

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of the Saskatchewan disenfranchised widows association. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended whereby benefits and pensions are reinstated to disenfranchised widows and whereby all revoked pensions are reimbursed to them retroactively with interest to April 17, 1985.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the city of Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present today on behalf of the disenfranchised widows of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended whereby benefits and pensions are reinstated to disenfranchised widows and whereby all revoked pensions are reimbursed to them retroactively with interest to April 17, 1985.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from Saskatoon, Stump Lake, Whitewood, Regina, and Estevan.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

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.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens asking for review of parental rights in the province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a review process with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, all from the community of Melfort.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I rise today to present petitions on behalf of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan and the prayer reads as follows:

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.

The signators on this petition are from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition on behalf of the good citizens of Lemberg. The prayer reads:

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

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

Thank you.

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

That your petitioners humbly pray 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.

I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again today to present a petition in this House on behalf of people of this province. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks at Cactus Lake, Macklin, Luseland, Denzil, and Kerrobert, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens that are concerned for the deteriorating state of our highway system. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, those who've signed these petitions come from all across the province.

I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today along with my colleague to bring forward petitions, and these ones are in regards to some problems with health care in the southwest part of the province. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on the NDP government and the Southwest District Board to stop plans of laying off nurses and support staff, and be it further resolved that the NDP government provide necessary funding to properly staff our health facilities with front-line health care workers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have hundreds if not a few thousand signatures on these petitions. They're from the Shaunavon, Eastend, Climax, Gull Lake, Frontier, Cadillac, Swift Current. It looks like they're all throughout the southwest part of the province, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased once again to rise on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are most concerned with the education of children with special learning needs. 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 an 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.

All of the people who have signed this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are from the Wahpeton Dakota Nation School.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have this morning,

Mr. Speaker, a petition from the rural municipality of Old Post No. 43. 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, to enter into negotiations with SARM and SUMA for a longer term plan of rural road restitution reflecting future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as the new trucking regulations change safety factors on these roads.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these folks of course come from the area of Old Post, which is in reality the Wood Mountain community and Scout Lake and Lisieux and Wood Mountain in that area. It looks like everybody in the whole community must have come out to sign this one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

Clerk: — Mr. Johnson, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills, presents the eighth report of the committee relating to the petitions for private Bills, and the report is hereby tabled.

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Northwest:

That the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: are there plans to close or reduce acute care services at St. Anthony's Hospital in Esterhazy; further, can the minister please detail what those plans are?

Thank you.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on day 20 I shall move first reading of a Bill, an Act to amend the vehicles Act, confiscation of John's vehicles Act.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what was the monthly acute average daily census for the Watrous Hospital broken out by month for the last 12 months?

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of SERM and any others that would like to contribute: is your government aware of the work being done by the Cypress Hills Research Steering Group; do you support their work; why does most of the funding for projects come from the Alberta government, the Alberta Research Council, the Alberta environment protection sources as well as the Alberta Conservation Association, National Soil and Water Conservation program; what percentage comes from Sask Parks; how is this amount determined; does your government support the three major projects on schedule for 1999; does your government support the riparian project that will be of major focus this year; are any of the research sites located on the Saskatchewan side of the Cypress Hills?

I so submit.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and of course to all of my colleagues in the House, I would like to introduce a very, very special guest who is seated in your gallery, His Excellency, the Ambassador of France to Canada, Monsieur Denis Bauchard.

Bienvenu à Saskatchewan, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur. This is going to be a long introduction so you may want to sit down to rest for a moment.

Mr. Speaker, the ambassador has a very long and distinguished career of public service in the French government and in the diplomatic core. He has an academic and governmental background in economics and finance; and he took his expertise in that area into the French foreign service with postings in Beirut, at the United Nations, and as Minister of Plenipotentiary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He served four years as ambassador to Jordan then returned to the ministry as assistant deputy minister and then executive assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was subsequently appointed as ambassador on special assignment responsible for trans-Atlantic economic relationships before being appointed ambassador to Canada last year.

Mr. Speaker, the people and the nation of France have long been our friends and our allies and I'm very pleased and proud to say that our relationship with France is still growing and growing. Prime Minister Jospin's recent visit to Canada, itself a culmination of many ministerial visits, resulted in a France-Canada action program designed to expand co-operation between our nations in a wide variety of areas.

It may not be known, Mr. Speaker, but France is our seventh largest trading partner and the fifth largest investor in Canada with more than \$5 billion invested across our nation. Canadian investment in France totals almost \$4 billion and more than 100

Canadian companies operate over there in France.

I'm especially pleased that French investment and French customers have found a welcome home right here in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan exports to France totalled \$320 million from 1994 through 1998. And we look forward to growing that number as we seek out mutually beneficial partnerships, particularly in the field of ag-biotechnology.

Mr. Speaker, we are building many collaborative relationships with France's world-renown biotech community. We hope to learn from them. And we are confident that we also have some ideas that we can share with them.

I know that one major French company, Groupe Limagrain, has already established a presence at Innovation Place focusing on canola biotechnology. As well the mining company COGEMA, which is majority owned by the French people, is an important player in our economy in the North, and everywhere, and a very important employer in the North.

And in addition to its contributions to our economy through operations, COGEMA also contributed \$10.5 million to the multi-party training program which is an investment in our young people in the North in particular, and an expression of confidence in the future of our province and of our relationship.

Mr. Speaker, that relationship between Saskatchewan and France is strong, and we look forward to building an even stronger relationship with France as we move forward together.

Mr. Speaker, during his visit to Saskatchewan Ambassador Bauchard will be meeting with His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor; with you, sir, if he hasn't already; with the Minister of Energy and Mines; and I'm very much looking forward to my meeting with him this afternoon.

This afternoon, as well, His Excellency will inaugurate in the rotunda a French parliamentary display called Exposition Le Parlement français with a tea and reception to follow. My printed note said that he was going to do that tomorrow but I notice that your announcement says it's today, Mr. Speaker, so I always follow your word.

On Wednesday His Excellency travels to Saskatoon for visits to Cameco, COGEMA, and Innovation Place.

And I hope and I trust that each step of his travels, His Excellency will meet with a warm and friendly welcome and that he will come to know the warmth and the openness of the Saskatchewan people as customers and investors — yes — but also as friends and as neighbours with many common interests in a rapidly changing world.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, as we meet here in this hallowed Chamber, the seat of democracy that we all cherish, it is entirely appropriate that we welcome today a representative of France whose own democracy has served its people for more than 200 glorious years.

And as we move forward in the world with the nation and people of France as our partners, our allies, and our friends, we should remember the ringing words of the patriots who created

that democracy in France — liberté, égalité, fraternité. And we should remember the challenge inherent in those words — to build a society of freedom, equality, and brotherhood.

Mr. Speaker, and colleagues of the House, I would now ask him to stand and my pleasure to introduce — and let's give him a warm welcome — His Excellency, Monsieur Denis Bauchard, the Ambassador of France to Canada. Monsieur Ambassador.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join with the Premier in welcoming the ambassador from France. I had the pleasure of meeting with Ambassador Bauchard and Madame Bauchard over lunch and the other officials of his group, and I enjoyed talking about the kinds of things relative to Saskatchewan from the French perspective.

I want to welcome you to Saskatchewan. I want to encourage you to have just a tremendous visit. I know this is your first visit to Saskatchewan for you and your wife and I hope that it's the first of many more to come. Welcome to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to add warm words of welcome to the ambassador, His Excellency, to Saskatchewan, to Regina. I also had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with him at the luncheon and reminded him that he needs to come back.

He's a little busy on this occasion, but I reminded him to make sure he returns and visits our beautiful historic sites and particularly the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) training depot which I'm sure he'll find very interesting. Bienvenue, Monsieur et Madame.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery we have a number of visitors as well that to you and through you, I want to introduce to the Assembly. They're accompanied by their instructor or staff member, Harris Sutherland and these are students from the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology.

And, Mr. Speaker, throughout our life we often hear of the phrase, self-government, and I want to say the students that are here today that they've taken the first big step. And I want all the Assembly in the same warm welcome as our ambassador, to the students from SIIT (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology) to the Assembly here today. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure for me this afternoon to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly some very distinguished guests who come here from a very long way away.

Today from the Namibia National Teachers' Union are four

guests: Mrs. Princess Luthuli, secretary of gender affairs; Paul Saerwein, the professional development co-ordinator; and from the Ghana National Association of Teachers we have John Nyoabe, research officer; and Kofi Nyiaye, head of the professional development division.

They are accompanied here today by their colleagues from Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Mrs. Susan Bates. These African teacher leaders are visiting the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as part of an international development program of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. They are here to explore approaches for professional development of teachers, and I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to meeting with them in the next few moments.

So I'd ask, Mr. Speaker, if they might rise and have all members of the Assembly join me in welcoming them not only to the Assembly today but to our fine province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — If other members have introduced guests, if you would permit the Speaker to introduce a special guest of mine who's also located the Speaker's gallery today.

He's a young man wearing a bright blue jacket with a French flag over his heart and with pins from many parts of Canada and other parts of the world. He's also the source of the rock music that goes on in my basement into the wee hours of the night.

His name is Nicolas Roos. And Nicolas is an exchange student through the Rotary exchange program, is in the city of Moose Jaw for a year, and has arrived in August, staying till July. For the past two and a half months, he's been a guest in my home and will be staying with us until the end of the month.

He hails from the Selesat community in the Alsace region of France and it's a special day for Nicolas to be able to come while he's here in Saskatchewan and meet his own ambassador to Canada; at the same time to celebrate the history of parliamentary democracy in his own country with the unveiling of the French parliamentary exhibit in the rotunda of our legislature.

And I'd ask you to extend a warm Saskatchewan welcome to Mr. Nicolas Roos.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry that I wasn't quickly enough up on my feet before you were introducing your guest, but I would like to join with you in your introduction and I also have a guest of my own that I would like to introduce if I may. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, seated today behind the bar on the government side, and I would say seated only temporarily behind the bar on the government side, is a former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Peter Prebble.

Mr. Peter Prebble, as members are all aware, very capably and ably represented the constituency of Saskatoon Greystone in the '80s. And Mr. Peter Prebble, as members do know, has most recently received the nomination once again for the constituency of Saskatoon Greystone, so he will be running for the New Democrats in Greystone once again and will be able to take his place with the government as a New Democratic member.

I am very pleased that Mr. Prebble has come to Regina to participate in our caucus affairs and to bring us greetings and to let us know what is happening in Saskatoon Greystone. And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members would welcome both a former colleague, a former MLA, and a future MLA in this Assembly, Mr. Peter Prebble.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with my colleagues in welcoming a guest to the Chamber today. Although she has been mentioned previously in our foreign visitors' introduction, I want, on behalf of the members, through you and to you, Mr. Speaker, to give a special welcome to Susan Bates who has returned to Saskatoon in a position with the teachers' federation but did spend some time in a hiatus here in Regina and it's nice to see your face again, Susan.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Minister of Labour's Daughter's Passing

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, it is with deep regret I stand in the Assembly to recognize the life of Sunny Thompson, the daughter of our colleague from Regina Centre, Joanne Crofford. Sunny died peacefully in her sleep today at the General Hospital in Regina.

Our prayers and thoughts are with the family. I would like the family to know that all members of the Legislative Assembly are saddened by Sunny's death. And please accept our deepest sympathies.

There is a scripture that says: when one suffers we suffer together; when we are joyous we rejoice together. Today we share Joanne's and her family's sorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the official opposition on this sad occasion to offer condolences to our colleague, the Labour minister, on the passing of her daughter, Sunny.

We understand the stress and the heartache that she has gone through over the last six months and we share her losses.

I would ask that all members join with us in offering those condolences to the family, to the two young children that Sunny leaves behind, and to her husband, as well as to the minister and

her spouse.

Thank you.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with all colleagues in the House on behalf of the Liberal caucus to extend our sincere condolences and sympathy to the Minister of Labour on the passing of her daughter.

It's not easy to lose a loved one, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure that we've, each of us, have shared such a loss. And our truly deepest sympathy goes out to the Minister of Labour and her family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Increase in Retail Sales

Mr. Kasperski: — Yesterday the member from Swift Current gave us some good news about building permits here in Saskatchewan and how they're on the rise here if not in our neighbouring provinces.

I also, Mr. Speaker, have some encouraging news which I'd also like to share with the Assembly. These figures come also from Statistics Canada, courtesy of our *Leader-Post* staff, our great provincial economy boosters.

An article in today's *Leader-Post* informs us that for the months of January and February of this year, retail sales were up in every province except Quebec.

I quote from the article, Mr. Speaker:

Saskatchewan department stores enjoyed the biggest jump in sales, posting an 11 per cent increase in February and a 9.3 per cent increase in the first two months of 1999, compared with the same (time) last year.

Any way you slice it, Mr. Speaker, this is good news for Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Services

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, people across Saskatchewan have expressed many serious concerns about the levels of health care services in Saskatchewan. Primarily we have heard from patients and family members.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a section of a letter I received from Dr. McKitterick, a medical doctor in Norquay. And the letter is dated April 8, 1999 and it is addressed to myself. The letter reads:

I saw a 63-year-old patient on April 6. He has advanced arthritic changes in his hip and this patient has chronic pain both in the hip and the right knee, which is strained because of his hip abnormality.

This patient has seen the excellent orthopedic people in Yorkton and is told that there is a possibility of him having

his hip operation in the year 2000. A delay such as this patient has in getting an operation to relieve the pain appears to be quite unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an isolated case. These conditions existed long before the dilemma health care faces today. Everyone from the patient through to the front-line caregivers like nurses and this doctor need to know that a plan is in place that will remedy these unacceptable situations. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Weyburn High School/Regional College Joint Use Facility

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Weyburn continues to shine as a centre of innovation and co-operation. Yesterday I attended the official announcement of the Weyburn joint use facility at the Weyburn Comprehensive High School, along with my colleagues, Hon. Clay Serby and Hon. Maynard Sonntag.

I've had the opportunity on several occasions to meet with the regional college board and the Weyburn Comprehensive School Board, and I know the hard work and dedication that they have put into this project, along with other participating boards and the community.

Both partners will save money by sharing the operating and maintenance costs of this facility. This money, along with the provincial government's investment of \$850,000 for renovations and expansion, will be directed to supporting instructors, teachers, and students.

This is a win-win project. Both college and high school students will benefit from the improved facilities and equipment, as well as high school students will gain a first-hand look at the post-secondary education system.

We are making the best use of available resources by enhancing existing facilities and creating more of the training and educational opportunities that lead to jobs and personal success, not to mention growth in the community. This is about partnership and lifelong learning. The benefits of this type of innovative solution extend beyond the high school students and adult learners to the community itself.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer my congratulations to all those who worked to make the Weyburn joint use facility a reality. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Wins Court Decision on Cogeneration Proposals

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, today sees yet another example of how this NDP government lurches from crisis to crisis like a mean drunk at a pub crawl. Today SaskPower won a court decision over Wind Power and Dove Industries. After encouraging them in 1993 to invest a great deal in preparing proposals for cogeneration, this NDP then turned around and slammed the door in their face.

Here we have another example of the heavy-handed but light-headed government with a record of missed opportunities and blown potential when it comes to getting needed additional power at little expense and diversified economic development in this province. The NDP asked for cogeneration proposals, promised help, but backed out and ended up dragging people through the courts.

This NDP government operates like a schoolyard bully with a chip on its shoulder. It bullied people on GRIP (gross revenue insurance program). It bullied people back ... with back-to-work legislation for IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) and SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses), and tried again on cogeneration

However, there comes a day when all bullies are called on their bluff, and it is obvious such a day, perhaps in June, is soon coming for this NDP (New Democratic Party) government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fiftieth Anniversary of Western Development Museum

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some 50 years ago Mr. J.L. Phelps submitted the first annual report of the Western Development Museum. And that annual report consisted of just over one page of report and said that, among other things, the price of admission at the North Battleford and Saskatoon museums was 25 cents, with children free. The Saskatoon exhibit was open year round but the hanger was unheated. The museum had a total of 300 exhibits, with half on display.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Phelps concluded his report, quote:

It can now be said that the Western Development Museum is an established institution, the value of which will increase with the years in preserving in visual form the story of the pioneers of the West.

Fifty years and 7 million visitors later, with an additional facility in Yorkton and Moose Jaw, with over 70,000 artifacts, the Western Development Museum has more than fulfilled the prophecy.

Ninety seconds of private members' statement today for 50 years is hardly sufficient to help celebrate the WDM's (Western Development Museum) 50th anniversary this week, but I know all members will want to congratulate the current staff and volunteers and pay tribute to all the visionary pioneers who made the Western Development Museum possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Caring and Compassion in the Community of Herbert

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, last Sunday in the community of Herbert I was privileged to witness the caring and compassion that are trademarks of the true Saskatchewan way. Close to 500 people attended a benefit brunch sponsored by the Herbert Lions and the Herbert Hawks. This was a tremendous show of support to help with the medical expenses of young

Braxton Penner. Later that day many Herbert residents again gathered to celebrate Harvey Jahnke's 80th birthday.

All this time, Mr. Speaker, the nurses of the Herbert hospital were providing relief for management at the hospital. Essential services were not being compromised as this government continues to falsely claim. No, Mr. Speaker, there'll be no airlift of patients required from the Rolling Hills Health District. And I can advise that any attempt to drive wedges between people in this community will fail.

In closing, I'd ask everyone to join me in saluting the community of Herbert for pulling together in true Saskatchewan fashion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Recycling Curling Rocks in Unity

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most of us who are curling duffers, if there is such a word, have felt the urge to smash those stones that won't do what we want to into little bits — sort of the equivalent of throwing your golf clubs into the water trap — but they're too heavy to throw and too hard to break.

However, Mr. Speaker, Frank Oatway from Unity in my constituency has come up with a way not only to break up old curling rocks but to also transform the pieces into attractive and unique objects. Frank is a rock recycler, turning curling rocks what once turned in when we said out, into pins, clocks, napkin holders, trophies, jewellery boxes — you name it.

In the process, Frank has become something of an expert on the kinds of granite used to make the stones. He can look at a rock and tell what quarry it came from, what kind of granite it is made of, and whether it is a rare or common variety of granite. And since he began this hobby he has become well-known at bonspiels around the country. Frank also donates his work for charitable fundraising.

Mr. Speaker, I tip my hat and wave my broom to Frank Oatway and his unique craft. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Nurses' Strike

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, your back-to-work legislation didn't work. Your court injunction didn't work. What's your latest solution? Another court injunction. It's no wonder we have a health care crisis. You're prescribing the wrong medicine. Every time the patient gets sicker you double the dosage.

Mr. Premier, it's time for you to admit you made a mistake. We need negotiation, not litigation. It's time for you to go back to the bargaining table, withdraw the threats, withdraw the preconditions, work out an agreement that addresses working conditions and treats nurses with respect. Will you do that, Mr.

Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It may not be known by guests to the Assembly, and I would like to remind all guests of the Assembly it's a long-standing tradition of parliamentary democracy and of this Assembly as well of course, that guests of the Assembly don't participate in proceedings. And the Chair asks that you respect that and seeks your co-operation. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I want to assure the public is that the Government of Saskatchewan has been advised by Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations that as soon as nurses return to work they will return to the bargaining table.

And we can get the kind of collective agreement that meets the needs of the various people that work in various workplaces across the province.

Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated to this House and to the public, we had an opportunity last Wednesday when the Premier met with representatives of SUN and the employer to address nurses' issues. Mr. Speaker, what we were not able to do in this fiscal year was address the 22 per cent increase that SUN was requesting.

Mr. Speaker, there is a minimum of 8.6 per cent or \$20 million for pay equity beginning in 2001 and, Mr. Speaker, there is a recruitment and retention fund and there are other things there to address issues that nurses face in the workplace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, today is private members' day. This afternoon the Saskatchewan Party will be moving a motion calling on SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) and the government to return to the bargaining table. Show some good faith, go back to the bargaining table, and I'm sure that good faith will be reciprocated by the nurses.

I think many of your members now realize you made a mistake. It's time to admit that mistake. Get out of the courtroom. Get back to bargaining.

Mr. Premier, will you allow your members to express their true feelings on your handling of the nurses' strike? Will you allow a free vote?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I can assure the public that should the nurses choose to return to work this afternoon, we will ensure that SAHO goes to the bargaining table.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union Health Care Support Workers

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health as well. Madam Minister, this morning more

than 600 support staff at Saskatchewan Cancer Agency in the North Central Health District walked off the job. These SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) members said they were joining the nurses on the picket lines because the government wasn't listening.

Sound familiar, Madam Minister? You refused to listen to nurses and forced them onto the picket lines. Now the NDP is refusing to listen to health care support staff in Regina, Saskatoon, and Melfort. The net result of this NDP government's incompetence is the worst health care crisis in nearly 40 years.

Madam Minister, what are you doing to ensure that cancer patients in Saskatoon and Regina will receive the care they need? What are you doing to provide health care services to the people of Melfort who are now without nurses and support staff?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, thousands of civil servants in this province, thousands of teachers in this province and thousands of Crown corporation employees and municipal employees in this province have settled for 2, 2, 2 plus 1, Mr. Speaker.

If we were to do what is being requested, Mr. Speaker, we would go back to the '80s where we ran up a debt in this province of \$15 billion. Today, Mr. Speaker, today as I speak, \$2 million this day is leaving the province to New York and Zurich and Tokyo as interest on the public debt. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, what we could do with \$730 million that now leaves this province in interest.

We could address, address every issue in this province — every issue, Mr. Speaker. But I for one have not spent eight years of my life turning this province into a situation where we no longer are spending money out in the deficit, Mr. Speaker, because that's not where people want to go. They do not want to go back to the past which those members are asking . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every day the minister gets up in the legislature and finds someone to blame. You blame past administrations; you blame the nurses; you blame the opposition; you blame the federal government. You blame someone.

Madam Minister, it's time to look in the mirror. This is your health care crisis. Your NDP government caused it, your NDP government made it worse, and now your NDP Premier lost control of it.

Do you realize the kind of impact you're having on people? In my constituency of Melfort all acute care patients have been hauled to Tisdale, Nipawin, or Prince Albert, wherever there's space for them. Medical care is now being administered by untrained family members and out-of-scope employees.

Madam Minister, when are you going to get back to negotiations again with SGEU workers? When are you going to

throw out the back-to-work legislation and the preconditions and negotiate with the nurses? When are you going to fix the problem you have created?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of this province — and this is an important question that needs to be addressed — I would ask that member if he believes that we should provide a 22 per cent increase.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, today there is no support staff working in the cancer clinics in Regina and Saskatoon.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Order. The Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the question put, and I ask for the co-operation of members on all sides of the House.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, today there is no support staff working in the cancer clinics in Regina and Saskatoon. There are no X-ray technicians, no lab technicians, no licensed practical nurses, no home care aids, dietary aids, and laundry staff working at the Melfort hospital. And, Madam Minister, thanks to you and the NDP government, there are no nurses working in Saskatchewan today.

The health care system is grinding to a halt. That's NDP health care, Madam Minister. It's a colossal failure, and every person in Saskatchewan knows it and is paying the price.

Madam Minister, when are you going to get back to meaningful negotiations with no preconditions so these people of the province who want to provide health care can get back and do their jobs with dignity?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, I find the member's question somewhat ironic given that Bill 29 — a Bill put forward by the Tory Party — The Democratic Unionism Act; Bill 30, The Trade Union Amendment Act which repeals successor rights; and, Mr. Speaker, Bill 31, The Saskatchewan Right to Work Act. Well, Mr. Speaker, I know where those members are coming from. I know where they're coming from because I have sat in this House for the last 13 years and I've seen their record on the trade union movement of the province.

Mr. Speaker, my question remains. Does this member support a 22 per cent increase? Is that his position, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Advertising During Nurses' Strike

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, haven't you learned anything from the mistakes you've made over the past few days? On Sunday the minister writes a letter to nurses saying it's time to end the recrimination. On Monday she's using taxpayers' money to take out a full page ad vilifying nurses. And today she runs an even more one-sided ad condemning nurses. The minister says . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — The minister says she's extending her hand to nurses, but what she really is doing here is extending her hand to slap nurses in the face. Madam Minister, why do you continue with this form of disrespect? How do you expect to make peace with nurses when you just keep on insulting nurses with these one-sided ads?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, on Sunday I, on behalf of my colleagues and government, acknowledged that while we were dealing with a \$15 billion debt that was wrapped up by her predecessors, the issues that workers were confronting in the workplace were not being addressed, Mr. Speaker. I did that, Mr. Speaker, with the understanding that the nurses would be returning to work, Mr. Speaker.

At that time, on Sunday evening, after I sent my letter, the SUN people decided that they were not going to urge their members to return to the workplace and comply with the judge's order, Mr. Speaker.

It is extremely important that the people of this province know the facts of this dispute, and we are not in the fiscal position to support a 22 per cent increase to the SUN.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Madam Minister, you are using taxpayers' money to run ads that only tell one side of the story. There's no mention . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — There's no mention of how you have destroyed health care or how you have destroyed working conditions for nurses over the last eight years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — There's no mention of how the hospitals have been closed and the nurses have been lost due to your mismanagement. Every taxpayer in Saskatchewan, including nurses, are being forced to pay for these ads. But most taxpayers don't agree with the NDP's handling of this dispute.

Madam Minister, why are you only telling one side of the story? Are you going to continue running these costly ads? And if so, will you dedicate half of the space in the next ad to allow nurses to tell their side of the story?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, we live in a country that is a country where the citizens of this country and the citizens of this province abide by the laws of the province and the country, Mr. Speaker. My question to the opposition is this: do you support a 22 per cent increase and do you encourage people to not abide by the laws of this land?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SGEU Health Care Support Workers

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, SGEU health workers in the North Central Health District offered their services to management, but instead of thinking of patients' safety, management said no, thank you.

The workers, the LPNs (licensed practical nurse), and lab techs said to management they would wear pagers in the case of emergencies. The workers offered to come in at a moment's notice. All the hospital had to do was call them and send off the beeper.

What was the response, Mr. Speaker, of the management? Did they say great, we'll give you a call if we need you? No, Mr. Speaker. Management's response was not only a refusal to call in case of emergency but they demanded the employers return the pagers.

My question is to the Premier. Why should people believe you care about patient safety when your management is stripping the pagers from these employees who are offering to come in at a moment's notice?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I've come to learn about some of the information that is shared in this legislature, is that when you check that information out it is not always found to be factual. What I can assure the member, what I can assure the member is I will check to see whether the information he's provided us is in fact factual.

But I can say to the people of this province is that we are not in a position to agree to all of the requests or demands that are being made of us. To do so would mean the following — we either cut services, increase taxes, or go back in a deficit position.

Mr. Speaker, we have not spent the last eight years trying to get this province into a fiscal position where we can start paying down the debt, start paying down taxes . . . or start giving people a tax cut, and start improving services. Mr. Speaker, that's not where we want to go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Madam Minister, I dare say you have another option. And that's to let go about the 600 spin doctors and hacks that your government has stuck all over the Crown Corporations.

Mr. Speaker, on the weekend government spokesperson and chairman of SAHO, Brian Rourke, said that they were so confident that nurses would go back to work they didn't even need a plan B — they didn't need a plan B, Mr. Speaker. Well it's no wonder health care is in such a chaos with this short-sightedness of your government.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP had no plan B for nurses going back to work and now look where it's got us. With such demonstrated incompetence I'm almost afraid to ask what the NDP's plan B is for the SGEU workers.

Mr. Premier, don't you think that plan A, B, C, or whatever plan should be first, to repeal the Bill that you put before this House and allow the collective bargaining process to go ahead without your political interference?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order, order.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier this afternoon, we live in a province where people abide by the laws of this province. Mr. Speaker, we are encouraging the SUN to ask their members to return to the workplace in order that the law of this province can be upheld.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Advertising for Out-of-Scope Hospital Administrators

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the people of this province read our newspapers these days they read ads like this one condemning nurses with full-page ads in the paper.

Mr. Speaker, they also see ads from other provinces like this one: Seeking nurses to move from Saskatchewan and work elsewhere. However, Mr. Speaker, they see ads . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Now the Chair is having some difficulty . . . Order. The Chair is having some difficulty . . . Order. Order, order. Order. Order.

Now the Chair has had — Order! — has had much difficulty being able to hear the question being put by the hon. member for Arm River and recognizes that part of the reason is because one of his colleagues is involving the guests in the gallery and — Order, order — and because of interruptions on both sides of the House. Order.

And I'll ask for the co-operation of all hon. members.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, the ads that they see in the papers from the health care people in Saskatchewan are ads looking for more administrators, Mr. Speaker. They're not looking for . . . not advertising for nurses. They're advertising for administrators, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us in this House what kind of a message that he's sending to our nurses that are residents of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has become apparent to us in the last six days is that we have very few out-of-scope nurse managers that are able to deal with the work that is being requested of them. I mean they can't possibly take care of the patient needs of people that are in our institutions.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the member is that this province cannot afford a 22 per cent increase at this point in our history.

Mr. Speaker, we are urging nurses to go back to the workplace. And we can assure SUN and its members that we will ensure that there is a collective agreement that meets the needs of their members, meets the needs of the taxpayers of this province, and meets the needs of people who are served by our health system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister of Health could tell this House how many nurses they could hire with these fearmongering ads that they've got spread across the newspaper in Saskatchewan this morning. Mr. Speaker, there are also reports that the Pasqua Hospital might be closing today.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health: can she confirm or deny these reports; is it just more of your fearmongering, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as you will know, that in this province unlike other times when there have been withdrawal of services by the registered nurses, we have a much more integrated system. As I indicated yesterday to the press, that the province would be looking to its districts because we were advised that they were going to begin to consolidate medical services.

Mr. Speaker, I'm advised that the people who are providing nursing services in the health districts are becoming extremely fatigued and, Mr. Speaker, those individuals are asking for some relief. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, I can report that SUN has been able to provide relief but, Mr. Speaker, in other situations I can advise that that has not been possible.

Mr. Speaker, as this dispute continues, the health districts will continue to consolidate medical services for the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Negotiations During Saskatchewan Union of Nurses' Strike

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government states that its legislation is necessary as far as legislating the nurses back to work, because it compromises patient safety. It also states that it cannot pay nurses an increase of 22 per cent in salary.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to be blunt about patient safety and how it has indeed been compromised for several years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Physical exhaustion, mental fatigue, being bumped from one area of nursing expertise to another, ever increasing demands with diminishing numbers of support, have already put people at risk who are in need of health care in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Madam Minister, I ask you this. Please, please have your government take the leadership role. Say this — say, we were wrong. Say, we are fixing it now. Say, we ask you to come back to the table first. And say it without requesting them to have to go back to work.

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

Ms. Haverstock: — Madam Minister, will you please take this step. Will you extend your hand fully to the nurses today, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, that member will know that I have the highest regard for her, and that member will know that on Sunday I sent a two and a half page letter to the president of SUN indicating that mistakes had been made, and for that I apologized on the part of the government.

I asked the president of SUN to take a step forward with me. We can solve this problem. We can solve it together. We are committed to addressing the issues that nurses feel so strongly about. I asked the president to take that step, to take it with me. But we cannot take that step while people are in violation of the law.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, there is only one reason why nurses are in violation of the law in Saskatchewan, and that was because your government did not think this through clearly. These are people . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — It is true, the government has been in error. And to present the stance like somehow you're solely protecting the taxpayers of the province from some unrealistic demands of greedy nurses is absolutely unconscionable. Because everyone knows the truth — the nurses have been taken for granted; nurses have been disrespected. They were shut out of a process and now why should they have to blink first in this showdown with the government. I do not believe in people breaking the law, Madam Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, what has been tried is not working. If it's not working, it's not working because the problems are cumulative and they are long-standing. Is your government willing to put aside its pride in this situation, to accept responsibility for this very, very sad standoff. Don't ask at this point to walk side by side. Lead . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order. Order, order. Now the hon. member has been extremely lengthy again. I'll ask her to go directly to her question now.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question, Madam Minister, is this. Do something else. Do something different. What will you do to initiate this process again?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, where I come from,

where I come from, Mr. Speaker, your word is your word. And last Wednesday there was a meeting, there was a meeting with the Premier of this province . . . I think people should listen. Last Wednesday there was a meeting with the Premier of this province, and SUN representatives said they would come back the next morning at 8:30 in the morning. When you say you're coming back, you come back. Mistake number one, Mr. Speaker.

We can say, and I have said, that we have made mistakes. There is no doubt about it. But, Mr. Speaker, we have a law in this province, a law, and a court injunction — a judge's order. And, Mr. Speaker, the people in this province are law-abiding people and we do not support the breaking of the law, Mr. Speaker. And we simply can't afford 22 per cent pay increase.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order! Order. Order. Order. Order. I will ask the hon. members not to be interacting with the guests in the gallery. Order! And I will ask all the hon. guests to respect the traditions of democracy. Co-operation is appreciated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 211 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 1999 (FREE VOTES)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 211, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 1999 (FREE VOTES) 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. 239 — The Resumption of Services (Nurses - SUN) Repeal Act

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 239, The Resumption of Services Repeal Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill read a first time.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of this House, now.

Leave not granted.

Mr. Hillson: — If leave is not granted now, then next sitting of this House.

The Speaker: — I'm sorry, the — order — the Chair was unable to hear the remarks of the hon. member for North Battleford.

Mr. Hillson: — My apologies, Mr. Speaker. If leave to move second reading is not granted for immediately, I ask for leave for second reading at the next sitting of this House.

The Speaker: — The Chair I think I heard the hon. member

correctly. Request to leave is not in order because leave can only be requested for a matter to be dealt with at this time by this House and that was not the nature of the request as the Chair understood. Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide the response to question 44, and by leave of the Assembly, also provide the answers to questions 45, 46, 47, and 48.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip, with leave, simultaneously provides the answers for items 1 through 5. Is leave granted?

Leave is granted, and the answers are provided for item 1, question 44; item 2, question 45; item 3, question 46; item 4, question 47; and item 5, question 48. Those answers are tabled.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I request, Mr. Speaker, that question no. 49 be converted to orders for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — The question, item 6, question 49 is converted to notice of motions for return (debatable).

Mr. Kowalsky: — The answer for question 50, Mr. Speaker, submitted.

The Speaker: — The answer to item no. 7, question no. 50, is provided.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I request that question no. 51 be converted to orders for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — The item 8, question no. 51, is converted to notice of motions for return (debatable).

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Health Care Funding

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks, I will be moving:

That this Assembly support the government policy of increased funding for health care, backing its commitment with the largest health budget in the history of the province, a budget that will lead to a health care system ready to meet the demands of the new century.

Mr. Speaker, events have rather overtaken this motion and it is so easy to focus simply on the events of today and to ignore the larger context. But, Mr. Speaker, I have witnessed in the last week some things that have caused me great personal distress, because I am extremely concerned that until and unless we have the rule of law in this land, we are creating the conditions, and some members within this Assembly are creating the conditions, of anarchy.

I joined the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, because I believe in progress. I believe in social justice, equality, and

fairness for all. I believe that elected representatives with a social democratic point of view can provide a voice for the powerless, for the weak and downtrodden in society.

I did not join the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, simply to be a mouthpiece for special interests, no matter how loud they may be.

Mr. Speaker, I joined the New Democratic Party, I became an NDP MLA because I believe we can work for change within the system. I believe that the majority of Saskatchewan people, all union members believe that we can work for change within the system. And so therefore I am rising today to address the issue of the health care system in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me we need to focus on the larger context when we are debating the question of health care. As the Minister of Health has indicated, yes, there have been mistakes made.

But I would say to the members of this Assembly that mistakes have been made because we have been coping with an incredible debt in this province. We were handed an unprecedented situation when we took government. And we have tried to find a way to reform and improve the health care system.

We had first of all to deal with a \$15 billion debt. We were lucky that we were able, through the co-operation of the people of Saskatchewan, to bring it down to \$12 billion.

We had a \$1.2 billion deficit in government programs. We've been able to bring it down to zero. Indeed this year we have a slim surplus of \$8 million; \$8 million, Mr. Speaker, as all members know, is not very much when it comes to dealing with a lot of the pent-up demands that many people in Saskatchewan feel — many people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, not only the group that is currently withdrawing its services.

Mr. Speaker, we had . . . in order to deal with the deficit, unfortunately we had to raise taxes and we had to cut programs — programs that many of us on the social democratic side of the House held very dear, like the prescription drug plan and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, those were not easy decisions for us to make, but with the co-operation of the people of Saskatchewan we made them. And all people sacrificed — members of the opposition, members of unions, members of the government. All people in this province sacrificed to get the province of Saskatchewan back on track.

We have now been able to do it and we were able this year, thankfully, to put \$195 million extra into health care. Unfortunately in the last week, we saw the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses withdraw their services because they wanted more than all the other workers of Saskatchewan who get their paycheques from the taxpayers, they wanted more than those workers received.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday we passed a Bill, the famous or infamous Bill 23, that gave the nurses 2, 2, 2 and 1 plus an additional 1.2 for wage parity. They got exactly the same as all

other workers in the province. At the same time though, Mr. Speaker, we made significant offers for binding recommendations from the nursing advisory process, something that the Associate Minister of Health had been working for since 1988 during the nurses' strike and in the 1999 nurses' strike. It can be summed up simply, Mr. Speaker — that was whistle-blowing legislation, a process for dealing with whistle-blowing. We made binding recommendations for that.

We gave them seniority-driven selection criteria. We offered pay equity — \$20 million pay equity to be implemented in 2001. We offered a recruitment and retention strategy with a tripartite-administered committee and conversion of casual positions to permanent positions. Those, Mr. Speaker, would have taken up a significant part of that \$195 that we had in health. We still want to negotiate with the nurses for those offers.

Mr. Speaker, in 1982 — people have been saying, well, remember '82, you might lose government again — in 1982, Mr. Speaker, when we had health care workers out, at that time nurses were demanding that they be paid the same as carpenters in this province. Well in 1982, the carpenters signed an agreement to give them an end rate of \$18.26 an hour. Mr. Speaker, right now a union carpenter currently receives \$17.50 an hour, down 76 cents from 1982. Now it's making its way up from the low of \$12 an hour that it went to in the '80s, but what I'm saying is we have to put all of these things into context.

This province has been dealing with a sinkhole of debt and all people have been paying the price. And now, Mr. Speaker, as we start to see some bright spots on the horizon, now is not the time for one group or another to say they are more than especially entitled than anyone else to a fair share of the pie in Saskatchewan. All people have to be treated equitably and fairly.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the geographical context. In Manitoba nurses have had a wage rollback. In Alberta they had a rollback; now their salary has come up again, but they have a labour relations code, Mr. Speaker, that does not allow nurses to strike. In BC (British Columbia) they have essential services legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we also have to take a look when we're looking at the larger context at the care context. Mr. Speaker, there are many people involved in health care, and I would like at this moment to pay tribute to all those people involved in health care. MLAs on all sides of the House have had many occasions in the last little while to be present in hospitals, in nursing homes, and to be in the homes of people receiving home care services. They receive, by and large, excellent care, excellent care from LPNs who have been holding the fort in the last few days; excellent care from housekeeping aides, from dieticians, from respiratory therapists, and excellent care from nursing managers and from nurses as well.

Mr. Speaker, the health care system is large, it is complex, and all people in the health care system deserve an equitable amount of compensation. Mr. Speaker, I believe very firmly in fair wages for all workers. The offer that we have given, that we have legislated for SUN, provides them a fair wage.

It also provides them with mechanisms for dealing with long-standing grievances and concerns. And I ask them to understand that everyone in this province has sacrificed together, which is the Saskatchewan way. Together, the co-operative way, people have been working to get this province back on track. And now is not the time — nor indeed, Mr. Speaker, is there ever a time for one group to say that they are especially entitled to more than all other people get.

Mr. Speaker, we have offered a great deal in terms of non-monetary items on the table. We have legislated the same fair wage package for nurses as we have for all other workers who receive their paycheques from the taxpayers of this province.

I ask the nurses to understand that there is a rule of law in this country. I ask them to understand that Bill 23 has been proclaimed and it is important that they go back to work. As soon as they are back at work, we will be back negotiating with them at the bargaining table for all those non-monetary items that they cared about so deeply in '88 and in '91.

Mr. Speaker, there's not a one of us here in this House who hasn't been touched by personal tragedy, who hasn't felt the strains in the health care system. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, there are many of us here who are feeling the strains in the health care system most acutely in the last six days. There are people in this House who have relatives who now are phoning them and saying, I've been diagnosed with breast cancer — how do I get my treatment?

As we know, as we heard earlier today, the Minister of Labour has not been present in this House for the last week because she has been over at the Pasqua Hospital day and night tending to her dying daughter. Mr. Speaker, I am assured that her daughter received excellent care at Pasqua Hospital both — and at the General Hospital as well — both before the current labour situation erupted and during the current labour situation.

Health care workers, whether they are nurses, LPNs, MDs (Doctor of Medicine), or housekeeping aides, or any of the other plethora of workers in health care, health care workers are professionals and I am very pleased that they have been conducting themselves in a professional way.

I hope, notwithstanding some of the signs that we have seen in this House of incipient anarchy, that those workers who think that the way to achieve their goals is to scream and intimidate, I'm hoping that they will understand that it is far better to be calm, to go back to the table, to obey the rule of law, and to listen and put their demands within the context of the larger society of Saskatchewan and the budgetary means and ability of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that this year we were able to provide an additional \$195 million for health care. And I do ask that everyone understand that as money becomes available, as we are able to improve the economy of this province and pay down more debt, that we will be able to make further improvements.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I do ask all members of the Assembly to join me in supporting this motion, which is, and I

do now move it:

That this Assembly support the government policy of increased funding for health care, backing its commitment with the largest health budget in the history of the province, a budget that will lead to a health care system ready to meet the demands of the new century.

I do so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I'm afraid the motion is not in order without a seconder, and I cannot accept it without a seconder.

Ms. Lorje: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I sometimes get carried away with my rhetoric and I forget to follow the fine points. That doesn't mean I'm an anarchist; it just means I forget about rules.

I do move, seconded by the member from Swift Current, that the motion that I had previously read out be now concurred in.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly to second the motion made by the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

I thank you for the opportunity to say a few words about the state of medicare in Saskatchewan and in Canada. Although we are presently experiencing a little difference of opinion between the demands of nurses and the government's position, I still believe that with patience, understanding, and good will, that we will reach a suitable settlement which will be fair to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, fair to the nurses, and fair to the patients.

But, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I would like to take a global view of the overall state of health care, not only in this great province but in Canada as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, good health means more than the treatment of physical shortcomings or the treatment of disease and illness. Good health refers to the well-being of the whole person.

Mr. Speaker, one of the government's responsibilities then is that we must create conditions conducive to good health. That means we must develop public policies made for healthy people, policies which provide for full employment, decent wages, housing, a strong social safety net, food, safe neighbourhoods, a clean environment, and a safe workplace. Mr. Speaker, these are all part and parcel and necessary for a good health policy.

This government is committed to public policies which will enhance the well-being of the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to list all the programs that this government has initiated. I would be here for many more hours than you would allow, and as a wise man once said: the mind can only absorb as much as the seat can endure.

Mr. Speaker, our policy of economic development has led to the creation of many jobs. In fact more people are working in Saskatchewan than in any other time in our history; good jobs at

decent wages which provide them with a healthy environment.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to mention the child action plan and how it contributes to improving the health and well-being of children. The child action plan is a long-term provincial strategy for government and communities to work together to improve the health and well-being of children. Emphasis is placed on helping those who are most vulnerable to health, education, social, and justice problems.

Mr. Speaker, as part of a broader poverty reduction strategy, Saskatchewan Health is participating in an interdepartmental comprehensive early childhood development strategy. That strategy is a long-term plan for all children aged zero to five that will attempt to link existing programs, build on existing resources, and introduce new community-based partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, three of Saskatchewan's Health activities related to the child action plan include: contributing 2 million through the family health benefits program to help families on social assistance enter the workplace without losing child health benefits; 500,000 for additional mental health staff to help coordinate services for children and youth with challenging behaviour; 150,000 for the early skills development program whose goal is to help kindergarten children with persistent, aggressive, and anti-social behaviours. Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the public policies that help create a climate for good health.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is known as the birthplace of medicare in Canada. It took a while to convince the rest of Canada to accept medicare, but eventually it became universal throughout Canada. The foundation of medicare of course in Canada is the Canada Health Act. Mr. Speaker, we often speak of the principles of medicare but I think that a lot of us forget what they are.

(1500)

The five main principles of the Canada Health Act are: universal coverage, accessibility, portability between provinces and territories, comprehensive coverage, non-profit public administration. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to maintaining the five principles. However, the province alone cannot ensure that these principles will be maintained and enforced. This is clearly the responsibility of the federal government. The federal government must maintain sufficient cash transfers to the province to guarantee access to health services as a right for all Canadians.

When Ottawa provided 50 per cent of the funding for medicare, it did have the financial clout to enforce the principles by threatening to withhold cash transfers to provinces that violated the Canada Health Act. However, when the funding from Ottawa only constituted a small percentage, richer provinces — like Alberta — could ignore the threats from Ottawa and proceed to implement their brand of medicare.

Mr. Speaker, the Tories opposite often refer to Alberta when comparing Saskatchewan's policies and accomplishments. One of the areas that they refer to is privatization of health care. Mr. Speaker, on April 3, 1999, the *Edmonton Journal* headline read: "Klein sees private hospitals some day." Quoting from the

article:

... the government released a ... report compiled by a blue-ribbon panel which indicates how the province might license and regulate private hospitals and fit them into the provincial health system without contravening the Canada Health Act.

Later Klein said the report could form the basis for legislation which permits privately owned, for-profit ... (hospitals).

Mr. Speaker, why should one be so concerned about the action in Alberta? Well, Mr. Speaker, if private facilities are allowed to tap into the public health insurance, US (United States) based health care providers will be able to open up in Canada and under the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, make the same claim on the public systems as a province, public, and non-profit providers.

At this time I would like to just compare the systems under four main points. It's a proven fact that the American system costs more. In 1995 Canada spent \$2,049 per person or about 55 per cent of what the Americans spent per person.

Canadians get much more for their health dollars. The public money covers every Canadian for a wide range of services. In contrast fewer than 30 per cent of Americans are covered by government care plans. And yet our Tories say they like privatized American health care.

One of the things which, Mr. Speaker, one of the things which we're often told about by the opposition party is about administrative costs. Well the administrative costs in Canada are much, much lower than what they are in the States. A study comparing hospitals in California, in Ontario, estimated that roughly half the difference in hospital costs could be explained by higher administrative costs in the land south.

Quality of care — often we hear the opposition and the Third Party across the hall exclaim about the quality of care which is in Canada. Although there is relatively more technology in the US, there is little evidence that all of it is necessary or altered to improve care quality.

There is however evidence that Canada distributes its technology more appropriately and equitably. The existence of a public administered health care system in Canada enhances the likelihood that research conducted here and abroad will be translated into improved care, and we have a lot of it.

Portability — Mr. Speaker, earlier I mentioned that portability was an important principle in Canada's Health Act. In Canada, public health insurance coverage follows Canadians, without a break in service, job to job.

Mr. Speaker, the threat of privatization of health care in Canada is the biggest challenge we face. This government will do everything it can to oppose what I believe is the greatest danger.

Mr. Speaker, our position is clear. But, Mr. Speaker, and to their credit, the position of the Tories is also clear. Despite having a care ... health care system in Saskatchewan

which is ...

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the motion presented by the member from Saskatoon Southeast and spoke on by the member from Swift Current are typical NDP motions and typical NDP speeches.

Brag, brag about what they think, brag about what they think they have done in the last eight years and blame everybody else for anything that somebody might disagree with. It's never their responsibility. What we've had here, Mr. Speaker, for the last eight years is irresponsible government — not responsible government but irresponsible government.

They accept no blame whatsoever for the year ... eight years that they have served as the Government of Saskatchewan. It makes you wonder why they want to be in power. They want to exercise the power but they don't want to take responsibility for the things they do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are some people who are prepared to hold them responsible. The member from Kindersley was just out in the rotunda and talked with the lady who is sitting in the gallery right now. And this lady told him that she has been a lifelong supporter of the NDP but that she will not be voting for them again.

There's a lot of people across this province, Mr. Speaker, that are expressing those kind of sentiments when it comes to the nurses' strike.

The member from Saskatoon Southeast last week wanted to brag about how great health care in Saskatchewan was under the member from Riversdale, the Premier and the Leader of the NDP Party. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we've seen the evidence that not all is well in health care in Saskatchewan. We have a strike in place, Mr. Speaker, that has been going on now for five days because of the actions of the member from Riversdale, because of the interference in the bargaining process that he stepped forward and implemented last Wednesday. He stepped in to interfere in the collective bargaining process, and it fell apart on him.

This was after the Minister of Health had told the nurses during negotiations, you will either do it my way or we'll legislate you back to work.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine the hue and cry that would arise from those members opposite if an employer in the private sector was to approach his employees during labour negotiations and use those kind of threats. He'd be thrown in jail immediately. He'd be thrown in jail immediately. And the member from Regina Wascana Plains would be the first one demanding that to happen.

And yet she sits in her seat and votes back-to-work legislation on the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. And she's proud of it. She's proud of it, Mr. Speaker — proud of it. I hope the people

in her constituency remember her pride in voting back-to-work legislation — not once, Mr. Speaker, but twice. Twice, Mr. Speaker. She voted for putting the IBEW back to work, and she voted for SUN going back to work. And she's proud of that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think there's a good many members over there who are showing false bravado in showing pride for what they are doing. Because they are getting the phone calls a lot more than we are, Mr. Speaker — a lot more than we are. And those are phone calls saying you're wrong, you're wrong, Mr. Speaker, to be voting this back.

The member from Saskatoon Southeast talks about middle of the night. Well that's what this government did in the labour negotiations. Two-thirty in the morning we get the phone call, back-to-work legislation is going to be presented; be here tomorrow at 10 o'clock. Middle of the night. And that's what the member from Saskatoon Southeast is supporting — back-to-work legislation in the dark of the night.

We have seen the problems, Mr. Speaker, that are taking place in the hospitals, and it's not just something that happened last week. It's been an ongoing process for the entire duration of this government in power — the entire duration.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a nurses' strike in place. And we believe that it's incumbent on this government to step forward, assume their role of leadership, assume responsibility for the things they have done, and say to the nurses, we will sit down with you and negotiate with no preconditions.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I will be moving an amendment to the motion at the conclusion of my speech calling on the government to do exactly that. I also call on the government, Mr. Speaker, to allow their members to vote freely, to vote their conscience and vote on behalf of their constituents; to vote on behalf of their constituents, including the nurses, Mr. Speaker, including the patients, Mr. Speaker.

And some of the members over there are asking, what is a free vote? I know they don't understand the concept, Mr. Speaker, because they have never been allowed to freely vote their consciences. It's when the party whip doesn't force discipline on you to vote the party line. It's when there are no threats such as the threat the Minister of Health used on the nurses: we'll force you back to work if you don't follow our way.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the whip to release his members, to not force them to follow party discipline, to allow them to vote their consciences, and to listen to what their members are saying.

The member from Saskatoon Eastview who was the past president of SUN — let her vote the way she wants to, Mr. Speaker, not the way the Premier and the party whip demands. Let her vote her own conscience. Let her vote for her constituents. Let her vote, Mr. Speaker, for the people that helped to elect her, the nurses that went on the doorstep and knocked doors for her, not the party line, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are many problems in the hospitals, problems that this government is not yet prepared to address — shortages of nurses. Isn't it amazing, Mr. Speaker, that with the past president of SUN sitting at the cabinet table that neither the

Premier nor the Minister of Health knew that there was a nursing shortage. They had sat there together for nine months or better and didn't know there was a nursing shortage. Perhaps the minister at that time wasn't allowed to speak for the nine months she sat in cabinet. I don't know.

But I think it would be a worthwhile question to ask that minister, did she raise that issue? Did she raise the nursing shortage issue with the Premier and with the Minister of Health? Perhaps her colleagues in SUN could ask her that question and get an answer from her because that member certainly doesn't stand in this House and speak to those kind of questions, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Saskatoon Eastview spoke about offering parity to the nurses. I think we need to clarify what she meant by parity. What this government has offered is parity starting in the year 2001 at a rate of 1 per cent — 1 per cent.

So if the nurses are asking for 22 per cent, and they're saying that's what it takes to bring us to parity, the government has offered 7 per cent over three years under this forced contract. That leaves 15 per cent. At 1 per cent a year it would take them an additional 15 years, Mr. Speaker, to reach parity — 15 years. Most of these nurses, Mr. Speaker, will not be able to continue working under the present conditions for another 15 years.

Mr. Speaker, this government has offered very little other than fines and court injunctions to the nurses. It's incumbent on the nurses, Mr. Speaker, to step back from the line, from the confrontation, and offer nurses the opportunity to go back to the table to negotiate without any preconditions.

Therefore I would move an amendment, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the member from Kelvington-Wadena:

That all words after "increased funding for health care" be deleted and the following substituted:

but urges the provincial government and SAHO to return to the bargaining table with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses with no preconditions in place in order to bring an end to the current labour dispute.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1515)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to stand in the House today and discuss this motion, more specifically the amendment put forward by the member from Cannington. Because I believe that's the type of amendment, that's the type of motion that not only the nurses in this province, but all the people in this province are waiting to hear.

They're waiting to hear the government take some responsibility for their own actions, and for once not blame somebody else in this province.

For the last eight years, we've been sitting here listening to the

government find somebody to blame whether it be the federal government, the district health boards, everyone else is . . . it's their fault but it is never this government's fault.

I think that one thing we learn as parents, as adults, as business people, is that when you make a decision you take responsibility for it. You always have to be willing to take the responsibility if you make a decision.

There's been many, many decisions made in this House lately, and once the decision is made, the person who has talked about it, voted on that decision, they are responsible. They are the ones that have to pick up the phone and say yes, that was my idea; it was my idea to legislate you back to work; it was my idea for the court injunction and I'm sure proud that that's the way I think we can deal with the nurses in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I hardly could believe my ears when I listened to the member from Saskatoon talking about how tough it was . . . how tough the nurses had made it on the rest of the staff in the hospitals there.

And I'm wondering if she hasn't heard that all the nurses, all the LPNs, all the support staff, SEIU (Service Employees' International Union), SGEU — everyone is supporting the nurses. They are saying, we understand what you're doing; we know why you're doing it. Health care is in a crisis and we're going to do whatever we can to make sure that this government recognizes that there is a crisis in this province.

I think there is . . . the member also talked about a great deal of non-monetary items that were on their list. Now there's very little that we do, when it comes to government, that doesn't involve money in some way. And I think that the members opposite will have a hard time convincing the RNs (Registered Nurse) that they have enough non-monetary items to make their life a lot easier as they're working on the wards and looking after the patients, the citizens of Saskatchewan.

I also wonder if the members opposite are relating the RN problems and the nursing problems with the social workers who have been outside the legislature very often, who have been calling their offices, and have been walking lines in Saskatoon and Regina to bring forward their problems and their concerns of their caseloads and the overloads they have in their cases.

The social workers did accept a monetary contract last summer on the provision . . . They recognized that there was many problems dealing with their clients, with the people they're dealing with. And so they said to the government yes, wages are a big issue, but we also have the huge issue of the number of cases that we have and the fact that the patients and clients in this province are dealing with the problems in social work that we can't deal with. We don't have the time or the ability to even work up to our own standards and work up to our own code of ethics.

And the government says, don't worry, we're going to deal with them. You just settle your wages idea and by December we're going to have . . . everything's going to be wonderful in the social workers' world.

Well we all know that that didn't happen. The social workers

are still trying to get the help that they need for their clients. They're not talking about themselves; they're not talking about wages. But they're talking about what's happening to the people who are on social services in this province.

And that's what the RNs are doing as well. They're talking about money but at the same time they're talking about the patients in this province, the people that are under their care, the ones that need to be in the hospital system or at home in the home care system, and they are asking for additional help for those people.

We also heard the Minister of Health say today that if the nurses would go back to work, then they would fix the problem. Well I think that the only problem that that would fix would be the government's problem of what they're going to do before an election with everybody in a union on strike, or wanting to be on strike.

They know very well if they go back to work, then to get the attention of the public, the attention of the media, the attention of the people in this province to relate to the fact that there is a serious health care crisis, that it won't happen as easily.

I don't believe that one of them would like to be on strike. They want to be there doing their job. They want to go to work. But how are they going to underline the fact that there is a huge problem in health care if they don't have the attention of the media, if they don't have the attention of the government?

As soon as they say, I'll go back to work, then they're stuck in a room and there'll be a little headline somewhere on the bottom of page 12 and it's not going to really bring their concerns forward any more. The government can deal with it in their offices but they don't have to have it smacked in their face every day when they come in the legislature.

And that's what the RNs are asking for — make sure we deal with all the problems. We're talking about money, but more than money we're talking about patient care and what's happening in this province.

We also heard the minister talking about obeying the law. In fact we heard a number of the members opposite talking to the SUN members about obeying the law. I wonder if they realize that last week at this time Bill No. 23 wasn't even a law. You know what we're doing right now? The government just makes up the laws, repeals the laws, adds to the laws, do whatever they want to with the laws, to suit their needs.

The nurses in this province and other people in this province — ask the farmers when we talk about the GRIP contract — the laws change according to the whim of this government. You have to be . . . have somebody on full-time staff just looking at them to see what they're going to decide is law today.

An Hon. Member: — You've got to understand that . . .

Ms. Draude: — I understand what's happening in this province . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. I just wish to remind the hon. member that comments made in speeches in

the legislature are to be directed through the Chair and I know that you will want to comply with Rule 28 in that regard.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and of course I would like to comply with Rule 28.

We are talking about the laws in this province and the fact that nurses are forced to obey a law that wasn't even, wasn't even law last week at this time. The government is bringing forward laws to make to . . . at their convenience. They repeal laws at their convenience. They decide to add or subtract from a law at their convenience.

And that's the type of thing that the people of this province are saying, we have . . . I have elected representatives, we've sent them into Regina to make sure that they are bringing forward our voice.

Now I wonder in the middle of the night if this government heard a voice from their elected . . . from their constituents saying, please make a law in the middle of the night tonight and bring my nurses back. As elected representatives, that's what we do is carry the voice of our constituents into this building.

In the dead of the night, this government, unless they had a terrible number of phone calls in their offices, made of a law of themselves. And they decided . . . eight o'clock the next morning, it should be enacted. I didn't see anybody or hear anybody get any calls. They didn't call our office and say, hey I want, I asked the minister . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. I ask the co-operation of all members to allow the hon. member from Kelvington-Wadena to make her remarks.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were talking about the laws and the members opposite, I guess, would prefer if we didn't talk about the law that they made in the dead of the night.

So maybe we should talk about the newspaper ads that the government has taken out to somehow let the public know that the nurses are . . . are really an uncaring bunch of people. That they are just asking for money and that their main life revolves around money. I think that that isn't working, that the tactic is not working because the people in my constituency and from around the province that have contacted my office are saying, why in the world is the government wasting thousands and thousands of dollars trying to make up my mind for me?

People in this province have the ability to make their own decisions. They don't have to have the government spending thousands of dollars taking out newspaper ads and radio ads to convince them about their way of thinking. That's called programming I believe. And I don't believe that the people in Saskatchewan need to be programmed. They're quite capable of making up their own mind, especially if they're given both sides of the story.

And when we're using taxpayers' dollars to put big ads in newspapers and on the radio with one side of the issue then I believe that that is a blatant waste of taxpayers' dollars. And it is not giving the people of this province the opportunity to make

up their own mind because they're only hearing one side of the story.

I was definitely happy this weekend to be able to visit with some of the nurses in my constituency so they could discuss some of the issues first hand. They told me quite openly and one of the first sentences that they said when I went in there, that the main issue . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The hon. member's time has expired.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very happy to enter this debate.

I was going to say that I support the member from Saskatoon Southeast's motion. I do not support the amendment to the motion.

I was going to go into quite a bit of detail on how we made an investment of \$1.9 billion in Saskatchewan for health services — an increase of 11.3 per cent, 195 million more than the 1998-99 budget — and some of the new services that we are going to provide.

But before I go on, I just want to make it very clear to the people of Saskatchewan that are listening exactly what went on in this legislature when Bill 23 was passed.

Bill 23, when it was passed, allows for both sides of the House to debate. It also provides in a democracy — it provides in a democracy — for the opposition has many, many tactics that they can use to hold up legislation that they do not agree with.

I was in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We adjourned early. That group over there on both sides did not fight that Bill. They passed it through with record speed. I am sick and tired of them talking about wanting to debate now when they had an opportunity to hold up that Bill for many days in this legislature and they passed it. And this House adjourned early, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want the people of this province to know that.

Now I'm going to go on to also say that all of a sudden the opposition are the people that are supporting labour. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then I challenge them to withdraw all their union-busting Bills that they have on their order paper. And there are many of them. I challenge them to remove those union-busting Bills off the order paper. There are three of them.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when the people of Saskatchewan are not fooled by this. Right in their platform they say they would freeze Health budgeting — freeze Health. How could they come up with the money that we need if they freeze it? How can they come up with the new services that we are going to provide when we put 195 million more in — 11 per cent more?

And we're going to increase investments in our valued professional commitment to health care providers in that budget right there. Funding for collective bargaining, increases of revitalization of the College of Medicine, improve hospital surgical and diagnostic care with that \$195 million — stronger cancer programs, increase cancer agency funding, new cancer

drugs and treatment, expansion of the stem cell transplant program, a focus on women's health, additional bone density programs to fight osteoporosis.

(1530)

A constituent of mine has been asking and fighting for this. We fought for this to increase the testing for bone density for women, streamline breast cancer assessment, stronger screening for cervical cancer. All of these improvements to the women's program; enhance rural and community services.

Our primary care model is second to none in Canada. These are the things that we are committed to. People out there in TV land have to know that when you put \$1.9 billion into health care, the biggest expenditure in the province, in the history of this province, you have to know we're committed to it. We are committed to the caregivers and to giving them increases when we can afford.

I just want the people to know out there that I have a salary schedule; the source is the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. We are third. BC and Alberta are ahead of us. We are third. This is their source.

We are not doing too shabby when it comes to the payment to our people that we value in the health care system. We will improve this. And there is an improvement on the table. And I ask nurses to come back. Come to the bargaining table, and we can get on with this.

The only thing I do say in all fairness . . . and this is on behalf of my constituents. The opposition has been asking me to represent my constituents. I will. Twenty-two per cent increase is too much. We are the fourth highest paid nurses in Canada now. We are going to do even better. But my constituents tell me over and over again 22 per cent is too much.

And SUN walked away from the best workplace agreement offered in a decade. And I believe that their rank and file members want that. They want a better workplace and I am behind that and so are my constituents.

And we're willing to negotiate and listen, but we must have the nurses returning to work. My challenge is to the nurses — return to work and then together we're going to build the best health care system in Canada. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to enter this debate and the opportunity to debate the motion brought forward by the member from Saskatoon Southeast who is asking us to support the government's policies on health care. And the member from Lloydminster saying that the nurses should go back with a gun to their heads and be told what to do, continue to be told what to do.

And while we welcome the government's decision to place additional monies — particularly federal monies, I might add — into health care, it's surprising to me to think that member would have the audacity to ask anyone to support them on their health care policies.

Why would the NDP members even begin to think we would support them on health care policies after the mess they've made of the health care system in this province? They talk about a legacy left by the Tories of a \$15 billion debt. But the Premier's legacy will have been to completely mess up our health care system in this province.

It's gotten so bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is willing to put its own political interest ahead . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, it's gotten so bad in this province that the government is willing to put its own political interests ahead of Saskatchewan people — ahead of the medicare system that Saskatchewan residents are so proud of, and ahead of the well-being of health care workers from right across this province.

The member from Saskatoon Southeast wants us to support their health policies through this motion at a time when they are out launching a smear campaign against our nurses. Today, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has an ad in the paper which points out plain as day that nurses in this province are not paid as well as those in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, we have a shortage. Yet the government expects these valued health workers and others to stay here, work for less, and do so in working conditions that are getting worse by the day.

You'd think this was a recruiting poster for Alberta, British Columbia, or Ontario. If you're about to graduate from nursing or are facing fines like our nurses, the NDP has already outlined your options for you. You get paid better elsewhere, and you don't have the threat of jail hanging over you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have thought that Alberta, BC, or Ontario should have paid for these ads because it's going to benefit them a lot more than the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, sure we support adding more money to the health care budget. A few weeks ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our caucus introduced its priorities on health care. In fact, we laid out our plans for what we would do if elected government. Among those plans is placing priority on health care. People in Saskatchewan want to see health care become the number one priority.

The motion before us today, like the NDP government's budget, fails to make health care the number one priority it deserves to be. For that reason alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it deserves no one's support.

By contrast, the Liberal plan would see new federal dollars directed and other funds redirected to provide pay equity and fair competitive salaries for nurses and health workers. The members opposite are asking us to support a motion which does not make nurses and health care workers a priority. And that is just not acceptable.

The NDP budget did not provide enough to make certain that these valued contributors to our health system receive pay

equity and salaries that are competitive with other provinces. Rather than provide enough money to cover the problems laid out in the Dorsey report and to give competitive rates of pay, this government had other priorities.

Among their priorities was higher rates of pay for CEOs (chief executive officer), particularly health board CEOs, some of whom had a 17 per cent increase in pay over the last three years. Go figure — 17 per cent for health board CEOs and 2, 2, and 2 for health care workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Southeast has the gall to ask us to support a motion which pats the government on the back for a budget which lets them to continue waste money on political hacks — and lots of them. The Premier's office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, gets around \$7 million. We believe about \$4 million of that could be cut and redirected to other priorities. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's not forget the numerous middle managers, the advertising, the foreign travel which this government continues to condone.

Rather than presenting a motion patting the government on the back, rather than presenting that motion, the member from Saskatoon Southeast should have put one forward condemning the NDP government for wasting thousands and thousands on full-page ads and radio advertising attacking our nurses. These ads, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were on the heels of others which gave accolades for the government's budget. Propaganda, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a higher priority for the NDP than nurses and health care workers.

Why did the members opposite waste money trying to cover for their gross mismanagement of health care issues? Why did they waste piles of money attacking nurses when it could have been better spent on hiring more nurses and improving the working conditions for nurses?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can anyone support this government on any of its health care policies. They not only pay health care workers less than other provinces, but they're also too willing to use the heavy hand of Bill 23 back-to-work legislation to get what they want. That's right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these people think nothing of rewarding their friends and using the heavy hand on people who are out there providing care for the great residents of this province of ours. This time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP members and their entourage of political hacks have finally trapped themselves. One has to question the government's sincerity on anything concerning health care.

Back in April of 1984, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the present Deputy Premier was busy quizzing the Tory Minister of Health on his handling of the nursing contract negotiations. The Deputy Premier said, and I would like to quote:

... I believe you have an obligation to put the money into the Saskatchewan Health ... Association (SAHO's predecessor) so a settlement can be reached at an early stage. I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, what you are attempting to do is force (a) confrontation ... And I predict that if you continue on this path, that we will (once again) be called (upon) in this Assembly to deal with a strike and this one of far greater magnitude, that when ... nurses of this province cannot get a contract, when the health care of this

province is sabotaged by you and your department ... your neglect in this area (do not) allow for proper funding of a nurses' contract will lead to a strike and you, Mr. Minister, will be responsible.

The Deputy Premier, at that time in 1984, his very words, and now he sits and dares to condemn our nurses — to condemn our nurses. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's changed?

The member from Saskatoon Southeast wants us to support a motion patting the government on the back for its health policies. Yet, she and her NDP colleagues have gone off and done the very same thing to the nurses that they condemned the Tories for planning to do. Yes, they're every bit as bad as the Tories when it comes to handling health care and treating of health care workers fairly. There's no fairness in that NDP side.

They want accolades for their sorry health record even though they failed to put up enough money and bargaining to pay nurses competitively. The NDP members want a thumbs-up even though they goaded nurses to walk off because they are unwilling to address the problems like working conditions and staff shortages.

As the Deputy Premier so ably noted back in 1984: "failure to provide enough money would lead to a strike and responsibility would lie squarely in the hands of the government."

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in good conscience I cannot support any motion that gives this government accolades for its sorry and disastrous health care records. I cannot support any motion from a government that's laid off 600 nurses; closed numerous beds, 53 hospitals; increased waiting lists; and created a health care catastrophe in this province that we are facing now.

It's time this government and the Premier simply swallowed their pride and said, I'm sorry, we will repeal Bill 23. We don't need back-to-work legislation. We don't need motions like this one today that offer credit where it isn't deserved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we do need is a government that makes health care a number one priority. It's a question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of a priority and the NDP just do not, they do not have their priorities right and they are wrong in what they are doing to our health care workers in this province.

They should immediately, the Premier should immediately recognize ... He's been a big enough man to get up and say that yes, he has made mistakes in the past and he's tried to correct them and they will correct them ... he will try to correct them. Now is the time for him to stand up in this House and again apologize to the people of Saskatchewan, apologize to our nurses and health care workers and say, I'm sorry we acted too hastily, we will repeal, we will repeal that law, and we will get our people back to the bargaining table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The public has been asking, and rightfully so, they've been asking for the government position on health care. The Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance, my seatmate, have responded over the last two or three weeks, Mr. Speaker, responded to the position on ... through the budget with \$195

million added to the budget — more than ever before, Mr. Speaker, a greater increase than ever before — to address the waiting times, Mr. Speaker, that people have had to deal with and that are increasing in some cases, to address the concept of better cancer treatment, and also to address, Mr. Speaker, the working conditions for nurses and pay for nurses, Mr. Speaker.

The public is also asking, Mr. Speaker, they are asking for the positions of the opposition parties. And I challenge, Mr. Speaker, the opposition parties to answer two questions; two questions that are related to the strike right now, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard considerable rhetoric from the parties opposite about the position and the strike that's before us right now. But what is not clear from the Tories, Mr. Speaker, is where they stand exactly on the increase. They're giving us mixed signals.

When they let the legislation through, that was telling me at that time that they were not in favour of the 22 per cent increase. Now the rhetoric I hear from the members opposite, I'm wondering if that's still their position. Have they changed? Are they now saying that they're going to favour that 22 per cent increase? Their original position, Mr. Speaker, was: zap, a freeze on health care. We have to know that from the opposition parties, Mr. Speaker, where do they stand? Do they stand for the 22 per cent increase, or do they not stand for the 22 per cent increase?

(1545)

When it comes to the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, there's another question. And that is the question whether or not they truly stand in favour of supporting the law as it exists in Saskatchewan now. Last Sunday, Mr. Speaker, as I was driving I happened to be listening to the radio, the same radio station that the member from Wood River was listening on. And guess who I heard on that station, Mr. Speaker, reporting. And what he did at that time in response to the questions asked . . . he was asked whether or not he was supporting the nurses in their illegal strike.

The member from Wood River, over the telephone, over public radio, at that time equivocated. He at no time did say that he was supportive of the laws of Saskatchewan — whether he liked the laws or not. He never at that time did.

And I challenge the Liberal Party. Do you . . . does he represent the position of the Liberal Party? Does the member from Wood River . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order, order. Why is the member for Wood River on his feet?

Mr. McPherson: — Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — What is your point of order?

Mr. McPherson: — I'd be prepared to answer the question if he wants to put it to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The member for Wood River will appreciate that he did not in fact raise a point of

order. Order, order. Order, order. Order. Order.

Now members have had the enjoyable chat back . . . Order. Members have had an enjoyable chat back and forth. I would ask, if you want to have a private chat, please do so outside of the Legislative Chamber.

The member for Wood River raised a point of order which is in fact not a point of order. The member will know that under rule 70 . . . under the 75-minute timed debate there is in fact a 10-minute period allowed for question and answers which, quite frankly, members, hon. members, we have now reached because the speaking time has expired. So we're now to the point of recognizing questions and/or comments.

Ms. Stanger: — Yes. I'd like to ask the member from Kelvington-Wadena, when we were debating Bill 23, why the opposition did not use the tools available to them to hold up the Bill — why we adjourned early.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much. Actually it was interesting that the members opposite didn't ask . . .

An Hon. Member: — Answer the question.

Ms. Draude: — Oh that's a real unique thing for you to say.

The amendment that we put forward is something that we thought the people of Saskatchewan and the nurses and the government could work with. It was something that seemed to be kind of conciliatory, which maybe isn't something you understand. So that was the kind of thing that we brought forward. We brought forward the amendment that would have actually helped solve some of the problems, and maybe that isn't what you wanted was to solve . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order, order. Order. I wish to remind all members that in the question and answer and comment period, all questions and comments and answers are to be addressed through the Chair as opposed to directly to members opposite.

I'm uncertain if the hon. member for Kelvington-Wadena was finished with the answer. I see the nod being yes. Further comments or questions?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, in my remarks I put two questions and I was pleased that the member from Wood River was willing to respond to it. I'm not sure if the rules of the House allow for him to respond, but I'm sure he could respond through his leader.

But the question is straightforward, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting whether the Liberal Party is backing the position of the member from Wood River when on the radio he said he was supportive of the nurses as they were defying the back-to-work order of this legislature.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the irony of this whole exercise here is we would not be at this stage if it wasn't for the tyrannical use of power, that's what we're opposed to, by this NDP government that's imposed, that's imposed unfair legislation in this House, attacking the very caregivers, the very

people of this province of ours who care for our sick, for our disabled — the health care workers, the caregivers, the nurses. And they continue to attack these people.

Even to this day when they have a law, when they have passed a law where they rammed a law through this legislature . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order, order. Order. Now members, I just would like to say the Chair is having a great deal of difficulty, despite a significant voice that the Leader of the Third Party has, the Chair is having difficulty hearing the answer. The question was put, and I ask all members to co-operate and allow the member to respond with the answer.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, for these people to now continue to enforce a law after having enacted legislation that was totally uncalled for, to destroy, to destroy the bargaining process, the collective bargaining process in this province is tyrannical on the part of a government of this day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. I would like the member to be rather more definite. When I heard their remark on the radio, the thought that came to me, and my interpretation was, was that the member from Wood River was bordering on contempt for the law and contempt for the decision.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I am asking for their position now. It was not clarified by the member. And I would like to know whether or not this Liberal opposition, whether this Liberal opposition is backing the nurses in their defiance of the law.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we do not support is the tyrannical use of authority that this NDP government is imposing on people of this province. People who have every right to bargain in good faith, something that the NDP government boasted — boasted — about supporting and now has completely taken away, completely taken away from all the workers in this province.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I would request leave of the Assembly to allow the member from Wood River to answer the same question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I remind members of rule 17 . . . Order, order. I remind hon. members of rule 17(2) which reads, and I quote:

At the expiration of sixty-five minutes, there shall be a period not exceeding ten minutes to be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters . . .

Order, order. I wish, before I read the rule book to members, I wish to remind members that when the Chair or Speaker is on his or her feet, rulings are to be listened to. And I respectfully request the co-operation of all members. Rule 17(2) says, and I quote:

At the expiration of sixty-five minutes, there shall be a

period not exceeding ten minutes to be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the contents of the speeches and allow Members who spoke in the debate to respond to (the) questions raised.

That was adopted March 1, 1994. According to Rule 17(2) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, the request is out of order.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to address my question to the member from Kelvington-Wadena and ask them whether they are in favour of the 22 per cent or in favour of a freeze?

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to address this question because I think maybe the government doesn't realize that the word collective bargaining is something that they brought forward. They have some . . . the people of this province . . . The nurses and SAHO were working on something, and the government, the Premier, got in and decided he could be the great white father and make the decisions.

We are not the kind of government that is going to come and say, this is what's going to happen. It's called negotiating. It's a term in the dictionary that you would learn if you understand that people have a right to agree on something — collective bargaining. That's our answer.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just another question to the member from Kelvington-Wadena. How does this collective bargaining coincide with the right-to-work legislation that you people . . . (inaudible) . . . on the order paper?

Ms. Draude: — Guess what? The people want to go to work . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. Order! The Chair requires no help from other members. I simply wish to remind the hon. member for Kelvington-Wadena — Order, order — I simply wish to remind the hon. member for Kelvington of rule 28, which is that comments be addressed through the Chair. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My comment to the government through the Chair would be that the word collective agreement and bargaining is that there's two people at the table and they discuss together and they come to a decision together, and a compromise. Negotiate — it's a word that seems to have been forgotten over there.

And when they bring a Bill in in the dead of the night and have the Premier come in and decide the way that it's going to, what's going to happen — that's not negotiating, that's not collective bargaining.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Members, it is my duty to inform you that the time under the 75-minute debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 — Support for Agriculture

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion that I'm going to move at the end of my remarks is:

That this Assembly support this government for making the highest per capita investment in agriculture of any government in Canada, and express its dismay at the woefully inadequate federal efforts to support our producers who must deal with subsidies provided to their farmers by other countries.

Mr. Speaker, it is relatively an easy task to indicate that the province of Saskatchewan is providing a lot of funding to farmers, to the agricultural community in the province of Saskatchewan.

But I would like to take just a little time to sort of give some history as to what is taking place with the federal government and its support to agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan over the last 30 or 40 years or so.

(1600)

Prior to 1970, the federal government had a number of programs that it delivered the funding to the agriculture community or provided support to the agriculture community that were fully funded by the federal government. The PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) had water projects, pasture programs, the purchasing of some lands that were not suitable for agriculture and turning them into pastures, and in 1961 fully funded the crop insurance program. Prior to 1970, the federal government support was fairly significant in the program.

Secondly, at that time the Crow rate was in effect, which left farmers with a marketing of a rate for moving their produce to the port that had a set amount and that was approximately between 4 and \$5 per metric tonne. All of this was supported by the federal government.

Then by about the ... in the early 1970s, the federal government came out with the Agricultural Stabilization Act and this was fully funded by the federal government. In 1970, the federal government also implemented and paid the lower inventories for tomorrow's program or LIFT, although it wasn't a program that was as beneficial to the agricultural community as one might have wanted. It was fully funded by the federal government.

And if you move up a little further into the mid-'70s, the federal government put in place the Western Grain Stabilization Act. This was funded two-thirds by the federal government, one-third by the producer for a program in essence that was a producer/federal government program and the funding came there with no provincial funding.

Now the crop insurance continued with the producer sharing half the premiums and the federal government the other half with the province providing the administrative costs. And, Mr. Speaker, this still indicates that the federal government was fully funding a number of programs.

Now at that time the province implemented some programs that they fully funded, and just to name a couple of them: the SHARP (Saskatchewan hog assured returns program) program for the hog producer and the beef stabilization program. These were fully funded by the producers and the province.

Mr. Speaker, these programs you could say were value-added programs or programs that were aimed at increasing the value of agricultural products before they left the province and they were funded by the province.

But if you go a little further into the '80s and get into the '80s, you have the federal government then making a major change to the Crow rate. And they changed it to the Crow benefit where they increased the cost to producers to move a tonne of product to port from an average in the province of Saskatchewan of \$4.85 to \$13.37; or something between 150 to \$170 million was taken out of the agricultural community in this one move alone. And in that move, they've shifted the costs on to the producer from the federal government.

Now in 1985 to 1990, which is a five-year period, the federal government started to implement some more program changes that increased the costs to the farmers or to the province of Saskatchewan to the provincial government.

In 1988, the two-price wheat program which they had established earlier, they abandoned. And this was a fully-funded support program by the federal government.

The programs, the special grain program no. 1 and the special grain program no. 2 in 1986-87 were two other fully-funded programs that lasted one year by the federal government.

The 1988 drought assistance program, announced and implemented by the federal government, forced the provinces to pay 25 per cent of the program if the producers in that province were to access this program. And we see now another move for the federal government to move out of paying as large benefits to the agricultural community as they were previously.

Mr. Speaker, if you look into the '90s you see some fairly major shifts. In 1995 the federal government abandoned the Crow benefit and left then the farm community at the mercy of the railways. And the cost to the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan runs something in excess of a half a billion dollars a year. And if just that money alone was back into the farm community the economy of the agricultural sector would be substantially better than what it is right now.

Mr. Speaker, but the interesting thing is what it did with other programs. With the crop insurance program, it shifted in 1990, asking the province to pay approximately 10 per cent of that program.

In 1991 in setting up NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account), that program was shared, cost shared 50 per cent by the provincial government, 50 per cent by the federal government, and then matched by the farm community itself.

Now the federal government has since 1990, in NISA, done a number of top-ups. In 1991 and '92, or 1990-91, each of those years the federal government gave a top-up I believe of 1 per

cent. And for the year 1998 they gave a top-up of 2 percentage points.

Well the reason that I've been going through detail of where the federal government is at is just to give the rationale behind what amounts to a very short statement in that, during the past 10 years or thereabouts, federal support for the agricultural community in the province of Saskatchewan, that's from 1991 to date, has dropped 78 per cent in the province of Saskatchewan — 78 per cent; \$2.3 billion in 1991 to less than a half a billion dollars in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, that is probably the most . . . that alone is the major reason for the agricultural community feeling such a reduction in the economic condition that they have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to indicate that during the last year or two, actually in the last budget year, that the province of Saskatchewan has been putting a fair amount of money into the agricultural program. Now when you look at it, what is taking place in agriculture, the province of Saskatchewan is putting in over \$300 per capita into agriculture as compared to something like \$78 for the federal government and the rest of the . . . (inaudible) . . . If you want to break that down it comes in a couple of different manners.

One is in tax relief, and one of the taxes that isn't paid is on the fuel used in the agricultural community. And I again point out that if the federal government were prepared to do exactly the same thing as what is being done by the provincial government, there is about 10 cents a litre of fuel tax that could be removed from the fuel that's used by the agricultural community in the province of Saskatchewan.

The department expenditures, for just a quick breakdown of 149 million, consists of 113 million on direct financial expenditures through the safety net programs; 13 million on research and development, which is a significant number; 3.7 million on industrial assistance including veterinary diagnostic services; and 19.1 million on interest subsidy, loan losses through the Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan for a total of about 149 million.

There's a 289 million in benefits from tax programs. The largest one is the E&H (education and health) tax exemption on farm machinery, repairs, fertilizer, pesticides, etc. And the second largest one is 120 million fuel tax exemption for farm activities.

Mr. Speaker, as I'd indicated earlier, if the federal government were to reduce the tax that they have on fuel in the same manner as the province of Saskatchewan does for the agricultural community there'd be about an \$80 million reduction for the agricultural community right there.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the following motion, seconded by Sharon Murrell — oops — the member from Battleford-Cut Knife:

That this Assembly support this government for making the highest per capita investment in agriculture of any government in Canada, and express its dismay at the woefully inadequate federal efforts to support our producers who must deal with subsidies provided to their

farmers by other countries.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in my place to second the motion supporting this government's investment in agriculture.

We recognize the contribution this industry makes to our economy and to our communities. Our budget continues to support our agriculture industry by providing more funding to farmers per capita than any other government in Canada.

We as Saskatchewan residents have been though extremely difficult times of horrendous debt, an unstable economy, and an ever-changing technology. In addition to these events, farmers have experienced additional circumstances putting much stress into their workplace. And, Mr. Speaker, farmers' stress affects our families and our communities.

Farmers work long hours, especially those who have mixed farming ventures. Sheep, alpaca, cattle, elk, and buffalo calve on their time, not on yours, so many farmers spend long hours in February, March, and April on three-hour patrol ensuring the safety of their herd, their moms and their babies.

(1615)

After a three-month calving period, farmers can now prepare for seeding — checking equipment, chasing repairs, hoping for rain, purchasing fertilizer, cleaning grain, income tax, GST (goods and services tax) returns. How many hours in a day is a person expected to work?

Now many of the above circumstances can be controlled or regulated by the farmer. But much that affects the farmers is from outside forces — such as the federal government's lack of support and understanding of this industry.

Our federal government over time has gone from taking the major responsibility for safety nets and disaster type of funding to a position of requiring provinces to pay 40 per cent of the cost. During the same period the federal government has taken away major programs that help Saskatchewan, such as the two-price wheat system and the Crow rate.

Farmers continue to face a number of challenges — international subsidies funded by national treasuries, declining commodity prices, rising input costs, increasing freight rates. Mr. Speaker, 320 million each and every year removed from assisting us when the federal government eliminated the Crow. And now the Estey report wants to remove the cap on freight charges.

Just where is the commitment of our federal government to this industry? It's not to highways. We are the only country out of all the developed countries who do not have a major . . . a national highways program.

It's not to our railroad system — well it might be to the CP (Canadian Pacific) or CN (Canadian National).

And it certainly is not to tax breaks. And it is certainly not to tax breaks. The GST is charged on each purchase every Canadian makes.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to our people and to our farmers. And our tax cuts reflect these fair and sustainable tax cuts. Since 1994-95 we have reduced the sales tax from 9 per cent to the current 6 per cent.

And, Mr. Speaker, we as a government acknowledge our agriculture industry through the following benefits: E&H exemption on machinery and repair purchases; E&H exemption on fertilizer, pesticides, and seed; fuel tax exemption for farm activities; E&H tax rebate on livestock and horticultural facilities.

We contribute to safety net programs: crop insurance, NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account), wildlife compensation programs; on industry assistance research and development; on interest subsidy, loan losses and allowances for bad debt for ACS or Agricultural Credit Corporation; ag-food equity; and loan management.

Our industry also benefits from other provincial programs such as Economic and Co-operative Development and Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation, and Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership.

Saskatchewan Ag and Food has invested in our beef industry, pork industry, specialized livestock, food processing, crop development, ag-west biotech.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan taxpayers provide 4.7 times the provincial average for agriculture programming on a per capita basis. This is 4.1 times what the federal government provides on behalf of Canadian taxpayers.

And, Mr. Speaker, these are investments that encourage us as farmers to expand our operations, diversify our crops and livestock, and to invest in processing of our own products and our future. Mr. Speaker, farmers are innovative, creative, and proactive — growing and processing echinacea, raising elk and processing elk horn, forming co-ops to raise hogs in feedlots, building terminals and pellet plants.

Mr. Speaker, as you and my colleagues know, the Battleford-Cut Knife farmers experienced severe drought the past four years in certain areas, causing additional stress. I am extremely proud of the support system we as farm organizations, community groups, and government agencies have established to respond to rural people in crisis.

The farm stress line began operating on February 10, 1992. All calls are confidential, and a farm stress counsellor listens, provides encouragement, and assists the caller to clarify the program, the problem, or the concern that they are facing. The counsellor uses the human service directory to match programs and services to the information or referral needs of the caller.

At the termination of the call, which may last from five minutes to over an hour, the counsellor completes a statistical report that briefs other counsellors. There is no mechanical recording device on the line, meaning the conversations are not

tape-recorded. And this allows our farmers, their farm companions, and families to deal with something that has never been implemented in our areas before and is very greatly appreciated.

And I would like to acknowledge the counsellors that give of their time, because dealing with farm stress is probably a lot different than dealing with any other stress because it involves so many other people.

I would like to emphasize the importance of having stress dealt with. It affects us physically and it affects us mentally and it affects our behaviour. And the farm families are experiencing behaviour problems that many people don't understand that it involves our teachers, because the children are misbehaving at school; it involves different situations that would never have occurred if we were allowed as farmers to continue to do what we do best. And that is to go out there and grow and produce and market.

And we've had so many interventions and so many programs that were implemented. Especially I remember some of the programs that were involved and implemented in the 1980s that have caused a great deal of stress, because my farmers no longer can meet the demands of back-owing bills, much less trying to deal with the incoming bills.

So I feel that anything that we have done as a government has been — keeping in mind that we need to think seriously of the programs that are implemented so that they are to the best and to encourage our people to deal with their own concerns — but we need to also be able to assist them with their concerns.

And I commend this government for the support because of the initiatives that we have done. And I commend them for wanting to work and to encourage and to expand the role that agriculture does contribute and play in this province.

Therefore I am proud to stand in my place to second the motion moved by the hon. member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter the debate here this afternoon surrounding the topic of agriculture. After the ramblings from the previous two members, incoherent about agriculture as they were, we'll try and discuss the subject here this afternoon.

Every single time that the government gets up and wants to talk about their record, the first thing they do, the very, very first thing they do is blame everybody and anybody they can think of for all their problems that they've created.

They blame us for two-price wheat. I don't even think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't even think I was farming when two-price wheat was done away with. I started my farming career in 1978, some 20 years ago now. I don't even think I was around then. I was in high school probably, or in short pants as the member from Melfort used to say, when this was done. But somehow or another the members of the opposition are responsible for two-price wheat disappearing.

Next they blame us for . . . next thing you know you'll be blaming us for prairie fires, gophers, frost, low grain prices, fuel prices, insecticide problems, drought. They're all our fault, all our fault.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — I didn't realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had so much power or we would wield it far more than we do. That kind of lunacy coming from the members opposite doesn't cut it with the farmers of this province any longer, and the Minister of Agriculture should know that.

The farmers of this province want some action on a number of things from this government, but they consistently get up and blame everybody for the shortcomings of their administration and want to say that everybody else is responsible for all of the troubles that farmers are going through.

Low grain prices aren't happening everywhere else, they're only happening in Saskatchewan. That's what the member for . . . the Economic Development minister likes to get up and say. The only place where we've got problems, the reason why we're losing jobs in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is because of low commodity prices. Alberta doesn't have low commodity prices, Manitoba doesn't have low commodity prices, United States doesn't have them, but we have them here in Saskatchewan. Somehow or another international grain prices are set right here in Regina. That's what this government likes to tell the people of Saskatchewan.

When it comes to the price of oil or when it comes to the price of potash or when it comes to the price of uranium or any other commodity, it's set right here in Regina; at least that's what the members opposite would like to have people of Saskatchewan believe.

And that's why we've got such a dismal record in job creation. Incidentally the job creation record when it comes to agriculture, the topic of this afternoon, is we lost 5,000 — count them, 5,000 — jobs in agriculture last year in this province. Five thousand jobs lost in agriculture last year as a result of the administration opposite and the policies that this government presents to the people of Saskatchewan. Five thousand jobs have been lost — the minister has said that — 5,000 jobs have been lost, picked up 3,000 in a couple of other areas for a net loss of about 2,000 jobs. And somehow or another the Minister of Agriculture wants to blame everybody and anybody he can find for his dismal record in agriculture.

A record that now we see problems that farmers are faced with in this . . . in the province of Saskatchewan that are going to be extremely critical come another couple of weeks when seeding starts. Farmers are attempting right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to line up operating lines of credit, to secure supplies to seed, fertilizer, all kinds of herbicides and that kind of thing for spring seeding that's just around the corner. In fact it's just started in the very extreme southwest of the province.

And somehow or another, where's the government when all the troubles are? The Minister of Agriculture, day after day after day, stands up in this legislature and throughout the province of Saskatchewan and says, don't blame me, blame everybody else;

don't blame me. That's what the Minister of Agriculture says.

Where were you, where were you when the farmers were asking for help the last time around? Where are you today?

An Hon. Member: — Right there.

Mr. Boyd: — Right there, he says.

Well I'd like to know where he is on some of the issues that the farmers are faced with. Where were you when they were negotiating the AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) plan, the one that . . . the AIDA program that's in place today? The only AIDA program that we have today is "you ain't gonna get any money." That's what it amounts to because there's no farmers that I know of that are getting any help from this administration.

The form is so ludicrous you can't hardly . . . nobody can understand it. The accountants across this province are telling us it's going to cost anywhere between 300 to \$1,000 to fill it out. None of them know that they are filling it out correctly.

The administration opposite was sleeping at the switch when it come time to negotiate that program and the Minister of Agriculture knows it.

If he knew anything about modern agriculture today he would have been there speaking on behalf of farmers. But oh no, the only thing he could say was give us more, give us more, give us more. That's always the NDP way — it's not our fault; blame it on somebody else.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you're going to have to do a lot better than that because the farmers of this province aren't satisfied with your program and the federal government's program when it comes to the AIDA program that's out there right now. Frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were amazed at the audacity of this government to bring forward a motion like this, saying that somehow or another they are helping agriculture.

The member from Shellbrook there smiles from his seat knowing full well that they don't want to take any responsibility for agriculture. Oh, blame it on somebody else. It's always the NDP way. When the farmers are down or when anybody else is down in this province, blame it on somebody else; hope the problem goes away; try and get support somewhere else; don't put one nickel of your own money forward.

The Minister of Agriculture has stood in this legislature now long ago when the debate was surrounding the AIDA program and said, it's not our fault. You don't go into a machinery dealer and say, I've got so much money and I want to buy a tractor . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's exactly what you do. When was the last time you bought a tractor, sir?

You walk in there and you say, I'm interested in buying a tractor. That's what you do. I'm interested in buying a tractor. Yes, I'm interested in buying a tractor. When they say what kind of tractor do you want, you tell them, don't you? How much is that one? How much is that one? How much is that one? Exactly. And then you find out from there whether or not you can afford it. Exactly. The member opposite says exactly.

(1630)

But first and foremost, first and foremost, you walk in and say to them . . . But what did you do? You walked into Ottawa and said to them . . . what did you say to them? We've got a balanced budget, yes. Can we afford anything? Yes. Yes, we can afford some help. We're so proud of the fact that we have a surplus here in Saskatchewan. We're so proud of the fact that we have a surplus here in Saskatchewan. Do we have a problem? No, we don't have a problem.

What are you asking for? What are you shopping for, in other words, here today, Mr. Minister of Agriculture? What are you shopping for? And the minister said, I don't know. I don't know. That's exactly what he said. That's exactly what he said. How much of a program are you looking for? I don't know.

The Minister of Agriculture in the House of Commons before the Ag Committee when they asked him, what would you like to see in Saskatchewan and how much are you willing to contribute, he said, I don't know.

That was his solution — I don't know. I don't know how to help the farmers of Saskatchewan. I don't know what I'm talking about when it comes to agriculture. That's what the minister in effect was saying to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture. I don't know how to address the problem in Saskatchewan. In fact I don't even know whether there is a problem.

The minister's on record as saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the ag crisis was over. Right in the middle of the negotiations — right in the middle of the negotiations. The Canadian Wheat Board as you recall, put up the initial price on wheat, durum, and barley by about 20 cents a bushel. And then the Minister of Agriculture gets up in his place and says, whoa, she's all over boys; the crisis in agriculture is fixed; we've got her looked after now.

I'm sure that helped the negotiations, Mr. Minister, when you said before the farmers of this province, when you said before the farmers of this province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . He keeps shouting from his seat, that's a lie. That isn't a lie, and he knows . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. I will simply caution members that it is inappropriate to make comments from the floor that you cannot make from your seat with a microphone. And I want to remind members on both sides that there was some — Order! — that there has just been some language used that is not in fitting with our parliamentary traditions.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government, which is congratulating itself for all its help in agriculture, is the same government, as you'll recall, back in about 1992, '93, thereabouts, was the same administration that cancelled GRIP contracts. They have this famed . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Ah, going to confession. We'll say we're sorry in agriculture when you say you're sorry at agriculture.

So a hundred and ninety-three million dollars you took out of

the province, out of the farmers' pockets of this province, and you have never once accepted any responsibility for that. Never once.

The farmers of this province, I suspect, would be thankful and grateful if they had a program that guaranteed them some degree of support today. But they don't. And it's a result of your actions opposite, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Minister of Agriculture. And the member from Rosetown-Elrose was the minister at the time when that program was stripped from the farmers.

And every single . . . there was the longest disruption of services, of disruption of this House in the history of Saskatchewan ensued as a result of that government's actions. And at the time, if you remember the legislation, they even had to bring in legislation that absolved them of any kind of personal responsibility surrounding that legislation.

And we still have court cases going on to this very day surrounding the GRIP legislation and surrounding the removal of some modest degree of support for farmers at that time. And this administration, this Minister of Agriculture has the gall to bring a motion before this legislature saying how supportive they are of the farmers of this province after conducting that kind of heavy-handed legislation back in those days.

During the farm crisis, we've seen this administration remove support systematically day after day, month after month, from the farm people of this province. Day after day, day after day the farmers of this province have to try and market their product over highways that are barely passable; have to try and address the concerns that the federal government leaves at their door surrounding rail-line abandonment that many, many producers are faced with in Saskatchewan today.

An Ag minister who says one day we got a crisis, the next day we don't. A Premier who says one day we've got a crisis and the next day we don't have a crisis in agriculture. And all the time the farm families of this province are hoping that they somehow or another come to their senses and realize that there is a crisis out there.

Right now we're faced with another crisis, and that's the nursing situation. But we . . . As soon as that one's addressed, and it won't be long . . . I suspect this government will be throwing people in jail before long with respect to that. And then the next thing we'll be faced with is an ag crisis because that one's there.

The west side of this province is dry once again. Farmers have no money to put a crop in — and the members opposite know that. The member from P.A. (Prince Albert) raises his hands. What do you want me to do, in effect, is what he's saying.

The farmers of this province are asking for some degree of support. At least say you support them. That would be a step in the right direction. At least say that you somewhat care about their problem. At least that would be a step in the right direction.

The member from P.A. holds his hand over his brow. He knows of what I speak.

We are saying . . . we saw a Minister of Agriculture tell farmers he was bargaining tough with the federal government and then hop on a plane to Mexico. Well that was sure a great signal for the farmers of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

At a time when they're having difficulty meeting their bills, at a time when they're having difficulty raising money for input costs this spring, at a time when the farmers of this province are in desperate straits to raise the money that's necessary to put a crop in, where are you? Where are you? Nowhere to be seen.

The member from just the constituency to the north of me knows very well that in her area the farmers . . . farmer after farmer after farmer is facing bankruptcy because they have no money, no hope, no chance . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, it's giveaways, is it? It's giveaways. That's what they want to talk about.

When the farmers needed support in years gone by, it was there. It was there. And the member opposite says, giveaways, giveaways. Giveaway, that's what the member opposite calls it. What you people are doing is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . When another administration is providing support for agriculture, it's called a giveaway. When you people are doing it, somehow it's a noble cause, a noble cause when the NDP is supporting people. When any other administration is supporting them, it's a giveaway.

Well I'll tell you, Madame. There would be a lot of, Mr. Speaker, there'd be a lot of people in Saskatchewan, a lot of farmers in Saskatchewan would like to see a little help from an administration today. They'd like to see an administration that's coming forward with a program that has some degree of support. The NDP's solution is: tough it out yourselves boys because we've got no help for you. That's their support level. That's the support level that this administration has for agriculture.

The Agriculture budget of this province has plummeted under you people, plummeted under you people. Look back in the budget *Estimates*. I challenge you to look back. See what it was in '92, see what it is today. See what support there was for agriculture in '92, see what support there is for agriculture today. It's a minuscule, a minuscule amount of money and the members opposite know it, and the farmers of this province know it.

And that's why the farmers of this province are leaving your party in droves, are leaving your party in droves. Of the 55,000 farm families of this province, there'll be scarcely few that support you in the next election, scarcely few that support you in the next election.

I remember and many farmers of this province will remember back in 1991 when the current Premier, then the opposition leader . . . then the opposition leader said at that time: the way you measure a premier's performance when it comes to agriculture is how much money he can go to Ottawa and get in a time of crisis. That was what the Premier of this province, the then opposition leader, said at that time — how much money he can go and extract from Ottawa and get for the farm families.

Well the one and only, the one and only occasion that the

Premier of this province . . . the one and only occasion that the Premier of this province went to Ottawa to try and support farmers, he came back with a bill for the plane fare. That was the level of support that he got for farmers.

Even by his own yardstick . . . even by the Premier of today — the leader of the opposition back in those days — even by his own yardstick, he's been an absolute, dismal failure for farmers in this province. By his own yardstick, by his own yardstick, by his own yardstick — he's a failure.

And the member from her seat says, what about Mr. Hermanson? What about Mr. Hermanson? Well I'll tell you about Mr. Hermanson. The farmers of this province know that when it comes to helping Saskatchewan and when it comes to helping farmers in Saskatchewan, you count on Mr. Hermanson for some help. You count on Mr. Hermanson for some support. You can count on him to say: no money for bureaucracy and administration, put the money into a program that's meaningful for the farmers of this province.

That's what he has said consistently since the time he was an MP (Member of Parliament), a Reform MP in Ottawa. Since he was a Reform MP, he has been attempting to try and drive some degree of sanity into the debate, saying that the money shouldn't go to administration, it should go to programs that are meaningful for the farmers of this province. That's what he said then. That's what he says today. And that's what he'll say tomorrow . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Premier shouts from his chair about no tires. I have no idea what he's even referring to.

No hope. No opportunity. No chances for agriculture here in good old NDP Saskatchewan — good old NDP Saskatchewan.

Well I'll tell you it's these kinds of motions that this government puts forward that cause the farm community of this province to be in distress because that's all they have is some sort of feigned hope for farmers. Some sort of, some sort of way of saying that we support agriculture. But when it's there, when it's necessary, when the farmers really need it, they're nowhere to be seen, nowhere to be seen — an absolute failure when it comes to supporting agriculture.

And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes time for election I don't think the NDP are going to do all that well in rural Saskatchewan — all over Saskatchewan for that matter, all over Saskatchewan for that matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks, I want to conclude my remarks by amending, amending this shameful motion, this shameful motion:

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

That the Assembly condemns the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture for showing no leadership whatsoever during the most recent agriculture crisis and because of this lack of leadership, allowed the federal Liberals to bring in a federal farm aid program package which has done nothing to address the serious situation facing many Saskatchewan producers.

I move the following motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seconded by the member from Humboldt.

(1645)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to enter into the debate. And I too have got to really hand it to the NDP — as the member from Kindersley said — for having the sheer audacity to bring forward a motion such as this, patting themselves on the back for their handling of agriculture. This is truly a laughable motion.

Since 1991, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since they were elected, the NDP has slashed and hacked away at the agriculture budget. It's now only a fraction of what it was when the NDP took over, and everyone knows that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) said, when he summed up the latest NDP budget, he summed it up with the following words, saying, "It's a black day for rural Saskatchewan." It was a black day for rural Saskatchewan, it was a black day for Saskatchewan completely, for all of Saskatchewan when this government came into being.

This government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is congratulating itself today, is the same government that pocketed \$193 million of farmers' money when it cancelled GRIP. Farmers of this province have not forgotten that and they will not forget it. They will not forget that. Hundreds of millions . . . of millions of dollars flowed back to the federal government because of the NDP's actions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you'll have to excuse farmers when they don't have a lot of sympathy at all with the NDP when they cry poor when it comes to farm aid. And the same heavy-handed legislative approach that they used when they cancelled GRIP, they have now used recently against the nurses, the nurses of this province who have not been heard as they've been voicing their need over and over and over again to have extra help, to have more staffing, for somebody to notice the kind of stress that they were going under.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to read a letter . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. The members will appreciate that I'm not that far removed from the hon. member for Humboldt and having a great deal of difficulty hearing the hon. member's remarks, and I ask . . . Order. And I ask hon. members in allowing other members to make their speeches when it's their turn.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite would like me to speak up. And because I have received a letter from a person in Wadena who would like to pass on his words to this NDP government, I am pleased to be able to do that for him here today. And here's what he says. This person says:

I would like to thank the present NDP government for allowing what was once the most prosperous province in all of Canada to become one of the largest welfare states in

North America. Thanks Roy, thank you Roy, for allowing farmers to be forced into losing land, shooting livestock and being forced . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order, order. Order. Now I'm not certain if the member is reading from a published document or from correspondence. I simply remind the hon. — order — I simply remind all hon. members that . . . order, order . . . Now two issues now come up. First off, I would invite all hon. members that wish to engage in a private discussion to please carry on outside of the Chamber.

With respect to the matter at hand, I remind all members that when quoting and reading names of sitting members it is acceptable if it's in a direct quote from a published article, but is not to be used in simple correspondence.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The writer of this has informed me that he has issued this to the papers of the province. So if . . . With your consent, I will proceed.

Thank you, Mr. Premier, for allowing farmers to be forced into losing land, shooting livestock, and being forced into taking financial handouts because they can no longer afford to feed their livestock.

Thank you to the NDP, the new dictatorship platform, for closing rural and urban hospitals and schools, the Plains hospital fiasco, forcing major companies out of Saskatchewan through high taxes, the highest gas prices in North America, forcing students on student loans to barely eat while you breast-feed your CEO supporters through raises and financial tax breaks.

Thanks for the casinos, for all of the destruction. Thank you for roads like those in Kosovo, and for setting the record straight on your world, for setting your record straight on how diversified our economy really is.

By the way, what colour is the sky in your world, Mr. Premier, so detached from reality? Oops. Freedom of speech is not a Saskatchewan value, as your Justice minister puts it.

Got to bow to the whip. Have we been to Cuba lately, because the nursing strike and your actions have me wondering. I guess old American McCarthy-era suspicions were right, but it did take some forty years.

Well enjoy your greed of power — enjoy that greed, because when this province and its voters go to the polls and boot you from power, you can be sure that that will be the last day you enjoy anything.

Meanwhile, me and my wife and my two children are leaving the province that we love. Put that in your statistics. Saskatchewan-born, soon to be a past resident for good.

PS Resign Roy — do us all a big favour.

So that's just an instance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of some of the kind of the letters that we have been receiving and some of the

letters being issued to the editors of papers all over this province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we're going to be helping our farmers we have to ensure that it is a kind of help that is meaningful to them. Ask the farmers of this province how meaningful this AIDA program is. Each of them that has even considered it has gone to their accountant and they know that they're going to be facing bills of around \$700 just to be able to fill this out and possibly have a payout in the end.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many farmers can even afford to take that route? The official opposition put forward a very, very wonderful suggestion about paying out on seeded acreage basis. Every farmer in this province that I've talked to since this farce of a program has been put forward is saying that that would have been the more sensible thing to do. They would have received some sort of a payment and they would have received it on time in order to help themselves in time for seeding.

But what do we have now? Due to the negligence of the Minister of Agriculture, the member from Watrous, we have a program that is terribly flawed, that is not going to be of any help to farmers, and our farmers are going to be facing bankruptcy again — many of them are right now and are forced off their farms into the cities. The cities aren't going to help anybody, it's going to be more people on welfare.

The other issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the high taxation that not only farmers have to pay in this province but every person in this province is facing. People of the province have been yelling loudly. They have been trying to get the attention of the NDP government to lower these taxes. People cannot live in this province and have a penny in their pocket at the end of the day.

And I just can't resist getting in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some words from nurses that I've been talking to today. Nurses who also have spouses that are farmers, both are them are in dire straits. This wonderful package that the NDP government is wanting to push on the nurses will amount to approximately four cups of coffee a day. That's the kind of increase they will be getting.

Surely, surely they are worth more. And surely when their husbands, many of them are facing a crisis in agriculture, the NDP government can be a little more caring and at least negotiate properly with the federal government for a package that is suited to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to also mention a couple of other things that have been brought to my attention. And one of them is that the farmers who are trying to determine how short-line railroads will be set up often are not told about the kind of taxes that they are going to have pay should they try to buy the elevators along the routes.

Taxes for instance in Porcupine Plain on elevators since reassessment have gone up from 15,000 to \$45,000. Does the NDP or anyone that is trying to determine whether or not it's going to be feasible to have short-line railroads and elevators along those lines, is it feasible? Can they pay these kinds of taxes? These are the kind of things that need to be brought

forward so that farmers realize the full cost facing them.

The other issue that I would like to present the government with is the area that they've been failing in is the rural water supply, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have contaminated water throughout the province in rural areas. The University of Saskatchewan has brought this to the attention of government. The government has done nothing about it.

There are many, many specific issues in the area of agriculture and rural life that have not been addressed by this government, have been ignored by this government, and they truly deserve not to have the confidence of the people of the province at the next election.

I would move to adjourn debate at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.