapped farmers.

That was back in November of 1998. Remember I said we had the all-party committee. We went — myself and the two critics — went to Ottawa. There was a bit of unity. Well then he starts to slip though. It comes around to the *Leader-Post* again in December, just a month later. It says here, and I quote:

Sask Party leader Elwin Hermanson is in Ottawa this week trying to persuade federal MPs to support his party's plan for a 70-30 split.

Well he slipped one cog. And then as I saw it happening, in January, just the third month . . . within three months he's gone full circle. He said, the province should put up its 40 per cent on the table, and if that's what is required, he added.

So that really helped the tax base and the farmers of this province, didn't it? The farmers and the people who earn their land from agriculture — 40 per cent of the people in this province — that really helped them. So on behalf of those people I say thank you, Mr. Hermanson, very much, for saying that you can bail yourself out, because that's exactly what he was saying.

Mr. Speaker, that is deplorable. And, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition in the House in last Throne Speech, a year ago, didn't have one word to say about agriculture, not one word. Check the record. And then a few months later they're running around saying, well, we could see it was coming, the . . . (inaudible) . . . problem coming. Why couldn't you see the problem was coming?

And you know what? I can probably count on two hands and maybe a little more that number of agriculture questions last year in this House. If they could see that the problem was coming, where were the questions?

Now that is not being totally forthright, Mr. Speaker, when you say you can see the problem coming and the evidence is to the contrary.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go now to give more credit to these

people, for the opposition. You know I want to be very, very clear that there is a myth being purveyed across this province that the Tory Party is the farmers' friend. I am going to spend hours and hours and hours — as long as it takes — to have people understand that this is a myth, Mr. Speaker, and I'll prove to you and to the opposition that it is a myth. It won't take me very long because the numbers add up very, very quickly.

This myth that they're on the farmers' side, and let's take a look at all the issues, the policy issues that have influenced Saskatchewan agriculture, that have influenced Saskatchewan agriculture over the last number of years. I could go back further but I'm going to start in 1988.

In 1988, Mr. Speaker, with the support of the Tories at the time — I can remember it well. In fact I can remember the member from, not Moosomin . . . but Souris-Cannington, just in Bengough about three or four weeks ago, when I brought the issue up of two-price wheat, jumping to his feet and saying, oh well, eastern Canada got all the benefit of two-price wheat and it should be gone anyway. He's still saying it.

Well here's point number one. The policy supported, the policy supported by this Tory Party here took away two-price wheat in 1988. And do you know how much it was? Do you know what he said — it wasn't benefiting western Saskatchewan, western Canada or other. Do you know the dollar figure on an annual basis that it brought to western Canada? Two hundred and fifty million dollars that you — that you — took out of the farmers' pocket.

And I want to give you credit for that on behalf of the Saskatchewan farmers. Thanks a lot for taking \$250 million out of western Canada every year, every year — not just once. So in 10 years it's 2.5 billion. Do you think that would have helped?

The friends of the farmer? What a myth. What a myth, Mr. Speaker.

(1445)

And then in 1995 if I heard it once, I heard it a thousand times get rid of the Crow. You talk . . . remember in 1982 — keep the Crow, let Blakeney go. Well that changed real quick. And to the detriment of this province, for 10 years building up the debt. The Crow benefit of \$320 million advocated . . . they advocated the demise of the Crow time after time after time. And you know what? They succeeded.

So I want to give you credit for that. On behalf of the producers of Saskatchewan, thanks a heap for getting rid of the help and get rid of the Crow. Three hundred and twenty million dollars each and every year on top of the \$250 million that the two-price wheat left. Add it up. There's more to come.

What a myth. Friends. Well I'll tell you with friends like that, the farmers don't need enemies. But you know what? They run around saying that they're the friends of rural Saskatchewan.

Deregulation — how many times have you heard this group over here talk about deregulation? Deregulation is the greatest

thing.

Well you know what deregulation did in 1995 as well, Mr. Speaker? In addition to the loss of the Crow benefit, it allowed the gains in railway productivity to no longer be shared with producers. Guess how much that cost us, friends of the farmer? A hundred and five million dollars annually.

So on behalf of the farmers, I thank you and give you credit for taking another \$105 million out of the pockets of Saskatchewan producers.

And you turn around and say you're the friend of the farmer. What a myth.

Mr. Speaker, and it goes on. This is the one that really gets me. In 1985 . . . 1995, rather, Mr. Hermanson, the leader of the Tory Party was a Reform MP (Member of Parliament) in Ottawa, a Reform MP in Ottawa, and in 1995, the Liberals, the Liberals reduced the safety net funding to agriculture unilaterally from \$850 million a year to \$600 million a year. That took \$80 million out of Saskatchewan farmers' pockets — 80 million every year.

And do you know what, do you know what the leader of the Tory Party said the year later, after they just took, the Liberals took \$250 million out? This is a press report from *The Western Producer*, June 27, 1996, "Reform press for more agricultural cuts." Two hundred and fifty million a year wasn't quite enough for the Reform Party and Mr. Hermanson and his colleagues.

And it goes on — with a pretty picture, well, with a picture of Mr. Hermanson — talking about another \$20 million. Now \$20 million isn't a great lot, but here's the point: after he sought \$250 million cut by the Liberals when he was sitting in the House, and then the next year goes and says we should cut more from agriculture.

Well I'll give him credit. I'll give Mr. Hermanson credit for supporting that \$250 million cut. I'll tell you, this is the friend . . . this is the leader who's the friend of agriculture?

Mr. Speaker, add them up, add them up. If you add up the two-price wheat, just on an annual basis, don't even accumulate it. Those four things add up to Saskatchewan — a loss. If we would've thought to keep these it could have been in our farmers' pockets. Annually \$635 million.

**An Hon. Member:** — Whoa.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Whoa, he says.

Well I'll tell you, I can tell you I'm on a crusade. Because I am going to convince every farmer in this province that you are a myth when you purvey the tune that you are a friend of Saskatchewan farmers: \$320 million dollars a year for Crow; 250 . . . well Saskatchewan's share of two-price wheat, 125 million; \$110 million with freight rates; and \$80 million with the federal safety net reduction.

Mr. Speaker, here's the point. These people run around pretending they're the friend of rural Saskatchewan. Ask yourself the question — you ask yourselves the question —

where would we be today if we had that \$635 million in our pockets every year, which we could have had had we banded together, had we fought for it — maybe we wouldn't have it all, but I'll guarantee if we would've all been same page.

And you know what, we were fighting for that. Every issue. I can campaign and went to rallies and talked to farmers and went to Ottawa and went to Regina before I was elected, and promoted it when I was in government. I was supporting, and we were supporting, it as a New Democratic party in government, every issue that those people succeeded in taking out \$635 million a year from the pockets of Saskatchewan farmers.

That is hypocrisy. You can't run around saying you're the friend of rural Saskatchewan. So on behalf of all the people, I give you credit. We wouldn't be, Mr. Speaker, worried about the AIDA program today had we had that money on an annual basis.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Let me give you another little sidebar comment. The Crow benefit alone of \$320 million is half of that, nearly half . . . over half . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — You're still on the Crow . . .

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Well we're still on the Crow, he says.

You're darn right. You're darn right. We're working like mad, we're working like mad to try to fill in that gap of \$320 million but you can't do it overnight. But, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada today has a WTO (World Trade Organization) agreement that was signed two years ago. Under that agreement we have a certain amount of money that we can put towards agriculture and safety nets.

They're at 20 per cent . . . okay, there he goes again. How much did you put towards this? It's not me my friend. Mr. Speaker, it's not me. I tell the member for Rosetown I just take the money from the taxpayers who work hard in this province and try to distribute it. And I'll tell you if he keeps saying just take more of that money and put it into your own pockets to try bail yourself out, we will never succeed in getting this province turned around with that attitude.

If we were to get more money out of Ottawa to fight the European/US treasuries as we should then we can use more of the tax dollars that we have to supply services, pay down debt, and give the taxpayers . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order! Now we don't need to be shouting across the floor, and I'll ask for all hon. members to come to order and allow the hon. member, the minister, to make his remarks in an uninterrupted kind of way.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Speaker, the opposition doesn't like to hear the truth. The credit that I'm giving them today, the credit that I'm giving them today is credit they deserve. It is true credit. They deserve the credit for taking away that money from Saskatchewan farmers and rural communities. But you know what, they went around pretending, the opposition went around pretending that it's nothing to do with them, nothing to do with them. Well it's got a lot to do with them.

But let me get back to my point about the WTO. Canada is at 20 per cent over the potential funding under WTO — 20 per cent. We could have still had the Crow Benefit, a subsidy that the Europeans and equivalent subsidies the Europeans and the U.S. kept, and we wouldn't be worried about AIDA. The U.S. are at 35 per cent of their WTO and the Europeans are at 67 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, you see we could talk about . . . I won't have time to talk about WTO policy, but the fact of the matter is WTO is important for trade but it's domestic policy, it's domestic policy that from the Liberals that's dictating the fact that we don't have what we could have today.

So let's not confuse . . . and they run and hide behind WTO all the time. Let's not confuse WTO from domestic policy because that's the reasons we have the loss of the Crow. It's nothing to do with WTO.

Mr. Speaker, so the credit that these people receive is simply put to them as this is your baby, and I'm going to tell every farmer in Saskatchewan that I can that this myth is now going to be shattered and broken.

And there's two more issues they're on. It hasn't ended here. They've only succeeded in four; they've only succeeded in getting rid of 635 million. Wait, there's more to come — \$275 million annually that the Wheat Board brings us. What's the policy? Get rid of the Wheat Board. Well I hope I can never give you credit for getting rid of the Wheat Board because that's \$275 million that we need in our pocket.

And what about the transportation policy? You look at the Estey report that the members opposite are so happy about and they want to get it in there. You know what the biggest thing in that is? — one of the biggest? — is get rid of the cap on transportation.

If you look at the transportation in this country compared to the U.S. in the areas where there is an unregulated, non-competitive environment, the US rate is \$20 a tonne higher — \$20 a tonne.

Do you know what every \$10 a tonne means to this country, this western Canada? — \$200 million out of our pocket; \$200 million for every 10. So even if it didn't go the US rate, even if it just went up \$10 a tonne — \$200 million. I'll tell you I hope I can never give them credit for that because again they'd be taking money, stealing money from the farmers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, these people, this opposition who decided that they were going to be the saviours in the middle of the night of Saskatchewan farmers have put forward policies that have destroyed this province in the farm financial community.

And then they went around with their solution. Just put your money in, they say — just put your money in; you guys put your money in. Mr. Speaker, who are you guys? You guys are the people of the province who pay taxes, that's who you guys are.

But somehow they say they just want to split that; they want to say government is you guys. But you guys are the people of this province who pay taxes. So they're saying bail yourself out,

you can do it, when 40 per cent of the people of this province draw their income indirectly or directly from agriculture. What kind of logic is that?

What kind of policy or platform do we have from the opposition in this province today when they wilfully, wilfully take money out of farmers' pockets and haven't got enough credit for it. But they're going to get credit, you wait and trust me. Trust me — every breathing breath — I'll be giving them credit for taking that money away from farmers.

But they won't quit there — they won't quit there. They want to take more away through the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board and through the removal of the cap on transportation so that farmers can even be in a worse off position.

Well, Mr. Speaker, their solution of Saskatchewan people bailing themselves out won't work. And I'm going to plea to them now, both the Tories and the Liberals. This issue of farm support, Mr. Speaker, has gone beyond politics. As I said at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) meeting, it's gone beyond politics.

When we first started in this House and we had the all-party agreement and we had the trip to Ottawa, I thought we were getting somewhere. And I say to the members opposite, they can argue with me about all the things they want to in terms of this province and the running of this province. But for once in your life, put your partisan politics aside to help the producers, not steal from them like your other policies have done.

Mr. Speaker, I plea to the members opposite . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. I've been listening to the hon. minister's remarks and I notice his reference to the use of the word steal. And I think the hon. minister will recognize that it's improper to be using that word in debate to refer to the motives of other hon. members, and I'll ask him to withdraw that remark and continue his debate.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw and apologize for that remark. I didn't . . . I knew when I said it, I shouldn't have said it but it slipped out in debate. Thank you.

Now what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that these people — these people I'm asking — it's beyond politics. Because, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't . . . it matters big who rules this province, who governs this province. But in terms of the governing body — in terms of the governing body sitting on your right side — it doesn't matter who's here in terms of the dollars and cents that come from this tax base. Because while we are growing our economy, we still can't take on the treasuries of the Europeans and the US on our own.

And I ask the members opposite: get on the bus. Get on the bus. I'll argue with you about anything, but on this issue it is imperative that we band together, not just with political parties, but with SARM, with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), with the business communities, with the elevator companies.

Because it doesn't matter who's governing, you simply cannot bail yourself out with three per cent of the population tax base

and over 40 per cent of the land base. It's not possible. It's not possible.

So I ask the members opposite, if they get up and talk about their speech, first of all, acknowledge that they are . . . have they been given credit for the policies that have taken many, many dollars from Saskatchewan farmers? I'd ask them to come clean, Mr. Speaker. Come clean in terms of what your real agenda is. What's your real agenda?

You can't have it both ways. You can't have it both ways because you can't say, as they believe, that government should have no influence, no money into the agricultural system. In fact one of the Sask Party, one of the Sask Party . . . one of the Tory's resolutions, if I can find it, a resolution at one of their conventions. Where did I put it? It says that they believe that there should be . . . No. Here we go. I'll read it to you: government should never become involved directly in business through grants, loans or direct payments.

(1500)

This is the agricultural section. Let me say it again. This is a Sask Party resolution. And the rationale for the resolution rather, it says, government should never become involved directly in business through grants, loans or direct investments.

So now there's a little bit of a problem here because at the same time Mr. Hermanson, the leader of the Tories, was saying . . . was flip-flopping from don't put any money in to put 40 per cent in, he has a little resolution package that says they shouldn't put any money into agriculture — shouldn't put any money into agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I think there has to be some explanation here. Mr. Hermanson has to . . . And his members in this House have to get up and explain to this House what they really stand for.

Well I know what they stand for. They stand for eliminating \$635 million, \$635 million from the pockets of the farmers of this province. And you run around . . . and they run around saying that they're going to be the saviour for agriculture in rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that is a joke. And I will have a hoarse voice before I'm finished telling people about that story.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's one more issue I want to cover — I've gone on longer than I thought on this issue — and that is the new safety net package that's coming down. We're in negotiations — and I would ask you: hopefully, you've learned your lesson — we're in negotiations, all the provinces are in negotiations with a new five-year safety net that's to be signed in the future. I don't know if it will be signed this year or not — it depends on how they go.

But, you know, I'll explain to you what's happening. This is another thing that's beyond politics. And I'll be interested in your response.

We have a safety net package now of \$600 million comprised of 30 per cent risk, which is crop insurance; 70 per cent value of product, which is NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account); and a small amount of money in what we call companion

programs — 30 per cent risk, 70 per cent value of product. Seven provinces at the last federal/provincial meeting made a presentation to go from risk-based to total value of product. That will mean, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan-Manitoba in particular where we're selling our grain products at an international price wars where we have very, very high risk, whether we would be removing that. And we go total to value product.

So if you're a potato grower in PEI (Prince Edward Island) or if you're a vegetable or a fruit grower in any other part of this country where you're not selling into a trade war and where you're selling domestically and when you're not, it's not into like I say a trade war environment, the value . . . you want to go to, to value your product.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba stood side by side, Liberal or . . . Conservative and NDP governments because it's beyond politics. I want you to listen to this and think about your response. Stood side by side and made a presentation saying to the federal minister, you can't do this because the net result of this would mean a shifting of the fundamental dollars and safety nets from the federal government to Saskatchewan-Manitoba: a reduction of \$70 million for Saskatchewan and \$30 million for Manitoba. That would mean we . . . if that was implemented. If the seven provinces got their way, Mr. Speaker, we would have to either cut crop insurance or cut NISA.

So I ask the members opposite, don't stand up when this comes to the issue . . . comes to the fore and say, just put your money in. Because it's the same issue. We don't have enough money to bail ourselves out.

And, Mr. Speaker, here's the hypocrisy of this Liberal government in Ottawa — I apologize for saying hypocrisy, I know that's not a nice word — here's the problem with this Liberal government in Ottawa. This country was built, Mr. Speaker, so that I can go to any part of this country and I can get the same education, the same health care, the same social services, the same pensions. By accident, no. By conscience. Because there are poor parts of this country and there are rich parts of this country. And the people who put this country together decided that there was going to be equality in this country. And so there is to a large degree.

Let's use the same principle for supporting agriculture. Let's not let the high population, small agricultural based provinces lead the way. Let's not let them influence that thinking in Ottawa where it's every person for themselves.

Let's have a government in Ottawa with a conscience that can say it is not fair for 3 per cent of the population in this country to have to provide dollars for 40 per cent of the agricultural land. Meaning, in Saskatchewan, under the AIDA program alone, \$70 per capita goes to the farm program, but if you happen to live in Ontario \$4 dollars per capita goes to the farm program.

We need a conscience in Ottawa. People delivering these programs that have the same thought patterns as the people who put the social system in this country together. Equality. Access. Because if we don't, my friends in opposition, you can say what you like and you can try to make government, and maybe you

will someday, but it won't matter. It won't matter because you'll have the same problem. So when this comes up again, I ask you: just say no, Saskatchewan people can no longer . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Now the hon. minister will recognize of course that the rules of debate require the debate to be directed to the Chair and not directly to members in the Chamber, and I'll ask him to guide himself accordingly.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Speaker, I ask through you that all members of this House put their politics aside on this issue, because it doesn't matter who's in power. There's not enough tax revenue in this province, no matter how fast we build it — and it is building — for a small tax base to support that large agriculture base.

So, Mr. Speaker, members opposite have some explaining to do. Members on this side of the House are going to continue to give them credit for removing the 300 . . . or help remove the \$635 million annually. Just think. Annually! That's more than the safety net package for western Canada. It's double the Crow. It's absolutely bizarre to think that somebody would say that they were the friend of the Saskatchewan farm rural community and at the same time work hard and advocate policies that takes money out of their pocket.

I think they've got a chance to explain that. There will be an election coming, I'm sure, that can explain it because I'm going to be asking everyone to have them explain it. And I'm going to be giving them credit for it.

Mr. Speaker, I implore these members and all members of the Assembly to support this Throne Speech; and secondly, to look at agriculture and the needs today in agriculture as something beyond the political spectrum, as something that is a need to build a country with fairness, as the country has been built in the past with fairness. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to represent the constituents of the good constituency of Cannington in the very southeast corner of the province, right on the Manitoba-US border. The constituency of Cannington in large part is made up of people involved in both agriculture and the energy industry — oil, in other words — and small-business people, Mr. Speaker. And they're very concerned about what's going on in this province, and they're very concerned about what this government is doing, or not doing, as the case may be. In most cases, it's not doing. But in a few cases it is what the government is doing, such as removing health care from rural Saskatchewan. I listen with a great deal of interest to what the Minister of Agriculture had to say. And while I want to deal in large part with my critic area, that being health, I think there's a few things that the Minister of Agriculture had to say that do need to have some comments made on them.

And one thing that I think should be noted, Mr. Speaker, is the amount of credit that the minister wants to give us and the amount of time that the minister wants to spend debating our platform. And I'm pleased to hear that. Because I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan know



that the Saskatchewan Party does indeed have a plan for the next election, a plan that is much better founded, Mr. Speaker, much better laid out than what the Speech from the Throne was that this government presented.

In fact I'm surprised that the number of times ideas and thoughts of our platform showed up in the Speech from the Throne. And it goes to show, Mr. Speaker, that the platform we presented has a lot of validity to it. It was sound and now the government wants to extract from that platform to use those ideas. We believe those ideas are good for all of the people of Saskatchewan. We're pleased to see that the government opposite is recognizing that fact and starting to utilize some of those.

One of things that the Minister of Agriculture was talking about was the power of the opposition — the power of the opposition to influence national affairs, to influence such things as the national agricultural programs such as the Crow rate. The minister opposite was giving us the credit for having influenced the changes to the Crow rate. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the changes to the Crow rate were a long time in coming. And fact is there were opportunities to make those changes a significant a number of years before that time, but the government members opposite and their allies in the agriculture industry opposed those changes. They opposed the idea of a \$7 billion payout on the Crow rate while they were in opposition.

And so what did they settle with? What did they settle for when they were in government, when they actually in theory, Mr. Speaker, had their hands on the levers of power? What did they choose? They chose \$1.6 billion — a loss of \$5.4 billion. While they had their hands on the levers of power, and yet they're saying that we in the opposition were actually in control.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about an annual loss of \$635 million because of the power of the opposition, the Saskatchewan Party.

Well I'd like to be able to say that we have that much power, Mr. Speaker, but we weren't in government. Indeed there has been even a greater loss in agriculture than \$635 million over the last few years.

While the minister of Agriculture was the minister, while the minister from Intergovernmental Affairs is commenting from his seat right now, while he was the minister of Agriculture, Agriculture budget in this province went from a billion dollars a year in 1991 to less than 300 million this year. That was under those ministers of Agriculture and that's where the real loss in actual dollars going into agriculture took place.

It was under the administration of the NDP Agriculture ministers — the member from Rosetown; the member from Carrot River Valley; the past member who was defeated for his inept efforts as the minister of Agriculture, Darrel Cunningham; and now the current member from Watrous. That's where the real losses in agriculture took place, Mr. Speaker, under their administration.

You know, the Minister of Agriculture talked about the record, about the history. And he's talking . . . he tries to talk about the Saskatchewan Party platform, and he does so for good reason,

Mr. Speaker. Because he doesn't want to talk about the old record, about the record he and his government have developed in their eight years. Because that's all they're going to get, Mr. Speaker, is eight years of government.

In their eight years of government, what happened to the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program? You know, I remember that same Minister of Agriculture when he was the opposition Ag critic prior to 1991, running around this province saying, I'm going to build you a bigger and better GRIP program.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they certainly changed the GRIP program. Because the Premier and his Agriculture ministers went zap, you're gone. And that's what happened to the GRIP program. They cancelled it, cut it. They broke the contracts, Mr. Speaker, broke the contracts and sent 300-plus million dollars back to the federal government. They took about a hundred and ninety-one or a hundred and ninety-four million dollars out of the GRIP program back into the provincial coffers to balance the budget that year.

There was no money, Mr. Speaker, left in farm programs for farmers when they needed it, at times like this when there was drought up in the Biggar, Saskatoon area, going across through Cut Knife to Lloydminster.

There was no money in farm programs in Saskatchewan when the prices dropped through the floor because those members killed the farm aid programs, GRIP.

(1515)

When they finally recognized last fall that there was indeed something happening in rural Saskatchewan and what was happening in agriculture wasn't good, when that finally happened — after we had indeed brought it up for them many times in the House during the session, after the Premier had had the chairmen's conference in Saskatoon where he was the chairman, where he could have brought up agriculture as an issue, where he actually took transportation off the agenda — it was only after all that that they finally recognized that there was a concern in agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

And so the minister recognizes finally that there's a crisis and then the Premier steps out and says, it's Saskatchewan's ice storm. And about a week or so later, the Minister of Agriculture who was just on his feet stands up and says, oh no, crisis is over. Price of grain went up 20 cents. Crisis is over. We don't have to put any money in now. It's all over. Go home.

Well maybe he convinced his colleagues on the government benches that the crisis was over but he certainly never convinced a single farmer across Saskatchewan.

And so he kept saying, no we're not going to do it. We're not going to participate in these programs. There is no need for it; the crisis is over. We're not putting any money up. And he wasn't going to.

And it took the opposition to step in, Mr. Speaker, and push him, and push him hard, before he would again admit that there was a crisis in agriculture in Saskatchewan and that the

government, the Government of Saskatchewan representing the majority of farmers, had a responsibility to defend those farmers. And it wasn't until he was pushed by the Saskatchewan Party that he screwed up his courage enough to go down to Ottawa and say, we'll participate; we'll put up the money that we have to, to get money back from you.

Which really surprises me, Mr. Speaker, that he would have taken that attitude because the Minister of Economic Development, while she was the minister of Finance, kept saying, oh no, no, we can't have any more economic development in this province because if we do, we won't get our payments from Ottawa, we won't be on welfare any more. And heaven forbid that we shouldn't be on welfare, Mr. Speaker, according to the minister.

The member from Saskatoon Northwest asks if AIDA is a good program. Well most of the farmers that I've talked to have said no, because this government did not get out of Ottawa what was needed.

The Premier of this province stood up in the House in I think it was 1989 and said the measure of the Premier of this province is how much farm aid he can get out of Ottawa. That's what the Premier, the man from Riversdale said. What did he get out of Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, what did he get? I think it's a hundred and seventy-four million dollars — a hundred and seventy-four million dollars. He almost spent that much on the plane trip down to Ottawa in 1991.

That's what the man from Riversdale got for us because he sent people to Ottawa to negotiate that wouldn't admit earlier that there was even a problem. So it's tough to admit, negotiate from a ground floor, that there is no problem here but you need to give us some money. When you come to a program, when you come to a position and say there is no problem here but you need to give me some money anyways, why should the other side even negotiate seriously with you?

The member talked of the all-party committee that went to Ottawa. And a Liberal MP (Member of Parliament) sitting there at the table says to the Minister of Agriculture, how's the economy doing in Saskatchewan? Is it doing well? And the minister responds, yes it's doing very well, in fact we're running a surplus. So the Liberal MP on the committee says, well you want us to put a whole bunch of money in because we're running a surplus, but you don't want to put any money in because you're running a surplus.

I think there are some non-parliamentary terms for that attitude, Mr. Speaker, that was exemplified that day by the Minister of Agriculture.

So when you go into a negotiations with an attitude with the federal government, but we don't really have a problem with you but we'd like you to kick some cash in anyways, you're not going to get a whole lot back out of it. And that's exactly what this Premier and this Minister of Agriculture got — not a lot.

The fact is what they got is a program with a whole bunch of strings on it that very few people are going to benefit from. Very few people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, are going to benefit from this program.

The minister talked about my leader, Mr. Hermanson, and claiming that he wanted to cut a bunch of money out of an agricultural program that the federal government had. And indeed he did want to cut some money out of a federal program, but it would have hurt, Mr. Speaker, it would have hurt those people that the NDP want to keep in place, because what he was talking about was cutting \$20 million out of the Agriculture department bureaucracy.

Cut those people out of the bureaucracy, there's less money for union dues and there's less money for the NDP coffers, and that's what he was talking about cutting. And I think that's a good idea, Mr. Speaker, that if you have an excess of bureaucracy in government, it is worthy of removing that, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks about you guys, you guys meaning the people of Saskatchewan. That when you're talking about paying for various programs, when you're talking about paying for things like the farm aid program, that when it's you guys that are paying, it's every taxpayer. And indeed the minister is right, which seems to run counter, Mr. Speaker, though, to the whole message, the whole philosophy that the NDP and CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) have put forward on other programs.

You know how many people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, have heard the term free medicare? Free hospitalization? Free medicine? I think probably everybody has but, Mr. Speaker, it's you guys that are paying the bill, the same "you guys" that the minister's been talking about. It's the taxpayer of Saskatchewan. It's not free to taxpayers for farm aid, and it's not free medicare, Mr. Speaker. It's paid for by every taxpayer in Saskatchewan.

And I'm surprised that the members opposite don't recognize that contradiction in their philosophy. Because I didn't hear any of the members making any comments about that, that if you can't have free farm programs — that they're paid for by the taxpayers — then how can you have free medicare and not paid for by the taxpayers when the dollars come out of the same Consolidated Fund, Mr. Speaker. So using the minister's own logic we don't have free farm programs, and we don't have free medicare, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move on to a few of the other things that were in the Speech from the Throne. The government, under a heading of jobs and growth, states that together we have created 30,000 jobs. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it comes down to measurements here.

Now the government in a lot of their statistics and a lot of the things they do, they like to measure from 1991, when they got elected, until today. Except, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to jobs. They don't want to measure from 1991 in jobs. Because if you measure from the day this government was elected until today or the last numbers that we have for last month, they've only actually created 21,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker — 21,000 jobs. And if you don't believe me, check Statistics Canada. That's where it comes from — Statistics Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of misinformations in the Speech from the Throne, areas where the government has

glossed over things, tried to present the good side up on these issues. And this is one of those where they're claiming 30,000 jobs, where in actual fact there was only 21,000 created.

And the fact is, over the period of the last year, in the period of the last year there was a loss of 4,100 jobs — 4,100 jobs. Now the member from Regina Albert South can claim something different. You know, if you want to go back to the month before, there was a loss of 4,900 jobs. Always a loss of jobs, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan in the last few months.

Now the argument there by the government is, well oil prices are down, grain prices are down; you know, those nasty Europeans are being hard on us. But, Mr. Speaker, oil prices and grain prices are down in Manitoba and they created 11,000 jobs. Oil prices and grains prices are down in Alberta and they created I think it's around 54,000 jobs. So why is it that only in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, only in Saskatchewan across Canada, was there losses of jobs over the last year?

**An Hon. Member:** — NDP Saskatchewan.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — That's right. My colleague says NDP Saskatchewan. And that is indeed the case, indeed the case, Mr. Speaker, and that's the reason why there has been a consistent loss of jobs in the last few months in this province.

The government goes on to say that unemployment is at a 16-year low — unemployment is at a 16-year low. And it probably is, Mr. Speaker, because the employable people in Saskatchewan are leaving. Demographically we have the largest percentage of population between the age of zero and 15, or between 55 and however high they measure, at 100 or whatever.

But when it comes to working people, Mr. Speaker, we have a very low percentage of our population. And that's a shame. The fact is it's a crime, Mr. Speaker, that we should be in such position. We have good people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We have developed many very good people and we can build a province, Mr. Speaker. We've proved it. We built Alberta. The people from Saskatchewan moving to Alberta built that province.

They still talk about people from Moose Jaw in Calgary as being the Moose Jaw mafia running the oil patch. Those are Saskatchewan people, and they would have built that in Saskatchewan but for what happened in the 1950s in this province under the CCF, the forerunner of the NDP.

The government talks in their Speech from the Throne about diversifying the economy, and I note with interest what examples they use when they talk about diversifying the economy. They talk about Weyerhaeuser up at P.A. They talk about the Saskatchewan fertilizer company out here at Belle Plaine.

**An Hon. Member:** — Saferco.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Saferco. All projects that were started by the previous government. And when the ministers of Economic Development or Finance go down to New York, what do they brag about as the great industrial developments?

Those are a couple of the examples they use, Mr. Speaker.

Now try to name a major industrial development in Saskatchewan under the tenure of the NDP. I think most people would be scratching their heads trying to come up with those examples.

(1530)

Mr. Speaker. the government goes on to say, "My government brought in a bridge support program at a critical time to assist our hog producers." Well I wonder how many hog producers actually got any money out of it. I certainly haven't heard of any yet.

So where is this great program? The \$140 million committed to assist producers, part of the farm AIDA program — \$140 million. And then it goes on to say, we'll pay 40 per cent of that program. So they're even trying to take credit, Mr. Speaker, for the monies that the federal government is putting in. Because they're certainly doing that in the next sentence — my government also announced that \$85 million top-up to the NISA accounts. Well the top-up did occur, Mr. Speaker, but this government only put in 10 million; \$75 million of that was federal money and yet this government is trying to take credit for it. Some more of the misinformation in this particular document.

And most of the rest of this document, Mr. Speaker, is really not of any value until we come down to health care. It says, "My government's goal is to keep building a strong, sustainable health system." Well I think most of the people in this province would change that word "keep" to "start." They would wish that they would build a strong, sustainable health care system.

Because talk to Ms. Bull, what we raised today, and ask her what she thinks of our health care system, being rushed out the door after surgery on her lung, with no one knowing that she was being expelled from the hospital, Mr. Speaker. Those are the kind of things that the member from Saskatoon Nutana has built for a health care system. Those are the kinds of situations that arise on a daily basis in this province, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis.

I wonder if the Health minister or the junior associate minister, Mr. Speaker, have ever tried walking to the General Hospital after dark? I wonder if they've ever tried that. Because a lot of nurses have to do that, Mr. Speaker, and they've been assaulted in doing so. And fact is, now the health district has to put security guards on to escort them around the premises. That's the kind of health care system that the NDP have built in this city and in this province.

**An Hon. Member:** — Better than the American system.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Well I hear better than the American system over there. Well I don't know about the American system across the board, Mr. Speaker, but I've had occasion to talk with people across in North Dakota. And a good many people from Saskatchewan go to North Dakota for their health care because they simply can't get health care service in this province. And no one, Mr. Speaker, no one is turned away at the door of a hospital in North Dakota. No one is turned away.

Reminds me of the time, Mr. Speaker, when a young lady showed up at the door — I think it was St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon — at emergency and tried to get in, and the doors were locked. So she went to a pay phone and phoned. She went to a pay phone and phoned, Mr. Speaker, and the security guard came along and told her to move her car.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are problems in health care in the US, but there are certainly lots of problems in health care in Saskatchewan.

People in this province, Mr. Speaker, are concerned about their health care services. And in the Speech from the Throne it says that the government, they are determined that no family should go without medical care because they lacked the money to pay for it. And their determination lives on in us.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they're absolutely right. Money does not play a role in getting health care in Saskatchewan. But what we have here is simply a lack of health care for a lot of families, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Saskatchewan. You know, the government likes to brag about universal health care. Well I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's not universal health care we have in this province; it's universal pain, because we all suffer equally in this province when it comes to health care.

Many people have heard the stories of patients waiting for months and months for surgeries, or months and months for cancer treatments. I know of a young woman out east of town here who was diagnosed, I believe it was in August, with a brain tumour. And it wasn't until she was blacking out in late December with migraine headaches that she finally got in for cancer treatments, Mr. Speaker — finally got in.

Or what about the gentleman from Estevan who was trying to get into the Allan Blair Clinic for treatments, and when he finally got in there to receive his cancer treatments they said, you might as well go home; it's too late. Those are true stories, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's the health care service we've had in Saskatchewan, health care service developed by the NDP since 1991. And it's ongoing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This program goes on to talk about . . . Again, I mentioned earlier to the Speaker that the Speech from the Throne dealt in part with the Saskatchewan Party platform. And so you kind of recognize certain words in here that the Premier has been using in directing towards the Saskatchewan Party program. It says:

Now is not the time to abandon the principles of our health system, nor to freeze our investment in . . . people's health.

Well what's been happening under this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not a freeze but a closure of our health care system — 52 hospitals across this province have closed as acute care services. That is the history of this government, Mr. Speaker, closure of facilities.

And what's their rate of investment in the health care system? Their rate of investment is the rate of inflation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's what their history is.

What we're proposing to do is do a value-for-money audit.

Exactly what the Minister of Health just did with the time from visiting the surgeon to the time you actually get into surgery, to determine where the problems are, and are things being done properly. The whole system needs that to be done, not just little bits piecemeal here and there but the whole system, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we're proposing as the Saskatchewan Party to be done to health care.

In addition to that we would continue to increase the health care budgets by the rate of inflation which is what this government has been doing, Mr. Speaker. Only we intend to spend the money more wisely to provide front line services, not administration, Mr. Speaker, front line services.

The Speech from the Throne goes on to talk about building better clinics and health facilities by investing in new, better community care like home care, community nutrition programs, ambulance services, first responder programs, and other initiatives. All very good worthwhile projects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all needed in the communities.

But the statement misses out on one critical element, Mr. Speaker. Nowhere — nowhere — does it say acute care. Nowhere does it say acute care. And that is what the people of rural Saskatchewan . . . indeed all of Saskatchewan because it's happened in Regina and it could happen in Saskatoon, we could lose our acute care facilities.

So we have to take a very serious look, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at exactly what is being proposed by this government when it comes to these issues. So I think what we need to look at, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what the government is saying.

Well we have heard the associate minister say, eventually we'll see fewer hospitals than we have now. February 22, that was the associate minister's statement. February 26, she went on to say — after first on the 22nd having put a torpedo into the NDP's health policy — she went on to say, what a hospital is defined as now is something that we are not necessarily going to see in rural Saskatchewan. That was the associate minister's second torpedo into Saskatchewan health, Mr. Speaker. Well right after that the damage control crews went into work.

That second statement on 26th was said in the morning and the damage control crews came out later on that day with some information as to try and clarify what the minister was talking about, because it certainly did need to be clarified, Mr. Speaker. And so they came out with a program that outlined some of the things they were talking about called the primary health services initiatives.

So the minister is talking and she provided a list here of hospitals; these are places, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with acute care facilities. These hospitals would be converted, and here are the names of the hospitals: Hafford, in the Redberry constituency; Hudson Bay in the Carrot River constituency; Beechy and Kyle in the Rosetown constituency; senior's project, the core city project in Saskatoon. Now those two places, to the best of my knowledge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, don't have acute care. These are in senior's facilities, Mr. Speaker, along with the Loon Lake and Lucky Lake hospitals.

These are going to be converted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, into

primary health centre services — primary health centre services. Now what is a primary health centre . . . health services?

Well what it is, what it provides for is assessing, diagnosing, treating health problems, including minor surgeries; offering health advice; counselling clients regarding health problems, treatments, and how to guard against future illness; providing advice and education regarding factors which influence health.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't hear anything about acute care. Not there. There is no acute care here. So to me and the people of rural Saskatchewan and the people of urban Saskatchewan, a hospital is a place you get acute care.

And when you convert it — when you convert it to a primary health services or when you convert it to a health care centre, there is no acute care and you no longer have a hospital.

So we have a list here with one, two, three, four, five, six hospitals on here that are already being designated as those sites . . . Oh here's some more — I missed these, Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that and I apologize to the people of those constituencies. Here, we have Eatonia, La Ronge, four directions family practice unit, the royal . . . RGH, Regina General Hospital, family practice unit, Royal University Hospital. North Battleford, Macklin, Unity, Wilkie, Borden — those communities are also included in this initiative, Mr. Speaker, in moving to primary health services. Primary health services as outlined in this briefing doesn't include acute care.

And I'm going according to what the bureaucrats and the minister put out. Nothing about acute care here, Mr. Speaker. So those are the government's plans. That is what this government is planning on doing. And yet the minister stands up and says no, no. No, we're not going to close any hospitals.

**An Hon. Member:** — There are acute care beds in Hafford.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — There are acute care beds, the minister hollers across. Yes there are acute care beds in Hafford right now. The question is, will there be acute care beds in Hafford after the government gets done with their hack-and-slash program? That's the question. So why won't the minister step forward and give us the information?

We've asked the government and we have asked the district health boards for their three-year strategic studies. Well a few of them have supplied it. Most of them say, send us money. Tells you how much money the government is giving them when they can't supply another government agency with a public record, Mr. Speaker. Some of them have said, sorry we can't give it to you. We have to send it to Regina and they will make any changes to it they want to; maybe then we can let you have it. And others have simply said, no you can't have it.

These are public documents, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why should they not be given to the members of this Assembly? But for some reason the government members opposite don't want those in our hands. They don't want those out in the public to be seen or to be known because in those plans they would show that there is no acute care talked about in what is a primary health services and that's what the NDP's plan is for health care

in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The minister yesterday had her report on the waiting lists. But it was very interesting how narrowly focused that report was. It focused only on from the surgeon to the surgery and in making changes there. And there's a good number of those changes that absolutely have to take place, Mr. Speaker — that absolutely have to take place. Such as why are our operating rooms not working to the maximum capacity? Why are they being shut down every third Friday?

I heard the minister in question period today respond that the MRI in Regina will soon be up and running. Well I thought the MRI in Regina was supposed to be completed in 1998. This is already 1999 and the MRI isn't working. We have one MRI for Saskatchewan. One, Mr. Speaker.

(1545)

And I've heard derogatory remarks from the members opposite about the American system. In North Dakota there are 12 MRIs for just over 600,000 people — 12 MRIs. And yet in Saskatchewan, and yet in Saskatchewan, we've got one for a million people, and you can't get in to see it. The animals, the vet college almost has as much time to it on the MRI as people do — as people do, Mr. Speaker — because this government has mismanaged health care.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I seem to have got the attention of the members opposite. And perhaps if they listen they'll actually learn what the people outside of the Ring Road are thinking these day, Mr. Speaker, because I strongly suspect that the members opposite go from this building, home and back again, and try and avoid the public as much as possible.

Because the members of the public are certainly not very happy with the members opposite when they have to drive on the roads to get to their health care; when they go to their local community and find out that their friends and neighbours are leaving this province because government has abandoned them.

That's what's been happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government has been abandoning rural Saskatchewan. It has been abandoning Saskatchewan people across the board whether they're in rural or urban constituencies.

Take a look at the roads, Mr. Deputy Speaker, take a look at the roads that we have around this province. Drive on Regina streets. There's as many potholes on the major thoroughfares of Regina streets as there are on any highway in Saskatchewan because this government has abandoned, has abandoned highways and infrastructure programs.

The government brags about how much money they actually put into highways. You know, \$232 million, \$232 million. The promise two years ago was \$2.5 billion over 10 years; 10 years, 2.5 billion — \$250 million a year. It seems pretty logical. But they've never done it. Not yet they haven't after two years. We're already running I think it's about \$140 million behind on that commitment from this government. And that's why our roads and highways, in town and out of town, are deteriorating so badly.

When you look at the amount of money, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that actually, actually ends up on the road, on pavement, on getting it fixed, we end up with about \$60 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$60 million out of a budget of 232 million that actually ends up on the road. That's why these roads continue to deteriorate.

The only thing that's going downhill faster, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than the road structure in this province is the popularity of the government opposite. Their numbers are dropping faster than the potholes are filling up in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this document that this government proposes as an outline for this session of the legislature, for the twenty-third legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is irrelevant to the needs of Saskatchewan. The only thing this is, is a blatant attempt by the NDP to set themselves up for the upcoming election.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're ready for that election and my only comment will be that I don't support this budget and call the election.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my privilege to rise and speak in support of the Speech from the Throne. I want to welcome everyone back to this session of the legislature, likely to be the last session in the millennium — I always have trouble with that word, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have to say that this Y2K (Year 2000) scare tactics that the people have been using doesn't scare me at all. I grew up in rural Saskatchewan without any running water or power. So seriously, though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being on Public Accounts and some of the assurances we've had from our government, Y2K doesn't scare me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank Mr. Speaker for the work that he has been doing. I know he's not present now but I hope that he hears this speech or sees it in the transcript. I want to thank him for the work that he's been doing in promoting parliamentary democracy in all the constituencies across the province. I have had excellent reports from the teachers in our constituency, and I appreciate personally because I think that our students have to get a positive view of politicians of all political stripes and I myself have given many non-partisan presentations to our schools because I feel very strongly that I support parliamentary democracy.

I want to thank Mr. Speaker for the work that he has done in this area.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — I'd like to say welcome back to the Clerk and to our Deputy Clerk and the officers of the legislature who do so much for us, and welcome to the new pages to the session. I'm sure that you're going to have exciting times with us this year.

I want to congratulate my colleagues who moved and seconded

the Speech from the Throne, the members from Redberry Lake and Battleford-Cut Knife. Not only did these two people speak from the heart, you also showed this Assembly the advantages of living in the great Northwest — something that we, all of us in that area, feel very strongly about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say that I am very proud to be Chair of the NDP caucus and my colleagues — great people all of them and each of them bringing a great gift here to the legislature.

I'm also extremely proud to represent the constituency of Lloydminster. This area continues to be one of the most diversified, progressive, and innovative areas of the province. I want to thank the constituents of Lloydminster for allowing me to serve them for this last eight years. It has been a pleasure, and I believe strongly there is no higher gift that you can give to people than to serve them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — I want to join the member from Redberry Lake in congratulating the Yellowhead Highway Association for winning the tourism award. We are all eagerly awaiting the completion of the twinning between Lloydminster and North Battleford — the section between Marshall and Maidstone proceeding this spring. Too bad the feds have money for highways in the east — for example, New Brunswick — but none for Saskatchewan.

But we've done it . . . we've gone alone before. We've done it before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we'll do it again, though that is not my understanding of federalism. The meaning of federalism should be to build this country together, no matter where you live or what your population is. And I often feel that in Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, our eastern cousins sometimes don't consider us like they should. And I know my counterparts in Alberta and Manitoba feel the same way.

My constituency neighbour is Battleford-Cut Knife, and we are suffering from the same conditions: drought, low commodity prices, high input and production costs, low oil prices. But as the member from Redberry Lake said — and he was quite right — because our economy has diversified and because we have worked with the people of Saskatchewan to pay down our debt, we will be able to ride this downturn out — something that wouldn't have been the case 10 years ago.

I think that . . . again I want to speak on something that really concerns me greatly. I am like the Minister of Agriculture. I am sick and tired of what is being said in rural Saskatchewan about our government, and I want to point the finger exactly where it should be pointed. We have recently announced that we will participate in the federal agriculture income disaster program. This is a \$140-million commitment by the people of Saskatchewan to our agricultural community. We set the money aside to ensure that it was there in case there was a disaster such as this.

I would like to discuss today some of the context for Saskatchewan's decision to participate in this federal program. I'm sure that you've heard our Premier and our Minister of Agriculture voice their concerns about the structure of this

program as soon as it was proposed by the federal government. Saskatchewan's government had very good reasons for our concerns.

Historically, support for Canadian agriculture programs have been funded in large part by the federal government. When you go down the list of farm programs over the years, programs which have helped to stabilize and improve farm income, Tory and Liberal federal governments have been getting out of the business of supporting our family farms.

I am sick and tired, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of listening to people say — Liberals and Tories — that they are defenders of farm families. That is so easy to say that, but I'd like to present the facts here today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — In the 1970s we had fully funded price support programs under the agricultural stabilization Act which became the two-third federal and one-third provincial western grain stabilization Act program. In the 1970s crop insurance was a federal program with provinces paying for administration only. And 20 years ago the Crow rate was shipping . . . for shipping our product to port was \$4.85 per tonne supported by the federal government.

Imagine where we could be today with \$4.84 per tonne for our rate instead of the 30 to \$40 per tonne and we had two-price, we had two-price system for wheat. Excuse me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I get a little overwhelmed because I feel very strongly about this.

Over the course of the '80s and '90s, the federal governments — Tory and Liberal — have shifted the costs of these programs unto the provinces or have eliminated them entirely, leaving our producers at the mercy of the markets and the elements. This is not my understanding on federalism. The Crow Benefit was the condition of Confederation as far as I'm concerned. We were sold down the creek by the federal Tory Party and the Liberals fell in with them.

As far as I'm concerned, I am sick and tired of being blamed and have people speaking to me and saying — Tories and Liberals alike — that I'm not concerned about farm people.

My ancestors came here from Ukraine in 1906, 90 years ago. They were slaves and serfs on the soil. They came because they could be free and they could farm here. In three generations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are we going to lose the land? Because I tell you there's no place to go now. We have to stay here and fight and we have to go out systematically and tell people in this province who supports farm families and who doesn't and who speaks untruths out of the other side of their mouth.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — They have eliminated the Crow Benefit. We fought on the Crow Benefit in 1982; they told us we were old fashioned. Guess what? The Crow Benefit is gone and we're going to suffer . . . (inaudible) . . . I'll talk to you about GRIP later. We have deregulated the railways and allowed acceleration branch line abandonment. We eliminated two-price

system for wheat. The federal government has eliminated western grain stabilization. They have transferred more and more of the cost of crop insurance and NISA to the provinces. They've gone from taking major responsibility for safety net and disaster relief programs to a position of requiring 40 per cent of the cost for the provinces.

Why have they done all this, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well successive Tory and Liberal governments have claimed that they have entered the wonderful new world for liberalized trade agreements. Remember them telling us we're going to be on a level playing field. They lied to the farmers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are supposedly playing on a level playing field. This sounds too good to be true, doesn't it. That's because it is too good to be true; it's not true. Far from delivering a level playing field, our producers have been left undefended in a marketplace distorted by subsidies.

Let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker. I remember in the '80s, Mr. Devine standing up and saying he was the defender of families; then he systematically undid all the things that we had, during the '70s, legislated to support families. I am sick and tired of hearing those folks say they are the defenders of rural Saskatchewan and then they support policies that systematically unravel everything that supports rural Saskatchewan.

(1600)

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — Canada provides subsidies amounting to the grand total of \$15 per tonne. The United States subsidizes each tonne of wheat \$72. The European community subsidizes each tonne of wheat \$116. This is a so-called level playing field that we are on thanks to the trade agreements that Mulroney and Chrétien governments have signed — thank you very much.

And I'm like the Minister of Agriculture. I'm going to mail out his speech and mine to every farmer. I am going to tell the story because I am sick and tired of people getting half-truths from people.

Now don't get me wrong. We don't prefer subsidies when I talk about the subsidies from the Europeans and the US. Our farmers are the most efficient producers of the highest quality product in the world. Give us a level playing field and we'll succeed very nicely; we'll succeed better than other people in the world and we won't whine and cry like the Americans do — the big capitalists. Just give them some tough competition and they're whining and crying. But the point I'm making is that either the federal government has entered into these trade arrangements, make sure that they work or they do something to support our producers who are being harmed by international subsidies by our competitors. You can't have it both ways. You do either one or the other.

Canada got rid of the Crow benefit and the two-price system of wheat and other subsidies; other countries did not. Well we sat there. I remember Mr. Mulroney saying, you know we're going to be on a level playing field. Well the Americans didn't get rid of their subsidies. What kind of a level playing field was that? Instead what we get is a federal program which will not help

everyone who needs it. And then the Chrétien government insists that the provinces hardest hit by low commodity prices should pony up 40 per cent of the cost of the program.

As the Premier put it, they're asking the same people who are facing the income draw, who are all Saskatchewan taxpayers, to pay for their own disaster program. When it comes to fighting a subsidy war the Saskatchewan treasury cannot compete with the treasuries in Brussels or in Washington, DC. This is a case where the emperor has no clothes.

And I would not talk about mismanaging money. We have just gone through 10 deficits in the Devine years where they overspent \$1 billion every year. And we are still paying . . . we are still paying the interest rates.

When I tell my constituents look . . . I talked to a woman today and I said look, we would like to help you in this area. This is a valid thing that you're asking for. But the third largest payment in our budget is to interest payments on the Tory debt that goes every year out of this province. That's wealth leaving this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But getting back to the agriculture, as long as we don't have fair trading arrangements, the federal government must step up to the plate and stand up for Canadian and Saskatchewan farmers. Give one or the other, a level playing field or level subsidies. We also had misgivings about the proposed design of this new program that we've got imposed on us. We're not sure that the federal Department of Agriculture was taking into account the serious droughts in part of the northwestern Saskatchewan that I represent and the member from Battleford-Cut Knife represents.

I'm sorry, any program that is based on a three-year average income would not do much to help people in my part of the world. These are the reasons why we are reluctant to sign on to the federal — and were reluctant to sign on — to the federal disaster program. I'm sorry but 70 per cent of zero is still zero, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is a shame that farmers in the best productive area of the province, the northwest, will not get any help.

But when it comes clear that our concerns have fallen on deaf ears — and they did fall on deaf ears — we decided to sign on in order to make sure that some Saskatchewan farmers got something, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be clear about one thing, Mr. Speaker. We are going to name the reason why we have had many problems. We lost the Crow rate and they said . . . they actually said transportation costs would go down. I remember that. And do you know what? If the Estey report goes through and the caps are lifted off, what are the farmers and the producers going to pay then? They got rid of the two-price system for wheat.

You know, the Minister of Agriculture went through all the costs of those programs. And to top everything off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are proposing that we get rid of the Wheat Board. I want to be clear and I want to go on the record now. I do not oppose, neither does any caucus member, the dismemberment and the doing away of the Canadian Wheat Board. This would be a demise to our farmers.

And I'm sick and tired of people talking about GRIP. It was a flawed program to begin with. It was called the gross revenue insurance program. What it would mean now is high premiums and no payout. It was a flawed program from the very first and any thinking people know that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. Now the hon. member from Lloydminster has the floor and the rest of the people can't hear, and the Speaker cannot hear the speech. I'm sure the hon. members on the opposite side of the House will have their opportunity to get into the debate at the proper time. But right now the hon. member from Lloydminster has the floor and I would ask all hon. members to come to order and listen.

**Ms. Stanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These Tories opposite would have the farmers of Saskatchewan believe that they support them. Well let's look at the facts about who has in effect pulled all the supports from the farmers. And we are going to tell this time and time again. I'm going to tell this story, so does the Minister of Agriculture.

The two-price wheat system gone, the Crow benefit gone, the western grain stabilization program gone, deregulation of railways, accelerated branch line abandonment — all of these actions brought on to us by successive Tory and Liberal governments. And what do these people opposite propose? They want to put the nail in the coffin of Saskatchewan farmers by getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board.

These people say they support farm families. Well let me tell you about what they support. They support larger and larger corporate farms and landholdings. My ancestors, like I said, did not come to this province 93 years ago to lose their land and become serfs on the soil again.

There is no place to go, folks. The lines have been drawn clearly in the sand. It's time to fight, and to fight for what we believe in.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — I'm also sick and tired, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the Tory opposition talking about the advantage in living in Alberta. Let me tell you something. I went to a meeting in a town in my constituency, Lashburn. They're planning to build a new sports complex. They've asked me my humble opinion, and I've been going to the meetings and trying to help them out.

On this committee, it was interesting to note there were three young couples. All had moved from the Alberta side and onto Lashburn. They tell me it is so much cheaper to live in Saskatchewan than in Alberta.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — This is a personal testimonial. This was not a political meeting. People had asked me to come there to give my opinion on how they could get organized, but when they said it, I just said yes.

And you know, people, this is another message that I get. Saskatchewan is not Alberta. It will never be Alberta no matter who is the government here. Because guess what? It's a vast



province, 750 miles long, 350 miles across. It has a sparse population of a million people scattered all over.

We want to provide the services for all of these people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a huge infrastructure in roads, in education, in health; a huge infrastructure in power, in telephones, in energy. We'll always have a vast province.

We are not Alberta with a majority of our population in two cities. We are not Manitoba which is only one-third virtually populated. We are Saskatchewan — a wonderful province stretching 750 miles. We'll always need a bigger infrastructure than either one of those two provinces.

And as long as I and my ancestors have a breath — and my granddaughter just won an oratory contest in Regina — as long as my family still has a breath, we will support and promote the Saskatchewan Way, the way our ancestors built this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — Now to go on about the Saskatchewan Way. I have a great deal of people that I have met in Alberta and have become friends with because my son-in-law happens to come from Alberta. By the way, I'll digress for a minute and tell you he comes from a Tory family. He now holds, and they live in Saskatchewan, a member . . . he is a member of the New Democratic Party. And his father, who is a neurosurgeon, tells me that if he lived in Saskatchewan he'd be voting for the Premier that we have here.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Stanger:** — But anyway my friends from Alberta tell me . . . And they send me clips often from the *Calgary Herald* because this is where my in-laws live. Last clip I got . . . and I was surprised to see that the member from Regina South had it. The *Calgary Herald* said on Monday, a report from the doctors there says a quarter of a million Albertans have now been without health care, health care coverage. One quarter of a million! One quarter of a million people have not paid their health premiums, are without coverage.

Can you imagine that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? In that vast, wealthy province with two . . . their major population in two large cities, able to . . . much easier to deliver their services, and they have a quarter of a million people that don't have health care because they haven't paid their premiums.

This is the Alberta advantage. Advantage in what way? Can you tell me? I've given you three examples. Couples who are moving to our side. If you earn 50 to 60,000, it's by far cheaper to live in Saskatchewan. I can tell you that right now. Family who have now become card-carrying New Democrats because they see what we're doing. The papers in Alberta. So don't give me the Alberta advantage.

Now having said all this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Alberta is a wonderful place too. We are neighbours, we co-operate, our premiers co-operate. I am not running down the Alberta system. I am just sick and tired of saying everything is perfect in Alberta, because it isn't perfect in Alberta, and I am a testimony to that.

Now I think I'd like to speak to The Respect for Constituents Act. If we could, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would make this Act retroactive to do for the members of the Tory Party what the Wizard of Oz did for the cowardly lion — give him some courage. And while we're at it, also what he did for the scarecrow. You remember what he did for the scarecrow — gave him some brains. Forget the heart.

(1615)

But all joking aside, Mr. Speaker, the reason for this Bill is the same as for any other Bill. When there is an inequity, a problem, a distortion that can be fixed with legislation, a responsible government comes up with a Bill to restore order or balance the inequity. It's this simple.

We have Bills that ensure orderly, environmentally sound burials. And during this session we will have a Bill to enforce responsible representation, or as Tommy Douglas would have said, and I heard him say it many times — elect a black cat, stay a black cat.

The reason for this Bill is simple. In any Canadian election . . . Just listen to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker; this makes eminent sense, and I know my constituents support this. In any Canadian election, about 20 to 30 per cent of the people vote for the party of their choice . . . they vote for the party. People like me voted CCF or NDP forever. I'm one of these 20 to 30 per cent.

Then there are about 50 to 70 per cent who vote for a party because they like their leader. That is very evident by the polls that are taken. That's the reason we always have been in good shape, Mr. Speaker; we've had good leaders.

Well, about 10 to 20 per cent of the voters, vote based on their preference for the local candidate. These percentages are very approximate but I believe them to be relatively accurate. As an aside, I should say that although they seem to slight the individual candidate — because a lot of candidates will think well surely I'm worth more than 10 to 20 per cent — it's worth pointing out that most individuals . . . it's good to find out that most individual races are won by less than 10 per cent. So we individual candidates make a big difference. We make a big difference.

So if I'm right here, this means that representatives who leave the party that elected them to join another are betraying — betraying between 70 and 90 per cent of the people who elected them. The people in my constituency want this Act; they see it as responsible government.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn to an article I read in the *Prince Albert Herald*, on March the 6th. And I'm going to quote from it. This is not something I made up. This is not a report from my paper or from anything I wrote. This is a report from a writer, Barb Gustafson, from the *Prince Albert Herald*, and this is what she wrote:

Saskatchewan Party Leader Elwin Hermanson came to town last week, undoubtedly looking for votes. He may have won some, but he definitely lost some others.

During his chat with the Chamber of Commerce executive,

he was asked about candidate nominations and the prospect of women running for the Sask. Party. His reply? Words to the effect that it's difficult to get women involved in politics, since "their concerns with the home" and "they don't like dealing with conflict."

Some of the women . . . heard his remarks dealt with their immediate conflict — between wanting to wring his red neck and the knowledge that such an action would be illegal — by walking out of the meeting.

The words are surprising only in their honest expression.

I'm going to repeat this again, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

The words are surprising only in their honest expression.

There is little doubt about what the Sask. Party sees as women's proper role; you just don't hear it articulated that clearly very often.

And that is what the writer said.

Well I want to tell Mr. Hermanson something and the people in my constituency, and the people in Saskatchewan. I want to tell them that my family has always come first with me. I am a mother, a grandmother, an aunt, a niece, a godmother, a teacher but I am also a politician, because I believe that it is incumbent on every person to leave this world a better place than how I found it . . . or they found it.

My greatest accomplishment has been in raising two wonderful daughters, Dawn and Duane. I mean Dawn and Denise. Sorry, Duane, you're my son-in-law, not my daughter. My two most wonderful daughters, Dawn and Denise, two intelligent, well-educated, responsible women, and taxpayers, they have married two wonderful men, Duane and Scott.

Now I have four wonderful grandchildren, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And guess what? And guess what? And guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I have the two wonderful daughters, two wonderful sons-in-law, four wonderful grandchildren, and guess what? None of that has prevented me from being on the credit union board, the Maidstone town council, the NDP executive of my constituency, the university senate, and now a MLA.

I do not see a conflict between my role in all of these and all the agencies I have represented and now the people of Lloydminster.

In fact I had a constituent the other day say to me, and it warmed my heart, a young woman of 37, 38, she said you know, Vi, what I appreciate — I don't agree with everything your government has done — what I appreciate is having a representative like you who has children of my age, who has children, grandchildren of my age, and also has a lengthy work experience as you have had and a lengthy time out in the world. She said, I may be 35 years old, but she said I appreciate having you as a representative and I would like you to run again.

And I said, I am. My nomination is April 14. I know that you're not a party member but we'd be glad to have you come.

So let me say, Mr. Hermanson, my family has always come first. They'll always come first — but you know what? The people of this province mean a lot to me. The people from my constituency mean a lot to me and surprisingly enough even the 58 members in this legislature I am proud of no matter what party they represent because this is democracy in action.

Thank you very much. I support the Speech from the Throne.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to stand up today and reply to the Speech from the Throne. Mr. Speaker, I think it continues on the many Throne Speeches that have been presented by this government since I became an MLA in 1991. I think it follows the question of vision and where we want this province to go in terms of the 21st century, which has always been the step-by-step approach that has been used by the Throne Speech by this government, also in the budget by this government and in the policies and programs that have been put forward by this government since 1991.

I first want to thank my colleague, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who moved the Throne Speech the other day, the member from Redberry Lake, a friend of mine, a very dear friend of mine. I think he was very honoured to do the Throne Speech.

I also want to thank the member from Battleford-Cut Knife for seconding the Throne Speech. I think her words are very eloquent in terms of outlining what she thought was important in terms of the Throne Speech and why it is important to her. And it is one about vision — it is one about vision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and those visions come in different areas.

And I want to touch on three of those areas today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The one area being agriculture and Ag and Food. The other one deals with the question of education. And the other one deals with health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The question of agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know full well what the impact has been in this province to producers, be it on the case of lower commodity prices or be it on the case of drought. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say personally that I have experienced the example of drought this year that has taken west central Saskatchewan. Without question I know what that impact is to producers.

Our agricultural community, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has changed dramatically in the last 10 years — dramatically. Producers in this province have rose to the challenge of the changes that are taking place in agriculture. They have invested in agriculture in terms of new technology and seeing it where it can take them in terms of cutting costs, improving production, and being there in the 21st century.

Producers have taken in new technology when it has come to new crops. Producers out there have taken a very strong role in terms of mapping out what takes place in the marketplace, Mr. Speaker. They have taken a role, a very important role, of trying to map out those things that they want to grow.

But with all the expertise, with all those things that are on their side, I don't think you can find an ag economist anywhere in

North America or in the world that can show the downturn that took place in the farming community in terms of income this year. I don't think you can find anybody who can say that the Asian flu was going to take place and the economies of Asia would collapse. I don't think you would find anybody anywhere who would talk about the currency crisis that took place in Asia, the currency prices that have taken place in Latin America, and for that matter in Russia.

And these are all good customers of what Canadian producers and western Canadian producers and Saskatchewan producers produce: the lentil crop that goes into the eastern European market and in the European market; the pea crop that goes into the feed market and into the human consumption into Europe; the area of elk production, the question of elk velvet going into Asia; the question of other crops and the question of canary seed in terms of the impact that it has had there in terms of going in to the US market; the durum market and things like this.

This has not been the fault of producers. This has not been the fault of producers. Producers are not out there saying it's some, you know, this or that. They are saying these problems have come from outside Canada and we need help to deal with those kind of things. But producers need to be given credit for what they're doing out there in agriculture, what they're doing to change the face of agriculture.

I speak too representing the riding of Saskatoon Northwest which has in it one of the major manufacturers in western Canada in terms of direct seeding technology — Flexi-Coil. Flexi-Coil is the first example of what happens when producers don't spend money. Their production has fell back. They fully recognize, talking to the people at Flexi-Coil, why it has taken place.

And as we go through this crisis in agriculture, as we go through this economic downturn in agriculture, I think it's short term. I think there's better days ahead in the area of agriculture, particularly in those crops that I've talked about the producers have gone into, and new crops that are coming forward: be it in the area of borage which is . . . Bioriginal produced out of Saskatoon; be it in the area of as I say bison production, in the area of Saskatchewan particularly in the northwestern part of Saskatchewan.

There are opportunities out there for producers to take advantage of. There are opportunities out there that producers aren't afraid to take advantage of.

But do you know what we hear from the opposition, from the other side? Gloom and doom. It's always gloom and doom. I don't know how the members opposite can go out there and talk to producers. I go out there and talk to producers. I go out and talk to those people that are selling farm machinery. I go out and talk to those people that are manufacturing farm machinery. They tell me there are better times ahead. They say in the long term, we're in it for the long term. They're in it for the long term. And I think that has to be an important piece when we talk about ag and food.

The other area I want to deal with that is mentioned in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the area of education.

This is a very significant part in terms of what takes place in our province in terms of education.

The Throne Speech talked about the number of children that are in school every day in the area of K to 12. And this government has provided a firm commitment to those areas of K to 12 and continues to do that. But at the same time education is changing out there.

(1630)

In the city of Saskatoon we have a number of community-based schools in Saskatoon which are meeting the needs of the different students that we have in our community. They are changing the structure by which they teach these kids, but these kids are grabbing hold to what's going on in the educational community. They're staying in school. They're being a part of it. And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, the community is being a part of the school system. These are the changes that are taking place in Saskatoon.

There was made mention today in terms of special ed in question period, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In question period a high school in my riding, Marion Graham, can be very proud of the special education program they are conducting. It allows these kids to integrate with the school system and provide them a level of education to meet their needs.

Mr. Speaker, it's becoming very difficult to shout over the opposition who don't want to hear good news.

**An Hon. Member:** — I want to hear it.

**Mr. Whitmore:** — And I'm glad to hear that the member of the third party would like to hear good news for a change. I get tired of hearing bad news.

Within the role of K to 12, as I talked about the changes that are taking place in education, we are embarking within the Throne Speech to establish a task force where we sit down and say, where does education need to be in terms of its roles and responsibilities for the 21st century. Talking about those kind of changes that will give us a good education system for those kids from K to 12.

There are other areas that we need to discuss too that will be outside the task force, but those discussions take place with the Saskatchewan trustees association and STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) and parents, in the area of governance and in the area of tax reform. But those things we are building on. We're building on those things in terms of education to provide the best education program that we can for our children in Saskatchewan.

But the education process doesn't stop here. And the Throne Speech clearly outlines that too. We have to look at what kids want to do, and what young adults want to do when they reach grade 12 — what course they want to do for their life. We see the activity that is taking place now in the regional colleges, the activity in terms of the colleges that I've met in terms of training people to meet the needs of their communities.

I remember talking to the Carlton Trail group in terms of

talking about their successes in meeting the needs of manufacturers out there in the Humboldt area. Within that, they also praised the government in their initiatives in terms of providing student assistance which has opened the door to many students in those communities to take the kind of courses they want to take without the kind of financial burden that's out there.

The next step also within the regional college sector becomes the area of SIAST colleges. Again we've seen some big changes in the SIAST colleges in terms of how they're trying to meet the needs of their people out there, be it by coordinating activities between the colleges now in terms of how we can supply these kind of programs throughout Saskatchewan and also enter into agreements with other colleges outside the province by which we can provide those services too to those individuals.

These are good working relationships that are taking place. We can be proud of these kind of programs and to the commitment that has been taking place in the province. Our training programs are being praised by the students that are using them. Our training programs are being praised by the business community that want to see them. And our training programs are providing success for those meaningful jobs that are out there in our economy — and I say to the opposition: those meaningful jobs that exist out there in our economy.

The other area that's important to me particularly is the area of post-secondary education, being that of the university campuses. We can be very proud of their tradition, the honour, and the high standard of excellence the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina provide to this province.

We have students. We can look at the history of those two universities and their alma maters in terms of the alumni people that have attended those universities. These are people we can be proud of not just in Saskatchewan, nor just in Canada, not just in North America, but around the world in terms of what they have offered to the people of the world in terms of those two universities.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whitmore:** — And we continue a commitment to those universities in terms of what's going on. We try and deal with those critical mass problems that they have. We try to work with them very closely in terms of how we can help them out to deal with the changes that are taking place at the university system.

They're not easy. There are high demands in terms of what's going on in terms of the university system. But we are trying to work in a co-operative spirit of what's going on. There are examples of that in terms of the Harold MacKay report that came down on the universities, of how they could work together. The DesRosiers report which is another example of where we can come together to work together as universities, at the same time recognizing that each of those campuses and those universities have their own function and their own importance in the scheme of things.

And those things have grown to provide very important segments to our economy. And I have to talk about here in the area of Saskatoon which I'm most acquainted with, and that being the area of ag-biotech, ag-biotechnology, which has been a growth directly related to the research that took place at the University of Saskatchewan. That growth is directly related to the basic research that took place there not just in the area of the university, but also too in the ag research station that exists there; those in concert have built a very good system.

The Crop Development Centre there is the foremost in the world in terms of the products, in terms of the varieties that they've brought forward for producers in this province and around western Canada to meet the needs out there of their customers in terms of what's going on in western Canada and to meet those needs. But within that, in terms of Innovation Place, we see other dynamics taking on that provide other benefits to other industries out there. And these are important growth sectors that are going on.

Other areas that take place at the University of Saskatchewan is the area of medical research — something that we don't pay enough attention to or talk about enough in terms of the medical research that takes place there. We know it's modest. We know that they face some problems in terms of competing with the larger universities and other research centres, particularly in eastern Canada.

But they are working to create a niche for themselves in terms of how they can provide those kind of services for the people of Canada and for the people of North America. These kind of benefits exist from within and we need to build on those kind of things that are taking place at the University of Saskatchewan.

We are committing ourselves to the changes that are taking place there and some of the capital requirements that are needed at the University of Saskatchewan. And we will try and deal with those as best we can within the other restraints or financial pull-and-tugs that exist. But it's important too that we make those kind of commitments to those university campuses because they are the heart and soul of the learning in this province. And we have to do that — it's an important segment of the economy.

So these are things that we have to deal with in terms of the education aspect. And we are working towards that to do those kind of things.

In the other area, Mr. Speaker, I don't . . . I want to deal in the area of health care, Mr. Speaker, in the positive direction this Throne Speech talks about in terms of where health care is going in this province. And I am tired of hearing the scare tactics from the opposition. I am tired of hearing them scare people.

Let us move on as the people of this province are building a good system. And we are meeting those strains and stresses out there as best we can in terms of the changes that are taking place. We see, in terms of trying to meet the question of the O.R.s (operating rooms), in terms of waiting lists as the report that came down today — or yesterday — and the commitment the Health minister has made.

But at the same time, we started an earlier commitment in terms of dealing with the question of the shortage of nurses by the commitment of hiring 200 nurses last year in June. This is a start of doing these kinds of things to build on the health care system. These are the positive steps.

We will now see the second MRI in Saskatchewan, in Regina, being operated, where the province of Saskatchewan will pay the operating costs to operate that MRI. We will see later this year, Mr. Speaker, the third MRI in Saskatchewan. And this will deal with those questions in terms of the waiting lists in terms of diagnostics.

The fourth one that the people talk about doesn't deal with the question of people health. It deals with the question . . . the one that we . . . they made reference to the one at the veterinary college at the University of Saskatchewan. The western veterinary college will have a MRI for veterinary purposes only. But that will be the fourth one in terms of animal diagnostics that will exist in the province.

Mr. Speaker, these are the positive things that are going on out there. There are changes. There are changes that are difficult to deal with. But as you talk to communities out there that face the change, that have made changes to meet the services of the people of the province, they are happy with them.

I talk about the community of Beechy and I talk about the community of Kyle that have been highlighted in national magazines that talk about the success stories. Yes. And you know this is an interesting thing. Beechy is the hometown of the leader of the Sask Tory Party. Yes, and he doesn't like this.

I'm going to drift off my speech for a minute, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't think anybody has the honour in this House . . . I had the honour in this House of being the only member that has ran against the leader of the Sask Tory Party, when he was not leader of that, when he was . . . And I've also had the opportunity to run against now the present Leader of the Liberal Party. I don't think the members opposite know that. Well the member for Kindersley does. He remembers the debate that took place.

1988 — 1988 federal election, federal election. I was running for the New Democratic Party, which was a riding that represented, I think, one-third of west central Saskatchewan. Also in the race was a Mr. Bill McKnight, who was representing the Conservative Party at the time, and a Mr. Elwin Hermanson, who was running for the Reform Party. There was also a Liberal, but maybe the member from Kindersley could remember her name.

The outcome, the outcome, I have to tell you the outcome, Mr. Speaker — I'm very proud of this — is that we cut the margin in terms of how the minister — or at that time was the minister of Agriculture, Mr. Bill McKnight — previously had won by 13,000 votes. We cut that margin down by 10,000 and he only won by three. Our vote increased, and I have to say that it was much, much larger than the member . . . or the gentleman who was running for the Reform Party at the time. I'm very proud of that; very proud of that, that I came in a very strong second.

Then in 1995 I had the opportunity to run against, at that time,

the Liberal candidate who is the . . . just the past president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

**An Hon. Member:** — Who's that?

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Dr. Jim Melenchuk. And I'm very proud to say that at that race I didn't come in second, I came in first. So it sounds that my political career is going the right way. My political career is going up, not down. And I'm very happy about that. I'm very proud of that.

So I await with bated breath to see who the opposition parties will put up this time to run against me. I would be very pleased to see what . . . who they wish to put forward because last time I was told I was the giant killer. Mr. Speaker, they now have to kill the giant. They now have to kill the giant.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(1645)

**Mr. Whitmore:** — I do digress. I do digress.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite make reference to my size. And I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, as always the case as I start on the campaign trail, I will be fit and trim when it comes to election day. Because I am, as I am right now, working hard to succeed as the MLA for Saskatoon Northwest.

I now want to move into the area of taxes, Mr. Speaker. Taxes is a very important issue to my constituents, to the people of Saskatoon, and to the people of the province. Our people, in terms of the people that have supported this government, have understood the difficult decisions that we've had to make as a government, and we thank them for that.

But as good times come, and budgets become balanced, we now want to share in terms of that success with the people of Saskatchewan. And since we have balanced the budget we have gone out there with fair affordable tax cuts — the income tax cuts, PST (provincial sales tax) cuts — which I have to digress again off my speech.

I have to talk about a meeting that took place in Langenburg, Saskatchewan and I may be corrected by the member from Saltcoats where the Leader of the Liberal Party at that time — it was just after this government had reduced the PST by 2 per cent — and the Leader of the Liberal Party, which is Dr. Jim Melenchuk, said at that meeting that a cut in the provincial sales tax was a political issue not an economic issue. It only had political impact, not economic impact.

The member from Saltcoats says he couldn't believe it either. I want to tell you something about where Langenburg is. Langenburg is very close to the Manitoba border. The tax regime in Manitoba at that time and until their — I have not kept up with their recent budget — their tax regime was that of 7 per cent applied to a lot more different items.

And I remember being in Langenburg before 1995 where the people were saying lower the tax to 7 per cent and we're competitive because we're not taxed. We're not taxing so many items. We can beat the people of Manitoba. And the Leader of

the Liberal Party had the gall to stand up to these group of people and tell them this didn't have economic impact in their community. I can't believe that the doctor said this. I can't believe the doctor said it. The doctor knows best. The doctor knows best.

And then he talks about the question of tax cuts and makes the comment that the people of Saskatchewan don't want tax cuts. Now I ask the members of the official opposition if they don't think that the people of Saskatchewan don't want tax cuts. What's their answer? Do the people of Saskatchewan want tax cuts in the official opposition? Yes or no? Yes or no? Do you want tax cuts?

Do the people from the government party want tax cuts? Is that what the people of Saskatchewan have said? But the dear doctor says they don't want tax cuts. And don't worry about the debt either. Forget the debt. Don't worry about the debt. It'll take care of itself. We're just going to go spend. We're just going to go spend.

Well I don't know where he's going to spend, Mr. Speaker, but I'm afraid he's going to spend this province out of existence. There has to be a rational approach by which you do things in this province. And I don't think your rationality has any place in leading a party in this province, a party that has changed from official opposition to the rump opposition. And the other question becomes this is not a person who is capable of leading the province of Saskatchewan to be Premier because this would be an insult to the people of Saskatchewan.

In the area of tax cuts I have to talk about the proposal that was outlined by the Saskatchewan Party, the Sask Tory Party.

**The Speaker:** — Now, order. Order. I think all hon. members will recognize how much more valuable it is to have the comments put on the record when you're on your feet. They don't have to be shouted across the floor at each other. Allow the hon. member for Saskatoon Northwest to continue.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My throat was getting a little sore from shouting over them so it's nice that it's quiet in here again. I'm going to talk about the tax cuts that were proposed by the Sask Tory Party.

The question of dealing with the proposals that they have outlined and the dollars that it would cost this province — it just doesn't add up. The money isn't there to do the kind of things they want to want to do. It is a question of a balanced approach by which they do it.

You know, the interesting thing . . . the Sask Tory Party talks about Alberta and the initiative Alberta has taken place in the area — decoupling income tax, provincial income tax from federal income tax. And I think this is an opportunity for all provinces to look at that because provinces have been fighting for that. And they have proposed in their budget a flat tax regime. Whether it has merit or not, I can't say, because I've not had the opportunity to look at it closely. But I think we have to look at all options when looking at tax reform.

But at the same time when they have proposed that tax reform, their Minister of Finance, Stockwell Day, has said we will do it slowly and carefully; full implementation may take place in year 2002 based on the revenues that take place within the province of Alberta. They take a very sensible approach to what's going on, recognizing they have to be careful.

We take the same approach here in how we deal with things. A balanced approach in terms of the tax relief that we can provide . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — We can afford.

**Mr. Whitmore:** — . . . we can afford. The question of also dealing with programs that are needed in this province, and meeting some of those programs that come up as a surprise. And AIDA being one of those surprises, the agricultural income program — a surprise to everybody, Mr. Speaker, the terms of the AIDA program. But other members today have spoken very eloquently on the AIDA program.

But we have to deal with those financial situations. We have to deal with the question of forest fires that take place, our commitment to health care workers in terms of creating equality out there. Those kinds of pressures too that we have to respect and deal with in a very balanced way.

And at the other side of the spectrum is paying the debt. And I give credit to the Alberta government who have been able to take advantage of opportunities in terms of oil revenue, where they with oil revenue have been able to pay their debt down very quickly.

And I give them credit for that. Because they are sitting on one of the largest oil reserves in the world and that geographic location has provided them with a lot of opportunities to do the things they want to do.

And I give them credit in terms of how they've use that best for the people of Alberta. I certainly wished we had that kind of oil reserve sitting underneath this province because it would provide us great success also, I think, that would match Alberta. But we don't have that kind of resource base that they have in terms of the oil sector.

So we must deal with the commodities that we do have in terms of being uranium production, being the heavy oil production, which is a larger reserve for us, but is more costly to get out of the ground. We have to deal with these kinds of things.

Potash is also mentioned. Coal was also mentioned. These are the resources . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Gold.

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Gold. These are the resources that we take advantage of and try and deal with in terms of the issues and the problems and the economic necessities that exist out there in the province. So these are the kinds of balances.

As the member has said, we also have to deal with the debt. As I made reference, Alberta's had those kinds of success. We haven't been quite so successful but we have gone a long ways

in paying the mortgage down.

And when I talk to the people in my riding on the doorstep, who fully understand what it means to pay the mortgage, they tell me, do what you can for me but pay the mortgage down. Pay the mortgage down. Because if you don't pay that mortgage, it will never go away. So you've got to pay that mortgage down in order to succeed in doing the things we want to do in the province.

And we've come a long ways from 1991. And we will continue to go farther, Mr. Speaker. So these are the successes that we are building on within the communities that are out there, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I digressed in terms of the spending. The official opposition talks about a grand total of spending \$2 billion. I want to know where it's coming from. Show me the money. Show me the money! I've seen the numbers that they've took before. I see where they came from. I would ask them to go revisit their numbers. I would go ask them because I tell you the most embarrassing thing you can do in an election is use whiteout.

So if you want to correct things now, I give them advice to change it now so they don't have to white it out during the campaign. I hope they would take my advice and revisit their numbers and deal with the question of reality in terms of what this province can afford, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting when I talk about the question of being fair, while I talk about what the people of Saskatchewan want and the kind of direction they want, the official opposition just goes crazy. They just go crazy because they don't want to hear the truth. They don't want to hear the truth.

We have had a good working relationship with those communities out there that drive this province in terms of the business community, a good working relationship with the municipal governments out there, a good working relationship with the area of education I spoke of earlier, and a good working relationship with the people in the health care industry.

These are the things that we need to build on, we will continue to build on, and it is the kind of vision we need for the province of Saskatchewan.

So I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, as the time is drawing near, that I am very proud that I will be voting for this Throne Speech. I'm very proud of the vision that it offers and the direction that it continues to offer to the people.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to adjourn the debate, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

