

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of people very concerned about health care and the imminent closure of hospitals. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce acute care or close any more hospitals in the North-East Health District.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Arborfield and Carrot River.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I have a new petition to present today. The prayer reads:

Whereas your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reduce the royalty taxes on new drilling in Saskatchewan to stop job loss and create new employment in this sector.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Carievale, Gainsborough areas of southeast Saskatchewan and Pierson, Manitoba.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of farmers of Saskatchewan to do with the crisis in agriculture. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to demand that the federal government work with Saskatchewan to put in place a farm aid package that provides real relief to those who need it, and that provincial government develop a long-term farm safety net program as it promised to do when it cancelled GRIP against the wishes of farmers.

The community involved, Mr. Speaker, is from the community of Rhein.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To as well present a petition, a petition calling on the government to review its CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) agreement, and I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to end its unfair tendering policies and immediately cancel the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by a group of people from the . . . it looks like the northern area of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I arise on behalf of citizens concerned about pending hospital closures in rural Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce acute care or close any more hospitals in the North-East Health District.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Carrot River and Arborfield.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today from the people of the Carrot River area:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce acute care or close any more hospitals in the North-East Health District.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People that have signed this petition are also from Carrot River and Arborfield.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, the petition I have this afternoon, the prayer is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reduce the royalty taxes on new drilling in Saskatchewan to stop job loss and create new employment in this sector.

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

This petition comes from the southeast part of the province, Carievale in particular, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have petitions from citizens of Carrot River demanding that no more hospital closures take place. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce acute care or close any more hospitals in the North-East Health District.

And as I've mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the signators are all from Carrot River.

I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, while I bring forward petitions. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the NDP government to provide funding in this budget to have the Swift Current regional hospital equipped and staffed as a specialty care hospital, and to immediately provide funding for the purchase and operation of both imaging equipment and renal dialysis centre.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I look through these hundreds if not thousands of petitions in the southwest, and I believe that every community in the southwest part of Saskatchewan has had somebody sign this.

I so present this today.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well to present petitions on behalf of people who are concerned about the need of having a regional hospital in their area. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the NDP government to provide funding in this budget to have the Swift Current regional hospital equipped and staffed as a specialty care hospital, and to immediately provide funding for the purchase and operation of both imaging equipment and renal dialysis centre.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, those who've signed these petitions — and there are many of them — are from a number of communities throughout the southwest but also from the Thunder Creek constituency. People from Main Centre, Rush Lake, Morse, Hodgeville, Neville, Pambrun, Vanguard, Herbert, Morse, just to mention just a few as well many from other areas of the southwest including also the city of Swift Current itself.

I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise again today on behalf of the people of this province to present a petition. 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 Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks in the communities of Fillmore, and also — looks like a coffee

stain here — from the good folks out in Creelman.

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions from residents of the northwest, requesting remedial action for the dangerous and confusing entrance to the city of North Battleford, and specifically the Highway 40 and 16 intersection.

Your petitioners this afternoon come from North Battleford, Gallivan, Cochin, Meadow Lake and Sonningdale.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am also pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon provincial and federal governments to immediately take steps to end unfair world subsidies and provide farmers with prompt relief from declining incomes and act as watchdogs against rising input costs which are harming the rural economy.

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

The signatures come from the good people in Lemberg and Neudorf, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of people who are concerned about children with learning disabilities in the province of Saskatchewan. And 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.

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

The petitioners who have signed this today, Mr. Speaker, are from Broadview, Grayson, Cowessess, and Regina.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's last petition is nevertheless still important and I'll read the prayer:

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 and enter into negotiations with SARM and SUMA for a longer-term plan of rural road restoration reflecting future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as the new trucking regulations change safety factors on these rural roads.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition comes from the RM (rural

municipality) of Prairie No. 408, which is up in the Battleford area; signatories are from the Battlefords mostly, but there are a few also from the community of Wilkie. And I'm happy to present this on their behalf today.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the petitions presented at the last sitting have been reviewed and found to be in order. Pursuant to rule 12(7) these petitions are hereby received.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: what exemptions to the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act have been made by the Farm Land Security Board in 1999 for the purpose of allowing non-residents of Saskatchewan to purchase land in excess of the maximum amount of non-residents as set out in the Act?

I also give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question, and also to the Minister of Justice:

What exemptions to the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act were made by the Farm Land Security Board in 1998 for the purpose of allowing non-residents of Saskatchewan to purchase land in excess of the maximum amount for non-residents as set out in the Act?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: what exemptions to the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act were made by the Farm Land Security Board in 1997 for the purpose of allowing non-residents of Saskatchewan to purchase land in excess of the maximum amount for non-residents as set out as in the Act?

I also give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: what exemptions to the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act were made by the Farm Land Security Board in 1996 for the purpose of allowing non-residents of Saskatchewan to purchase land in excess of the maximum amount for non-residents as set out in the Act?

I also give notice that I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: what exemptions to the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act were made by the Farm Land Security Board in 1995 for the purpose of allowing non-residents of Saskatchewan to purchase land in excess of the maximum amount for non-residents as set out in the Act.

I also give notice, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member has a series of questions which appear to be identical except for the difference in the year, and if the hon. member would wish to advise the House of the same question and name the other years, that would be really quite sufficient.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The questions that I'll ask on day no. 12 also include the year of 1994, 1993, 1992, and 1991. Thank you.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

To the Hon. Minister of Energy and Mines: how many natural gas and H₂S flares are burning in the province's oil fields; has the industry offered to voluntarily reduce the number of flares as they have in Alberta; how many cyanide formations have there been identified in the province; how many cyanide formations have been perforated by the oil and gas drilling such as the one in the Consul area; have residents been issued a warning of the dangers to health in these areas as has been the case in northern Alberta?

I so submit, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. I would like to introduce to you and to all my colleagues in the Assembly, seated in the west gallery, a splendid and very fine group of young people. They are in fact, Mr. Speaker, 50 grade 8 students from MacNeill School. They're accompanied by their teachers Jim Harrop and Ron Schindel.

And I know that after they've spent some time in the Chamber, they're going to have a tour of the building. And later on I look forward to meeting with them and answering any questions they may have on the proceedings of the House.

So I would ask all my colleagues to join me in extending a warm welcome to the students from MacNeill School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — I've got another one. Thank you. While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce two very special people to you seated in the Speaker's gallery. One will be known to many of you, Donna From, my constituency assistant. And all of us here will know how important our CAs are to the work that we do.

And seated with her is Tony Martin, a very accomplished musician and friend from Lumsden, who is very interested in the proceedings of the House. And so I've asked him to come and spend some time with us here. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to Tony and Donna.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a guest seated in the west gallery, Mr. Patrick Delaney from Aquadeo, involved with L & M Wood Products of Glaslyn and P & E Logging. Mr. Delaney started showing up in my office a while ago and got to know him pretty well. Oh by the way, seated beside him is my chief of staff Corinne Bernier.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Decision on Treatment for Cancer Patient

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are all familiar with the tragic case of 13-year-old Tyrell Dueck. While there is debate about the most appropriate course of cancer treatment in this case, people have been almost unanimous in expressing serious concern about the ability of the government to intervene in decisions made by responsible parents about their children.

As members of the Legislative Assembly, we're elected to represent the views of our constituents. People are saying we need to look closely at the processes that are currently in place with regard to family intervention by the Department of Social Services.

There is a legitimate role for government to play in protecting children. However the process of intervention must be supported by the public and these processes must respect the right of responsible parents to make decisions regarding the raising of their children.

The Department of Social Services needs to review its policy with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

The public needs to have an opportunity to participate in this review, and the government needs to make the results of this review public.

Our prayers go out to Tyrell Dueck and his family in this very difficult time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care in Carrot River

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the true spirit of co-operation which this Assembly occasionally achieves, I want to thank my Liberal and Tory colleagues for gathering 200 people together so I could discuss with them the advances being made in our health care system.

We had a spirited meeting yesterday afternoon in Carrot River to discuss health care, an issue near and dear to everyone. I had the floor for about an hour and a half because the citizens of Carrot River had a number of tough, pointed questions which I was happy to answer.

They had questions, Mr. Speaker, about the information spread by my colleagues who called the meeting. I answered the

questions because it was very clear at the beginning that the Liberals and Tories were more interested in bashing each other than explaining how they could manage Health.

The Tories said that they would introduce Texas audits and no more. Understandably so, because an audit is a prelude to slashing the Health budget. And Mr. Hermanson said he really didn't say that we have too many hospitals in Saskatchewan but the Liberals said that we really did . . . he really did say that, and complained about the highways. It was a very good meeting, Mr. Speaker, all around. And today the people of Carrot River do know that there will be health care facilities in their community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Congratulations to CJVR Radio

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Melfort's own CJVR Radio. CJVR 750 this past weekend cleaned house at the Country Music Awards. They captured the Country Music Station of the Year Award for the fourth consecutive year. CJVR also tied with CKRM for the Merit Award. Cal Gratton received the Music Director of the Year, On-Air Personality Award and Country Person of the Year. My sincere congratulations to Mr. Gary Fitz, the management, and staff of CJVR 750 Radio in Melfort.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Economy Hot

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy today to talk about positive economic . . . the positive economic performance of the city of Regina.

According to the conference board . . . Mr. Speaker, according to The Conference Board of Canada, Regina and Calgary shared top spot for employment growth in the country in 1998. Six thousand new jobs were created in Regina, a 5.6 per cent increase over 1997. Six thousand! The strong job growth was led by new jobs in management, administrative and other support, health care, the professional, scientific and technical services sectors.

Regina was second best — yes, behind Calgary but ahead of Toronto — in the nation in terms of best overall growth in gross domestic product because of strong activity in construction, commercial services, wholesale and retail sale, and housing starts.

Louis Theriault, senior research associate and author of the conference board's *Metropolitan Outlook* says the latest figures from the board point to another good year in 1999 for the Regina region and continued growth in GDP (gross domestic product), employment, and retail sales.

All this, Mr. Speaker, in the city and province I am proud to live in without having to envy anyone else, as the Tories sitting opposite seem to want to do all the time.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Unionization of Saskatoon Food Bank Staff

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I speak for all of us, Mr. Speaker, when I say that Saskatchewan people depend on the work and dedication of food banks and their staff everywhere in our province. When families and individuals are in need, it is heartening to know that the food bank can fill a most serious void.

However it is important for me to bring my constituents' concerns to this Assembly even if they are questioning an esteemed organization. And the calls I have received are deserving and worthy of acknowledgement.

Apparently, Mr. Speaker, some of the staff at the Saskatoon Food Bank have become unionized workers. Callers to my office are wondering how and why such a necessary, not-for-profit organization would organize its staff in a union setting, especially when these very staff depend upon public donations and the goodwill of Saskatoon volunteerism to provide added services.

There is great concern on the part of these callers that the work of the food bank might be jeopardized by the unionization of Saskatoon Food Bank staff. And I hope that Saskatoon citizens who have constantly supported the city's food bank and are worried by this change will be provided with appropriate reassurances that their donations will be directed to the needy and only the needy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

75th Annual Regina Horse Show

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week between March 22 and 26, Regina is hosting the "Jumps into Spring" Horse Show, which is the 75th annual Regina horse show. Once again the Saskatchewan Hunter/Jumper Association is presenting this event as a means of showcasing their sport and the horse industry.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Saskatchewan Hunter/Jumper Association on their diamond anniversary and to say that I am certain this year's show will be as well run and exciting as all the others.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the "Jumps into Spring" Horse Show attracts over 100 competitors from across western Canada and the United States every year. Every year the show brings high calibre show-jumping competition for all ages and levels of skill.

Every year the show brings approximately \$180,000 to Regina's economy. Events like this increase tourism, boost Regina's economy and its reputation as an excellent host city. More importantly perhaps such events, big and small, also help community spirit by building a strong volunteer network and by giving residents of the city and of the province yet another special event to attend and to be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Priorities

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have been sitting by and watching as health care waiting lists increased; farmers sat by and suffered while governments bickered over aid; and as highways have crumbled. These are the priorities of Saskatchewan people, yet they continue to suffer under the NDP (New Democratic Party) government.

While the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan suffer for want of action, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has tended to its own priorities. Well on two occasions in the last four years, Mr. Speaker, the present Minister of Economic Development found it necessary to take political hacks and flacks with her on foreign trips to New York, Hong Kong, and Tokyo.

While waiting lists grew, highways crumbled, and farm income slumped, the Minister of Agriculture was not going to be outdone by his cabinet colleague. Over the last four years on six different occasions his priority was to take political hacks and flacks to foreign destinations. Possibly, Mr. Speaker, those airports in Seoul, Tokyo, Phoenix, Tucson, Mexico, Indianapolis, and China are just too big for the minister to carry his own bags.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, it's time this government got its priority straight, and put issues like health care ahead of trips for hacks and flacks.

SaskTel's Sympatico Highspeed Internet Service

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1996 SaskTel was the first telephone company in North America to offer high-speed Internet service using digital subscriber lines.

Since then Internet services include not only Regina and Saskatoon, but also Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, the Battlefords, Weyburn, Estevan, and Yorkton. Yet the demand for this leading edge technology continues to grow and SaskTel has been there to meet that need.

On March 13, SaskTel began offering its Sympatico Highspeed Internet service to residential customers in White City and Emerald Park, right in the heart of Regina Wascana Plains constituency. Sympatico Highspeed offers Internet access that's up to 50 times faster than basic Internet dial service. Another improvement is the ability to allow simultaneous telephone conversations and Internet use on the same phone line.

By offering Sympatico Highspeed, SaskTel not only meets a demand but it also strengthens its position as an industry leader for interactive and multimedia services within Saskatchewan, across Canada, and around the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hospital in Carrot River

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm also happy today because I can stand up and represent the people of Carrot River Valley by asking the Minister of Health a question. Madam Minister, yesterday almost 300 people crowded into a meeting in Carrot River to talk about the future of rural health care.

Madam Minister, the conclusion was unanimous: the NDP health care reform process is a disaster. Just ask your colleague, the NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Carrot River Valley. What he'll tell you, Madam Minister, is that people in his constituency are mad as hell and they aren't going to take it any more.

The Speaker: — Now I think the hon. member will recognize that her language is non-parliamentary, and I will ask her to withdraw that remark.

Ms. Draude: — I withdraw that remark.

And there's something else that the NDP member from Carrot River Valley should tell you. Nobody believes you any more when you say the NDP has no plans to close rural hospitals. The people in Carrot River Valley certainly don't believe you. They say that you're going to close their hospital.

Madam Minister, will you stand today in this legislature and assure the people of Carrot River that the NDP won't close their hospital next year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are few days that go by in this province when we don't receive a press release from another politician capitalizing on the fears and anxieties of this province's citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it's important that we rise above this so-called public discourse and get to the facts. Mr. Speaker, our government has said that we are not going to close rural hospitals. Mr. Speaker, what we are going to do is provide more hospital and more health care services for people living outside of Saskatoon and Regina, Mr. Speaker.

For the edification of the members opposite, they will know that with changing technology and with less invasive procedures, Mr. Speaker, thousands and thousands of surgeries that used to be done on an in-hospital basis are now being done on an out-patient basis.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that the people of this province get the facts, and not people capitalizing on fears and anxieties.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the facts are that people in rural Saskatchewan know the NDP government is closing hospitals. You got up in the legislature a few days ago and said the NDP won't close rural hospitals. But do you know what? Nobody believes you, Madam Minister, and there's a good reason why. Because it's not true.

And I will quote the doctor from Carrot River yesterday. This is what he said when he stood up at the meeting. He said, "I'm sick of hearing the district say no, the hospital isn't closing. Yes it is. That white building will be closed." That's the doctor's words, Madam Minister — the hospital will close.

Madam Minister, will you care to change your statement and will you finally come clean and admit the NDP does plan to close hospitals, including that white building in Carrot River.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I also have a quote that I'd like to report to the people of this province. The Saskatchewan Party seems to have problems with figures. Mr. Speaker, not 300 people in Carrot River; according to the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), 200 people in Carrot River.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give another quote. According to the Saskatchewan Party leader, Mr. Hermanson . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order! Order! Now the Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the minister's response because of . . . Order! . . . because of comments coming from both sides of the House. And I'll ask for the co-operation of all hon. members.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I want to say to the people of this province is that according to the *Leader-Post*, March 3, 1999, Elwin Hermanson who is the leader of the Saskatchewan Party from which that member is a member, has indicated that he couldn't guarantee that his party would keep the doors open at all 36 hospitals. He'd have to do an evaluation, Mr. Speaker.

So the fact of the matter is that there will continue to be hospital beds in Carrot River. We don't have to do an evaluation. There will be hospital beds in Carrot River.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I was there yesterday and so was the CBC and I counted 278. I said about 300. Sorry.

Madam Minister, I think the people in Carrot River talked about . . . they talked about what the minister says when she gets up in the House and they call it pure, unadulterated gobbledegook because you just won't come out and say what you really mean.

When you talk about converting a hospital, do you know what it means? You're going to convert a hospital to an empty building. That's what converting a hospital means. One senior who attended yesterday's meeting in Carrot River summed it up really well. He said, they tell us we're going to have a better facility afterwards but we don't believe them.

Madam Minister, nobody believes your government any more, not even your own junior Health minister. She says there will be fewer hospitals in rural Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, will you please come clean and explain what you mean and tell people of rural Saskatchewan that there will still be hospitals as we know them.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues on this side of the House and most people that know me have no difficulty understanding what I mean. I don't speak gobbledegook, Mr. Speaker, I speak the facts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to get back to another report and this is from Melfort, CJSB, they reported that just under 200 people attended their meeting.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Saskatchewan Party, the Tory Party, can't add up the facts. Mr. Speaker, what I want to report . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now all hon. members will recognize it's not necessary to be shouting across the floor, and I'll ask for the co-operation of members on both sides of the House to allow the Hon. Minister of Health to conclude her response.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I can report to the Assembly is that Carrot River will have a hospital with four acute care beds and two swing care beds. What I can report, Mr. Speaker, is that there will be 32 long-term care beds

What I can report, Mr. Speaker, is that there will be lab testing and X-ray testing. What I can report, Mr. Speaker, is that acute care treatment will also include treatment. Mr. Speaker, there will be hospital beds in Carrot River.

The opposition, the Tory Party, can't guarantee anything. I'm giving you a guarantee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Aid Program

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, farmers are starting to receive their applications off the Internet for the farm aid program. These forms are nothing but a make-work project for accountants and bureaucrats.

Once again, nobody really thought about farmers when they were designing this inadequate program.

I've looked at this form, Mr. Minister, and all I can say: what on earth were you thinking of? Where were you when they designed this ridiculous program? Were you still in Mexico suffering from heat stroke?

Mr. Minister, how did you allow this to happen? How did you and the federal government design such an inadequate, unreasonable program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, again we see the opposition trying to mislead the public. I have said from the beginning that we reluctantly went into this program. I said from the beginning that I was not satisfied with the way the program was going to be run. I said from the beginning that we will continue to try to improve it

and talk the federal government into improving it. But we had no input.

For this member to stand up and say, where was I, is a direct attempt to mislead the public.

I would say to that member over there, explain to the public why your leader, Mr. Hermanson, one year after the federal government cut \$80 million out the Saskatchewan agriculture — money for Saskatchewan agriculture — he came in the House the next year as the Reform leader and said: cut more. Tell the public that.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, I believe what Mr. Hermanson said, if you'd have read the whole clip, he was trying to cut the bureaucracy. Something you should pay attention to.

Mr. Minister, we are hearing estimates the accountants are going to charge any . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now the Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the question being put and I will ask — order — and I will ask for the co-operation of all members of the House to enable the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we're hearing estimates that accountants are going to charge anywhere from 300 to \$1,000 to fill out these forms. And then after the forms are filled out, most farmers aren't going to qualify for any assistance. One farmer said it's like buying a thousand dollar lottery ticket. And the way this program is designed, you might be better off buying a thousand dollars worth of lottery tickets.

Mr. Minister, farmers are going to have to hire accountants to fill out these forms and at the end of the day, thousands of farmers — some of the farmers that need the help the most — aren't going to get a cheque. They're going to get a bill.

How did you let this happen? Why weren't you at the table? Why did you let the federal government design a program that's actually going to stick farmers with a bill instead of giving them the assistance they need.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, this is incredible. A party along with the Liberals who kept saying, who kept saying day after day, just put your money in, just put your money in, which made our bargaining position weak, weaker, and the federal bargaining position stronger, now stands up in this House and says, how did you do it?

Well take some credit for this whole process. I agree that the process is not good. I agree that the federal government bungled it from day one; the Liberal federal government bungled it from day one.

But I have another question for the member when he gets up on his feet again. The member that advocated getting rid of \$320 million out of Saskatchewan pockets, farmers' pockets annually . . . You see, you see, it hurts. The truth hurts. The member who advocated getting rid of the Crow benefit which took \$320

million out of Saskatchewan farmers' pockets annually, now stands up and tells them this program is inadequate.

If he hadn't had succeeded in getting rid of the Crow, we wouldn't need this program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest, Mr. Minister, you might as well just let us govern. You blame everything on us anyway. We might as well just do it — maybe we could get it right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Minister, you say, you say you have . . .

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier had have gone to the table with some money from the province of Saskatchewan, they might have let you have some input. Naturally they weren't going to when you wouldn't go with nothing to offer.

Mr. Minister, I want to give you a few examples of how ill-designed your program is. You and the federal government have determined that: number one, interest is not an expense; number two, farm rent is not an expense; three, property taxes are not an expense — and the list goes on and on.

Mr. Minister, who comes up with this? Mr. Minister, do you agree with these rules? Do you agree that interest, rent, taxes, and others are not legitimate farm expenses?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Again, Mr. Speaker, he should be asking that question or maybe he should get his federal MPs (Member of Parliament) to ask the question in Ottawa. Get some of your federal — oh, I forgot. You don't have any. You don't have any. Well, that's tough.

Mr. Speaker, just listen to what the member said. He said, you just should've went down there and put your money on the table and you would've got a better deal. Well he says he's a farmer. How many farmers go into the dealer and say, I've got 80 to \$100,000; what'll that buy me for a tractor? Does that make any sense? Does that make any sense?

It doesn't make any sense. And I'll say one more thing.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Now I'll ask all hon. members to allow the Minister of Agriculture to conclude his response.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, you don't go into the dealer and say, here's 100,000, give me the best you got. You know what you'll get. I want to say one more thing.

This program, Mr. Speaker, this program, Mr. Speaker, has many flaws, and I've said that hundreds and hundreds of times.

But the member said one thing when he began: he said, just give us a try, maybe we can get it right. Well I'll tell you, the

policies that they have promoted and succeeded to implement . . . to help implement have cost this province on an annual basis \$635 million. I'm not going to give you a chance to get anything right because I know your policies have taken money out of farmers' pockets.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Use of Government Executive Jet

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as sure as you can tell the signs of spring, you can also tell a government that's on its last legs. You can tell because of the abuse of power and their abuse of government perks at taxpayers' expense. Through a freedom of information request the Liberal caucus has learned that the Deputy Premier used, probably abused, the executive government jet. On June 27, the flight logs for the executive jet report that the minister, his wife, and two sons travelled on the executive aircraft from Regina to Fort Nelson to Anchorage to Whitehorse and then back to Regina.

Can the minister explain to the House what government business he was on and why his family needed to travel with him? And does he think this is a good use of taxpayers' funds when everybody else is asked to tighten their belts?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I don't have all the information with me, but I understand that the dates that you refer to I was on government business to the western governors' conference, which I attended last year and I think three of the four past years. And I might add the member who represents the town of Shaunavon, Wood River, has attended that conference in the United States in the past at government expense.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister missed the text of my question — the explaining to the House the reason for his family and the cost to the taxpayers as a result of that. And if there are some remunerations that had been made would the minister table them in the House here today. It's all a matter of priorities, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, we found this through a freedom of information, and I'm sure perhaps that if we look through more pages we may find more abuse. Mr. Minister how can the people expect your government to get its priorities straight when you can't even get yours straight. People languish on waiting lists. Can you answer that please?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that if he's got a problem with the government policy, that's one issue. But I want to say to you very clearly that when government ministers travel on government business the policy is, has been, was under the previous administration — I think is in Ottawa — that if the plane is travelling and there's no expense to the taxpayers that ministers are allowed to take their family, their children along. And on occasion — on occasion — I have taken my family with me at no expense to the taxpayers.

Now if you have problem with that policy, if you have a problem with that policy, then that's an issue. But that's the policy that I follow. Other members in this Assembly know that that's the policy. And if you want to play politics with issues of

substance, I don't mind that.

But I would really urge you not to include my family, who are following government policy. The work I was doing at the governors' conference in Anchorage, Alaska was at government expense for myself and not a penny was used for my family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Management/Union Ratios in Crown Corporations

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to the government's latest figures there are approximately 2,300 employees at SaskPower, of which 504 are in management. How does the minister justify that there is one manager for every four employees at SaskPower? And how does the minister justify SaskTel's 5:1 ratio. Doesn't he feel that this is a bit excessive even for the NDP government.

My question is to the Deputy Premier. When you don't have money for the people's priorities — health care and highways — how can you justify having so many hacks and flacks appointed to management in the Crown corporations?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member opposite that when it comes to the payment of managers in our Crown corporations and the value that we get for money in our Crowns, if you look at the cost of services in the province of Saskatchewan, I can tell you very clearly that our managers as well as our employees are second to none anywhere in Canada.

I have here a graph that I'm going to table as to the . . . relates to what that member and others talked about the high compensation for our employees and our managers. In 1982 when we left office and the Conservatives took over, the difference between the medium, or average, salary of union people and managers or the CEO (chief executive officer) was four times. The difference was 26,000 for employees; 100,000 for the CEO.

By 1991 that had changed to 33,000 for the average employee to 428,000 for the CEO or 16 times — 16 times. That has now been reduced back to four times. I'm going to table that.

And I say to the member opposite that he should know, he should know this and he should apologize to the managers and families who he slanders in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, obviously the minister in charge of the Crowns is trying to . . . to think we're talking about the wages not the hundred and hundreds of managers who are your political friends and insiders.

Mr. Minister, your government has no money for health care, no money for highways, but when it comes to rewarding NDP friends and insiders that sky is the limit for you guys. Admit it. If you had your way you would sooner fill the ranks, the Crown corporations, with your NDP friends and insiders. You would rather fill them with your buddies than spend one penny on reducing waiting lists or putting it towards these ridiculous

highways in Saskatchewan. Admit that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member opposite that when it comes to the management teams that we have in our Crown Corporations, the evaluations that have been done recently is that our Crowns run hugely efficiently as compared to any other utilities in Canada.

I say to the member opposite that if he knew what he was talking about, which obviously he doesn't, he would know that we have the lowest long-distance rates anywhere in Canada — the responsibility of our workers and managers. We have the second lowest natural gas rates and the lowest automobile insurance rates.

I say to that member, I say to that member, if you want to talk about people's ability to manage, you might just check at home and your ability . . . who started out with a party as official opposition, with what I think is a credible leader, you're now down to a rump of a party, largely the responsibility personally of you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Application Form for Farm Aid Program

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Minister of Agriculture.

More confusion, Mr. Minister. This morning I'm getting calls from farmers that are saying they've been to rural service centres in the last day or two and rural service centres are recommending, do not fill out the application; changes are coming to that application.

So I called Ottawa, I called the AIDA (Agriculture Insurance Disaster Assistance) office and they said, no such changes are coming; we don't know what they're talking about.

Mr. Minister, can you settle this once and for all so farmers know. Can they fill out the application and apply or should they wait? Is there changes coming? Is there not?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I, like the member opposite, am not aware, or the other people are not aware. I'll give you my word that I will check into this, if you want to tell me what rural service centre it came from. I don't like having farmers confused. If there is confusion I certainly want to get to the nub of it quickly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cost of Ambulance Services

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is the for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, since you seem to have been caught off guard with the fact that Saskatchewan was in the midst of a serious shortage of nurses, it may also come as a surprise that NDP Saskatchewan is also suffering from a lack of hospital beds.

Well, Madam Minister, the bed shortage is causing another problem. When rural patients are discharged early from city hospitals to free up a bed, it's the patient who pays for the ambulance ride back to the district hospital. But for patients who live in the city, ambulance transfers between hospitals are performed at no extra cost to the patient. It's another example of the two-tiered health care system. Rural patients pay for return ambulance services; city patients do not.

Madam Minister, would you confirm the government has this two-tiered ambulance policy in place — rural patients pay; city patients don't.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, what the member may not know is that ambulance service has never been an insured service under medicare. What I can inform the member is that the province of Saskatchewan pays approximately \$13 million each year to health districts across the province to assist them in providing some subsidy to ambulance operators in this province.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we do have a subsidy available for senior citizens. The subsidy means that a senior won't pay more than \$250 a trip. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we also have air ambulance available to the province's citizens, and they too, who take an air ambulance trip, I believe they don't pay more than \$300 per trip.

So I guess for the edification of the member, ambulance services have never been part of an insured service in the province of Saskatchewan, but we have significantly increased the amount of money going to district boards for emergency services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 15 — The University of Regina Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, The University of Regina 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. 16 — The Mineral Taxation Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, The Mineral Taxation 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. 17 — The Local Government Election Act, 1999

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, The Local Government Election 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. 18 — The Constitutional Questions Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, The Constitutional Questions 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. 19 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 19, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) 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. 215 — The Health Districts Amendment Act, 1999 (Fully Elected Health Boards)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 215, The Health Districts Amendment Act, 1999 (Fully Elected Health Boards).

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

Bill No. 20 — The Business Corporations Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 20, The Business Corporations 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.

Ms. Draude: — With leave to introduce a guest, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in your gallery is a friend of mine, Audrey Miller from Lake Alma. She worked with the Department of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) for a while and now has been visiting our office frequently to talk about her concerns. And I ask my colleagues in the House to join with me to welcome her to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, by leave of the Assembly, to move several routine motions pertaining to the membership of committees and a motion in regards to the absence of a member.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Substitution of Members on Committees

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That the name of Mr. Buckley Belanger be substituted for that of Mr. Harry Van Mulligen on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That the name of Mr. Buckley Belanger be substituted for that of Mr. Grant Whitmore on a list of members composing the Special Committee on Regulations.

The Speaker: — The motion is not in order. I don't see the seconder of the motion present in the House. If I can pause just for a moment.

The Chair erred in the proceeding by accepting the motion we just passed and I'm going to ask the House to reconsider that motion and ask that it be moved and seconded by members both of whom are in the House. And do we have leave of the House to return to the first motion, if we may.

Leave granted.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I move that we amend that motion to be seconded . . . moved by me, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone.

The Speaker: — It has been moved with leave by the Government House leader, seconded by the Deputy Premier:

That the name of Mr. Buckley Belanger be substituted for that of Mr. Harry Van Mulligen on the list of members composing the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That the name of Mr. Buckley Belanger be substituted for that of Mr. Grant Whitmore on a list of members composing the Special Committee on Regulations.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Regina Elphinstone:

That the name of Mr. Buckley Belanger be substituted for that of Mr. Grant Whitmore on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Environment.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That the name of Mr. Buckley Belanger be substituted for that of Mr. Grant Whitmore on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Education.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That the name of Mr. Ned Shillington be substituted for that of Mr. Ed Tchorzewski on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That the name of Mr. Myron Kowalsky be substituted for that of Mr. Ed Tchorzewski on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

Motion agreed to.

Leave of Absence for Member to attend 25th Anniversary Celebration

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That leave of absence be granted to the member for Saskatoon Meewasin from March 24 to March 26, 1999, to attend and be honoured along with other former Chairs at a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency.

Motion agreed to.

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. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the

relatively wide-ranging debate allowed under the Throne Speech I'd like to speak briefly about my wonderful constituency of Meadow Lake and how one man made my constituency an even better place in which to live.

Senator Fred Martell was born in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan on December 10, 1924 to his parents Bruno and Judille Martell. Throughout his life his parents served as strong role models to him, and their community leadership focus created the desire within Fred to serve his people in a leadership position.

He was first elected as chief of the Waterhen First Nation in 1958 and served a number of terms totalling 26 years. In two elections Fred went unchallenged and was acclaimed for another term by his band members.

Senator Martell was active in politics at the band, tribal council, and provincial level. Early in his years as chief he attended a meeting in Fort Qu'Appelle where Premier Tommy Douglas addressed the chiefs. Fred spoke often of how he was moved by this speech and encouraged his leadership by this charismatic leader.

Now, Mr. Speaker, every person that knew Fred has an interesting and humorous story to tell, and I too have one and I related this yesterday at the gathering that took place in Fred's memory.

When I first met Fred some 15 years ago in the credit union system when I was working there, we got talking about our own private lives. And one of the things that he was particularly interested in was meeting my father who had known a number of his friends as well. Well the meeting took place, Mr. Speaker, on election day in 1991. For those of us who were elected in 1991 you will remember it was a snowy and miserable day.

Fred volunteered . . . he contacted me and volunteered that he would haul voters to the polls for me because many of the people on reserves didn't have vehicles. I graciously of course agreed. Anyway Fred was out hauling voters to the polls with his van and every day . . . or every 15, 20 minutes he saw this other van coming down the road.

And on the reserve the roads are fairly narrow, and that day with a lot of snow they were quite slippery. Fred, believing that the other van was hauling for opposition members, slowly crept his vehicle into the middle of the road in an effort to carefully edge the vehicle off the road.

Well it was at the end of the day when he stopped this vehicle and confronted the driver who had been driving this van, and lo and behold he discovered that the driver of the vehicle was none other than my father hauling voters for me.

So from that day on they loved to relate that story back and forth and it's been told often — the day that Fred tried to run my father off the road.

Anyway, he was instrumental in the formation of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and served 12 years as their chief. His leadership carried over to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, where he always took an active role in all

developments. In 1992, Fred was appointed as senator to the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) and subsequently selected as president in 1996. That is president of the senators.

He regularly attended a number of meetings and went wherever he was called. He was known for his humility and encouragement in all matters discussed at the FSIN level. Oftentimes he resolved issues by encouraging people to always work together and that this unity would bring success.

In 1996, as president of the senate, he witnessed the signing of the agreements to establish the FSIN treaty implementation process. This, for him, marked a fulfilment of a lifetime of commitment to the treaties.

Throughout his life, Mr. Speaker, Fred was strongly committed to developing education initiatives for First Nations people. His support for Indian control of Indian education was unwavering and he led in the development of many of the education institutions that are now renowned throughout Canada. He served as chairman of the FSIN Indian Education Commission and the Saskatchewan Indian Community College, now known as SIIT (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies).

In 1992 he was awarded FSIN's citizen of the year. He received numerous other honours and awards for his service to First Nations people. He worked his whole life, believe it or not, with only a grade 3 education, yet inspired by many of his family members to pursue their . . . yet, I should say, he inspired many of his family members to pursue their education. Today much of his extended family are leaders in the field and hold graduate and post-graduate degrees.

In his remarks to the people of Waterhen yesterday, Chief Perry Bellegarde said that Senator Martell was a role model for Indian people. I'd like to correct Chief Bellegarde only slightly and say that Fred was a role model not only for Indian people but for all who knew him. You only had to meet Fred once to appreciate his gentle sense of humour but at the same time he was quiet and powerful in his leadership abilities. His arguments on any issue were always reasoned and very persuasive. The last time I visited with Fred was at his home in Waterhen. We had a wonderful visit and I regretted having to leave.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we buried Fred's body but I assure you we did not bury his soul. There will forever be memories of Fred and what he has done to advance not only the causes of Indian people, but to promote harmony between all cultures in this wonderful province.

Fred will be sadly missed by wife Cecile, and their 16 children; his brothers Pete, Marcel, Arthur, and sister, Juliet.

He has many grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces and nephews. To all of them he was Uncle Fred, the head of a very large and prominent extended family. Outside the family, many, many people in all walks of life who knew him and his presence will miss him throughout our province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be able to stand in my place in this Assembly today

and enter this debate on the Speech from the Throne of the Fourth session of the 23rd legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say how honoured I am to be able to serve the greatest people, in my opinion, in Saskatchewan and that is the voters of Last Mountain-Touchwood, and it is on their behalf that I reply to this Throne Speech.

As the Throne Speech says, with spring in the air and a new century dawning, it is a good time to reflect on the basic values that has built our province — those being the values of balance, common sense, and of hope. The men and women of Saskatchewan use these values to build our province and they did it the Saskatchewan way. We can be very proud of how far we have come in such a short time, but, Mr. Speaker, there is much left to do.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, I want to start today by talking about one of our most prized gifts in Saskatchewan, that being our health care system. Mr. Speaker, as I talked the other day to one of the board members of one of my health districts, we were talking about what health care is and how far the direction of health care has gone, and he informed that even himself when he was first appointed to this board had to correct his thinking in the meaning of what health care actually is.

He said that when someone mentioned health care to him years ago, the only thing he thought of was a doctor and a hospital. And I believe that there's lots of us that way. Health care means a doctor or a nurse and a hospital. Well that's no longer the case. Health care now means a doctor, a hospital, home care, chiropractor, dentist, physiotherapists, and on and on.

He told me that in their health district they thought they would try a chiropractor and to see if there was a real need for it. People started going to him instead of the doctor, found that they could get treated there a little cheaper and better than the doctor. In fact people started going to him so much that this chiropractor, in a short time, actually got burnt-out with overwork in that health district.

Now they're trying to hire two chiropractors for that same health district because they realized and the people realized that a visit to the chiropractor every once in a while, if needed, gives people a better quality of life and actually saves the health system dollars.

The other person they thought they would try to bring in there was someone that works on the care and the treatment of people's feet — and I won't try to say the name. But anyway it took a long time actually to get, he said, to get some of the elderly people to go to this person because, as you know, some seniors are very set in their ways and they're not going to have someone messing with their feet and so forth.

But finally, after they got some going to it and they realized that after they were treated and they found that they could walk better and they had less pain and therefore could look after themselves a little easier and a little less home care needed, they started to tell their friends about it. And the friends started to go to this person and found out that yes, there is more to health

care than just a doctor, and there's more to health care and good care than a doctor, and therefore their quality of life improved because of it.

Have we made mistakes in reforming health care? Certainly, we have. We have some waiting list problems and we have some ambulance shortfalls in rural Saskatchewan. We have some problems getting doctors into rural Saskatchewan and keeping them there. But all of these I'm glad to say are being addressed.

You know in Strasbourg they never had a hospital. I was born in the town of Strasbourg, and you might say that was quite a few years ago, and at that time, there was not a hospital neither. It was simply a house that was remodelled to serve as a hospital and that served the time.

But now they have one of the best health care centres in Saskatchewan. In fact one of the former ministers of Health, the hon. member for Moose Jaw Wakamow, visited that facility years ago and said at that time that it was even ahead of its time. And I'll tell you it just keeps getting better.

They now have, of course, a doctor, but also they have an emergency room with all the up-to-date equipment to repair and to stabilize a patient to make them ready for transportation to a major facility. Why would they just have that? Because, Mr. Speaker, the people know that you can't afford a major facility in Strasbourg and in Raymore, in Southey and in Earl Grey and every other small town. That would not make sense so they have built accordingly.

But they also have a dentist, an optometrist, chiropractor, and others coming in on a regular basis and more services for the people of Strasbourg and the district.

Is our health care system perfect? Course not. But it is better than any other in the world.

And that is why I support the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health in their initiatives to make the system even better. And that's why I support this government's direction in health care. Because I believe that health care is whatever it takes, both mentally and physically, to make one's quality of life the best that we can make it.

And that is also why I believe that now is not the time to abandon the principles of our health care system nor to freeze our investment in our people's health and quality of life.

Next subject, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk on a little is education. As the Throne Speech said, today one-fifth of the population of Saskatchewan is in school. We all know that the key to maintaining a strong economy and our lifestyle is the best education in the world.

The greatest worry for me is that the times are changing faster in some ways than our schools can. In fact, in some cases we seem to be more concerned with modern technology that we forget that first a student must first learn the basics of arithmetic, reading, writing, and general science.

When I hear of a math teacher telling a student that to learn the multiplication table is not important — that your calculator will

take care of it — I become alarmed.

Also, when it is no longer important that a science student needs to know that an acid and a base neutralize each other, I become alarmed.

I may be old-fashioned but I still believe that first you learn the basics well and the rest follows easier and is learned much faster.

Do we have some problems in the education field? You bet. I still think that we have to have our schools in this province teaching the same thing at basically the same time, and I'll tell you why.

Statistics say that a person will no longer or not likely start a job and keep that job until he or she retires. In fact, they may change occupations four, five, and even up to six times. And in some cases that change of job may also mean a change of location.

So it's not fair for a student to go from Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan to Consul, Saskatchewan and to the points which two schools are in the curriculum are so far apart that the student may not be able to fit in before the year end.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Hudson Bay or Preeceville should be within a few days of where Consul are in the same grade at the same time of the year. And as I understand it now this is not happening. And I believe that it is wrong — that this is a wrong that has to be corrected.

Also when I hear people tell me that a university class taken in the Regina campus is not transferable to the Saskatoon campus or vice versa in our own province, one has to wonder if the different campuses are more interested in turf protection than helping a person better their education.

These are some problems that I'm sure will be rectified.

As we prepare our classrooms and students for the next century, I wonder what direction we'll have to take in our schools. Will we bring a kindergarten student into the school, plunk them in front of a computer, and think that this is our main learning tool all the way through to college and maybe into college? Or will we have a return to the basics for the first part of their schooling and then bring them into the technological part? Or is there some mixture of the two — a balance that may be struck?

I strongly believe that the children of Saskatchewan and Canada are the future.

Mr. Speaker, when I send graduation cards out to the students in my constituency, there are a few quotations that I write in them. I will either put in them, The future belong to you. Best Wishes. Or, Follow your dreams for they are the hopes of the future.

I write these because I firmly believe in both of them. Our education system allows anyone to build whatever future they want. The future belongs to them. Maybe I should add, but you have to work for it. But I think that they know you receive what you work for. And to follow your dreams because quite often your dreams are your true, true hopes for the future. Our

educational system allows young people to set the direction of their own future and to build on their real hopes.

Do I support the Minister of Education and the Minister of Post-Secondary Education in their initiative to make our education system even better? You bet I do. And I support the Premier when he says, as we approach the 21st century, now is not the time to freeze investment in our schools and our children's education, because education is the future.

What about the job markets in Saskatchewan. Let me say a few words on that, though I should say more. But due to the shortness of time I'll keep my remarks short on it. It was what I thought to be an enormous target when we set out earlier on and projected 30,000 jobs by the end of the century. Well I was wrong. We did it and I'm sure we'll do more.

Sometimes it is a slow process but most of the time jobs created are not short-term jobs. They are in fact long-term, full-time jobs that are the result of hard work and well thought out policy. Policy that makes value added in rural Saskatchewan come to the forefront. A policy that lets our young people stay at home with high skilled, high paying jobs, where they have the inside track on the expanding growth in our economy in rural Saskatchewan.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Our Minister of Agriculture has worked long and hard to have the poultry quota for Saskatchewan producers increased. And I thank him for that. Sunnyland Poultry in Wynyard employs well over 400 people, and they have just been sold to Lilydale, a group of producers from Alberta.

Because of the expansion of the quota in our province, that plant will quite likely double its slaughter capacity, thus increasing the number of employees. And these are not minimum wage jobs, Mr. Speaker. These are well paid jobs with good benefits, and all because we had, and our Minister of Agriculture had, a futuristic policy.

The other day I was in the credit union at Raymore and I took a look at the bulletin board there, and you know what I saw? Help wanted for work in Raymore. Help wanted for a small lawn ornament maker in Southey, Scott's Concrete Lawn Ornaments & Greenhouse. They're hiring two positions — two full-time positions in a little lawn ornament manufacturing just north of Southey.

What I'm seeing more and more in my constituency are positive signs. Not the "Closing Out," out of sale signs, or "Going Out of Business," "Closed" — those were the signs of the late '80s. But I'm seeing the "Grand Opening" signs, "Expanding Our Business," "New Ownership," "Help Wanted" signs — and the list goes on.

We are on the right track, but we must not act recklessly. We have learned through bitter experience that we cannot afford to buy our future with borrowed money. Because if you do you end up with a \$15 billion debt that we came out of the 1980s with, and it's still costing us some few million . . . \$2 billion . . . or \$2 million per day in interest payments.

Because of our policies on jobs and economic growth, our

population is steadily growing. Between 1992 and 1997, Saskatchewan led the nation in economic growth, and is still growing today. We are paying down the debt — that \$15-billion debt I talked of earlier. We are paying it down, and we're paying it continually. Because of the paydown on our debt, and that coupled with the expansion of our economy, the debt has gone from 70 per cent of the gross domestic product to 40 per cent of the gross domestic product — nearly half. Quite an achievement, Mr. Speaker, in just eight years.

More people are working in our province today than ever before. Unemployment is at a 16-year low, and on top of that, an Alberta study ranked Saskatchewan number one in youth employment three years running. More jobs, more full-time jobs, and more youth working. That along with some \$7 billion in new investment in 1998 tells me that industry, manufacturing, and young entrepreneurs see Saskatchewan as the best place to invest and to start up. And that tells me that our policies in economic development are working.

I want to touch a little on safer communities. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the small town of Lestock is in my constituency. The town has had some severe problems with crime — and not always local people, neither. This is people that are coming through and coming in from outside of the community. The people of Lestock do their best to protect themselves. But one must remember that a large majority of the town's residents are senior citizens, and their ability to protect their property is limited.

However, when these offenders — in most cases they are young offenders — commit the crimes and destroy property, they are quite often caught by the police and taken to court. And that in my opinion is where the breakdown takes place. They're back on the streets within hours and in some cases thumbing their noses at the police and the citizens because they know that they will not be reprimanded for their actions.

However, Mr. Speaker, the police continue to do their job, and let me say that I think they do their job above and beyond.

But if they're prevented from removing these people from the community, and the people know that, what happens?

Well you hear of cases in Lestock where grandmothers are sleeping with loaded guns by their beds, and in my opinion, that is the recipe for disaster. And let me make it very clear here and now that young offenders in the Lestock area are not of one ethnic background. They are of all kinds. Some live outside of the town, some inside.

But what do we do to stop all of this? Well as the former deputy minister of Justice said at a public meeting in Lestock, sometimes you have to remove some of the offenders from the area. I have to agree wholeheartedly with him. There may be a group, but in most cases, it's two or three that are leading, and leading the rest into the life of crime.

I guess you could say if you don't want the entire box of oranges to spoil, you take out the rotten ones. Well same thing as here. But our justice system has to start realizing this and acting on that theory, or I'm afraid we will have people picking up and taking the justice into their own hands — vigilante

justice. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't want that and I don't think anyone else does.

But let me tell you in some parts of my constituency, that has been talked about and it's been talked about a lot in the coffee shop. And we have to do what we can to prevent that from happening. And our government is doing many things to turn this around.

First we have to find the root of the problem, and in many cases I believe that the root of the problem is that our family structure — as most of the problems I see in society today — is that our family structure is breaking down. And we have to give people some sense of direction.

(1500)

Many people in that area are on welfare, live without work, and live in poverty. Alcoholism in some cases is a major problem. The children go hungry, which is leading them into crime. They go to school hungry and because of that cannot concentrate or learn, and end up without an education, leaving crime as their only escape. Violence within the family leads to no direction for the youngsters, and therefore making it easy for the criminal element to entice him or her.

Are we doing anything? You bet we are. Our Minister of Justice has set up the Saskatchewan serious crime task force to target organized criminals and gangs. And the serious and habitual youth offenders comprehensive action plan is targeting violent and repeat young offenders.

He has also lobbied the federal Justice department for positive changes to the Young Offenders Act, and got some of them, but there is still more room for more improvements.

But the most important is that we have to work to replace that feeling of hopelessness and failure with one of hope and give them the chance and independence. And our government has made a groundbreaking move in reforming the welfare system to give people this sense of hope and independence. Building independence and the government's award-winning child action plan are restoring hope to vulnerable families and giving hope to the young people. This is a slow procedure but it is making safer communities from the ground up.

I want to take a moment to give credit to two people who were in the lead on the child action plan, not only in our province but nation-wide. One of, of course, is the Premier of our province; and the other is, I'm proud to say, now my seat mate and the former minister of Social Services, the hon. member from Moose Jaw Wakamow. Once people start growing independence in society, they become productive citizens and the communities become safer because of it. And it will work.

Mr. Speaker, now let me turn to a subject that is dear to me — agriculture — because I am a farmer and have been for many years. I have made my living on the farm for some 29 years. I've been through the good and the bad — quite often more bad than good — but we've managed to stay on the farm. Is there a farm crisis? Make no doubt about it. I believe that there's a crisis and in fact the crisis that we are now in, in some ways is far larger than the crisis of 1980s.

If people go around and ask their lending institutions as I have, if there's a problem, they will likely tell them that what . . . that they do not have any more people in arrears this year than they have had in past years. But it seems to me that there's two reasons for this. Firstly, because the banks have abandoned rural Saskatchewan. They don't have any outstanding loans because they don't loan any money to farmers. Secondly, because I believe that most of the debt that has been owed by farmers in most cases could possibly be held by the companies that supply the inputs for these farmers — the grain companies, the fertilizer companies, spray companies, and along with the many of small businesses in our town.

But this crisis did not just start with our low commodity prices that we had in the past few years. It certainly . . . it enhanced it. It started back when, I think even before this, but one of the major things was when the federal government took away the Crow benefit. Remember? They said it was good for our . . . it was taken away for our own good. And we could do . . . we'd be better off without it. Well, guess what? The short fall in farm income is awfully close to what we lost in the Crow benefit.

I want to ask what will happen to the Saskatchewan farmers. Well I'll tell you what I think will happen to the farmers of Saskatchewan. They will survive. Because I believe that we have the most ingenious and most productive farmers in the world. And may I live long enough to see the end to the mentality that we have to supply cheap food to the people of North America.

You know, Mr. Speaker, people will not go and buy their kids a hundred dollar pair of skates. They have to have the \$300 pair of skates. They have to have the best.

People will protest strongly if the price of the local bread goes up by 5 cents or beef rises in the supermarket, the price of beef. But in the same breath they could not refuse to buy that new vehicle because, you know what, it only went up a thousand dollars this year.

I don't think any producers or any people buying groceries out there, if someone said we put 15 cents on a loaf of bread and it was guaranteed, guaranteed to get to the farmer, not be lost in the shuffle somewhere, that anybody would complain on it. But that guarantee has never been made. It's been said but it never gets down to the farmer. But I don't think the people that I talk to in Regina, Saskatoon, or any of the towns would argue with paying if they knew it was going to get back to the farmer.

But the attitude that our farmers can continue to produce cheaper and cheaper has got to end. We always make laws to protect our workers. We don't allow jobs to be bid out to the lowest bidder. We try to prevent that race to the bottom with minimum wage laws and unions and so forth. And I believe it's time that the feds put an income security package together and implored to stop the race to the bottom of our prized industry, agriculture. If we don't, it will end up with the large companies like ConAgra, Cargill, and others owing our land and we becoming simply tenants of that land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our forefathers left that system to come here to a new life. And 100 short years later we are on our way back to that same system and I think that's a shame.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the ministers of our government that were involved for the great work they did in securing the organic plant that is to be built just outside of Regina. I think in many cases this is the salvation of some of our farmers. You get out from the large underfoot of the fertilizers and spray companies and to be paid and rewarded for it. Certainly it's not for everyone, but it is in line with our commitment to the value added right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture will continue because the farmers of Saskatchewan have the ability to maintain themselves as long as we can turn that around and get away from this race to the bottom where who's going to do it the cheapest — and that's where we are now.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to end up — or Mr. Deputy Speaker — talking a little bit on The Respect for Constituents Act that was mentioned in the Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, I believe there'd be just cause for any person in this Chamber. And when I did it myself — ran for election — you go out with a platform, and quite often a party platform, and you go to ask the people for your support on those policies. Very few people go around and ask: elect me as a person. They go around with a list of . . . of a policy platform, and that's what the people are elected on.

So I don't think it's right for a person — once the people have elected you on one platform — to be able to say, thank you very much, you've put me in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and now I'm going to change my stripes. Now I'm going to change my banner. All of a sudden, once I've got here, I've changed what I stand for, and I've changed what we would do if we did form government.

But if these people all of a sudden change their beliefs and change their stripes, then I fully believe that they owe it to their constituents to put themselves before them under an election, under the new banner, and let the people choose. And if the people of those constituencies wish him or her to continue as their representative under this new banner, then I say, okay, no problem. Then, and only then, can they come back to this Chamber and honestly say that they represent their constituency. It is only fair to the voters of the province.

Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne has a futuristic message and that is where we have to look — beyond the horizon. You don't drive a car looking in the rear-view mirror, but you have to look back every once in a while or else you forget the failures of the past.

Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne is futuristic; futuristic for our health care, futuristic for our education system, futuristic for our farmers, futuristic for young people, and futuristic for our seniors. And that is why I will not be supporting the amendment. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the original motion and in support of this government. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today I have two chances to get up and speak about the constituency not only of Kelvington-Wadena but also for the people of Carrot River Valley, who yesterday asked me to make sure I spoke for them when I got up today.

I have an opportunity to speak to the amendment, which I will be supporting wholeheartedly. I listened to the Throne Speech the other day and I couldn't believe that this government had such a total lack of vision and a total lack of faith in the future. It was nothing more than the rhetoric we hear every day. It was not rooted in reality at all, but it came from an arrogant and very tired government who does not know what's happening to the vast majority of people out in Saskatchewan.

This Throne Speech is not linked to reality. Then again this government isn't linked to reality. It doesn't recognize that there's a crisis in rural Saskatchewan. There's a crisis for our farmers, and for our small business people, and retired people, and youth, and Aboriginal communities, and every family in this province.

There was so little that this government could offer the citizens of this province that they were forced to provide a pathetic, self-serving piece of legislation called The Respect for Constituents Act. How ironic that this government proposes to legislate respect for constituents when they demonstrate absolutely none themselves. This piece of legislation has everything to do with politics and nothing to do with governing.

We'd like to talk about free vote, we'd like to talk about recall, which people in my constituency know about very well. They also like the opportunity for me to actually vote the way they want me to vote because that is who elected me — them.

I want to talk about respect for constituents that the people on the other side of the floor have when they didn't tell the people that they were going to close 53 hospitals. They didn't tell the people that they were going to let the roads go to complete ruins. They cut municipal government until there was nothing left to cut. And then we have . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. I wish to remind the hon. member for Kelvington-Wadena, remarks in the Speech to the Throne are to be addressed through the Chair as opposed to directly across. And being a veteran member, the member will know that.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, I should remind the government, or maybe through the Chair I'll remind this government, that one of the contracts that they broke that many, many people in this province have not forgotten, is the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contract.

The GRIP contract cost the farmers of this province millions of dollars. It not only was the dollars that this province decided to take and put into the General Revenue Fund to balance the books so they could say, hey look at me, I balanced the books. But they also sent \$370 million back to Ottawa. Did Ottawa send at least a note saying thank you very much? At least if they did, nobody in my constituency got it. They would have preferred the cheque, but we didn't get it.

I also want to ask, through the Chair, I'd ask the government that this is the same government that promised a fair and open investigation into Channel Lake. Now let's see, Channel Lake. Wasn't that the one that we spent about \$77,000 on a lawyer for? We had meetings sitting in this legislature last spring for a

couple of months. Everybody came in. There were witnesses lined up for ever and people had their daily little soap opera on our channel. And then at the end of it we had Mr. Topp write it for us.

It would have saved a pile of money and a lot of time if you guys would have had enough respect for your constituents to say: doesn't matter what you say, doesn't matter what the facts are, I'll tell you what you're going to spout out.

The people in my constituency say if there's going to be respect for constituents, it had better be so that when we know what's happening, what this government is doing with our dollars.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also . . . before I go on to another portion I'd like to thank the Speaker. Because there's one thing that is happening and since he became Speaker, coming out to the schools in our constituency and spending time with them and letting them know that they actually have an opportunity to become involved in politics, to understand the role of the Speaker and the legislature and to see that they actually are going to have a voice in the future is something that we can all be proud of.

The Speaker spent a full day in my constituency at one school, and I think he told me that it was the only school he'd ever talked to every classroom in the school from kindergarten right up to grade 12. He did a great job.

And at the end of it . . . I'm going to read this into *Hansard* because I'm hoping that maybe next . . . Well if he has the opportunity. But maybe at some time people will have . . . be able to tell the students in our schools that there is a power of one.

(1515)

Often you hear people say I'm only one. I don't count for much. Well it's simply not true. Sometimes just one vote has changed the course of history.

For example, in 1645 one vote gave Oliver Cromwell the control of England. And just four years later the execution of Charles I took place because of one single vote.

In the United States in 1776 one vote gave America English instead of German as their language. And later in 1868, one vote saved Andrew Jackson from impeachment.

But perhaps the most telling example was that in 1923 in Germany one vote made Adolf Hitler the leader of the Nazi Party.

I'm only one and you're only one but don't ever let us imagine that we don't count. Never underestimate the power of one vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that one of the big things that the government opposite has problem understanding — and maybe it's because a lot of them don't have direct input into it in their past lives — is the idea of job creation. I doubt there is very many of us were proud when we have numbers come forward a while ago that Saskatchewan was the only province to lose jobs

in the last year. From 1997 to 1998 Saskatchewan lost 4,900 jobs. Probably young people that actually saw a future for themselves in some place other than Saskatchewan, and I believe that's really sad.

As a business person I think there are some of the rules and regulations that have got to be changed if there's going to actually be businesses prosper in this province. The government's promise three years ago to look at the regulations and downsize them by 25 per cent over 10 years was a start, but I don't know if they started counting at that time or if they started counting after they added all the regulations to deal with occupation and health and safety. That's one issue that a number of the manufacturers in my area are very concerned about.

I'll give you an example of one of the rules that that is really quite silly. In a welding shop, where of course the whole air quality is a problem at all times, the government has decided we should have a smoking area for those who actually smoke cigarettes apart from the smoking shop.

So it's hard to tell which is the smokiest — the welding shop or the smoking area. It is absolutely a redundant, silly thing and it's something that I think the business people are wondering about.

The member opposite talked about minimum wage and I was interested to read an article that the chamber of commerce had written when they talked about the minimum wage actually being quite an advantage for the government because 44 cents out of every dollar of money went to the government. So there was some of that money that helped employees, but it also was a huge help for the government.

Our Minister of Economic Development talked about job numbers last month when we had a loss. And what she told the people of this province is, if you take agriculture out, we actually gained jobs. Now let's stop and think about this for a minute. We have agriculture as the backbone of this economy and the only thing we can say is that if we ignore the backbone of our economy, everything is fine.

This is absolutely ridiculous and I think that the people out in this province are just shaking their heads saying, what are we doing? What is this government thinking about? We can just wipe agriculture off the map.

This is also the same minister that talked about the PST (provincial sales tax) a while ago and said that if we actually reduce the PST, there might be some more spending and then our equalization payments will go down from Ottawa.

We don't want to . . . we don't want to work. We keep our welfare mentality that we've always had in this province. I for one do not want Saskatchewan to be a have-not province, and I don't want to be on welfare from Ottawa. I'm quite prepared to work, and work hard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the issues that's of great concern to the people of my constituency is the government's commitment to roads — or their lack of commitment to roads in rural Saskatchewan. They've fallen approximately \$70 million short

on their commitment to spend \$250 million a year on highways. We all know that every time we travel out to our constituencies. Yesterday the trip out to the area . . . the constituency of Carrot River Valley, we travelled over some roads that were considered quite treacherous.

But I do have an article . . . a letter that I know the Minister of Highways received from one of my constituents, and I'm just going to briefly . . . He may even have been a gentleman that at one time was thinking that the government opposite was doing the right thing, but today he sent me a copy of this, saying:

About a week ago I heard a rumour that highway (#38) between Chelan and Greenwater . . . was to be rebuilt . . . and preparations were already in the works. At the time I did not believe the story. We know that road. It is in very good shape (judging by Saskatchewan standards) except for a few short stretches . . . It seems to me that it is 20 years newer than our stretch . . . (between) Perigord and Kelvington. Our road is terribly rough with depressed wheel tracks and patches on patches on patches. Although I was sure the rumour was not true, I decided to check it out. (And you know what? It was true.) The contract has . . . been awarded!

The people of Saskatchewan have been . . . very patient . . . We all realized that we would have to make sacrifices . . . (and we even lived there but) we winced (when the) . . . GRIP was put down. We groaned under the burden of extra taxes . . .

(But all of us knew we needed to do that if we were going to get out of debt). We suffered and (we're) . . . still suffering today (as a result of cutbacks from the federal government and the way the provincial government has cut into our lives). Through all of this we have kept our eye on the ball: we will get through this and (we'll get) back to normal . . .

(But) there has been a lot of complaining, especially about Health Care and Roads. (And) as a group of people we've (been) . . . pulling together towards a better future.

I have wracked my brain . . . to (see) how the above-mentioned road comes ahead of . . . completing the (highway to) Archerwill . . . rebuilding 38 from Perigord to Kelvington. I have considered the age of the road, the condition of the road, the type and volume of traffic.

And I guess what we have here is a major expenditure of money that is not the best use of taxpayers' dollars, and we're asking the Minister of Highways to give us the criteria that she uses to decide which road is going to be fixed and which road is just fine in their opinion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other issues that people are saying to me was the number of maintenance trucks on the roads today. We had a USA (United States of America) citizen come down during hunting last fall. He asked us what all the red flags were on the road and we told him that they were the danger holes. We asked him how they spotted the holes in their highways. And he said, well we don't flag them, we just fix them. And it seemed to be quite a simple answer to a problem

we've spent a lot of time . . .

The NDP has been very successful at getting people onto the welfare rolls and keeping them. There has been no incentive to get them off of social assistance and find gainful employment, because taxes out there are crippling people and there's no place to go for the jobs that are needed.

Social services is the third largest area of expenditure of this government, and the numbers of people on social services has increased dramatically since the NDP has come to power.

It is something, an issue that people don't feel good about at night when they go to bed. They don't have a job. They don't have a reason to get up in the morning. And it's government's job to allow them . . . to provide an environment to get them back to work. It's something that Saskatchewan Party knows that we can do and will be doing.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had a delegation come in from SARCAN a while ago and they wanted to talk about another issue, and that was one of recycling. They were talking about the containers that came into this province from out of province. And they know from this that this government has figures that proves there's \$2 million of Saskatchewan taxpayers' dollars that goes annually to Manitoba every year from cans and bottles that are brought into this province for recycling. That's an issue that has to be addressed — \$2 million is a lot of money to taxpayers; it's a lot of money to municipalities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Now many members have had the opportunity to enter into this debate. Those of you who haven't, I urge that you take the opportunity when the member for Kelvington-Wadena completes her entrance into this speech.

I am simply asking all members for their co-operation in allowing the hon. member for Kelvington-Wadena to continue.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the whole issue of social work is something that the workers in this province have been talking about openly to the media since December or earlier. We know that they were talking to the government about this last summer, and the government settled the wage contract. But they didn't deal with the issue of caseloads.

There are workers in this province that know that they cannot go to bed at night feeling confident that they have actually even lived up to their code of ethics for social work because of the caseloads. It's an issue that the government must address, and we must be looking at making sure that the people do get the help that they need.

I also have . . . people in my constituency are talking about community homes and the very fact that they are a necessary part of the system right now. But they aren't getting any help to either form their association or to talk about the many issues that they have to make sure that young people are carried through on a caseload with some consistency and that they know that people do care about them.

We do have lots of answers. The government prefers not to listen to them. And I think that you will find the people of your constituency will be telling you the answers because they are reading the platform of the Saskatchewan Party right now. They know that this government is tired and doesn't have any idea what's happening out in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech promised to strengthen kindergarten programs to provide broader access to computers and to begin a Role of Schools Task Force. That's just what we need is another task force which is good for NDP cronies. At least there'll be some job creation then.

What is this government's vision for education of our students when it comes to school closures in rural Saskatchewan?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order, order. The member is addressing her remarks very properly through the Chair and facing the Chair, and I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the hon. member. I ask for all members' co-operation in this matter.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm asking what this government's vision is for the education of our students in rural Saskatchewan. Will we continue to see schools close? We saw last week a Qu'Appelle school was slated to be closed and the students would end up being bused to Indian Head.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had a problem with our school in Englefeld and the people in Englefeld took it into their own hands. They said, I'm going to draw a line in the sand and I won't take it any more. I'm going to make sure that my kids receive the schooling that they want. And they worked within this government's laws to have their own school division.

I support people who say, I am going to make it happen the way our forefathers made it happen. They came to Saskatchewan a hundred years ago and they said, I'm going to do everything that I can myself. I'm not asking the government to help me, but we need health care, we need highways, and we need education.

Out in rural Saskatchewan they're still looking for health care, education, and highways. It's the kind of thing that unless you live in one of the principal cities, one of the few that this government has decided should survive, you're not supposed to have it in this province.

Education is a fundamental right that allows individuals to receive their full potential as a citizen. Unfortunately Saskatchewan trains its young people for export. There are not opportunities for our young people to stay in Saskatchewan, for them to stay and to work and raise a family and pay taxes, and contribute to the potential of our province.

I'd like to ask how many of the members opposite have family members who have left this province to work elsewhere. I'm virtually sure that every one of you has had this experience, and it often happens not because people want to leave but because they feel they have no other options. And that's just not good enough.

We can no longer afford to educate our young people to see them leave, and I believe and our party believes we must create opportunities for them to stay here.

An Hon. Member: — How? How?

Ms. Draude: — The members opposite ask how. And I think that's a sorry state of affairs when a government says, how do I do it; I don't know how. Well I'll tell you how — call an election and let us do it. And then you'll know how to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Throne Speech the Premier admitted that the government had made mistakes in health care reforms. Then the minister yesterday talked about the waiting lists were not as long as we had said and she wanted to know where we got the information.

Well the information came from the Fraser Institute, for the information of the members opposite. The numbers are true. They are just, and you can't hide behind saying that they're something we made up.

(1530)

Rural Saskatchewan has taken the brunt of the mistakes this government has made in health care. And the Associate Minister of Health leads us to believe that the pain is not yet over. My constituency would be left with no primary health care facility if you expand on your policy that you had in 1992.

Because of your government's health care reform, increasingly there is need for more and more families to provide health care to their loved ones themselves. Long-term care for the elderly, post-operative care, and ensuring that family members get to medical appointments further and further away from home is now a family responsibility.

The ambulance rides that we talked about today in question period is costing people in rural Saskatchewan 5, \$600. In fact unless you know all the rules and can get your Blue Cross in time, it can cost you 8 or \$900. That's two-tier health, members opposite. That is what's happening out in rural Saskatchewan.

And this issue is of particular concern to me because the vast majority of at-home care workers are women. Women who not only look at the elderly and the sick family members, but they're also the primary caregiver for their own children. And who often work out of home . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Now . . . Order! Members on both sides of the House are again becoming louder than is necessary to ensure a good debate, and I ask for your co-operation to allow the hon. member to continue her speech.

Ms. Draude: — The government opposite has done nothing to recognize the important role that women play in the delivery of health care. And this government's health care reform has done a dismal job of putting adequate money into home care and family support services.

Some of the crises that we see in the health care system and the increasing expectations that are being put on the family to care for sick patients has been created by the nursing shortage. This

same government that was madly laying off nurses three years ago is now attempting to attract them back from Ontario, the States, and wherever else they went to.

But the nurses look at them and say, why would I come back to Saskatchewan and pay 10 or 15 or 20 per cent more in taxes than I would where I am right now? I might love my family and my province but I have to take the dollars home at the end of the day.

Surprise, surprise that nurses have left this province in search of career options and they aren't going to come back. And even as we sit in the House today the nurses of this province continue to seek and negotiate a contract.

Last week the nurses left empty shoes on the steps of the legislature inviting the Health minister and the Associate Minister of Health to walk a mile in their shoes. I wonder if you tried it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister, the members opposite talk about zapping. We can talk about the zaps that they have done, mostly to rural Saskatchewan. Farmers, health care, education, every one of them has known what it means to be zapped out of importance as a citizen in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this government has attempted to claim credit for changes to the Young Offenders Act under the guise of the federal government legislation. If this government is committed to safe communities and the safety of families in those communities, how can it be possible that we see caseloads in the Department of Social Services like we talked about yesterday?

Let me remind you that a child care worker often has a caseload of more than 45 people — 45 young people. Foster care family workers have caseloads of more than 50. Young offender workers, they have caseloads of more than 65 young offenders. People that are . . . that need care. People that need special attention so they can work their way back into society and make sure that they are a viable part of society.

Income security workers have caseloads in excess of 300 — 300. How can we possibly ensure the safety of the most vulnerable people in our society when social workers are functioning under these conditions?

Violence against women and family violence is an issue throughout our whole province. And what has this government done to ensure the safety and well-being of women and children? What has this government done to protect the rights of women and children in rural areas where increased isolation creates more barriers for women attempting to leave a abusive relationship?

Creating safe communities starts at home, and this government has done little to address the issue of family violence in a meaningful and productive way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year, or two years ago for the first time the Women's Secretariat finally was given more than a little bit . . . given more than lip service. They were given a small amount of money — three-quarters of a million dollars —

to use the best they can.

And they actually talked about targeting rural Saskatchewan. I was really hopeful this meant that maybe some of the women that are in abusive situations, some of the women that are talking about wanting to go to work, but they don't . . . there's no daycares for them. Women that are talking about their children needing additional clothing for schools. They need some help actually raising their children.

Let's talk about the needs that rural Saskatchewan and farm families have. You know what this government decided to do with three-quarters of a million dollars? Internet. Internet doesn't feed kids.

Internet is a wonderful tool. But when government has fundamental responsibilities of health care and education and highways, why in the world would we think the best thing we can do for women is to spend three-quarters of a million dollars helping them get onto the Internet? They already have the computer. They have the knowledge to get work . . . to work it, then they can possibly get onto the Internet as well. Maybe it was just a way to get the money back to SaskTel through another way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that we have . . . We know about the job creation record in this province. We have the worst in all of Canada. We know about the taxation system in this province. It's the second worst in Canada.

We have the birthplace of medicare. We have health care that's the worst in Canada. Our waiting lists are longer. The percentage of live births is . . . of infant mortality is higher. And this government is spending about the same per capita as other governments. There's something fundamentally wrong with what's happening in the health care areas.

Our welfare numbers are the worst in Canada. Crime is the worst in Canada.

And let's talk about no-fault insurance. Ralph Nader, who is the founding father of consumer rights activists, came to Regina last year to point out the shortcomings of the legislation. Ralph Nader cannot be accused of being right-of-centre and he is adamant that this legislation is not in the best interests of people in this province, the citizens of this province, who have no other options. They're forced to buy their inadequate insurance coverage from a state-sponsored monopoly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government made 12 references to "The Saskatchewan Way" in its Speech to the Throne. This government seems totally unaware that it has lost touch with what the Saskatchewan way is. They have confused this with the NDP way.

This government's own polling shows them that they have lost touch with the Saskatchewan people. They are more concerned with their power and control than they are in the well-being of our province and ensuring that issues are governed in a responsible and accountable way.

I find it very interesting that this government is now boasting about a common sense approach to governing. Nothing could

be further from the truth. Let's consider some of the examples of common sense when it comes to Channel Lake and taxation and labour relations and health care reform.

Mr. Speaker, I'll close my comments today by stating my own position and respect for constituents. I have the utmost of respect for the constituents of Kelvington-Wadena. And I don't need legislation in order to do this. They are hard-working people who know the true meaning of doing things the Saskatchewan way.

As a member of the Legislative Assembly, my greatest concern is for their welfare. I look forward to the upcoming opportunity to challenge this government and for the honour of representing this riding.

This government's approach is not common sense, it's not balanced, and it's not the Saskatchewan way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been waiting with bated breath to hear who this government opposite is going to put into my constituency to run against me. I've heard that perhaps the mayor of Humboldt is the one that's going to be coming into my constituency. They're assuring me into my constituency. I really think that the people of my constituency deserve more than somebody who's already lost in one constituency in a nomination meeting.

But if they must . . . but if he does want to come over into my area, I suggest that he come over to my place in Kelvington-Wadena constituency and I'll spend some time with him and teach him . . . tell him some of the things that are going on there.

This weekend I'll be painting in my house in Kelvington-Wadena constituency and if he puts his paint clothes on, he can come over, work with me and I'll tell him some of the things that are going on in this area.

And I'll also tell him that the people of my constituency that have phoned me saying, now why would the mayor of Humboldt, who has the biggest regional hospital in my health district want to be in this constituency? He'd have to tell the people of Wadena, no, go to Humboldt. Who would you really be representing? The people of Kelvington-Wadena want somebody who lives in Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of my constituency deserve much more than the Romanow government is willing to offer at this time. I am not supporting the Speech to the Throne. I am definitely supporting the amendment that was put forward by the member from Canora-Pelly and I look forward to voting on that today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I must say that it's with a bit of anticipation that I'm standing today making my maiden speech as a member of the NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — I wish to add, Mr. Speaker, that there may be several classes of school kids watching the presentation and I want to just briefly explain the purpose of this response is that the Speech from the Throne is in which the government basically sets out a road map as to where they want to take the province over the next year. And of course that's happening and this is what we're responding to.

And later on in the week, again for the school children back home, what we will do is we'll have the budget that will actually have the financial details to support the direction the government wants to go.

But certainly, Mr. Speaker, I'm not here today to talk about the response to the Throne Speech. I'm really here to talk about the constituency of Athabasca and certainly some of the challenges that they have, over the next 30 minutes.

First of all, the Athabasca constituency's a very large constituency. And I did measure the distance from my home driveway right to the driveway here in the Assembly. And the amount is 796 kilometres from home to home. And that's a long ways away, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say, the constituency also includes communities way up in the far North and these communities include Camsell Portage, Uranium City; they include Black Lake and Fond-du-Lac, and of course the small community of Stony Rapids. So it's a long, long way from those communities to here in the Assembly.

And I also want to point out the constituency primarily consists of Aboriginal people. And the important fact, I guess, is that although the huge population in the North is Aboriginal, they certainly have a lot of respect and admiration for their non-Aboriginal neighbours in many of our northern communities.

I want to point out as well, Mr. Speaker, the challenge in the constituency of Athabasca is with the young people. The population I believe, and I could be corrected on this, that 60 per cent of the northern Aboriginal folks are under the age of 33. So that's a very, very high concentration of young people. And as you're very well aware, Mr. Speaker, when you have that number of young people in and about your constituency, wanting to see things happen, certainly that calls for strategies to deal with all that energy.

I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, some of the successes that we've had in northern Saskatchewan, and particularly the Athabasca constituency. I'm here today to represent the constituents and I want to make sure that people out there, back home, and certainly people in southern Saskatchewan, appreciate the fabric of northern Saskatchewan, in particular Athabasca constituency.

Several months ago I was surprised to hear on the radio a couple of friends of mine. One of course is the chief and the other is deputy mayor of Turnor Lake. And these two individuals are fairly young individuals and they signed what they call the Turnor Lake MOU — a memorandum of understanding. Where this young chief, being the chief of Turnor Lake Indian population, and the young deputy mayor

decided that we're not going to let the lines divide us because Turnor Lake, right down the centre road . . . on the right is the reserve and on the left is of course the hamlet.

And the mayor and the chief said we have an arena here that we need to work on, but because these lines are there we can't help each other; well we're tired of those lines. We're going to diminish those lines. We are one community of Turnor Lake, we bring to the table each a strength — the treaty First Nations bring their strength as well as the Metis and the non-Aboriginal people of the hamlet of Turnor Lake.

So I think the message that this offers to Saskatchewan is yes, the Aboriginal folks realize that they have to work together to build up their communities. And that the lines that sometimes divide us really are a detriment to our northern communities. And I think we say that with full respect for the First Nations and the treaty rights. We don't do that in spite of it.

And I think I want to say, my hat goes off to the mayor and council of Turnor Lake and certainly the chief and council of the Turnor Lake band.

I also want to talk about the Ile-a-la-Crosse basketball team. It's a young team from my hometown that were one win away from showing up at the provincials. They lost, I believe, in the sectional finals. And again these are all young individuals that walk the streets of Ile-a-la-Crosse, attend the Ile-a-la-Crosse school. They were one win, Mr. Speaker, away from the making the appearance at the big show. So there's a lot of young, ambitious athletes as well.

(1545)

And another one I want to talk about was the Dillon chief, the chief of the Dillon band, Elmer Campbell, who's really, quite frankly, a strong leader in northern Saskatchewan. He's been recently re-elected as chief. And Mr. Campbell is very, very protective of his band and certainly of the band members.

And recently he worked alongside of SERM where a certain lake was under threat of being overfished and that there was a lot of questions about the role of the treaty people harvesting fish from that lake. Well Mr. Campbell and his council stood up and said, we will now use treaty rights to protect that lake from overfishing. And I think it really supports the example of Chief Robert Sylvestre of Turnor Lake in terms of working together.

I also want to talk about Pinehouse, Garry Tinker. Many of you may realize a number of years ago this disabled young individual from the small community of Pinehouse walked many, many miles — I believe he walked to this city from Lac La Ronge. I'm not sure of the distance but I do know that he walked with his crutches to bring highlights and certainly to bring the challenge of northern folks and the disabled people, who number 400, in terms of trying to get some of their issues heard and certainly explained to the people of the province.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, I also want to take my hat out to the community of Pinehouse because Pinehouse had a hockey team a number of years ago, three years ago, and this team was very, very good. They entered a number of tournaments throughout the northwest and certainly in the northeast and other regions,

and they dominated the hockey scene for a long, long time. Very gifted hockey players.

And, Mr. Speaker, the surprising thing about this Pinehouse hockey team is they never had a rink. What they'd done was they cleared a section of the lake and that's where they practised.

And it just goes to show the spirit and certainly the admiration of many people in northern Saskatchewan towards their own. And I for one am very proud of the examples of Garry Tinker of the Pinehouse hockey team and so on and so forth.

A number of years ago the person that we continue to admire in northern Saskatchewan, Lawrence Yew. He also inspires a lot of people in northern Saskatchewan. And to this day since his passing, a number of people still mention his speeches and still mention some of his leadership. And I want to again today certainly pay tribute to Lawrence who was the first Aboriginal member in this House and certainly the member that inspired me to get into provincial politics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — La Loche and Garson Lake, Mr. Speaker, another fine example of two communities working hand in hand. They built the Garson Lake road. It took them 13 years, and time and time again the village and the small community of Garson Lake worked to try and make the reality of the Garson Lake road happen.

And I'm pleased to report today, as a result of their determination, their work, and their ethics, April 1 we'll have the grand opening of the Garson Lake road. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a small community but that road will offer many, many benefits to the 40 or 50 people that live in Garson Lake.

And I can say today now that the people of Garson Lake do not have to pay \$130 to have a plane fly in their groceries on a weekly basis. So I think that without question that's a tribute to the Dene people of the community of Garson Lake and certainly of the other people that have helped out.

I want to talk a bit about Alex Shatilla. Alex was a dear friend of mine and he passed away this past summer. And I want to certainly publicly thank the entire family for having me as a honorary pallbearer. Alex really inspired me as well in politics. And I think the important thing is that since his passing, him being a veteran and a community activist and certainly somebody that cared about the northern folks, I think I also want to share some of his accomplishments and recognize him here in the Assembly today.

Several days ago I spoke about the national Aboriginal achievement in terms of number of people that really made their mark as Aboriginal people. And again without going through the whole motion of mention the names and their contributions, we know who they are, and again my hat is off to them.

I want to recognize back home the Sakitawak Development Corporation. Wendal Desjarlais and company are doing a fine job trying to create jobs at the local community of Ile-a-la-Crosse. They fundraised a total amount of \$60,000 over

a period of a couple of years to get the corporation moving and now they've created a tremendous amount of jobs. They've got some dollars in the bank.

I don't want to elaborate because it might give more pressure to Wendal to spend more money. But I can almost guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, it is a far cry from the \$60,000 that we started with.

I want to talk about the inspiration that I received as the MLA, from some of the workers working at the northern mines. Mr. Speaker, many people would be surprised to hear that young people like Don Merasty travels a number of miles from Ile-a-la-Crosse to La Ronge to catch a plane. And I believe the distance across is three, three and a half hours on a gravel road to catch a plane each week that he goes up to the Far North to work at some of these mines.

So there is no connecting flight between the Ile-a-la-Crosse point that Don lives in, and La Ronge. So what Don does every time he comes out is he hitches a ride there and he hitches a ride back, and then he flies to the northern mine. And Don is being paid seven fifty, eight bucks an hour while at this mine.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's thousands of examples of people in the North that add to the fabric of Saskatchewan. We don't want to be viewed any further as a place that is out of sight and out of mind. We don't want to be viewed as a welfare state. We don't want to be viewed in the sense that we are simply an attachment to the province of Saskatchewan.

What we want is to be recognized as a real part of Saskatchewan with the people that have the spirit, co-operation, and determination to make a difference in all of our lives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — So, Mr. Speaker, in closing on some of the achievements, there are many I wish to talk about. But there's a couple of other points that I want to raise.

In terms of our veterans, I want to recognize them today. I know there's a couple of them watching today. So I want to make a point that not only have we contributed currently in the present, that we've also made a contribution as northern Aboriginal folks throughout time.

So again in recognition of my being here and all of us being here in this democratic state of Saskatchewan and this great country of Canada, we owe our veterans special note.

And that includes Louis Roy of Beauval . . . (inaudible) . . . Morin of Ile-a-la-Crosse, Thomas Chartier of Buffalo Narrows, Gilbert McCallum of Ile-a-la-Crosse, and my father Leo Belanger of Ile-a-la-Crosse. These people are still all with us. We've buried a number of other veterans.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that every year we have a celebration in honour of the veterans that give us the democratic right to stand and speak today. But I can say today that it's one day we celebrate their achievement, but it's all year round that we certainly benefit from their accomplishment and their sacrifice to our country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Finally, Mr. Speaker, in terms of recognizing distinct individuals, I called a grandmother today and I asked permission if I can read a poem. This poem has been written by a young lady, Leslie Aubichon. And Leslie has been battling cancer for 11 years of her 17 years, and this past Monday Leslie was laid to rest.

So she wrote a poem that I think is really neat in terms of her struggles, and I promised her grandmother I would read it today, and I wish to do so. The poem goes as follows:

Blue moon on the rise
Come down on my eyes
Cause in my world
I can live without drugs
Without doctor's unhappy shrugs
To dream of what can be
What I could have been
Smelled, tasted or seen
The something which
Will never become of me
Blue moon on the rise
Come down on my eyes

And that was a poem written by Leslie Aubichon of Ile-a-la-Crosse. And it really dictates and really indicates of the struggle that she had, and the sacrifice and certainly the heartache associated with, you know, with her life.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say hello to an elder back home. This elder worked for a number of years when he was younger, in Hay River. He was a very, very strong physical person. Some of the stories of him being able to pick up motors with his bare hands and being called a human forklift, and on and on and on.

He worked many, many years for many, many people in the Territories and he is originally from Ile-a-la-Crosse. But recently he had a stroke and he is now sitting at home. And at 61 years of age, he still thinks he's 21, and he wants to wrestle with me all the time, but of course, I'd be able to beat him now. But I want to take off my hat to Leo Maurice as well, who is out there, I know, and I hope is listening.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can tell from the North that the northern people are very dynamic people. They work, they pay taxes, they've suffered, they've had heartache, they've had celebration, they've had promises, and they've had hope.

And I guess, as the MLA for that particular area, I want to point out that there is a lot of people in northern Saskatchewan once again, screaming at the top of their lungs to be included. And certainly I hope that the rest of the province recognizes them as a people and as a region.

So in closing, in terms of some of the things that we want to point out, is I tell all the young people back home, young people that may be watching, is to never forget who we are. And the people that have sacrificed before us, and certainly the people that continue building northern Saskatchewan.

Once we don't forget who we are and we realize what our

challenges are, then we know where we have to go. And at this point in time, it is still, still a very tough struggle getting our young people to really get involved with the economy, the politics, the business, and the likes.

I want to turn my attention briefly to the Saskatchewan Party, and certainly I respect all the MLAs that make this particular job their life. While many families are home having supper, many of us are on the road travelling. While many people are watching TV in the evenings relaxing, many of us are at meetings arguing. So to a large extent we certainly have to respect each other in this Assembly, and that respect will continue being shown by me.

However there is still some challenges that, you know, that have to be addressed. And I'm very, very disturbed again by the apparent onslaught of the Tory party on the Aboriginal folks. Throughout time I was not pleased with some of their responses and some of their attacks, and I can say at this point in time that the Aboriginal folks do not appreciate being used in that capacity.

We have the right to be a part of Saskatchewan. We have the right to take part in forums such as this nature. And we have the right to suffer through growing pains, Mr. Speaker. We have that right.

Many of us are just getting involved with self-government. There are challenges; there are mistakes. But we have the right to make mistakes, to learn from those mistakes, so we can become our own bosses and to create our own destiny.

And as a result of that, I am encouraging all the Aboriginal people from across Saskatchewan to come out and vote. Come in the hundreds, come out in the thousands to make their impact known.

And I say to every Aboriginal people in northern Saskatchewan that you can no longer disclaim your role in terms of getting out to vote. The Aboriginal people can control 22 constituencies . . . can have impact on 22 constituencies and five federal ridings. So the Aboriginal folks and the Aboriginal vote is very, very key to the formation of a democratic system in Saskatchewan.

So I say to all the Aboriginal folks back home and that may be listening, is come out and vote, vote, vote and exercise your democratic right.

And as well I'm disturbed at some of the spread of misinformation. Recently in northern Saskatchewan there's talk about the hospital closure to the northern communities. When, in fact, the opposite is happening. And I'm very, very pleased to hear the Minister of Health come out and say point blank that this will not happen.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is some of the things that is wrong with the Saskatchewan Party — the Tory Party — and I ask you, on behalf of the Athabasca constituents, to stop this politics that divides Saskatchewan, that divide the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal folks, that divide rural and urban Saskatchewan, that divide North and South, that divide the elders from the youth.

Mr. Speaker, we need a party that brings us together and I'm very happy to say that I'm in that party that does exactly that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1600)

Mr. Belanger: — And the other point, Mr. Speaker, is that I'll also ask the Tory Party to stop the nonsense that Aboriginal people do not pay taxes. As was indicated today, there are three distinct Aboriginal groups in the province. There are the Metis, there are the non-status, and of course there are treaty.

And as indicated earlier today, there is a number of things that people have to know. Aboriginal people do pay taxes. Many of the people that I've spoke about today have paid taxes all their life and they will continue paying taxes, Mr. Speaker. So stop the nonsense that the Aboriginal folks do not pay taxes. They do and they have and they will continue doing so, Mr. Speaker.

And day in and day out I hear them complain about the highways; I hear them complain about taxes; I hear them complain about the Aboriginals; I hear them complain about health care. And the list goes on and on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, the question I have, in coming from northern Saskatchewan, how come you never hear the Tory Party complaining about the debt? How come you never hear the Tory Party complaining about the interest of \$2 million per day that we pay as a Government of Saskatchewan? We never hear them bringing those issues up, Mr. Speaker. Why is that? Why is that?

And they sit here and they talk about the rural problems in the province, saying that you guys created . . . that this government created those problems. Well, Mr. Speaker, the injustice to the province of Saskatchewan is that \$2 million that we pay every day in interest as a result of the Tory administration of the 1980s. And if people in Saskatchewan are tired of hearing about that \$2 million per day, well the Saskatchewan taxpayers are tired of paying that \$2 million per day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — So, Mr. Speaker, that debt is not going to go away. That interest is not going to go away. And I can say with all pride that the thing is that the people that made the debt shouldn't complain about the problems that we have a tough time at times balancing on this side of the House. And that was a direct result of some of their mismanagement.

So the Tory Party should stop trying to play the role of being the guys that are complaining about everything and trying to bring justice to the province of Saskatchewan when in fact the greatest injustice to this province was created by them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I want to just quickly, as my final shot at the Tory Party, I want to talk about a March 18, 1999 clipping in which they often make reference to the province of Alberta. And I want to quote Peter Hryniewicz from Saskatoon, and these are two separate quotes, Mr. Speaker.

The first one:

When my wife and I returned to Saskatoon after living in Alberta, we noticed a significant improvement in both our quality of life and standard of living. Alberta is not heaven on Earth by a long shot.

Now the second quote from the same letter, Mr. Speaker, quote:

A bit of objective homework might suggest Albertans need those tax breaks to keep up with Saskatchewan and the rest of Canada, to pay their medicare premiums, higher housing/rental and insurance costs and generally higher living costs.

So, Mr. Speaker, if the Tories are so pleased with Alberta, they're so happy with Alberta, well there's a road, there's a number of roads happening at this point in time, that they don't live in Alberta.

At this point of time we are living in Saskatchewan, we have to make a Saskatchewan difference. We can't continue comparing our province with those provinces that seem to have it all when in fact they don't. This is the best province in the best country to live in, Mr. Speaker, and people have to begin to realize that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — My quick note to the people of northern Saskatchewan, my message to them as the MLA for Athabasca, is we have to be patient. I must again ask for more patience. While there is growing optimism and real progress, there is no overnight solutions to the many problems that northern Saskatchewan have. We will remain on this steady course of planning, building, and seeking ideas.

Number two, that we must balance our economic plan with protection of our environment. We cannot nor should we compromise either opportunity.

Number three, that we must undertake a serious effort to diminish the lines that divide the northern people if we want to grow. As a region we're relatively small in numbers. Any further attempt to further break into special interest groups will further erode our common strength.

Number three, that we understand and respect each other more and appreciate the challenges of our First Nations, our Metis, and our non-Aboriginal members of our communities. We all face the same problems each day in northern Saskatchewan. We are not immune because of who we are or where we live.

Number five, that we begin the work of co-operating between communities, between businesses, between community development corporations, and private enterprises, and to understand the roles and responsibilities of all the players involved with economic development.

Number five, that we make every effort to target our elders for special support in repairing their homes; and recognizing their simple health needs, such as a wide-card coverage for their medicines; and recognizing the need to respect them in their final days. These people have worked all their lives: they've

paid taxes, they raised their families, they've struggled through lean times; and all they ask for, Mr. Speaker, is a little help in their old age.

Finally, my message to all the young people out there listening and to all the people in general in northern Saskatchewan, is do not exclude yourself from the political process that shape policies that impact our lives. Whether it's local elections, band elections, Metis elections, or avenues of provincial politics, I say to you that there is nothing here to fear.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the government recognizes the challenge that this government has in governing this great province of Saskatchewan. And the reason why we support this government, Mr. Speaker, and the reason why the North stands tall, side by side and in pride with this government, is for a couple of reasons.

Number one, that this government is committed to balanced budgets that reduces on a constant basis our current \$11.6 billion debt, that has consistently reduced taxes, and has consistently enhanced services. Fighting for a balanced budget is very tough to do, and I want to take my hat off to my new colleagues who throughout the year, and throughout the years, have shown discipline and dedication. That was required to achieve this balanced budget process.

Mr. Speaker, the other important strength is that this government is not involved in the fire sale of our Crown corporations, the corporations that create wealth, service, and employment for all of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is positioning its Crowns to effectively compete in our western Canadian economy. The North recognizes that. And I believe, as many people in northern Saskatchewan believe the Tory strategy in the 1980s was to break the province so bad that it had to sell the Crowns. Sell the Crowns and not make anything happen in Saskatchewan. But the only thing, Mr. Speaker, they did not count on was an NDP government that was going to make a real difference in balancing our budgets.

And third, Mr. Speaker, that the health care continues to be a high priority for this province. No question challenges remain. Health care is a national issue as we hear all the provinces struggling with health care. Saskatchewan is not immune to federal budget cuts and yet continues to commit serious efforts to our health care system.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the biggest reason that we're very happy to be part of this government was the willingness to work together in a common sense, forward-looking, and realistic plan of action for the North, for the northern people, and for all of Saskatchewan.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, change is all around us, happens everyday. In the North, I guess my final message, my final three points, is clear.

Number one, northern Saskatchewan, all we need is our fair share — nothing more, nothing less. Number two, is we too have dreams, hopes, and aspirations of our children and our grandchildren; we have that ability to also dream. And number three, the North, the Aboriginal people are not going anywhere. We are part of Saskatchewan's dream; we are proud of who we

are; and we have and will continue to sacrifice and contribute to this great province and to this great nation.

And in closing, Mr. Speaker, on a short smile, I had a dream several days ago. And in that dream, Mr. Speaker, I was about to be shot by a firing squad. In fact there was two of us. There was the member from Cannington and myself — both tied to stakes.

And the member from Cannington and I were both tied, about to be shot by this firing squad when the captain of the firing squad walked up to both of us and first asked the member from Cannington, what's his last wish. And of course the member from Cannington replied, I want to hear three-hour speech from Elwin Hermanson on fiscal responsibility and health care — our commitment to health care.

So the sergeant of the firing squad walked up to me and asked me what my last wish was, to which I responded shoot me first.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the government caucus for their gracious welcome to their caucus. I want to thank the member from North Battleford for his kind comments of several days ago. And I also want to thank the constituency of Athabasca; to tell them today that you won't see me speaking very much in the Assembly simply because I'm part of the government that has to defend its current direction in northern Saskatchewan.

We will be in your home communities. We will be at your meetings. We will be making a real difference back in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Beauval, La Loche, Patuanak, Pinehouse, and the list goes on.

So again on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca, I humbly take my seat with the Government of Saskatchewan on behalf of the great northern constituency of Athabasca.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's a privilege and with a great deal of humbleness I enter into this debate on the occasion of the reply to the Speech to the Throne.

It must be difficult, I would find, to at one point in time be on the criticizing side of this House and then to turn around and then go on the defensive. That must be very difficult. That's an experience that I'm not sure how one might handle.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to welcome the communities of Balcarres and Melville from my constituency. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to your efforts, Balcarres has joined the list of many communities across the province who can now watch the proceedings of this Assembly live in their homes. It is my hope that this service will be well used and, once in a while, they will in fact turn to watch the proceedings and perhaps their MLA in action.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to speak a little bit about my constituency. The hon. members know that I represent the constituency of Melville and area. I believe that

this is one of the very best in the entire province. It is certainly one of the most representative constituencies in Saskatchewan, with a mix of rural and urban interests.

(1615)

Since coming to office in the summer of 1995, it's been a privilege to work on a variety of projects and programs that help to improve the quality of life in our area. Helping people to attend to their needs when they come looking for assistance.

A number of important events have taken place in the constituency these past years. I would like to extend sincere congratulations to all the special and numerous individual accomplishments and the new community and business ventures that have taken place.

Business plays a very important role in the Melville constituency. Melville and area show some of the greatest amount of entrepreneurial spirit in the entire province. In fact, I would like to mention a few like the expansion of Babcock & Wilcox bringing new jobs to the area, the creation of Melville Seed Processors, and the nearing completion of Terminal T-22 at Balcarres — all massive undertakings as a result of individual entrepreneurship needed, so desperately needed to keep rural Saskatchewan alive.

I commend the small-business people who have opened shops and offered goods to the people of those small communities where the government has taken away employment and services for the people that need it, for the people that are at the heart of this great province. If it were not for the hard work and the initiative of the people who live in our smaller villages and towns, rural Saskatchewan could not survive.

Mr. Speaker, I want to single out a new small business in Lebreton. It's a small tea and craft house called Fair's Fair. I single them out, Mr. Speaker, because there is a slogan stencilled just below the ceiling, which I have often felt was particularly true of this particular government. It says: a vision without action is a daydream and action without a vision is a nightmare. I often think, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite have spent too much time acting without a vision which has resulted in a nightmare for the people of Saskatchewan.

I've heard from this government at different times that jobs and the economy are a priority; that health, education, and social programs must be protected; that highway and transportation issues are important. And yet not once, not once, Mr. Speaker, have I seen a clear vision for long-term plan from the members opposite. Not once have I heard a plan of direction, but rather, Mr. Speaker, I've only seen and heard of poor, piecemeal, band-aid solutions for health, highways, for job creation, for education, and a myriad of other areas.

Crisis management which is the most costly to all the people of this province — that's the type of management we have under the NDP government.

Like all of Saskatchewan, Melville depends greatly on the farming economy. This year has been particularly hard on farmers with rising input costs and poor grain prices. I've spent

considerable time talking and listening to our farmers. When farmers are hurting, we are all hurting. We in rural Saskatchewan are always very mindful of that but I'm not so sure if the members opposite are aware of this. They are in charge, yet what are they doing to alleviate the pain and suffering in our agricultural community? Not a great deal. They're dickering with the federal government.

Apart from business and agriculture, you cannot speak of Melville without talking about one of the city's longest employers, Canadian National Railways, which gives the city a distinctive flavour of which its residents are fiercely proud.

Now just a little bit about some of the people in my constituency. Those people that I represent, that are the most important part of my life as an elected representative, their input helps me make decisions that affect them. They allow me to serve and they allow me to serve them and they allow me to serve the people of this province. I know to whom I am responsible and to whom I am accountable — and that's to the electorate of my constituency.

Melville enjoys a wide variety of people, hard-working individuals who are willing to pull together and work together and include me in some of the decisions and some of the decisions and initiatives to make the area a great place to be. People are our priority, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing we can do as legislators if we do not understand that people are in fact the future of our province.

In the Year of the Older Person, I think it is important to mention that there are many seniors in my constituency who continue, continue to make important contributions to their communities. They want the best we can provide for their children and grandchildren. And they keep me mindful that decisions that we make here in this House affect the changes in the types of issues and costs that affect their lives. These are the people that have been referred to as having worked all of their lives, having built this province, having paid their taxes, and now, in my humble opinion, deserve the VIP (very important person) treatment unfortunately to which they do not have access.

I'm also proud to say that my constituency includes six First Nation's communities: Peepeekisis, Okanese, Star Blanket, Little Black Bear, and Standing Buffalo First Nation as well as a portion of Sakimay First Nation. And I know first-hand the First Nation's communities in my constituency are working very hard to overcome past hardship and provide bright futures for their people.

I was pleased to recently be involved in the opening of the Okanese community centre, initiatives like homes for seniors in those First Nations communities, health care centres for First Nations people, community halls for young people to come and meet.

I'd also like to tell you a little bit about the people in my family that have allowed me to participate in political life. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, my wife Barbara. Just recently we celebrated 31 years of marriage, and for that many years . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — For that many years, Mr. Speaker — thank you — she has been a source of steady support to me no matter what change I have made or what adventure I have led her on.

I'm constantly reminded of what I want this great province of Saskatchewan to be as well when I visit my daughter, Kim, and her husband, Kevin, in Melville who, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce for the first time in this House are expecting my first grandchild next month.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — And before — it is the Year of the Older Person, no question about it — but before I move on, I think that we need to be reminded that there are many Saskatchewan people, some from my constituency and some from others, who no longer live in this province but would be willing to come back and contribute if this government and its policies had not lost the Saskatchewan way.

Mr. Speaker, every day I appreciate and trust the responsibility that the people of the Melville constituency have bestowed upon me. And, Mr. Speaker, I always enjoyed meeting and speaking with them whether in my office, on the street, at a social event, or anywhere. But, Mr. Speaker, I find now, and it troubles me, that they no longer seem to have the same time to visit. Instead when I see my constituents, they have many serious concerns. They are preoccupied because they feel that they've been abandoned.

The treatment that the people have received from this government have caused them these additional undesirable stresses and concerns. They have become frustrated at the way they are being treated by their own government. Many feel they are being abandoned and betrayed to an unfeeling system. They fear the unavailability of care for their health when they need it. They fear for the lack of facilities when they get older and they require them, that they may as well . . . may not always be available as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier often talks about changes and how, as Saskatchewan people, we must not be afraid of change. And, Mr. Speaker, I must say Saskatchewan people are very resilient people and they do adapt to change, Mr. Speaker. But all people have a breaking point and that is where we stand today. Change has not been a friend to Saskatchewan over the past eight years.

We hear reference to "The Saskatchewan Way" often throughout the Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, do the members opposite believe that closing hospitals, allowing Saskatchewan people to languish on waiting lists, underfunding education, allowing the infrastructure to crumble, forcing farmers off their land — is that what the members opposite mean by the Saskatchewan way?

Mr. Speaker, the government of the day's priorities are wrong. Four years ago in my maiden speech here in this venerable Assembly, I said that far too often in the past politicians in this province have played political games with people's lives rather than coming up with sound policies. Four years later this government has learned nothing and done nothing to change this.

As I said previously, there are serious issues facing the province. Many times, over the past four years, I've been disturbed at the state of affairs and the actions of the members opposite. How those elected to represent the well-being of Saskatchewan people have treated them so callously, so shabbily. It is common knowledge that the NDP's wellness plan has not benefited rural Saskatchewan with hospital closures, longer waiting lists, fewer specialists, and less accountability.

This is a government that has stopped listening to the people. It's become tired and arrogant and uncaring.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier admits mistakes have been made in health care reform but not once — not once — have we heard him apologize in this House to the people of Saskatchewan for their suffering, a suffering that's been induced by this government.

Time and time again during the last session, we stood in this House and brought to the attention of the members opposite the severe shortages that have been appearing in our health care system. There are people, hard-working Saskatchewan people who've worked all their lives, waiting weeks and weeks for critical tests and then months and months for surgery.

Why is there such a long waiting list for these facilities, Mr. Speaker? Because the government opposite does not have a comprehensive plan. They've not had a comprehensive plan; it's been crisis management. They've got expensive study after study but no plans.

Rather than admit to the problem, Mr. Speaker, it has been easier for successive ministers of Health to downplay the serious state of health care in our province by accusing this opposition of playing politics.

Well I'll tell you who's playing politics. It's the NDP members opposite. The Minister of Health's predecessors turned a deaf ear to over 100,000 people who signed petitions and attended rallies last year to protest the closure of the Plains hospital and medical care to southern Saskatchewan.

She herself was not aware of the nursing shortage — can you believe that? — until recently. And yet her own Associate Minister of Health, member for Saskatoon Eastview, had spoke of it several years ago. And still, still, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina South has the audacity to stand in this House and accuse the opposition of playing host to the Jerry Springer show.

But, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there's scarce good news stories in health care. Health care is not working in this province and has not been working for some time. And it's time that the Premier and his government keep some of the commitments that they have made to the people of Saskatchewan about health care.

The Premier had promised last spring there would not be one more bed closed in the Regina Health District. And guess what? This spring 60-plus beds were closed, adding to the already 300-plus beds that were closed previously.

Then he said there would be no more hospitals closures, and yet

his associate Health minister, who obviously spoke out of turn, said hospitals in rural Saskatchewan would be changing.

So what does this all mean, Mr. Speaker? Well lately I've noticed that instead of making promises and instead of answering questions put to the Health minister in this Assembly, she has begun quoting statistics. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have some statistics to quote as well.

Closure of 53 rural hospitals, and who knows how many more on the chopping block. The fact, Mr. Speaker, that over 6,000 people languish on waiting lists, and yet the member from Regina Coronation Park proudly told this House how then premier Blakeney called his Health minister on the carpet and told him to do something about waiting lists when the number reached 2,000. Well, Mr. Speaker, just one health district alone in this province has almost 1,900 people waiting.

The elimination of 968 acute care beds and more to come, more to come, member from Lloydminster, if one believes the Associate Minister of Health. The elimination of 467 long-term care beds. Almost 600 less nurses than when this government came to power, despite promises from the Health minister to hire 200 more nurses.

(1630)

And I've lost count. We've all lost count of the millions, or tens of millions of dollars of cost overruns with the consolidation of the two remaining hospitals in Regina. And I'm not sure if there appears to be a light at the end of the tunnel as far as any sight for completion of the construction at the Regina General Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, the Health minister says, wait for the budget to determine our commitment to health care. And yet, Mr. Speaker, no matter how much money the NDP come up with in an election year for health care, it doesn't take the place of a health care plan or a vision or a direction, and it doesn't take away the hurt of the last eight years. Action without vision — a nightmare. And that's what we're faced with.

I just want to end my comments on health care with the fact that last June the previous Health minister, I'm not sure, number five or six, promised us that Melville would be the site of a new hospital in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, my sincere hope is that the current minister understands what a priority this is for the people of my constituency. For more than 10 years individuals and groups have planned, fundraised, and waited for an announcement. This facility would centralize acute care, home care, and supportive care under one roof.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents in the North Valley Health District are still waiting a definite funding amount for the project and they deserve an answer after this budget. I hope to have good news for them.

And before I leave the topic of health care, I wish to commend and thank all those front-line health providers, especially those in the North Valley Health District, that do such a good job for us despite the situation and the conditions that they have to

prevail under.

Mr. Speaker, another area where there has been no direction is Highways and Transportation. I'm stopped weekly on the streets by people who have had to travel on our highways, report potholes, report damage to their vehicles, their undercarriage, their springs. I'm constantly embarrassed by the government's record.

The road system in this province, especially with the weather conditions we have during the winter season, is not surviving the ongoing destruction and abuse that the road system has taken because of the lack of action and inadequate funding by the government.

The current government has taken almost \$200 million from the highway budget since coming to power and is presently spending less on maintenance than the government of the day did 10 years ago. And presently, less than 50 per cent of the fuel tax the government collects is invested back into highway budget.

The neglect of our highway system is jeopardizing jobs, the safety of those who must travel on them.

Mr. Speaker, last year over 30,000 Saskatchewan people signed a Liberal-sponsored petition urging the government to begin the process of twinning the Trans-Canada Highway. And how did the government respond? Well with such a lack of commitment, such a pathetic beginning to construction, that it was a slap in the face to the safety of Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 12 months, I've travelled across Saskatchewan and I've met many people, and with that travelling I came across some pretty pathetic roads — or at least that is what the government calls them. In fact, driving on Highway No. 310 in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that the Highway minister has found some common ground with the member of the official opposition. Travelling on Highway 310 it makes me wonder whether the Highway minister agrees with the member from Saltcoats that some highways would be better off if left to gravel.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I'm travelling through my constituency avoiding the potholes, I do see many good individual and community achievements. I visit schools throughout my constituency. I'm always impressed with the quality of existing programs, the innovation of educators and the enthusiasm of students. And although I'm always impressed by their innovation and creativity I'm disappointed at the lack of support they receive from this government.

Educators tell me that more and more children need more than just learning the three R's. Expectations around education have grown. Education professionals are finding more and more children need some form of special education, whether it be in the form of special programs and support services for learning disabilities, or social or emotional or behavioural difficulties. Educators believe that between 20 or 30 per cent of students need some form of special education, and yet this government only funds at a rate of 2 per cent of students.

Mr. Speaker, the education system is dealing with more mental

and health and social and physiological issues than ever before, with less social support and funding from this government. The education system has seen little or no improvement with the introduction of the wellness program. In many cases schools are already doing preventative parenting. So why has this government not provided the resources where they are most needed? Why do we only hear about co-operation between health and social services and education, but never see any evidence of this?

Mr. Speaker, I'm told that when school districts are creative enough to find savings in their budgets they are not allowed to reinvest it in front-line programming in their division. It just doesn't seem to make sense. Again this government and its members have their priorities all wrong.

A good education is one of the best investments we can make for our children and our grandchildren. When will the government start investing at home in our own people. Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is still hope. I believe in new beginnings. My vision of the Saskatchewan way is of co-operation, community, and shared efforts in making this great province truly terrific.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so very pleased to have announced in this House, in less than a month, I'll be a grandfather. And Mr. Speaker, in a few months or in several months, when the Premier dares call an election, to run on a pitiful record, a record created by a government that forgot what it was elected to do which was to serve the people of Saskatchewan, to make them the priority. Mr. Speaker, when this election happens, I will start a second term as the elected member from Melville, along with many new Liberal MLAs from across the province and together we will give hope back to the Saskatchewan people.

Because we in the Liberal Party have not forgotten the Saskatchewan way and we have always made the people of Saskatchewan our priority. This government has abandoned health care, highways, education, and in short, Mr. Speaker, they have abandoned the people that depended on them the most.

And, Mr. Speaker, you may feel that I have neglected the Tory Party that sits to the right of me. But Mr. Speaker, I've given them the same amount of thought and consideration they gave their constituents when in the dead of night and concerned only for their own preservation, they joined together to form a new Tory Party. Mr. Speaker, I don't need to send a message because come election time their constituents will send them a message loud and clear, the only kind they'll understand.

Mr. Speaker, because this Throne Speech does not address the priorities of my constituents or the people of Saskatchewan, I cannot support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:44 p.m. until 4:49 p.m.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 11

Toth	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
Draude	Julé	Osika
Hillson	McPherson	Aldridge
McLane	Goohsen	

Nays — 29

Romanow	Flavel	Calvert
Wiens	Shillington	Upshall
Goulet	Johnson	Whitmore
Lautermilch	Cline	Kowalsky
Crofford	Van Mulligen	Bradley
Trew	Renaud	Sonntag
Scott	Nilson	Langford
Murray	Hamilton	Stanger
Kasperski	Ward	Belanger
Murrell	Thomson	

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Regina Sherwood and to participate in the fourth Throne Speech debate since I was elected in 1995. It's indeed a pleasure to be back again here in this esteemed Legislative Assembly and to see all my colleagues on both sides of the House.

And, Mr. Speaker, I first of all would be remiss if I didn't set out a few welcomes to yourself and members of the Legislative Assembly. I want to, as other members have done, I want to thank you for your continued outreach activities although I think my outreach this year brought me into the legislature with one of our classes as opposed to you coming out to our school, but nonetheless that was a very interesting experience and certainly very rewarding for all those that were involved.

I'd also like to say hello and welcome the officers of the Assembly, the Clerk, the assistant Clerks and to say hello to them as well. And also our Sergeant-of-Arms.

I also send greetings to my friends in Hansard. They will note that I have now made a habit of providing translations when I give statements in other languages. In the statement I did in French last week I think they had a translation. I'm planning to do one in Polish and in German a little later on this spring and I'll make sure that they get the proper translations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome all new communities that have been added to the legislative broadcast network and certainly convey on behalf of myself and all of us here a welcome to them tuning in to our facilities and to our debates.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not send special greetings to a new colleague of mine, the member for Athabasca. It was great to . . . We've been out on a couple of outreach activities together and it's certainly a great pleasure to be with him and working with him here in the legislature on the

government side of the House.

Finally, in my introductory remarks I want to compliment my esteemed colleague, the member from Redberry Lake, on the fine job he did in moving this Throne Speech. And also compliment my colleague, the member from Battleford-Cut Knife, for the job she did in seconding the Throne Speech here last week. It was a fine job and has started off what is a very fine debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Speaker, I'd first of all like to take a couple of minutes and talk a little bit about my constituency of Regina Sherwood, and I'd be remiss if I didn't pay some . . . or offer some description of the area I represent, its people, and its neighbourhoods.

As I've explained before, Mr. Speaker, Regina Sherwood, is prominently a residential constituency with very . . . I only have one large and one small commercial shopping centre so it's a neighbourhood residential area that consists of about I think six community associations and I'd like to maybe take a minute to talk a little bit about them and explain just exactly where they are.

Starting on the southern part of Regina Sherwood, we have the Dieppe Community Association in an area that lies totally within Regina Sherwood. Moving north from there we have the community association of Rosemont-Mount Royal. The Mount Royal section lies within the constituency of Regina Sherwood; the Rosemont section lies within the constituency of my colleague, the member for Regina Elphinstone.

Moving north from there, Prairieview Community Association is another area that I share with another member, in this case the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. She has the western part of Prairieview which is West Hill and I have the eastern part of Prairieview.

Moving north from that, the entire area of what we know as Normanview West lies within my constituency. Moving a little west from that or east from that we have the community of Normanview, where I reside and my family, and that's another area that I share with another member. The northern part of Normanview is in Regina Sherwood although the southern part of Normanview lies within and is represented by the member for Regina Elphinstone.

Moving north from that, I also have another shared area. It's the area of the city called Walsh Acres. The eastern part of Walsh Acres is represented by my esteemed colleague the member for Regina Coronation Park and I have the western half. And finally the last area that's within my constituency is called Sherwood Estates, McCarthy Park. I have the section of McCarthy Park, and Sherwood Estates is shared by my colleague, the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

As I indicated a little earlier, Mr. Speaker, Regina Sherwood is almost exclusively a residential area. The only major commercial establishment we have is the Normanview Shopping Centre, and also a smaller strip mall at the corner of Sherwood Drive and Dorothy Avenue.

And I single out a little bit the Normanview Shopping Centre because, Mr. Speaker, just this past Saturday I was very pleased to attend an important function at the Normanview Shopping Centre. For the 10th year in a row, the Normanview Shopping Centre, which is owned by Harvard Developments of Regina here, has had what they call the . . . has the volunteer wall of fame. And this, Mr. Speaker, is a wall that's on one of the hallways in the shopping centre where for 10 years they have pictures and descriptions of volunteers from the West Zone Board in the area of the city which I represent, and they recognize three volunteers a year and have a ceremony where they are presented with a plaque and an award.

And this past Saturday, I was very, very pleased to attend as the local MLA to see three volunteers receive the 1999 awards and take their place on the volunteer wall of fame at the Normanview Shopping Centre.

Mr. Speaker, these members . . . if I could just get my notes here . . . The three people that were nominated this past year and presented with . . . and put onto the wall were Judy Zawyrucka, who is a licensed practical nurse at the Pasqua Hospital and was named outstanding community leader for her years of service with the Rosemont-Mount Royal Community Association and other groups.

The second volunteer recognized was Carol Biberdorf, who has been a volunteer on the Dieppe Community Association for over 20 years and was named outstanding volunteer. Finally, Ian Stavness, a grade 12 honour student and student leader at O'Neill High School, was named outstanding youth for his work and volunteer activities, athletics, music, and his church. Mr. Speaker, my congratulations and those of all my constituents I'm sure to these three members and newest additions to the Normanview Shopping Centre volunteer wall of fame.

Mr. Speaker, I have lots of other topics I'd like to raise. And I talked a little bit earlier in my member's statement about the economic growth that's been taking place here in the city of Regina in the past year or two which is, to say the least, the economic situation in this city here is quite hot. I would however like to take a little bit more time to do this and getting that it's getting towards the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this may be as good a time as any to bring to a conclusion these remarks. And therefore I'd ask to adjourn debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

