

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions today to present on behalf of many, many rural residents in Saskatchewan and city ones. The prayer reads:

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 those roads.

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, of all these petitions are many: Kinistino, Birch Hills, Meskanaw, Crystal Springs, Yellow Creek, Wakaw, Prince Albert, Balgonie, Edenwold, Abbey, Lancer, Meath Park, Albertville, Christopher Lake, Paddockwood, Canwood, Northside, Fillmore, Osage, Forget, Landis, Earl Grey, Bulyea, Craven, Sifton, Southey, Consul, Robsart, Nokomis, Raymore, Saskatoon, Watrous, Imperial, Govan, Simpson, Coleville, Kindersley, Stewart Valley, Success, Swift Current, Eastend, Shaunavon, Dollard, Golden Prairie, Maple Creek, Ogema, Punnichy, Quinton, Wynyard, Grayson, Broadview, Dubuc, Melville, Richmond, Conquest, Outlook, Glenside, Okla, Lintlaw, Rockford, Invermay, Preeceville, Frontier, Weyburn, Yellow Grass, Cupar, Markinch, Regina, Sedley, Gravelbourg, Bateman, Stoughton, Lake Alma, Gladmar, McTaggart, Beaubier, Lucky Lake, Elrose, Limerick, Mankota, Aneroid, Glenbain, Hodgeville, Vanguard, Marengo, Alsask, Carlyle, Manor, Luseland, Major, Kerrobert, Lafleche, Woodrow, Leader, Prelate, Tisdale, Gainsborough, Carievale, Carnduff, Alida, Redvers, Storthoaks, Govan, Duval, Hudson Bay, and Lampman, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present petitions in regards to the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. Reading the prayer:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitions I present today are signed by individuals from the communities of Regina, Saskatoon, Lumsden, Warman, and many other communities in the province of Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of rural citizens of this province. And the prayer reads:

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

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

And the petitioners, a lot of them, although not on this signature, come from those communities that the member from Saltcoats had mentioned, and also Killaly, Melville, and Fenwood. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again this afternoon I have petitions from residents of the Northwest asking that the congested and unsafe entrance to the city of North Battleford be changed to make for safer driving conditions on the entrance of Highways 40 and 16 to the entrance of North Battleford.

Requesting that this:

Hon. Assembly may be pleased to relocate Highway 40 in order to alleviate the congestion at the entrance to the city.

The petitioners are from the Battlefords, Mayfair, and Cochin. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring forward petitions from the good people in the southwest part of the province. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial government and SaskTel being wholly accountable to the people of Saskatchewan to immediately take steps to provide cellular coverage to this area so that residents can travel in winter with some assurance of safety.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, all of the people that have signed these petitions are from Coronach.

I so present.

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

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

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

Those who've signed these petitions come from communities across southern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, such as Gull Lake,

Shaunavon, Maple Creek, Tompkins, Eastend, Cabri, just to name a few.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to all members in the House two individuals. First of all a gentleman seated in the east gallery, a gentleman from Regina here; his name Terry Wall. Terry is the recently nominated candidate for the Saskatchewan Party in the constituency of Regina Victoria. Not only do we soon . . . seated not only in the gallery but soon to be seated on the floor on that side of the House as well.

I'd also like to introduce a gentleman that I recognize in the front row of your gallery, Mr. Speaker, a gentleman from my constituency, Mr. Orest Mysak.

I'd like everyone to recognize these two gentlemen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce one of my constituents who is here from Regina Lakeview, Mr. Bill Dowhaniuk who is sitting up in the first row of the Speaker's gallery.

I've made a special point of introducing him because many of you who travel on Regina Avenue between the legislature and the airport will notice a yard with the best and most beautiful flowers in Regina. And those are Bill Dowhaniuk's work.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the House that good looking group of 42 young students from Vicker's School in Prince Albert — not only good looking, Mr. Speaker, but intelligent as well.

I will meeting with them this afternoon, and we'll have drinks. And I want to mention that they are here with the accompaniment of three teachers from Prince Albert from Vicker's School, Mr. Dave Monette, Mr. Kirk Baird, Ms. Linda Franc.

And I would ask all members to give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend a welcome to a long-lost but shirt-sleeve relative of mine who has already been introduced, Mr. Orest Mysak. Good to see you here, Orest.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to stand and introduce to the Assembly here some 28 students from the grade 4 and 5 class, sitting in the east gallery. They're from Fox Valley School. And they are with their teacher, Nicole Stein. And I'd welcome them here today and hope they enjoy the proceedings in watching this.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the member from Rosetown-Biggart to introduce a group of 34 grade 8 students sitting in your gallery from Rosetown Central High School, Mr. Speaker.

And I think most members of the Chamber have been to Rosetown Central High School because we've held some caucus meetings there. And I must say it is a very beautiful school — it really is a nice school, Mr. Speaker — with a nice group of students. And we welcome them to the legislature here today.

And they are accompanied by teachers, Richard Barezowski and Melody Newman, as well as my cousin, Mr. Speaker, Norman Cline, who I believe is acting as the principal of Rosetown school at the moment and is normally the vice-principal. And also the bus driver, Lawrence Klemmer, is here too, and if I may be permitted to say so, Norman's son, who's my second cousin, Elliott Cline, is here too.

And these students and teachers will be having a tour of the building, Mr. Speaker, as well as a meeting with the member from Regina Qu'Appelle. I would like to meet with them but I'll be in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker.

And if I may be permitted to say just one more thing. You know, I just want to say that my cousin Norman became a teacher whereas I became a lawyer and politician, Mr. Speaker, and our family is very proud of Norman, and we welcome him here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a member of our staff from the official opposition. And it's little wonder why the official opposition does as well as it does in the House when we have staff like the member sitting up in the gallery, Ms. Adrienne Batra. She's a very accomplished young lady, speaks a number of languages, and she had a very distinguished career with the armed services here in Canada, Mr. Speaker. So I would caution people to be careful — she knows how to drive a tank.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to welcome Adrienne to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Public Health Care System

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, it would be a sad legacy to witness

the demise of the public health care system in a province where it was first given birth. Those are the words of Dr. Peter Kapusta, president of the college of family physicians, a body which represents over 400 Saskatchewan doctors.

Dr. Kapusta goes on to say that the government's treatment of our nurses is, and I quote:

But a symptom of the failing health of Saskatchewan's health system. As with many health care issues, there has been little pro-active management for problems that have existed for sometime, and little action is taken until a crisis eventually emerges.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Kapusta says that Saskatchewan people are suffering the NDP's (New Democratic Party), and I quote again:

Short-sighted health care policies and the increasing surgical lists, restriction of access to diagnostic and therapeutic services, and chronic deficiencies in home care.

Worse yet, he predicts a physician shortage that will soon become critical.

There it is, Mr. Speaker — the NDP record on health care from those on the front line. It's time the Premier admitted he not only made mistakes, but big mistakes. Get your priorities right and start fixing the health system you're destroying.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Heavy Oil Interpretative Centre in Lloydminster

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new initiative involving Saskatchewan's oil industry was launched Tuesday under the Canada-Saskatchewan Western Economic Partnership Agreement. The Minister of Energy and Mines and myself were in Lloydminster on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development to celebrate.

In my constituency of Lloydminster, \$25,000 of funding has been designated for a heavy oil interpretative centre. This facility will be used to showcase Saskatchewan's heavy oil technologies, enhance tourism, and provide a resource for Lakeland College to use in training.

The volunteers in the Lloydminster heavy oil visitors' community centre committee are renovating part of the Barr colony museum to house a new heavy oil science centre. There'll be interactive displays, multimedia presentations, Internet database, and an outdoor display. It's nice to see the promotion of the industry since a large portion of our future heavy oil reserves are found in west-central and northwestern Saskatchewan.

The Oil Field Technology Society heavy oil science centre plans to open on July 1 and I plan to be there. The centre has been in the works for six years and has been planned with much support and enthusiasm from the oil industry.

With the help of \$25,000 and Vic Juba and his committee, I want to say thank you from all of us for making this project a

huge success, one of its kind in North America.

Emergency Preparedness

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party in recognition of Emergency Preparedness Week.

Over the past couple of weeks there have been news reports indicating to the people of Saskatchewan the importance of being prepared in any type of emergency situation. I would like to commend all those involved in emergency preparations and the Saskatchewan media on getting the message out there.

But in addition today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to issue another alert to all of the people of Saskatchewan. For the past eight years the killer NDP plough winds have wreaked havoc and untold destruction to our province.

But there is time yet to rebuild with the Saskatchewan Party — an industrious, talented, visionary group of architects, engineers, and construction workers. Mr. Speaker, these are the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to prepare. We can change the direction of these destructive winds before they turn into a full-blown tornado by forming a Saskatchewan Party government in the next election. Thank you.

SecurTek Launched in Yorkton

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yesterday in my constituency of Yorkton an important announcement was made — important not only to the people of Yorkton and area but to all of Saskatchewan.

The Deputy Premier was in attendance to announce a new diversification strategy by SaskTel. SecurTek was launched as a Yorkton-based subsidiary of SaskTel to offer remote monitoring services and province-wide security.

SecurTek will be able to provide services like real time event detection, monitoring, and dispatch by using SaskTel's leading edge technology. Up until now, most security services for Saskatchewan people have been based outside the province.

Now SecurTek will operate a call handling centre out of Yorkton, initially employing 20 people, and the number expecting to grow to 50 people in the future. The province-wide leading network will bring security products to customers across Saskatchewan.

I'd like to congratulate both SecurTek and SaskTel on the new project that will certainly benefit my constituency, the area of Saskatchewan in which I come from, the province, and demonstrates our government's commitment to jobs in rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan's National Geography Challenge Winner

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to bring to

the attention of the Assembly the efforts of one of my constituents — Cody Redekop. Earlier this spring, Cody, a 13-year-old student at Herbert School, competed at the provincial competition for the National Geography Challenge in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, Cody competed with school students from around the province. His exemplary performance and knowledge of geography gained him first place in the competition.

Mr. Speaker, on May 22, Cody will travel to Ottawa where he and another Saskatchewan student will represent our province among 24 others at the National Geography Challenge finals.

I know that his family, teachers, and friends are proud of his accomplishments and well behind him in his efforts in Ottawa.

I'd like to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that all hon. members will join with me to wish Cody good luck, good memories, and good travels. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Retail Sales Up in Saskatchewan

Ms. Murrell: — Here I am, Mr. Speaker, doing my best imitation of the member from Swift Current. I have some good news myself about how things are hopping in Saskatchewan, or as Mr. Devine used to say: how things are hoppin'. You could always tell when an election was coming when he started dropping his g's. "We're buildin' and growin'," he would say — building and growing the deficit.

But that's not what I want to talk about.

Department store sales, Mr. Speaker, department store sales are up again in Saskatchewan. People are buying — that's buying with a g — at a higher rate than last year. This information too from our friends at Statistics Canada.

Here are the facts. March this year over March of last year, sales are up 3.7 per cent. That does not sound to me like an economy in decline.

One more number. For the first three months of this year, compared to the same period last year, sales are up in Saskatchewan by 7.1 per cent. By comparison, the natural average . . . national average was 4.9 per cent. Our good neighbours to the east averaged 5.3 per cent. To the west where there is no sales tax, but they do have that pesky health premium, 5.9 per cent.

We win again, Mr. Speaker. I hope the members opposite are finally gettin' the point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Brewing Company Awarded Gold Medal

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, I will not drop any g's as I make my member's statement. I do, though, want to tell you a nice little story about Saskatchewan know-how, creativity and innovation. Not a surprising story, but one worth a moment's

notice.

As you know, when Molson's Brewery pulled out of Saskatoon in 1989, a group of employees did not want to see the brewery and their jobs disappear. So they bought the site and equipment and established Saskatoon's Great West Brewing Company.

They have done very well in the ensuing decade, Mr. Speaker. In fact, just recently Great West was awarded a gold medal at the Midwest Brewers' Festival. Now, unlike some members in the House, I am not an expert on beer, Mr. Speaker. But this award sounds pretty fantastic to me.

Great West premium light beer beat out over 30 other entries. At the festival, western premium light was compared with national, international and regional products, and evaluated by a team of brewmaster judges. They said that, "the new brew clearly meets and exceeds the expectations of classic North American light beer."

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the local team did very well against the big boys — not a surprise, as I said.

I would like to, Mr. Speaker, in closing congratulate brewmaster Jim Fitzpatrick and Ron Waldman, president of Great Western Brewing Company, and the entire brewing team and employees.

Thank you.

Health Care System

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This doesn't happen to me too often, Mr. Speaker, but I had an interesting thought yesterday when I heard a story on the radio.

The story said that a South Dakota health care centre that put ads in our papers a year ago had not one customer from Saskatchewan — not one call.

They did have a couple of calls from the Tories and the Liberals. Why I wonder? Were they calling for information on American health care?

And then I remembered, Mr. Speaker, that not long before the session began our good friend from Swift Current had a bypass operation. Now day after day he is our legislative poster boy for joy and optimism.

I remember the member from Melville sharing his joy with us at the birth of his granddaughter, which reminded all of us of the birth of our own children and maybe grandchildren.

I thought of my own friends and family who have used our health care system in the last while. And, Mr. Speaker, it occurred to me, our health care system is doing not a bad job of putting people back on the street.

So they can — the Liberals and Tories that is — tell the world how that same system is crumbling before our eyes. Something doesn't make sense. It just doesn't add up.

This thinking stuff, Mr. Speaker, is hard for me I guess.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Taxes

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Minister, after eight years you finally decided that you want to know what Saskatchewan people think about income tax. Well here's a news flash, Mr. Minister — it's too high.

But, Mr. Minister, at least we agree on one thing. There should be a province-wide consultation process on taxes — it's called an election. If you really want to know what people of Saskatchewan think about taxes, let's just call the election and voters can choose between the NDP plan for high taxes, the Liberal's plan for even higher taxes, or the Saskatchewan Party's plan to cut taxes right now in a balanced way.

Mr. Minister, why don't you admit you have no plan to cut taxes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from Melfort is calling for an election, and a provincial election there shall be. And he does it on the question of taxes. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, for the record, that since 1994-95, provincial taxes have only gone in one direction in Saskatchewan — down. Debt reduction surtax, where? Down. Sales tax? Down. Personal income tax? Down. Sales tax? Down again this year.

By the way, I have something here issued by the . . . Oh and talk about the platform — NDP, down. Here's your platform — you're promising mailing out everywhere, in their platform, a reduction in the sales tax from 7 to 5 per cent, if they get elected. It's already at 6 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

The Globe and Mail — no less an authority — *The Globe and Mail* says that basic provincial income tax rates for all provinces, you know where Saskatchewan is? Third lowest behind Ontario and Alberta — third lowest. That's our record. Tax reduction in a responsible way while tackling the debt, while maintaining health care and education. That's a plan that works. Their plan just does not add up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's nice to see the Premier rise to defend a record that's almost indefensible.

Mr. Premier, you should look at the budget. The average family of four earning \$50,000, in BC (British Columbia) they pay \$2,600 income tax; in Alberta, 25; in Manitoba, 31; in Ontario, under 2,000. And what about Saskatchewan — \$3,540. That's nearly 80 per cent higher than Ontario, nearly 40 per cent higher than Alberta; and both of these governments have a plan to cut taxes even further in the future.

Mr. Premier, the Saskatchewan Party has a responsible plan to cut income tax by 20 per cent over four years. Where's your plan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, our plan is already being implemented. I can repeat again the plan of tax reduction.

Where in the world . . . What planet do you guys come from? Where do you come from? You've got in your election platform material, your leader's going around the province of Saskatchewan and he's going to increase the sales tax from 6 to 7 per cent and then cut it back to 5 per cent. That's what your platform says. Where do you live in this regard?

And you talk to us about taxes, there isn't a tax, as the Minister of Finance said, that the Tories don't like. Since you were in office, you know, you had a flat tax; you had a tax on gaming; you had a 12 per cent high income tax . . . surtax. You had everything from used car taxes, everything announced — new tax. It moved — you people taxed it. That's your record.

You know where your plan so-called is going to lead you? It's going to lead the province of Saskatchewan to a \$1.8 billion deficit, or added to the debt in four years, just like the Devine government did. It didn't work then. It doesn't work now. It doesn't add up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, I can see why the Premier doesn't want to defend his record and would much rather fight an election that was 20 years ago. We're here to fight the election now on your record, Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order. Order. Order. Now all hon. members will recognize the Chair is having some — order — is having some difficulty already being able to hear the questions being put and the answers being provided. And this is because of shouting from the other side of the floor plus assistance from the hon. members' own colleagues while on their feet. And the Chair asks for co-operation of all members to allow the questions to be heard and the answers to be provided.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Finance minister at least had the good sense to copy our program and reduce the sales tax by 1 per cent in this year already. And if you had the good sense you'd say you'd do it again next year. If you can't . . . if you don't have the ability to lead, at least follow our good advice and cut taxes now because that's what the people of Saskatchewan are demanding.

Mr. Premier, will you call the election? And will you listen to the people of Saskatchewan who are saying that your taxes are too high?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — You can be assured, the hon. member from Melfort, and you Tories — Sask-a-Tories or whatever you call yourselves — I tell you, you can be rest assured there'll be an election. And you can be rest assured that your so-called fiscal plan will be compared and watched very carefully.

Here this question comes from a political party that has us

paying \$750 million a year in interest payments because of their debt for which we get absolutely zero.

Mr. Speaker, if we did not have that Tory debt we could do away with every penny on the sales tax. We could lower the income tax significantly. And even in spite of this albatross, this millstone that they've tied around the people of Saskatchewan, we've got the third lowest income tax rate according to *The Globe and Mail*. The PST (provincial sales tax) is going down, other tax rates are going down on a balanced, responsible way.

They'll never go back to the old Tory days of burn and slash and destroy, where you nearly bankrupted the province. It didn't work then and it will not work now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Potato Industry

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for Sask Water. Mr. Minister, *Leader-Post* columnist Ron Petrie is asking in this morning's paper what everyone else in Saskatchewan has been asking the NDP for months: "who voted for these guys in the first place?"

Mr. Minister, Ron's observations are so profound, so insightful, that I find myself behooved to share them with you. Ron writes:

Most families, in fact, would be hard-pressed, over the course of a few potato patches, to chalk up losses of \$6 million. To achieve those results requires government intervention.

Mr. Minister, yesterday we found out the NDP stands to lose as much as \$23 million in the potato business. Mr. Minister, would you explain for the benefit of Mr. Petrie and every other potato growing Saskatchewan family how it is possible for the NDP to lose \$23 million growing potatoes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to remind the member that one of the first investments, the first investment of money was by that government in the 1980s — some \$65 million by way of irrigation infrastructure.

Now the fact that that infrastructure is there, Sask Water and the growers in that area believe that we should use the infrastructure that did exist. We believe that some diversification, with wheat prices and canola prices and other crops down, it only makes sense that you do something else.

We are continuing to work with the growers. We have a substantial investment by way of the infrastructure, irrigation equipment, and the storage facilities. And we'll work with the producers to ensure that we get through this downturn.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, you're also stuck back in the '70s and '80s. These potatoes were planted in the '90s by your government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Minister, is it possible that the same business geniuses who forgot to read the Channel Lake contract also put together the NDP's plan to build North American's most expensive potato storage facilities?

Mr. Minister, the 23 million you've already lost on your intervention into the potato storage business may not be the last of the taxpayers' losses. Sask Water also signed a \$10 million deal with a South American company, INIA (Instituto De Investigaciones Agropecuarias) to buy, sell, and trade in potato products.

Mr. Minister, is that investment also going down the tubes? What is the status of the INIA deal? How much money has the NDP sunk into this deal and what has been the return on that investment so far?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, our intent is to continue working with, through the federal government, the Farm Credit Corporation and the private lenders, the Royal Bank, and certainly with the growers, to try and work ourselves through this downturn.

There is substantial investment out there. As I've said, some \$120 million by way of irrigation infrastructure — 65 million invested by their government — and we think that we need to work through this. This is simply a downturn, and we need to work with the growers out there and try and build the industry back up again. And that's our intention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, if you'd have kept your government's paws off the potato industry, there wouldn't have been a downturn.

Mr. Speaker, my question this time is for the Premier. Clearly, Mr. Premier, what we have here is a minister that doesn't understand what's going on in his portfolio. We have Sask Water investing heavily into the potato industry without the foggiest idea what they're doing. As a result, the loss is \$23 million of taxpayers' money.

Hundreds of families in the Lake Diefenbaker area have lost their life savings. Hundreds of people have lost their jobs and the NDP has lost \$23 million. How did this happen, Mr. Premier? Potato growers are angry because the NDP set their industry back years. The investors are angry because they think the NDP misled them; and taxpayers are asking where did our money go?

Mr. Premier, will you come clean with the potato growers and taxpayers? Will you order an independent inquiry into Sask Water's disastrous \$23 million loss?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, we've said this before, but with the Royal Bank and the Farm Credit Corporation, and ourselves, we've agreed that we will try and sell this or get this back going as an operating unit. All of the facilities are out there. It's not going to be disposed of piecemeal. And our intent is to certainly work with the growers in the area because we

believe there's a very viable industry out in the Lucky Lake/Outlook area. We want to get through the cycle, but we will work with all of the growers and the producers in that area to get us through this downturn.

Rural Grain Elevators

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, last week the Liberal caucus introduced a Bill to save rural elevators from the bulldozer. Liberals want to give communities a chance to buy them at a fair price. We recently spoke with members of the Gravelbourg/Hodgeville rail-line committee in my constituency. They're worried Gravelbourg may lose its elevator in the future, and neither the railway nor the elevator company will commit to keep the elevator.

Gravelbourg residents know elevators like this one are threatened and they want a chance to buy them. It's the same story in Vanguard and Aneroid. They fear they'll lose their elevators and they want a chance to buy them as well. Saving elevators is a priority and people believe it should be the Premier's priority.

Mr. Premier, why don't you join the Liberals in giving these communities a chance to save their elevators from the bulldozer?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very interesting as a provincial government in our jurisdiction, and we are the government that doesn't have jurisdiction on here. But I want to tell the member opposite actually what we are doing in spite of that. First of all you need to have branch lines to also have elevators. And so we have a short-line advisory unit that is working on saving branch lines, working on short-line options, and working on options for elevators in those communities. And they work with those communities in that area.

As I said previously, we had just been in the southwest area meeting with the area planning committee. And they were wishing that the government that actually has jurisdiction, that has the big "L" at the beginning of it — the Liberals — would do some of the things that we have asked for through Estey, through . . . We need a branch line moratorium.

But another aspect to all of this is, is that we have recently had SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), and interlocutor Harold MacKay sitting down with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool on looking at what kind of options there can be there for communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I just wish that we could get an earnest response out of this government on this very simple issue — one of saving elevators. But I guess if I was being completely earnest, I'd have to admit that the Premier has been active in rural Saskatchewan.

In fact he's been proactive. He's been proactive on closing rural hospitals. He's been proactive on closing rural schools. He's been proactive in allowing our highways to crumble to a point

that they're no longer worthy of being called highways. And as if that's not enough, he's been proactive in allowing the result — the decimation of our rural population.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, can we count on you one more time to be proactive, but this time in support of rural communities? Will you help them save their elevators?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I think anybody who would take with an ounce of gravity . . .

An Hon. Member: — Credibility.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Or credibility is the better word, the question of the member involved in, from the Liberal Party, I will have one of two or three bridges I could sell him in Saskatoon — cheap — just like that.

This comes, this question comes from a member of a party in Canada which over the last several years has gone on a deliberate campaign to shut down branch lines, railroad branch lines. A campaign where there's been \$500 million reduced from the rural Saskatchewan people. They shut down the branch lines at which there is a country elevator. You can't use the branch lines to get the wheat to the country elevator.

And now they say that the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and all the farmers involved in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, because of what we've done by shutting down the branch lines, you've got to keep those country elevators open.

And then he blames us. Why don't you blame the people who are at fault — Liberals in Saskatchewan and in Ottawa for not having stood up with us in support of rural Saskatchewan when the fight was on.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Basic ambulance rates in the Battlefords have recently risen from \$145 per trip to \$225 a trip. That's a 55 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. This will hit our senior citizens very hard.

One woman in North Battleford had a fall. She had to call 911, the ambulance came, they helped her up, they put her back to bed, the call cost her \$225.

Mr. Speaker, the Battlefords ambulance company needs to upgrade equipment, it needs to compete for qualified staff. However, 55 per cent increases hit our most vulnerable citizens.

Mr. Speaker, has the minister contacted the Battlefords Health District about this huge increase? Is the minister concerned about this latest health crisis that I alerted her to over a month ago?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member will know, in the province of Saskatchewan there are a number of services that are in fact insured through the medicare system in Saskatchewan. For decades, since medicare came into existence, ambulance fees have not been an insured service

under medicare.

What I can tell the member is that we have significantly increased funding to our health districts for emergency services. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, we do have a cap on the amount of money that can be charged by private ambulance companies and others to senior citizens, and that cap is \$250 per trip.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased funding to health districts for emergency services from \$9 million to \$13 million. Mr. Speaker, we think that we are making our way towards an emergency system in the province that is publicly funded but we are not there yet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, this is two-tier health care. The basic cost of an ambulance call in Saskatoon is \$175, in Regina it's \$135, in the Battlefords it's \$225. Why should people be penalized for choosing to live out their remaining years in some of our smaller centres? Why is the cost of ambulance service dependent on the community you live in?

Mr. Speaker, if there does have to be deterrent fees in ambulance service, surely they should at least be consistent throughout the province and there shouldn't be a war on certain communities, favouring certain communities over others.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I have indicated to the member is that ambulance trips that, for the most part in the province are provided by private ambulance companies, are not an insured service under medicare. What I can tell the member is that we have increased, significantly, funding going to the districts to support emergency services in their particular district.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have air ambulance in this province that provides a tremendous service to those people living in rural and northern Saskatchewan, and that service is heavily subsidized by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

What I can tell the Liberal Party is that we are making tremendous gains in publicly funded health care, and in fact, I note from a newspaper article from Newfoundland that three doctors left Buena Vista this past Monday to work in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to tell the members that Saskatchewan is making progress in spite of Liberals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Y2K Concerns in Pharmacies

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health.

Madam Minister, Saskatchewan pharmacies are growing increasingly concerned about the Y2K (year 2000) problem. We have been contacted by a number of pharmacists who say their computer systems need to be replaced in order to remain

compatible and to meet the needs of the Saskatchewan drug plan system.

The problem is it will cost thousands of dollars and the province is not willing to pick up any part of this cost. In fact, pharmacists have been without any kind of a contract with the provincial drug plan for two and a half years now.

Madam Minister, why are you doing nothing to help pharmacists get ready for the Y2K problem when it's your computer system that is causing the problems?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member is that the Saskatchewan pharmacists are presently involved in negotiations with the Department of Health to come to a new contractual arrangement with Saskatchewan pharmacists. I understand that talks are proceeding and I understand that we are making our way towards a fair agreement for pharmacists in our province, their clients, and the taxpayers.

What I can also say is that there is some funding available for pharmacists so that they can have software upgrades to meet some of the issues associated with Y2K.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they've been in negotiations for two and a half years. They're not settled yet. We only have 240 days more to go, Madam Minister.

When a patient arrives at a pharmacy 72 per cent of new prescriptions and 27 per cent per cent of repeat sales need additional administrative services. These services are provided by the network connection between the central computer and the druggist's computers. Without these computers to determine cost-sharing, drug plan coverage under the formularies, and the coordination of benefits, patients will have to pay directly for the full cost of drugs.

People will need, Madam Minister, to have pockets full of money to meet their drug costs on January 1. When are you going to provide support to pay for the computers needed to operate, run and maintain administration of your Saskatchewan drug plan? Why will Saskatchewan patients have to pay for your incompetence?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget the Government of Saskatchewan has increased our funding to health care in this province by \$195 million, or 11.3 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, I'm pleased to report to the public that we have increased funding for the Saskatchewan drug plan from 64 million to approximately 78 million or a 21.5 per cent increase.

Now why is that, Mr. Speaker? The reason why funding has been significantly increased to the drug plan is that we are now covering low-income families and their children's drug benefits. In addition, we have significantly increased costs

associated with new drugs that are coming on to the market as a result of drug patent legislation that was introduced and passed by a Progressive Conservative government in Ottawa called the Mulroney government.

What I can say is that we are negotiating with the Saskatchewan pharmacists association in order to conclude a fair agreement — fair to pharmacists, fair to clients and fair to taxpayers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Emergency Services in Health Districts

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister seems more concerned about health care in Buena Vista than The Battlefords.

Why is it, Madam Minister, that funding arrangements for emergency transportation vary from district to district? Why is there not standard funding? Why do health services vary from district to district?

Will the government commit to one-tier, comprehensive health care, including ambulance service, consistent through the province of Saskatchewan and quit worrying about Buena Vista?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I can share with the member is that there is some districts that have publicly funded emergency services. They do not have private ambulance companies. There are other districts that have continued with their arrangements with private ambulance companies which are represented by the Saskatchewan Ambulance Association.

As I said to the member previously, we have in this province . . . we have not had, as an insured service, ambulance services. And the reason why costs vary from district to district is because some districts have publicly funded ambulance services — they don't contract with a private insurer, like Regina — and then we have other districts that do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 225 — The Farm-input Costs Monitoring Act

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 225, The Farm-input Costs Monitoring Act.

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

Bill No. 226 — The Health Waiting List Elimination and Accountability Act

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 226, The Health Waiting List Elimination and Accountability Act.

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

Bill No. 251 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 7)

Mr. Hillson: — In order to accommodate the Hon. Premier, I move first reading of Bill No. 251, The Romanow Road Act (No. 7).

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

Bill No. 252 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 8)

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 252, The Romanow Act (No. 8).

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

Bill No. 253 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 9)

Mr. McPherson: — I move first reading of Bill 253, The Romanow Road Act, An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 4.

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

Bill No. 254 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 10)

Mr. McPherson: — I move first reading of Bill No. 254, The Romanow Road Act, An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 13.

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

Bill No. 255 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 11)

Mr. McPherson: — I move first reading of Bill No. 255, The Romanow Road Act, An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 37.

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

Bill No. 256 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 12)

Mr. McPherson: — I move first reading of a Bill, No. 256, The Romanow Road Act, An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 36.

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

Bill No. 257 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 13)

Mr. McPherson: — I move first reading of Bill No. 257, The Romanow Road Act (No. 13), an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 18.

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

Bill No. 258 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 14)

Mr. McPherson: — I move first reading of Bill No. 258, The Romanow Road Act (No. 14), an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 19.

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

Bill No. 259 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 15)

Mr. McPherson: — I move first reading of Bill No. 259, The Romanow Road Act (No. 15), an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 2.

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

Bill No. 263 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 19)

Mr. Osika: — I move first reading of Bill No. 263, The Romanow Road Act (No. 19), an Act to rename Highway No. 22.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and, by leave of the Assembly, ordered to be read a second time later this day.

Bill No. 264 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 20)

Mr. Osika: — I move first reading of Bill No. 264, The Romanow Road Act (No. 20), an Act to rename Highway No. 56.

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

Bill No. 265 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 21)

Mr. Osika: — I move first reading of Bill No. 265, The Romanow Road Act (No. 21), an Act to rename Highway No. 52.

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

Bill No. 266 — The Romanow Road Act (No. 22)

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 266, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename Highway No. 310.

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

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to make a personal statement.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER**Farewell Remarks**

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now I may be accused of making these farewell remarks prematurely. But in anticipation of this being the last session in which I am a sitting member, it is very important for me to take a moment to speak.

Now I'm hoping that in spite of the hectic lives of everyone who work in this beautiful building as elected representatives and employees, that most of you will have had the opportunity to see the film *Life is Beautiful*. This Italian movie received an Academy Award for best foreign film, and it exemplifies the power of courage, the indomitable human spirit, and the lengths to which one will go to protect, nurture, and support loved ones.

Well, Mr. Speaker, my life has been very beautiful, and it is because of people I have been blessed with knowing, and it's also because of people I've never met. On a broader scale, I am so fortunate just to have been born in Canada, in Saskatchewan, and in Swift Current to my parents, Tom and Nita Hamm. They were very decent people with very special gifts.

My father taught me — and I've said this in this House before — that it is more important to be trusted than to be loved. My very gracious mother, who was grateful for every second of her life, willed me to learn that one must love people for what they are and forgive them for what they are not.

(1430)

She provided me many lessons, and it really resulted in my having true appreciation, I think, for all that matters. When I couldn't walk, Mr. Speaker, her first action, when I got home from the hospital when she came to visit me in Saskatoon and I was in a wheelchair, was to hand me a broom in order for me to sweep the kitchen floor. That puts things in perspective. Her second lesson on that very same day, was to tell her embittered daughter how blessed I was that my arms were fine because, "you can hold the ones you love".

My family — I'm going to be emotional — always really believed in me even when I embarrassed them with my teen pregnancy. In fact, the same teacher who inspired Dr. Lillian Dyck who we honoured in this legislature this last week — he fought alongside my parents so that I could remain in high school and finish grade 10. That teacher is Mr. John Dyer and I want to thank him for his courage 35 years ago.

Two other teachers deserve special recognition for getting me to this place: Don Whiteman for whom I could still quote Tennyson, if he wished, and Verda Towne, posthumously, my music teacher who gave me jobs when I was a very young mother and in great need of someone who believed that I really did have something capable of contributing.

Now there are so many, many people to acknowledge in this building as well as in my constituency office, Mr. Speaker. And this is leaping over decades, of course, of people that I really should thank as well. But at the risk of forgetting someone in the moment, I still want to let my friends know what they meant to me by at least mentioning some of them: Elaine Hughston, Vonda Croissant, Linda Denis, Susan Veenhoven, Jonathan Denis, and Jon Jonsson for their decency, integrity, and loyalty in helping me with my job as politician.

My thanks, my great thanks to the Sergeant-at-Arms of course, Patrick Shaw, who I want on public record for people to know is a true feminist; and all of my great coffee cohorts who shall have to remain unnamed because they are guilty of having coffee with me at 3 o'clock every day; the very friendly, friendly people we have who represent us so well to the public in Visitor Services.

To our very competent *Hansard* staff who go so unrecognized. To Steve Bata, whose conversations with me are discussions that I'll miss very, very much and his industrious friendly crew. To our capable, capable people in library staff and the extraordinary Allison and Kathy and Garnet in the Law Clerk's office. To everyone in the cafeteria —and I don't know if this will mean much to anyone else — but especially to Pam who I see so very often and she's just great to me.

To my mailroom folks. Oddly enough my brother, who was a member of this Legislative Assembly many years ago, said that the people who ended up being the most kind to him were the people who really go unheralded, and I know that Betty Lou and the others from the mailroom staff have certainly have made my life less lonely.

To our unforgettable Clerks and those on your staff; the many, many pages, and those included here today, who have been here the last eight years when I have been here; to our extremely professional people in administrative services and in financial services who do such an exemplary job and keep such a high standard, I most certainly am appreciative of them.

And I do want to mention that I've met media personnel from one end of our province to the other, and they play such an important role in our democracy, and I want them to know that not just the people who are representing the media in this legislature, but to those with whom I've dealt with over the last ten years of my political life, I do appreciate what they do and it's not an easy task.

I'm going to be really, really embarrassed if I've missed anyone. Oh, gosh darn, Gary. I don't want to forget Gary and all of our great guys, our technical television folks with whom I've also had some great conversations over the years. And there are many others in this Legislative Building who have been exceptionally kind to me and I thank them all.

I can't express my gratitude, really, to so many people who have supported me throughout Saskatchewan in my political efforts. And in particular those in Saskatoon Greystone. I'm really proud to . . . I've really been honoured, truly, to have represented them. And I'm also proud to have represented the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan from 1989 to 1995.

Most of all of course, I have a beautiful life because of my dear husband, Harley Olsen, and my family. Now they have hurt very much when I've hurt, and they've rejoiced every time I've rejoiced, and I love them deeply.

The first political speech I ever gave, which was to become Leader of the Liberal Party, you know, when you reflect back. What I did was I quoted Tom Stoppard. He's my favourite playwright, living playwright, I might add. Tom Stoppard has a play in which he actually quotes Christopher Logue who in turn

quotes Appollinaire.

And I remember as clearly this moment as I did then what I said to this group of people. I said that quote of Appollinaire and it is this:

Come to the edge! We are afraid. Come to the edge! But we might fall. Come to the edge! And they came. And he pushed them. And they flew.

Well I shall not have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to I guess try under my tenure to have the province soar, but a friend said to me at lunch time, man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for!

Mr. Speaker, to you, to my hon. colleagues and friends in this the people's Assembly, to everyone that I've mentioned previously and to all I have mistakenly forgotten, I will miss you and I pray that continued blessings are bestowed on each of your beautiful lives.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with leave from the Assembly to respond to the statement from the member from Saskatoon Greystone.

Leave granted.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with grateful appreciation and admiration that I stand today to pay tribute to the member from Saskatoon Greystone for her sincere and meaningful contribution to the people of Saskatchewan during the time that she served as the Leader of the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan and as a MLA.

I am intensely proud to have served and worked alongside this dynamic woman. This leader, this woman of vision and hope, who has been for me a mentor, a guide, and a valued friend. And for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, she has ushered in a new and refreshing approach to governing. An approach hinged on the belief that we can achieve politics with principle, commerce with compassion, and service with integrity.

Her fundamental belief that one must value and stand on principles above all else, has been exemplified by her decisions and subsequent actions.

Mr. Speaker, the focus of my friend from Saskatoon Greystone has always been on good governing rather than politicking, although she does realize that good governing on occasion necessitates a little politicking. Her philosophy in life and in governing, centres on the empowerment of people. She has chosen to believe in people, to affirm people, encouraging them towards self-reliance and towards believing in themselves and using their talents and abilities to achieve their full potential. As a politician and as a professional, her first priority has always been the well-being of our people.

The member from Saskatoon Greystone prefers to say, let me

help you to help yourself, rather than, let me do it for you. And, Mr. Speaker, her commitment to this Assembly to increase the accountability and responsibility of all members to the people of Saskatchewan, is indeed commendable.

She has raised the level of civility and decorum in this Chamber with her thoughtful and principled participation, and has rightfully earned the respect of all members that have served with her. She is a woman of exceptional integrity, honesty, compassion, and courage. And she has graced this Assembly with her intelligence in a dignified manner.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Greystone has brought a breath of fresh air to Saskatchewan politics, and her departure to private life is indeed a loss to this legislature and the people of Saskatchewan for whom she has been an eloquent advocate. Foremost in my mind is the truth that she is an exemplary model for all women.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members join me in wishing the member from Saskatoon Greystone every success in her new endeavours. Thank you, Lynda.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Yes, I ask for leave to respond.

Leave granted.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all it is an extreme pleasure to speak on behalf of my caucus to, you know, to respond to the many words today in reference to the member from Saskatoon Greystone.

I want to point out that throughout my tenure as the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) the first few years, that I wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker, that this fine lady has been a great friend, a gracious leader at one point, and certainly conducted herself in a dignified and noble manner.

I think it's important that throughout life as we travel in the many paths and the many directions that life affords us, that we make as many friends along the way.

And often we speak about the fact that there is no time in this world — no time for pity, no time for self-doubt, no time for racism; that there isn't enough time in this world for anything else except to bring about happiness, prosperity, peace, and friendship.

And I want to say on behalf of the people of Athabasca, the people of northern Saskatchewan, to our friend, and my friend, what no other words are able to say. I want to say thank you very, very much for your decency, for your kindness, and for your compassion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — If I may, by leave, I would also wish to respond briefly.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I think all that needs to be said has been said, but I do want to simply add that as always, but especially on this day, I'm proud to call you a colleague, I'm proud to call you a friend, I'm especially proud to call you a cousin.

You inspired a generation of our province. And you quoted a playwright. May I also quote a famous playwright, William Shakespeare, who said, "When comes such another."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave of the Assembly to introduce a motion of condolence.

Leave granted.

(1445)

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll move the motion this time at the end of my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, it's my sad duty to inform the members of the House that in putting this motion, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition, that yesterday we saw the passing of Mr. Eiling Kramer, a long-time, long-standing serving member of this Legislative Assembly.

Eiling Kramer passed away last night about 5:30, 6 p.m. Mercifully he was not ill too long, coming down with his affliction within 24 hours before his passing. And in a way this is kind of fitting for a man who lived a life in many ways as big as he was physically, if not bigger. Robust, an active mind, committed to principles, and committed to politics.

But nonetheless it is for me in any event, a very sad occasion to see this man who most of us met, I think, Wednesday — not last but a week Wednesday last — at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association banquet and dinner and annual meeting, which you hosted, sir. There he was, standing erect as he always does, all 6-foot-some of him, with his wife, still showing his commitment to the democratic system and to the parliamentary system.

Eiling was born in 1914 in North Battleford. He attended school in Highworth and then became a rancher and an auctioneer; a pretty good rancher, a pretty good auctioneer — probably even a better auctioneer.

And from there he developed a stronger sense of the importance of getting involved in public life and public policy. He contributed at the grassroots level, as we politicians like to say, to the principles of the co-operative movement; to the principles of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, now the National Farmers Union; and to the principles of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the CCF, the forerunner of the New Democratic Party.

And I say contributed at all levels, whether it's financial contribution or door-to-door canvassing or pursuit of memberships, explanation of policy — not only party but farm union policy, co-op movement policy, and the like.

In fact it is such, I think I can say without fear of contradiction from my colleague, the present member from North Battleford, that at every election campaign and in between election campaigns, Eiling Kramer's strong suggestion to the campaigner visiting the constituency — I speak for myself; when Eiling makes a strong suggestion or made a strong suggestion, you took the advice to heart always — you would campaign in the Co-op Centre in North Battleford. And what a magnificent facility it has grown to be.

Eventually a person of this drive and high intelligence was persuaded, I think fairly easily, to seek elected public office, which he did for the CCF in 1952 when Tommy Douglas was the leader of the movement and the leader of the government.

Eiling Kramer was sometimes affectionately recalled ... referred to as Tiny Kramer in complete contradistinction of his actual physical being. I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I never can recall having called Eiling Kramer, Tiny. There might have been an occasion of which I do not have specific remembrance of that, but he was just too intimidating.

And when I entered the legislature in 1967 with a crop of seven or eight new MLAs, there was Eiling Kramer already the MLA for The Battlefords. We were in opposition. And an MLA who, as the record shows, served in this Assembly of which we have spoken all so glowingly a few moments ago in tribute to the former leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party in this great Assembly of the people, he served here for 28 years, 4 months, and 9 days. I think that's eight general elections.

Eiling Kramer was as proud of this province and this country and as proud of this province and our people as any person I have ever spoken to or have met. Many are very proud of our province. I'm not saying Eiling was the best in the sense of his pride. We all share that pride, but boy, he was never second. He was right there with all of us who believed in this province and this country.

And with his election as an MLA, it was inevitable through his long career that he would serve with distinction as the MLA, which is a first and foremost duty of all of us; and then to go on to serve as minister of Natural Resources; minister of Co-operation and Co-operative Development when it was a free-standing department; and minister of Highways and Transportation where he in fact was very active and extremely innovative in the nature of road construction, the changing patterns and designs, and extremely passionate in the need to maintain an infrastructure for the economy and for the rural way of life and for the Saskatchewan way of life.

Serving for the 28 years, 4 months, and 9 days, Eiling retired from the House in 1980. As I say, I was elected in 1967. By that time Eiling had had a number of years under his belt as a member of the House, and there were several of us who came in together.

One other memorable and notable contributor was a friend of mine by the name of John R. Messer. Jack Messer, myself, John Kowalchuk, Miro Kwasnica, just a few of the names that come to mind of the class of '67 if I can refer ourselves to that, Ted Bowerman. We came in with drive — at least I like to think we did — determination, vision, and ideal, and with a high degree

of ignorance as to how the House worked and how the real practical politics of Saskatchewan worked.

There was Eiling Kramer as a mentor and as a teacher, the embodiment of what I would say is the ideal Saskatchewan legislator. Commitment and passion, intelligence, loyalty, friendship, hard fighter for his constituency and constituents, Eiling was rewarded — perhaps reward is the wrong way to describe it — was given the trust by the voters of the Battlefords eight times, eight times to come back to this House to speak for them.

Only one other such Saskatchewan politician can cite such unqualified support from his constituents in my judgment, and that was Allan Blakeney, in whose cabinet Eiling served with such distinction.

I want to return back to reminisce about my period in 1967 to '71 in opposition. I told this little story in caucus today when we discussed for a moment and paid our little tribute to Eiling's passing. A member sitting on the opposition side, I was in the seat next to where the official leader of the opposition was. One of our members is where the current member from the Battlefords is located, a man by the name of Bill Berezowsky.

Bill Berezowsky was an extremely passionate man and he was a fantastic orator. And in those days we had live radio broadcasts, and the two whips negotiated the radio times that you'd have. You'd have 20 minutes — no more, no less. If you were less, the opposition would get up and get more time. If you were over, then the opposition would take their extra time back. So it was a pretty good system of honour, and we followed it.

Bill Berezowsky was so emotional, in one speech he got so wound up — this wasn't one speech; this would be a frequent occurrence — he'd actually get a nose bleed. A very, very significant, notable nose bleed live on the radio, to which all of us are handing him handkerchiefs to try to stop the — how should I describe it? — rather unpleasant sight that was about. He wanted to sit down because he couldn't continue, but we wouldn't let him sit down because he had to finish his 20 minutes. Otherwise the opposition would take the seat. Eiling had to go up to the Chair to provide him with an Eiling Kramer style handkerchief in order for Bill to finish.

Well in any event, the point of this story is a little bit of a diversion. On a night which might or might not be like tonight — we'll see what happens in the House — we were winding up and proroguing. And John Messer, myself, Eiling Kramer, Gord Snyder — related now to the Kramer family — and Bill Berezowsky, all of us were in a car coming home from a very important meeting which we had in a part of Regina, talking about political life.

Bill Berezowsky said, he said, boys, I want you to know, meeting you young fellows with your idealism and your drive, he said, you make me feel like such a young man. Eiling Kramer said, no, not a young man; he said, you made us feel 25 years younger. To which I thought I got off my best repartee line. I said, no, Eiling, we didn't make you feel 25 years younger; trying to keep up to you made us 25 years older. They were always on the go; they were always working hard.

Eiling lobbied very hard for his riding and for the big issues of Saskatchewan and Canada. He took his concerns right to government members at the highest level, provincially and federally. He set a standard of work which I've always tried to follow. And I think Al Blakeney said it best once, of Eiling, when he said the following. He said, Eiling has never been one to skirt an issue; you knew where he stood and what he was going to do. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, no truer words were said than those words by Allan Blakeney.

I recall one occasion when in this House I was the Government House Leader, and a past leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan at that time was advocating the idea that Saskatchewan should join the United States of America. Some members may not know, but we had a Unionist Party in this House at one point.

And in advocating the idea that Saskatchewan should join the United States, Eiling got so doggone nationalistic and so doggone angry, he slipped outside the House, came back in and put Canadian flags on all the members' desks, contrary to the rules of the House. He took matters in his own hands, even though he had to withdraw the flags.

I think the most famous example of taking things in his own hands was when he was in a great debate with the Liberal minister of Highways, the MLA from Rosthern constituency at that time, Dave Boldt. Eiling wanted a stop sign at a particular intersection in North Battleford — the member from North Battleford apparently remembers this. And he couldn't get it. And they argued in the House, and they debated.

Well one night — I don't know how it happened — but after the sun rose there it was — not quite an official, but full stop sign at this particular intersection, I think against the law. Eiling fessed up to it and at the end of the day after the appropriate apologies were made, the minister of Highways put up the stop sign. I think it's still there.

Over the next few days, I'm going to be asking myself when people ask me: what do you remember best about Eiling Kramer — I could stand for hours in my place, and I'm not going to do that — but I think what stands out for me the most about Eiling Kramer was his commitment to the principles — and I don't mean this to be any partisan sense, but it's true, he was this way — the principles of the movement of my party, our party, the NDP, the New Democratic Party, and the CCF.

Those principles were as important to Eiling as, I believe, principles of religion, values, of home. He was a husband and the father of eight children, grandchildren. A wonderful friend and colleague. And loyal. And loyal to you as an individual, but loyal to you because he knew that even if you and he disagreed on an issue, on the fundamental principles which kept you together, he was there.

I said at the beginning of my remarks about how he was a mentor to me when I was first beginning in politics in '67. I tell you, he was a mentor to me from 1991 to the current time as Premier. We went through some very difficult times in this House from 1991 — all of us — making tough decisions. We agreed, we disagreed — members of my political party. Some of them would not agree with the decisions which we had to

take — Eiling Kramer on occasion was one of those. But I tell you there wasn't a meeting in and around the Battlefords area that I attended in which one would always see present to, Eiling Kramer, coming up to me, saying to me, hang in there, you're doing the right thing. Or hang in there but make a little change. Or hang in there and tell those so-and-so's — in more colourful language than that, referring to the opposition or whatever — what the story is. He was always there.

(1500)

And if I had to pass on any lesson, which I am not going to do, to anybody in this House of all or any political stripes, I would say the blessing that I've had in political life is to have had people like Al Blakeney and Eiling Kramer to whom I could turn in moments of extreme crisis, and know that the advice and the conversation would be carried in confidence and the advice would be the very best because of the principles of community, caring, and sharing that those two men fought for and lived for and stand for, all their living days.

You have a blessing indeed if you have that kind of a relationship with a leader or leaders. You have continuity, you have evolution, you have progression, you have support, morally, and physically, and emotionally. And we all need that. We all need that.

Eiling Kramer gave me that; gave our movement that; gave our province that.

And no final words can be made without a word of sorrow and support to Dorothy and the family. Mrs. Kramer was the ever present, ever supporting partner for Eiling Kramer to this day. When I spoke to her on the night that he took ill, she was calm as she could be under the circumstances, in control. I asked her if there was anything I could do to assist, at that point the illness had developed too rapidly, and she said no.

I came away from that conversation marvelling at how the human spirit can summon up the strength required in moments of crisis like that when all around us people are in a state of emotional upset. Sometimes anger, sometimes sorrow, sometimes it's the emotional tiredness. How it is that something in the human spirit is summonsed up to be able to have that strength that Dorothy Kramer exhibited in that telephone conversation 24 hours ago with me. That's the kind of strength that she had with Eiling through the tough times and the good times of his political life.

So, Mr. Speaker, friends on this side and friends on the other side of the House, we saw the passing of a good man — we marked that yesterday. Today, the passing of another good person: intelligent, dedicated, loyal, hard-working, uncompromising, honest, dedicated to Saskatchewan, dedicated to Canada. It doesn't get any better than that. What a great life he's led, what a great contribution he's made. And I'm going to miss a wonderful, wonderful friend and colleague, but at least I'll have the memories to carry with me forever.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by my colleague, the member from Canora-Pelly, the Leader of the Official Opposition:

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

Eiling Kramer, who passed away last night, was a member of this Legislative Assembly from 1952 until 1980, representing the constituency of The Battlefords for the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Kramer was born on the family homestead in the North Battleford district on July 14, 1914. He received his schooling at local elementary and secondary schools in Highworth. Mr. Kramer and his wife, Dorothy Johnston, married on December 15, 1944. He had a family which grew to include six boys and two girls.

Mr. Kramer's first forays into the employment world combined farming during the summer and working as a lumberjack during the winter. He also worked part-time as a constable with the North Battleford police force. Later he purchased a cattle ranch and trained as an auctioneer. A very successful auctioneer, I might add.

Eiling Kramer was noted for his interest in the well-being of his community and served as a member, organizer, and director of a number of local and provincial organizations. These included the Saskatchewan Forest Products, Saskair, the Sherwood Co-op Association, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Battlefords Co-op Association, the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, International Odd Fellows, and the Lions and the Cosmopolitan clubs.

Mr. Kramer was active in the CCF since its inception; and was involved as an organizer and campaign manager prior to entering public life himself.

Eiling Kramer was one of the longest serving members in this Assembly. His tenure extended over 28 years before he announced his retirement from public life in October 1980. He was first elected in 1952, and successfully contested the seat for the following eight general elections.

Mr. Kramer was responsible for several cabinet portfolios including Natural Resources, Co-operation and Co-operative Development, and Highways and Transportation.

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

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a sad day for members in the House — the colleagues that we have here today — to have to rise a second consecutive day to honour a former member who has passed away.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I take a look at the tremendous amount of accomplishments of individuals like Mr. Kramer,

one has to, one has to look at one's own life and take a look at the accomplishments of an individual that it can be compared to.

You know the first thing that caught my attention, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Mr. Kramer was elected to this House in 1952 — at a time when I was one year old — and served for 28 years. And when we take a look at ourselves — and many members in this House, Mr. Speaker, were elected for the first time, and as myself, in 1995 — and if you look at that and you take a look at 28 years, you know, we could be sitting here till the year 2023. That's almost unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, to think that that kind of period of time is what Mr. Kramer served.

We take a look at the fact, as the Premier mentioned that, you know, eight successive general elections — to fight an election campaign, to go through it, and to be successful — a tremendous accomplishment.

Mr. Speaker, the information about Mr. Kramer says that we have a gentleman here, I think, who was a leader in his own community. A farmer, a lumberjack, a police officer, a cattle rancher, an auctioneer, and a politician. All took parts of Mr. Kramer's time and he devoted his attention to those kinds of occupations at one time or another.

He also, as indicated, was a tremendous leader in his own community; a volunteer. And I think for a successful individual in Saskatchewan, someone who has a reputation that Mr. Kramer had, one knows that that person is a tremendous volunteer in the province of Saskatchewan, and is willing to become active, is willing to take on responsibilities beyond what is the normal routine of individuals.

So when you start to look at the tremendous contributions of Eiling Kramer, on behalf of the official opposition, the Saskatchewan Party and all my colleagues on this side of the House, I'd like to extend to his wife Dorothy, to his eight children and numerous grandchildren, our sincerest condolences and sympathies at this time.

When we also take a look at the fact of the tremendous accomplishments of Mr. Kramer, it will not be difficult for the family, after a period of time of grieving, to look back at all of the tremendous accomplishments and remember all the positive things that happened in this individual's lifetime, because there are many.

So on behalf of the official opposition, we extend our sincere sympathies to the Kramer family.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Husband, father, grandfather, rancher, auctioneer, and politician. Having served The Battlefords for over 28 years as MLA from 1952 to 1980 consecutively, including several years as minister of Highways, one of his major goals was the twinning of the Yellowhead. And while he wasn't able to see that goal through to completion, he certainly had a major hand in getting it started.

The big man in the big boots with the big heart. He was held in high esteem, not only for his physical size, but also for the quality of his character and for the manner in which he treated people.

I am in a good position to personally vouch that he is the standard against which all other elected representatives of the Battlefords have been judged and will continue to be judged for many years.

He always knew your name, he always called a spade a spade, and he never backed away from a good fight. His place on earth will be a big space to fill. We are thankful for his time and we will not soon forget the big man from the Battlefords.

May I offer my personal condolences to wife, Dorothy, children, grandchildren, and the entire family. Thank you for sharing him with us. And thank you, Mr. Kramer.

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saddened to hear of the death of Mr. Kramer. He was an example to us all. He has earned his place in this province's history, but more importantly he has earned his place in our hearts. I want to extend my sympathy to his wife and family on their loss. He was an example to us all.

He excelled at whatever he did, and I believe that was directly due to his ability to surround himself with the right people. His choice of a lifetime partner certainly exemplifies that. All those years in business and politics, Dorothy, his partner, was wife, mother, housekeeper, secretary, answering service, and soul mate for well over half a century.

Eiling's sense of humour stood him in good stead in not only politics and business. He was just plain nice to be around. And one of his attributes that is often overlooked was his natural ability to teach. On the lighter side, you always learned from his combination of quick wit, hilarious stories, and, oh yes, his ability to recite poetry.

Most of you will never have heard that poetry. Having heard some of it, I certainly hope that not everyone has heard those poems. Great poems. You would have enjoyed them, Mr. Speaker, and then quickly called them out of order.

In the early years, Eiling was a farmer, a rancher, and a construction worker having worked on the original construction of Highway 40 east of North Battleford. Little did he know that he would one day be the Minister of Highways.

As the years went by, Kramer brothers ranch established a fine herd of polled Herefords on the Round Hill Ranch. His brother Herman used to haul a truck load of bulls southwest into the ranching country once a year and sell off the truck until it was empty.

One year Herman couldn't go, so Eiling went instead. I remember Herman telling me that he never went again. Eiling was a natural born salesman and he just plain brought home more money. So he became the Round Hill Ranch's leading bull shipper.

(1515)

Eiling was a loyal friend, however, in the case of politics he was a formidable foe and loved nothing better than his exchanges with Davey Steuart. When I think of Eiling, I not only think of the politics — yes, he was a politician — but he

was also so much more.

I think of the ranch, I think of Kramer creek. I think of the fisherman, the hunter, the auctioneer, and the Kramer Auction Service of 50 years of service. I think of his choice of names for the building, the Big Bid Barn. I remember his early political activity in the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union.

Back in the '40s, he was an organizer for the CCF during a federal election when the guest speaker became ill so Eiling gave the speech. He gave his first political speech in Mirror Lake School southeast of Spiritwood. Later he was a town cop in North Battleford and North Battleford's first official Santa Claus.

Often times he would travel to various events in those years and his mother would sometimes accompany him. She was a major influence on his life and his lifetime values as she was alert and active until well past her 100th birthday.

I must mention that he was very partisan. He loved people, but if you were a Liberal or a Tory he had just a little trouble accepting you in just the same light. However, he did have the highest regard for the democratic . . . for democracy and its institutions. In fact the last time many of us saw him was at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association annual meeting last week.

Wherever Eiling went he was noticed. He had the ability or rather the gift of presence, which made it possible for him to walk into a room and to be the centre of attention.

I would like to thank his wife, Dorothy, and his family for sharing him with us for all those years. He was a great campaigner for the good of Saskatchewan people, and he never quit. He was retired for nearly 20 years but his efforts to help people never stopped. I will miss the phone calls and visits, both at home and at work, as I know many of my colleagues will.

The Minister of Highways informs me that Eiling's still in the office, in spirit at least, as they have some casework in the mix for him right now.

He was one of a kind, and I feel fortunate to have known and shared a portion of his life. He had the ability to make you feel like you were important to him because you were. He loved his fellow-man, and they returned that love and respect. He will be missed.

The big Dutchman is gone — gone but certainly not forgotten. He was a man who was truly larger than life. The Kramer hat, the huge, friendly handshake, the fantastic memory, all part and parcel of the most complete politician that you could ever hope to meet.

He was truly a person . . . someone who was always interested in everyone he met. And once he met you he almost never forgot. I've been with him when he called people by name that he had met only once 30 years before.

A very gifted man who served his constituents from June 11, 1952 faithfully for the next 28 years, four months and nine

days; eight consecutive elections. And he was never defeated.

I first met him in 1952 and he has been an influence on me ever since. My dad has been a close friend of Eiling ever since he attended his first nomination early that spring. Mr. Kramer, his wife Dorothy and their eight children — that's two boys and eight daughters — were often visitors at our home for many years to follow.

My first political activity was biking around the farming district where we lived, with Kramer posters in the basket. Not the ordinary posters like the rest of us might use, but posters with a picture of Eiling Kramer wearing his ever present big hat saying: Wanted on June 20 — Vote Eiling Kramer. And vote Kramer they did. How often have I heard people openly criticize the government of the day, but then say, but I vote Kramer. Well on June 8, 1960 I voted for the first time, and I too am proud say I voted Kramer.

The thousands of miles of dust-free highways, the stop signs placed at a dangerous crossing while in opposition, and of course the seat belt legislation — these are his legacy. Yes, his community which was the whole province of Saskatchewan, is a better place because he lived here.

I can honestly say about Eiling Kramer what I once heard him say about Woodrow Lloyd, he was the finest man I ever met.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to at this time express my condolences on behalf of myself and my many family members who lived in the North Battleford district, to Dorothy, Eiling's family, and his children and his grandchildren. And I'd like to do so by acknowledging his influence on my life, particularly in my formative years.

The name Eiling Kramer was held in great respect in my parents' household. In fact every Christmas we would get a card from Eiling. Quite often there would be a photo and it would be displayed very prominently.

One thing I remember, Mr. Speaker, was that every year the picture showed another child. And if I recall correctly one of the . . . if we look at Eiling's speeches in *Hansard*, one of the remarks he would often make was that he would announce to the people in the legislature that there was an addition to his family through the year.

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of things that I learned from Eiling Kramer. First of all was a respect for this institution. It was Eiling who . . . through Eiling's efforts that I first got to visit this institution when I was 14 years old. And it must have been something that happened there, Mr. Speaker, because the concept of having visited this grand building stayed with me until I revisited it again after I got elected. And I want to acknowledge the influence that he had on me in that respect.

The second thing that I learned from Mr. Kramer was that everyone counts. I recall very well one time when in North Battleford, he brought Tommy Douglas into the community . . .

An Hon. Member: — I was there.

Mr. Kowalsky: — The Premier says he was there at the same

time. We were to meet at the Savoy Café, there was a group of youngsters here that we were going to meet with. And what happened was there was a lady who came to . . . and she asked to speak to Mr. Kramer and to Mr. Douglas because she had some concerns about a pasture.

Mr. Speaker, this lady was — I knew, I know of her — she was a very ordinary, down-to-earth, hard-working Ukrainian farmer. She was a widow. And, Mr. Speaker, before Mr. Douglas and Mr. Kramer came to take their place at the table, they took time to speak to this lady and to hear her concerns. And I learned from that, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, that in politics, as in life, everyone counts.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that in Eiling's memory, what I would like to rededicate myself is to something that he gave me. And as a youngster, it was people like Tommy Douglas and Eiling Kramer and — I can say it in the same breath — Pearson and Diefenbaker, who we looked up to because they were leaders and they were honourable. And the entire society looked at politics and politicians as something honourable to do and somebody honourable to be.

And it was people like Eiling that gave me the belief that people can do great things together. And the way to do it . . . one of the ways to do it is through our political system and that therefore going into politics is honourable. And I would like that to be passed on to other generations as well.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I'd like to tell about three little stories that involve myself and Eiling Kramer.

I remember Eiling from, first of all, his auctions, where as a young individual of about 10 or 12 along with some of my friends we purchased some mirrors — as the household goods were being sold first — and took these mirrors out and broke them so that we had a nice-sized chunk of mirror about, oh, six by six. And then we would find a location where we were a fair distance away from Eiling, who was doing the auctioneering, and flash the sun in his eyes. And the reason for doing this was that if you could distract him enough from the sale that he was doing, he would tell another story in order to get the crowd back and start over again. And so we had successfully done this a number of times before he got someone to straighten us out a bit on just what was going on at the sale.

A little later on, as a MLA — because I sat with him in the house and was in the neighbouring constituency of Turtleford — I can remember being part of the organized meeting where I was to introduce Eiling as the speaker. And I looked at it and I looked at all the people and I knew a few of them, and I knew that the individual that I was introducing could have named everyone that sat in the room, or at least from my opinion he could have; there may have been people that he didn't know but he would have known most of them.

So in that introduction, I introduced him this way — that some of the people in the room may have found Eiling not hollering out their name a half a block away lately, but I wanted to assure them that the individual that I was introducing still remembered them and still knew their name. It was just that he was in need of wearing glasses and he didn't like wearing glasses and so it was that he couldn't recognize them until they got a little closer.

Eiling then gave a speech and he took his glasses off and on about 20 times during the speech, and everybody in the crowd roared when I introduced him. And afterwards Eiling was very mad at me for the introduction, but I don't think there was a soul there that thought it was a bad introduction.

And then I can remember a trip in a vehicle where he was talking about the farming that he did as a rancher and the kind of money that he made when he bought and sold broomtails or grassers, and what was really bothering him in that particular day was that one of his daughters was raising little dogs in the city of Regina and selling them and making more money on each of her transactions than he had ever made on any of the larger animals that he had raised and sold. And he told this to a number of different people.

And so I'd like to place my name with everyone else in my condolences to the family; and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Renaud: — I'm going to be very short, Mr. Speaker. Firstly I want to offer my condolences to Dorothy Kramer — Mrs. Kramer — and the Kramer family. I just want to relate a story, and I know Dorothy would appreciate it.

When I was Minister of Highways and Transportation, of course Eiling would phone quite often to advise me. And I appreciated his wisdom and all his wonderful ideas.

But of course Eiling was a politician as well. And during the 1980s when the Conservatives were in power, along the highways they put up these garbage stands — they were blue elevators. And I guess the reason they were blue was because that was the Progressive Conservative colours at the time and so the elevators were blue. And that bothered Eiling very much. And he wanted these blue elevators to disappear. And he had this idea that we should make gophers out of plastic and insert the gopher over the elevator.

(1530)

And we never did get that done, Mr. Speaker. And I really believe that Mr. Premier actually changed the Minister of Highways often so we could keep one step ahead of Eiling Kramer.

So it was a wonderful experience to know Mr. Kramer. And I know that I will miss him; I will grieve, but the good memories I know will lessen the sorrow.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to move a motion with respect to the hours of the Assembly.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Moved, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That notwithstanding rule 3 and rule 55, on this sitting day the Assembly shall not adjourn until the completion of all business under Government Orders, including Royal Assent, and further that there shall be a recess from 5 to 6.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. Junor: — I ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, the grade 5 students from Hugh Cairns V.C. School. They're here with their teacher, Susan Katzman, and chaperones, Mr. Zakreski, Mrs. Dolynny, Mrs. Singh, Mrs. Prokopchuk, Mr. Boswick, and Mr. Finney. Hi.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

The Chair: — Department of Highways and Transportation were here yesterday. I leave it up to the minister to introduce her officials or not. Okay, I'd ask her to introduce her officials, please.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my immediate right is our deputy minister, Brian King. To my left is Barry Martin, the assistant deputy minister. Just behind me to the right, Bernie Churko, senior executive director of grain, rail, and area planning. And seated beside him is George Stamatinos, director of business services branch. And over to my left is Terry Blomme, executive director of southern region.

That's my officials. Thank you.

Subvote (HI01)

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister. And a warm welcome to your officials this afternoon.

As mentioned earlier, there were a number of Bills proposed dealing directly with those specific highways throughout the province which desperately need some immediate attention, perhaps more than just a little bit of attention.

And, Madam Minister, you will recall on probably every spring about this time of the year or sooner, the notification to your department about the seriously deteriorating conditions of specific highways in my area. And I know you probably get some from other areas as well.

As a result of that severe and serious deterioration, highways like Highway 310 and Highway 22, Highway 56, and Highway 52, those roads that get patched up and in the spring of the year completely break up again.

And I have here a list of responses under freedom of information with respect to the costs that your department has paid to individuals who have sustained damages, serious damages, to their vehicles as a result of the deterioration of some of the highways I mentioned, and others in other parts of the province.

My first question in that respect, Madam Minister — Mr. Chairman, to the minister — is there a specific type of a form or a document that your department has prepared for those individuals who have come to myself, to my colleagues, to other constituencies, to other MLAs perhaps, to say, hey look, I was travelling down this highway and I unavoidably ruined my rim, had my wheel fall off and it needs to be replaced, and these are the damages that I've incurred?

I was wondering if there was that type of a form or document that we could now or they could now request to detail the circumstances, location, times, and so on.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Well thank you for that question on this, but we don't have a specific form for those types of damages. But we do have a pamphlet which we could make sure that you have a copy of and could be certainly within every constituency office, a public claims process that explains just the process that a person would go through if wanting to claim for damages to a vehicle.

Mr. Osika: — Yes, I'm aware of the pamphlet. It's just that there on occasion needs to be more specific detail that's requested. I know that some of the folks that have called me after the fact have indicated that they had reported their damages to SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and on many occasions were told that, well that's tough. SGI would not necessarily cover the extent of those damages. And if in fact the damages were less than \$700, there was no point them reporting it anyway because they would have to pay for it themselves.

Is that correct? Or does your department in fact pay over and above what SGI may be responsible for?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I think to be clear here, our process is separate from SGI. And if Highways and Transportation is totally . . . is responsible, there would be the type of claim that we would be at fault, then we would be legally liable for that.

There would also be the time when clearly we're not at fault

and things were clearly marked, and we would say there would be no fault on that type of a claim, and probably no compensation.

There are times again when the Highways department would not be at fault, but in which the circumstances of the damage that has happened, there might be some discretionary settlement. And that is what we have put through this kind of a claim process, is on that third type of a claim in which our department would be responsible.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I believe that my colleague perhaps made this point earlier. But under the circumstances, the question that I'm asking is because of the deductible. I believe that your department only sees the very tip of the iceberg as far as some of the damages that do occur to vehicles that travel under conditions that perhaps . . . The highways may be marked, but not every — not every crevice can be marked, not every pothole can be marked.

And I'll cite the example that I brought to your attention earlier about the home care nurse travelling on Highway 22, who very diligently slowed down to avoid the marked pothole, and having to move over into the oncoming lane, hit a piece of pavement, broken pavement, that damaged her vehicle to the extent of about 5 to \$600 for a rim replacement. She needed a tow truck to bring her to the city of Melville for about 20 miles. Her commitments to her patients, and other commitments were delayed. She had to wait to obtain a replacement vehicle because that rim had to be ordered from the US (United States) and would take about a week or longer to obtain.

Those are the kinds of situations that concern me, that occur. And in some cases, they are not reported because people give up their hands; they feel the only place they can go is to SGI. And SGI immediately tells them, hey, listen, unless you've got a pretty comprehensive package, it's going to cost you 700 bucks right off the bat for your deductible.

So do you offset the costs of that deductible in the event of those types of accidents or mishaps to vehicles?

(1545)

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — In answer to that, I think that's what our whole process is about, is addressing those kinds of concerns. And there are times when, if the claim comes to us, that the deductible would be paid if the circumstance warranted. There would be times that it may not be paid. But that's where it would be . . . clearly it would go through the process and there'd be an evaluation done on that, and we would try to do a reasonable settlement.

I think on the whole piece on all of the highways, and when we talk about the claims that have come in and so on, I think what we are trying to do is be responsible for those circumstances when a road doesn't get repaired as quickly as possible or, like you say, the type of a circumstance that you've just given us — that that kind of a claim would be looked at very seriously, and try to come to an agreement on some compensation for that.

Mr. Osika: — And that claim is submitted directly to your department and in the event of a denial, is there an appeal

process that an individual can go through?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Yes, there is an appeal process. If the claim is denied, there is an appeal process that comes back through to the deputy minister.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just as an example, I've received a call from again another individual travelling on Highway 22 hitting a loose, rather large boulder on the highway, unable to avoid it, unmarked, to the tune of . . . replacement of a tire, wheel alignment, and parts and labour to the tune of \$261.68. Those kinds of estimates and bills and circumstances surrounding the mishap, written out and reported to you for consideration, would that be appropriate?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Those types of claims again, I mean if some damage like that would happen, they would go to their area manager in that area. Or if you've got the pamphlet, there's also phone numbers that would be directed through the different regions in the province and a person then would . . . again they would examine the claim, see what the circumstances were, and if it appeared that there needed to be a settlement that that would be done for that person.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you again for that. We're dealing with Highway 22, 56, and 310. And I note in response to a freedom of information request that from April 1, '98 to December 31, '98 there was one claim at a cost of \$50. And perhaps, as I say, this seems like a minimal claim. So it encourages me but again suggests to me that perhaps there are many others of that nature that may not have been reported because of the concern about a deductible or not having sufficient coverage. It's only an assumption on my part. That's my concern. I'm happy to see that.

Highway No. 56 — two claims at a cost of \$604 in that same year. And Highway 310 at a cost of \$627.

And those are what . . . Highway No. 22 and Highway 310 in my area are the ones that particularly this spring have been a horrendous number of calls indicating that . . . almost as if those highways have deteriorated more than ever before and have not been receiving the immediate attention that they should.

I was wondering if you had an update from January 1 to this point or to the end of April as to what additional claims. It may give me some comfort that people are aware of the pamphlet and have been submitting them directly to you without coming to me. I hope that's happening.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member from Melville. On that particular question, we don't have any of the data here with us right now. What we've got is up to February 15.

And some of the difficulty in knowing yet this spring the . . . First of all we don't usually keep it by highway; I mean just, you know, by highway numbers as the claims are coming in. But they would likely, a lot of those claims then, if there are more, would still be in process. It takes time to get those settled. And so we don't have the numbers with us at this time to know exactly what's happened in March and April.

But I would be able to say is that every spring this is the most

difficult time on the highway system in the province, as it has been before. Like the one highway that you speak of, on Highway No. 56, there is going to be significant work done on that highway this year. And we certainly are putting more dollars in, in which to upgrade and to maintain the highway network in this province.

Mr. Osika: — I thank you, Madam Minister. I see in the news release for the 1999 area highway projects for east central Saskatchewan . . . you may have a more comprehensive list of those specific highways in my constituency.

I'll refer first of all to Highway 22 which is one that I've just recently raised — or just raised, as a matter of fact. It indicates spot improvements, Killaly to Lemberg. Good heavens, Madam Minister — spot improvements, Killaly to Lemberg. Has anybody been on that stretch between No. 10 Highway and No. 47 Highway; between No. 47 Highway and No. 9 Highway? Between that Highway 47 and Grayson is where that terrible incident occurred, taking that home care nurse out of business for a day and a half or so.

I mean, how can you just do those little spotty little things? It goes beyond that. That's the concern. What happens to the rest of these areas that are so badly deteriorated?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Okay. To the member opposite, when we talk about spot improvements, that's above and beyond the regular type of maintenance and improvements that would be on the highway surface.

And so on a highway like you've just suggested, on Highway No. 22, we would be spending about 2 to \$3,000 per kilometre just on regular maintenance preservation on small improvements when they were needed on that highway.

But when we talk about spot improvements, that's significant dollars going in to do major work on certain areas of that highway, but not maybe a total stretch, but certain specific areas that need major work.

And on the one that you're talking about, on Killaly west, we're going to be doing significant work on over 29 kilometres of it. It's over \$413,000 on that specific improvement.

But I'd also like to bring to your attention is that right in that area some of the impact that passes on that road is due to some rail-line abandonment in that area. And so you're getting heavier truck traffic, which again is one of the concerns in which we're seeing an off-load from rail onto road due to a lot of federal policy that's affecting our province.

Mr. Osika: — Madam Minister, I don't know what you want me to say. To apologize on behalf of somebody? I'm not going to apologize on anybody that you're trying to lay the blame at, the blame at the feet of. I'm just going to tell you that we've got a problem in this province and you're the one that's responsible for looking after that department and fixing things.

You know, we can get up here and what am I going to tell the folks that are saying, hey listen, I just broke an axle. Well, gee, the minister says it's the federal government's fault. They don't want to hear that.

They're having a tough enough time in rural Saskatchewan with their transportation, with their farming, with the farm economy. And when they suffer even at what might seem to be minor — thousand dollars? Some people would say that's much; that's big dollars for those people now, that have other financial difficulties that they're facing.

To replace strings on a grain truck, that's a horrendous cost to them. But yet they need that grain truck to haul the very precious little grain that they do have, in return for the little precious bit of money that does come back to them from that grain. So that's not the issue here, who's fault it is. The fact is, how are we going to fix this for the people in our province and this great province of Saskatchewan, so they don't have to consistently and constantly go through the horrors of trying to avoid potholes, wreck their vehicles, wear and tear.

We're talking about folks that report to us damages to their vehicles. The day in and day out, the pounding that the people who have to travel those roads take. The depreciation on a particular vehicle would increase rapidly because of that as opposed to being able to travel on roads that don't shake the living daylights out of the doors, and loosen the motor and the hinges, and what have you.

So I guess just to focus on how can we fix this problem without trying to avoid or lay the blame somewhere else; what can we do to go beyond just to these spot improvements and these short stretches, but to address the whole issue of No. 22 Highway right from No. 47 to No. 9?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Well thank you for that question again. And I want to be really clear, is we do have a concern about the condition of the highways and roads in this province.

And that's why we've increased dollars into our budget. Every time since we've had a balanced budget, we've been targeting more dollars to highways and roads in this province. And so we do recognize that.

And one of the ways in which we can have a better transportation system in the province is to do these strategic types of spot improvements, because those are some of the worst sections on some of the highways. And that's a good way of spending our money very wisely in trying to get the best, I guess, the dollars spent for the most improvement that we possibly can on the road system.

And it still comes down to, when you talk about are you trying to seek the answers — yes we are. I think you have to look at where the problems come from, try to seek the solutions.

And at the municipal and the provincial level, I do believe in this province we're trying to tackle that — with increased dollars and trying to target how we spend those monies in the very best possible way, in the types of partnerships that we've proposed this year in our budget with municipalities, both at the provincial Highways budget but also under the municipal governments' budget.

So I think we are trying to do the very best we can with the partners. But the one partner that is missing is at the federal level. And they certainly could be part of the solution, not just

part of the problem. They've helped create the problem.

I suggest that they should be part of the solution, either in cost sharing on highways and roads in this province, whether it's at a national level or because of the shift in grain transportation which everybody agreed to right across this province. Even on Estey's recommendation, I never heard one person say that the province shouldn't be putting more money in, but that the federal government should also be putting more money into that infrastructure.

So I think that's not just me saying some blame; I think that's got to be part of the solution.

(1600)

And I think that you'd want to be part of that solution also. Because I believe some of the changes we've seen in rail line, and we need to have some changes in the kind of regulations that will allow more branch lines.

I know that the opposition has been saying, we want to keep more elevators. Well if we're going to keep more elevators, we got to have more branch lines. So keeping more branch lines is going to take some changes at the federal level in the rules and regulations there, and we need to have some cost sharing at the federal level. So I believe provincially we've got to do our part, and it is a huge responsibility, and I believe we've got to fix more roads.

We've got to do as best as we can with the dollars that are allocated. Each year we've added dollars to our budget. We will continue to do that. We'd just like to have some federal partnership because they should be part of the solution, not just part of the problem.

Mr. Osika: — Madam Minister, how serious an effort is being made by your government to pressure the federal government on these issues?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member opposite, and I will speak on behalf of myself on what we've been doing through Department of Highways and Transportation, but there's also certainly been an effort made by our Premier and also through our Agriculture minister.

But first of all, four western provinces certainly have done an effort to stay united in a lot of our meetings with the federal government. We were there in March to meet with the federal government with transportation on next steps with Estey, again saying that the provinces need to be involved, that producers need to be involved, and that if you're going to move to a system that is more efficient, more accountable, all of those things, that's admirable — but those efficiencies have to get back to producers. And that's where we see some of the difficulties in the direction that we've seen in the federal level.

We were also down at a stakeholders' meeting that I also participated in and which both governments across this country were at, road builders were at, municipal governments were at, again meeting with the minister of transportation at the federal level.

Also the Minister of Finance again saying the absolute necessity for a national highways and infrastructure program with cost sharing, because we cannot possibly compete in this country with all of the other countries but especially to our neighbours to the south, that are putting huge amounts of federal dollars into transportation. So we have been there for that.

Later this month, around the middle of the month, I will be attending another meeting with the federal minister and provincial ministers right across, a federal-provincial meeting, again in which we will be stressing the needs for national dollars coming into highways system. But also some of the needs that we need in changes in grain transportation, the types of rules that need to be in place in which you truly can allow short lines to be viable, and a lot of other pieces that need to be in place.

So we've been doing a lot of lobbying on that. I've got calls in. Actually, probably, maybe, possibly tomorrow I've been wanting to meet with the Hon. Ralph Goodale in the province here about a number of these issues, but also again to talk to David Collette.

We've got some issues around P.A. (Prince Albert) to Birch Hills right now on abandonment. We have asked the federal government to participate there with 40 per cent of their funding, ours matching 40 per cent, municipalities coming with 20 per cent — an absolutely vital, strategic line for the port of . . . for Churchill and for the Hudson Bay route. We need to have the federal government who has jurisdiction to come onside on these issues.

And certainly we're doing what we can. We just participated in a short-line conference also where the federal government attended. I wasn't there but the deputy minister was there.

We are doing everything we can to get the attention of the federal government along with area planning committees, along with the Western Rail Coalition, along with the road builders, along with the people of this province that need to have the federal government's participation.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. You indicated that in the near future you would be meeting with the . . . was it the federal government, with the minister of transportation and highways, the federal minister, or . . . and other ministers? I'm sorry. I must have missed in your response when you were going to meet, when you were going to continue the meetings to discuss the need for this funding.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — There will be a federal-provincial meeting. It's May 14, I think is the meeting date, with the federal minister, with all the provincial ministers across Canada and Territories . . . of transportation, sorry — of transportation.

Mr. Osika: — Will that be taking place here or will that be taking place elsewhere?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — This meeting that's coming up will be in Ottawa.

Mr. Osika: — Will there be an opportunity for you to share an agenda with us and perhaps subsequently the results of the

meeting?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — On that meeting, we don't have a final agenda. It's a bit fluid still yet, but we know the two major topics will be of course on: grain transportation, Estey review; and on national highways and infrastructure.

Mr. Osika: — I take it that your priorities will be what you just responded: the transportation issues, the railway and abandonment . . . rail-line abandonment. Or will there be specific projects for this province that you would also have on your agenda?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I think — to the member, again, from Melville — that the two main areas certainly will be on . . . the grain transportation and handling will be one. And some specific things that we will be again emphasizing is the importance of your moving to a more efficient, accountable system that you get those returns back to producers; and that you also have to take into consideration all of the costs, right from that farm to the port, which includes a road system in there.

And so those would be areas that . . . when I get specific into some of the things in grain transportation that are important, to say that how the branch-line abandonment process is going, is not working as Estey identified — and we have some difficulties with that — and we would say again that that should be then halted until we know what the new rules are that are going to be in place, that the viability of short lines, that we need to have some . . . What they say are the difficulties, we would say that there needs to be a lot of changes there; those would be efforts that we would work on. And freight rates would be certainly a concern of our provincial government. That would all be wrapped into, of course, the review around the grain transportation and handling.

And also the next step which again provinces need, the western provinces need, to be involved in that. But the producers also need to be involved in that because we do not want to see a system that becomes that all of the efficiencies just go to railways and grain companies.

So those are the areas in which we would have major issues on. But the secondary again, is on the cost sharing with national highways and the kind of a proposal that could be put forward. The province is adamant that we get those kind of cost sharings.

All of the provinces have done a study. We know what dollars need to come into the national highway system. We also know even from Estey, we did a . . . had an independent review study done on the impact to our roads. And so we've got the information ready. What we need is the federal partnership to come in on dollars and good policy that will help us build that transportation system that we need in this province.

Mr. Osika: — Can you tell me who will be chairing that meeting, Madam Minister? And whether or not you will be leading any of the particular workshop groups or focus groups?

The Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker . . . or Mr. Chairman, in the Speaker's gallery today we have 11 students from grade 7 and 8, from the One Arrow First Nation. They're accompanied by two chaperones, Fabian Paul and Darlene Thomas, and their teacher, Roger Petrisor. And they are here observing the events of the Assembly. And they're just across the river from part of the constituency that I represent.

And I'd ask all members to welcome them here to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

Subvote (H101)

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Okay, on the type of role that we'll play. Actually there was . . . like the New Brunswick minister will be the Co-Chair. I was able to be that last year. But it will be co-chaired by New Brunswick with the federal minister.

But on the grain transportation side, certainly Saskatchewan has been taking a leading role with the western provinces on bringing that forward to the federal government.

Mr. Osika: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. Just to end on that particular aspect, I want it on the record, and I want you to know that we have, my colleague, the critic for Transportation, has been corresponding with the federal minister and we have been getting probably similar responses to what you have. Just to let you know and assure you that our efforts are as well along the lines of having our federal government participate in this very, very essential and these needed programs.

Just getting back to our local, provincial highway problems and again going back to the deteriorated ones like 22 and 310, 52, 56. The markings on those highways are fine and they're not bad in the daytime. But the problems are compounded, I'm sure you will appreciate, when travelling on those roadways at night.

And I know you only have so many highway crews to get at these things and get them fixed, but there is a great deal of urgency for attending to those particular pieces and stretches of highway that can cause some pretty serious injuries and damage. It's bad enough that in rural Saskatchewan you have to try to avoid hitting deer, and then trying to swerve around potholes makes it all the more dangerous.

On the matter of highways and another incident that I just recently reported to you, Madam Minister, that is subsequent to a concern that I brought to you about Highway No. 10 near Balcarres — that scares the daylight out of me every time I travel that stretch and I see the increase in traffic. And, as we

discussed last year, you had responded by saying there would be some history, that you would look into accidents, and some studies done this summer. Madam Minister, I appeal to you on behalf of that community — we can't wait.

That community at the intersection of No. 10 and 310 has already had far too many incidents involving fatalities. There have been too many near misses. We've got to have a speed zone through that stretch of highway. There are at least five businesses on the south side of the highway, opposite the town of Balcarres. Presently the new health care facility is nearing completion on the north side of the highway. There is also a service station and a confectionery and a very good restaurant/bar on the north side of the highway that people now access.

(1615)

In order to access either the health care facility and the town of Balcarres from the west side and that roadside stop, people travelling from west to east need to make a left turn. And when they come to a stop with their signal lights flashing, people travelling from behind in a 100-kilometre speed zone unfortunately may not, for whatever reason, have occasion to stop in time, as happened on May 1 on that location, which nearly cost us two lives. Nearly cost two lives there.

I came upon the scene not long after it happened, and it just sent shivers through me. And I must admit — and I should apologize — a little bit of anger that we had discussed the concerns . . . The town of Balcarres had brought this concern to Highways department previously on different occasions from a safety-factor point of view, and nothing was done. Nothing. There were no counts from that . . . anytime up to this point that I'm aware of.

And I know you said there'd be some counts done this summer. But you know what's going to happen to summer: more B-trains, more heavy trucks, more summer traffic going to Katepwa Lake that will transgress that area.

Madam Minister, I just would appeal to you. That particular area — just down the road, and you're familiar with Terminal T-22 — that entire area needs to be very closely looked at and needs to be desperately looked at immediately. No further studies.

I know there needs to be some reviews by engineers and safety experts — great. But we need it now in that area, and I appeal to you to give us a commitment that you will attend to that particular stretch of No. 10 Highway at your earliest convenience.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Okay, to the member opposite. I think there was two questions there. The first one was on the marking, and actually it's one of the things our department is very, very proud of, is that we have some of the most efficient striping and marking equipment and technology in all of North America for the Department of Highways here. And actually some of the equipment was developed right within our own Department of Highways and has been asked to be used in other parts of the country actually in some of the national parks and so on, because it's such an effective machine and it does such a

good job.

Now they do work full out once we get into the season where we put the markings back on. Certainly sometimes they wear out, and like you say, you're not able to see them. And so they work full out through the whole season right up to the winter in which they cannot do marking any longer.

Some highways are marked more than once a year because of the volumes on it and them wearing off. So we do make an attempt to have the markings on these highways as best as possible.

On the second part of the question there on Highway No. 10, they have reviewed the kind of information so far. They're going to do some more counts as quickly as possible in the next two to three weeks.

They will be meeting with the town and area I think in about four to six weeks to look at — and they will have both the engineers, the safety people there — to see what the options should be. If it's slowing down the traffic, turning lanes, I mean whatever will . . . I mean you've got to take all of the situation into consideration. But certainly our objective is to have the highways as safe as possible.

And so we will look at the whole piece there and try to find out what will work in the best interests of that particular highway that you're mentioning to us.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. It still concerns me a little bit that we need to wait another four to six weeks. But I appreciate, you know, that you understand the urgency. Four to six weeks takes us into June. School's out, summer traffic, lake traffic in that area — things get moving rather rapidly, Madam Minister.

I want to thank you for that and thank your officials, and defer to my colleague from Thunder Creek. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to the minister and her officials. Just a little bit further along the issue of pavement marking, could you let us know here this afternoon what was the pavement marking budget last year, and what will it be for this year?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member from Melville on that question . . . Oh no, sorry, member from Thunder Creek that asked me that question. In '98, we spent about — we don't have the exact number — but around the \$5 million mark on marking, and we will be spending that amount plus inflation, so probably somewhere 200 to \$300,000 and more this year in our budget for it to cover the inflation. But it usually stays about standard, the amount of marking that we can get done in a year.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I believe in the year prior to last year you had spent something closer to five and a half million dollars on that same sort of a treatment . . . on the marking of the lines on highways so there's been a substantial reduction, if I understand it correctly, in last fiscal year. And if all you're going to do is maintain that sort of a level, well certainly that's not doing enough.

And then with your response to my colleague from Melville, when you mentioned how the marking equipment here is put to use elsewhere, well I can see why if we're not spending the money here in the province that we used to in terms of marking highways, well certainly, I guess it might be employed somewhere else.

Because I even . . . when you look at the document that was prepared for the Department of Highways in July of last year, there's transportation engineering literature, I'm told, that identifies these pavement markings. And here we can get into what we were yesterday in terms of cost-effectiveness. They refer to these pavement markings as being one of the most cost-effective means of providing safety on highways in the province.

So certainly it seems that your concern is lacking in this particular regard. I know of a number of these types of, I guess you refer to them as collector highways, secondary, tertiary — I'm not quite sure of the term; it's all to make them sound like they're not very important anyway.

There's a lot of those highways where there are virtually no markings left now. Why would you not be considering to have had at least in place some sort of a level of funding that would allow for the safe marking of all of these centre and shoulder lines on some of these highways where it's needed?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I think there was two or three different questions there but back to the pavement marking budget. In '97-98 the budget was 5.4 million. What the actual spending was that year was 5 million? And so that year was an incredibly good season, just the needs that were . . . the paving marking was done in a very effective, efficient manner and that's what we spent. And so that's what we have put into the next two year's budgets about, but we've added inflation to that.

So pavement marking is one of the things that I think too is extremely important right across all of our paved surfaces. Every paved surface in the province of Saskatchewan gets marking every year. And some of the high volume roads will be marked two or three times because they do become worn off. But whether it's secondary or, like you said, tertiary or primary road, marking is done on every one of our paved surfaces in the province.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I'm looking at the construction projects for '99 and 2000. I don't see very many projects on the go in the Thunder Creek constituency. I notice Highway 339, Briercrest north, seven kilometres are going to receive preservation spot improvements. And would you be able to describe that specific process to me.

We're going to get into these specific processes here again this afternoon I can see, and the cost effectiveness of them, and the safety aspects I'm sure that I'll again be trying to have you address.

(1630)

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member from Thunder Creek. Actually there's a fair amount of work being done in your constituency now on highway . . . first 334, that is going to be

completed into Avonlea. That's a highway that was affected. It was a TMS (thin membrane surface) highway affected by a lot of the changes in the grain transportation on the heavy truck haul.

Last year we did a major project on that and this year we will be completing that into Avonlea, and so that's changing that from a TMS to a granular surface structured type of pavement. So that's quite a big improvement for the community and area around Avonlea.

In Highway 339, we're doing spot improvements and you're asking what does that mean? Well like I had said previously, all of these TMSs, get say somewhere 2 to \$3,000 spent on them per kilometre each year. When we talk about a spot improvement we're talking about then going in and doing some significant work on an area that has got the most damage and needs to be rebuilt. And so on 339, I think on spot improvements we're going to be spending somewhere close to \$270,000 on that in your constituency.

And overall in the constituency of Thunder Creek, it's close to I think about \$5 million worth of road work that's going to be done there on major projects. That's not talking about the routine maintenance and preservation that's also being done in that constituency.

So I think a tremendous amount of work is actually being done in your constituency of Thunder Creek. I could give you some more examples there, but on the two that you've named I think I've told you what is going to be happening on 334 and 339.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Well thank you, Madam Minister. I would be interested in having all of the examples that represent that \$5 million worth of road work. I must be missing some of them on this list.

It doesn't look . . . if I add up the number of kilometres here, unless I've added it incorrectly, it looks like only about 36 kilometres all told that are going to have any work done.

So perhaps I've missed something. If you'd outline them all please.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I could list off I think. Of course certainly Highway No. 1 is still in that constituency and so from let's see — Highway No. 1 there's resurfacing of over 30 kilometres on that, so we put that together; that's over \$2 million. Highway No. 1 again near Pense is having some work done on drainage ditch repair. Highway No. 1, they're doing some turning lanes and so on on that. So then there's, like I just said, there's . . . let's see that's over 2 million maybe on that.

Highway No. 19, Chaplin to 9.2 kilometres north, that's \$1.1 million being done on that. On Highway 334, as I had said earlier, Avonlea east — that's another 1.3 million. And that's in addition to last year. I'm not just sure what those dollars that were spent last year on that, but that was in the millions of dollars too.

And then we've got the Briercrest to Moose Jaw Creek at around \$270,000. So that adds up to close to five million — it's \$4.977 million. Compared to my constituency at around \$1

million, I think there's a significant amount of work being done in Thunder Creek.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And thank you, Madam Minister, for outlining those projects.

And incidentally, I'd also just like to commend the minister. It seems like you've had a change of opinion with respect to Highway 301, because I noticed this morning there were some highway crews out there who were actually rolling some asphalt on the surface instead of doing, you know, the spray the oil and lay the gravel. And this was occurring right over where there was a previous treatment.

So I appreciate the fact that you have taken some safety concerns at heart with respect to this. And anywhere else in my constituency that you might be able to reconsider some of these types of applications, I'd certainly appreciate it. I suppose I maybe am running the risk of sounding selfish here then, I sense from some of the members here, when we speak of Thunder Creek only.

I noticed on this list, we can . . . well we can head practically to the other end of the province if we want. With respect to highways in the North, the highway that goes into Cumberland House, I don't see very much on here for Highway 123 in the way of preservation or spot improvements. Is this the sum total, 1.1 kilometres? Is that all that you're actually going to improve on that highway during this fiscal year?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member from Thunder Creek. Part of . . . too what we work on looking at the whole system and trying to spend the dollars in the most beneficial way as to preserve the system, but we also like to consult with the people in areas and get their input on the priorities.

Now in Cumberland, certainly the Cumberland Bridge was a major expenditure that was expended by our government and was important for the community in that area.

When looking at . . . There still will be dollars spent on Highway No. 122 on regular maintenance and preservation. But also in talking to the community, they felt their priority was to do surfacing of the highway as it goes through town and its connection to the bridge. And so that's the major work that's being done this year.

Certainly there will be work done in other years coming up on Highway 123 and there will be work still done on regular maintenance and preservation of Highway 123.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, it sounds to me like perhaps you're not consulting enough with some of the people in the North. I've got a letter here in front of me from somebody who is speaking with respect to the conditions of Highway 123. I could just quote briefly some of it here. It doesn't sound very pretty — I have to warn you in advance. And to quote:

To get to the oldest settlement in Saskatchewan, Cumberland House, you drive on Highway 123, the worst road in Saskatchewan, arguably the worst road in western Canada.

And this individual goes on, and I quote:

When doctors travel from Nipawin to Cumberland House, they don't drive the road, they fly over since one of their members was killed on that road.

I can quote further:

This road is so bad that the ambulance from Nipawin got stuck twice in the middle of the road.

And further:

Finally we have a bridge paid for by the local residents, the poorest of the poor. Now through neglect of successive Tory and NDP governments, we no longer have a road. When will this government remember that Cumberland House exists and do something about Highway 123?

And that's the end of the quote. So there's the sorts of things that we hear from people who are representing people in the North. These are the sorts of concerns that they have. I don't know that I've heard yet this afternoon anything that would really satisfy individuals such as this. But I certainly judge by the content of this letter that Highway 123 sounds like a prime candidate to have been introduced as a Romanow road as well.

But perhaps you could outline for us what you anticipate in the way of future work on this road. You've briefly made some mention, but could you give some of these people a little bit more hope. I'd certainly appreciate it.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Well thank you on that question, because actually I visited that community and met with the . . . met with the community in Cumberland. And certainly they had some circumstances, especially last spring, with some real concerns about some of the soft spots, and I know in the spring that we do have some of those difficulties on those roads. And so I had an opportunity to meet with the community up there.

We've had discussions with them. And what they said, they really appreciated us as a government spending \$6 million on the Cumberland bridge. I don't think they'd ever thought that we've forgotten about that community. They've recognized that we have certain limitations due to the amount of resources.

They also said, when we were up there — and I heard some of those, I'm not just sure when you got that letter — but the concerns last year too about some of those soft spots. We actually added dollars into our budget last year later on in the season — I think it was over \$300,000 — to do those improvements on those spots because of the difficulty, as you say, for ambulance service. I think that is extremely important that we keep the road in good shape.

But the community said to us, rather than this next year, if we could put more dollars onto the gravel and work on that part of the road, or would they rather have the paved surface of the highway through the town, they said their priority would be doing the paving this year through the town of Cumberland. That would be their priority and that's what we have done in this budget.

But we're certainly still going to continue to spend money on Highway 123 in routine types of maintenance and preservation and making sure that that road is an accessible road for that community.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, I . . . Always we're before various ministries and in estimates — and I'm not criticizing, certainly not criticizing the Chair's decision here — but on a number of occasions we're told, well you're in estimates for a particular department so you should stay on track.

Well in that vein perhaps ministers could respond in that same fashion. And I just simply put to you, could you not endorse a policy as a Minister of Highways where the entire amount of revenues collected in fuel taxes by a provincial government were put back to the very use of constructing and maintaining highways in the province?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you for that question, because I think again this question, there's been a lot of maybe misconception out there and I think that we have recognized — as I've said previously — that we need to continue to put more dollars into highways and roads in this province because it is certainly a priority of this government and a priority of the people of the province.

But also a priority of the people of the province is to have a balanced approach and so they know with every surplus budget that you can do some tax reduction, some debt reduction, and some program enhancement.

So if we actually take the dollars that we've been adding into our budget on Highways and Transportation, and also the dollars that go into the municipal roads from the provincial coffers, and we compare that to the amount of revenue that we take in that would be actually revenue on road fuel tax — not on locomotive tax, not on tax that is rebated to farmers, but what we would consider tax that is on road tax — and we do the numbers over last year, and now with again some increase in our budget this year, we are very close to spending 80 per cent of the dollars collected back onto highways and roads in this province.

I think we always have to remember, as the Minister of Finance has said, in every dollar collected in revenue, 16 cents of that is also going to still interest payments. So we're very much approaching putting the dollars that we collect on revenue from gas tax back onto the roads.

But I also want to just caution, there could be a government and there was a government at one time that cut fuel tax. Does that mean that zero dollars go back on the roads? I think that the argument that needs to be made — and we can compare it to fuel tax if we want — is that we know we need to spend more dollars, and that's why they're continuing to add more dollars. And we need to have some federal participation because on fuel tax they're only putting back into the highways and transportation system across this country at a 6 per cent level.

(1645)

So we recognize we need more dollars. We need to have the

federal dollars. Certainly we can do the comparison to fuel tax. But I think if we had a fuel tax level, we could drop our fuel tax and say, okay we got 100 per cent going back onto roads. But that's not enough dollars. I mean the percentage isn't all that valuable.

We know we need more dollars, good planning, federal contributions. Thank you.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, I want to thank you for coming again this evening, and along with your officials.

I had some calls about some of your response of yesterday. And in fact there was one caller who listened to some of your responses and wanted to pass one thing on this evening, if you were coming back. And I said you would be. And that's, shame on you for what you're saying is enough spending on highways in Saskatchewan when they as seniors have to drive on these things. And this call came from the Mankota area.

And they said, if you want to see really what it's like, come down there. In fact, Madam Minister, I'd drive you down just to show you what these roads are like.

If you think you're spending enough on the highways system, you just come into the south, southwest. And I told this senior couple that I would raise this with you. And on behalf of them, shame on you and your government for what you've done to rural Saskatchewan, especially in regards to highways.

Another issue that was raised — and I believe it has been raised with you and your department — is that the signage on No. 4 Highway at the community of Cadillac. Now I know that the community of Ponteix has requested a sign be put up on No. 4 Highway to show that in fact there is a community to the east. There's many communities between Cadillac and Assiniboia.

But in fact, are you going to do or have you already agreed to put up a sign saying that Ponteix is just a little bit to the east? This is a community that is a francophone community. There is a great number of tourists that visit Ponteix each year for cultural reasons. And in fact they — I think it's a plesiosaur — they have people coming to view their plesiosaurs and such. And can I have some commitment that you're going to at least do that small amount for the community of Ponteix — is get the sign up on No. 4 Highway?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member for Wood River then. On the issue of Ponteix, yes, they brought that up to me — I think it was at the SARM convention — and Highways officials have been out and met with the people. And it's my understanding that there will be a sign put up for Ponteix on Highway No. 4.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, I appreciate that, but when I heard your response I was thinking wouldn't it cost more to send the officials out there to discuss whether or not they're going to buy a, you know, a \$40 sign then just go ahead and put the sign up when you first asked?

That may be the problem with your government is that, you know, there's so much bureaucracy to get the smallest of things done, and you probably add those costs onto what you're

spending on highways in rural Saskatchewan when in fact it makes no sense to the people. You know, it's really a case of trying to get a grip on your department, Madam Minister.

I'm going to raise a few concerns. Last night we talked about the chunk of pavement that did a lot of damage to the wheel and vehicle of the Grydes at Climax. You assured me that this would be taken care of. Another one was sent in and this one, I'm just looking at remarks from the adjuster. I'll read:

My name is Donald M. Mitchell of 526 MacKenzie Drive of Swift Current, Sask. I was going east on High No. 18. The blacktop was really loose on that road. I hit a pothole and a piece of asphalt came hitting the bottom of my car. It touched the cross member, cracked the oil pan. I kept on driving, not knowing anything was wrong.

I only had eight miles from my farmyard to go. When I got to the farm, I checked underneath my car and seen that the oil was running out of the bottom of the car. I did not drive my car after that.

Highway No. 18 is really bad all the way from Climax to the No. 4 junction. You can only go 40 kilometres per hour on that highway at the best of times. It will be fairly smooth and all of a sudden there's a big hole with the asphalt all broken up.

And this Don Mitchell, and I look at his repair bill for oil pan damage to a car — I think it was \$280. And I was wondering: do you have a system or a process in place where people when they're getting their vehicles smashed, completely destroyed, things like this are happening, where they can in fact get a, you know, a process that's . . . (inaudible) . . . and taking care of these bills without jumping through all the hoops with SGI and such? Because really it comes down to your department, whether or not you're taking care of the highways.

And they're disastrous. Last year we raised several cases. I think it was a vehicle that the Coburn's had. Now we raise the case of the Grydes. And you can say that you're spending enough on highways, but when you have chunks of asphalt coming through the vehicle windows that are huge. We brought one in as you recall about a year ago. What did that weigh? Some, some 20 pounds. You know chunks of pavement wrecking vehicles, ripping the bottom out of a car.

This has gone on too long. It's just, it's getting absolutely dangerous. There's a safety factor.

But at least for these people that have the damages on their vehicles, will you make sure that there's a process that they can actually phone your office or an office in your department to say okay, here's the bill?

Just accept that the problem is yours because perhaps you're not as effective in cabinet as others are. And so that spending would go to Guyana or Chile or Santiago or New Zealand or whatever. And so you're not quite as effective in getting money for Saskatchewan highways.

So really then it comes to you just making sure that these people's bills are being paid. Will you insure that process is

being put in place?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member from Wood River. First of all, the particular case that you just brought forward, I'm not sure that we've had that but certainly forward it to us if we haven't received it, because we will certainly look over it.

I'm talking about the process here. We do have a process in place. Clearly, we have said, as I said previously to one of your other caucus members, if the department is totally at fault then we are legally liable. If there is a claim in which we are not legally liable, there can be — I'll just wait; I'll just keep talking I guess.

But anyways, we do have a process in place. It's a public claim process. Pamphlets can be brought to your constituency office and it has the phone numbers on there for you to be able to phone to understand that process.

Mr. McPherson: — Well you know, Madam Minister, my colleagues had raised these construction projects and I look at where some of these damages are constantly occurring. In fact, you know, some of the constant claims that are coming in are from Highway No. 4 from Cadillac to Val Marie; 18 from Val Marie over to Climax, and then back up 37 to Shaunavon. And you're getting quite a number of those claims coming in. Hopefully you are. At least, I'm getting a number of bills and I have to assume that they're all going in to your department.

I look at your construction projects. You know, they talked about the worst highways in Saskatchewan. I'll tell you one of the worst highways that I've ever been on in my life is from Val Marie to Cadillac. That is a highway that you can't, you can't take your eyes off the road and you have to always have two hands on the wheel. It is so wavy.

You know, you talk to somebody who's hauling grain or fuel on that highway — they're afraid there're going to roll their vehicles in the middle of the road. Absolutely ridiculous.

You're cutting Saskatchewan people off. You're not prepared to do what you have to do or what your department could do in ensuring that we're saving some railroads out in rural Saskatchewan.

You know, your thrust is, oh let's do something with the federal government. Well you sit back and do nothing. You do nothing. At least will you fix their highways? That No. 4 Highway is an absolute disgrace. These vehicles that are being damaged here, that's where they're being damaged, is in that loop, just that loop.

And I mean it goes on and on. If you look at the Wood River constituency, it's absolutely horrible. The other day I was in Assiniboia heading down to Coronach. And if you head east of Assiniboia, you go through a stretch — I don't know, four or five miles — I've never seen so many red flags.

I think you've bought all your red flags and put them right there, and it is disastrous. You know, you can easily throw a rock from red flag to red flag for quite a stretch. And it's just embarrassing. It should be really embarrassing for the government.

Yet I look at your construction projects and your news release, "Highways and Transportation Minister Judy Bradley has announced nine projects in southwest Saskatchewan." Well when I look at these projects in southwest Saskatchewan, what is there for the Wood River constituency? Well really you have nothing.

You think the highways are fine in the Wood River constituency, and you're getting all these claims in. And a year ago was several claims from the Ponteix area. You recall those. Bridges were being washed out. You didn't even have flags to put up.

You know, at what point are you going to just accept that some of these highways — 4 and 13 and 18 and 37 — shouldn't they ever get into your construction project lists? You're spending nothing, and I look at what you're saying is good — spot improvements, spot improvements.

You know they may look like you can do spot improvements from 25,000 feet in the jet, and on a clear day I think you can even see some of those supposed highways. But get down and drive on them and you'll find out why these people have just absolutely had enough.

When are you going to start to spend some money in some of these other areas? Wood River constituency gets no money, virtually no money spent there. I have to sit back and think, are you really so crass as to be doing highway projects based on politics? Oh, I hope not but I suspect that's exactly what it is.

Madam Minister, when I take a look at your flags, you know here we have a freedom of information request that was answered for 1998 — approximately 1,200 warning flags for a cost of \$6,700.

Do you know how many kilometres of miles of highway that it just completely beats to nothing — don't have flags. I sit back and wonder: well if that's your only highway and transportation budget spending is flags, aren't you even prepared to buy enough flags?

You know are you using . . . I've had so many people raise this with me, Madam Minister, that in fact they're wondering with this upcoming election if in fact who these two NDP candidates are — bump and danger. Because they seem to be all over the province but maybe you're short. Maybe you're short some of these candidates or red flags. Twelve hundred flags aren't doing it. And it's quite clear when you're seeing the kind of damage to the vehicles that are out there.

Madam Minister, it's as simple as this. Do you feel that you even have enough red flags up if you're not prepared to fix the highways?

(1700)

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I just want to tell the member from Wood River that we are doing work in his constituency. And actually I have driven on a lot of the highways and roads in that area. I've had the chance to go down in that area several times. I've met with communities. I just met with the Southwest Transportation Planning area committee and they actually know

— and I want to just reconfirm — is that, you say we've got enough money; I say no, it's not enough money.

But are we trying to address it? Yes, we are. We continue to add money. And each year in good seasons we've even been able to add more money. But we have to keep a balanced budget. As I said before, we've got to work with your communities. We've got to work as a province doing the best we can with the dollars we have and the best kind of planning, and we do need that federal partnership.

But to be a little bit more specific on the constituency of Wood River, we are working on Highway No. 4 with some spot improvements. And as I've said earlier today, spot improvements are above what the regular maintenance and preservation work is done. And that's worth over half a million dollars on Highway No. 4.

On Highway No. 13, in your area of Limerick to Hazenmore, there's a full seal coat being done in there. That again is a major project being done over 49, almost 50 kilometres worth of work that's being done there.

So we are addressing issues in your constituency, actually at a level very close to the amount of dollars that's being spent in my own constituency.

Mr. McPherson: — Madam Minister, can I have your assurance you will send over that list and the dollars that you're spending in the Wood River constituency?

And the fact that you even break it down by constituency — and that's what you're looking at — your quoting from sheets that are breaking this down by constituency tells the people that are watching tonight, yes, it is political. Otherwise who would break it down by constituency?

But please, we'll leave it at that. I think you fool no one. Send it across, send it across, and we will have a look at it.

I know we're wanting to wrap up here right away, Madam Minister, but there is one other thing that I think I want to briefly touch on and that is something that has become very obvious in each Crown and department as we're getting closer to the election — the horrible increases that your departments and Crowns are spending on polling and advertising.

I had one freedom of information request answered here where in fact Quest Communications Group for the '97-98 fiscal year, \$506,642 spent on Quest Communications and that's pretty substantial. It's very substantial.

And when I take a look at another freedom of information and the cost of operating communications and public relations branch of the department for the last two years, and for the '97-98 year it was \$775,000; and for the '98-99 — and this only goes up to the end of February — you'd already spent 620,000.

Madam Minister, the point is, and the people sit back and they ask this through us: why you would spend these kind of dollars? You know it's nothing for you to spend a million here and a million there. I'm sure if you stand up, you'd have to admit that you're spending a mere pittance in the Wood River constituency with all those highways that you've completely

neglected since you've been in power. And yet you're prepared to do all this advertising.

That's the problem with your government. It's all advertising friends; it's building election — padding election accounts. That's what it's really coming down to all too often.

So, Madam Minister, I'm not even going to wrap up by asking you a question. I'm just going to ask that you start to show a little compassion and show a little caring for the people that are in this province that, you know, you've closed their hospitals, you're busy closing their schools, you're having . . . you're forcing kids to go further and further by bus, and you're forcing ambulances to be taking people out of these constituencies for health care.

I could go on and on. At least give them a proper road to be on, and we'll discuss the other stuff at another day. But you've got to do something on the road issue first. I'll leave you with that thought. I don't even need a reply.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, and to your officials. Madam Minister, I actually have a number of questions but to save some time, can you give me an assurance that if I contact you and give you specific . . . specifics regarding these questions, that you and your department officials will get back to me as quickly as possible on issues that have just been raised and brought to my attention in the last few days and I think it's imperative that we at least get a response to. Is that an assurance given?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I'd absolutely be able to give you that response.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And thank you certainly to your officials for some of the other answers we've received, certainly answers we're still waiting for regarding expenditures by kilometre for different levels of highway construction as well. Thank you.

Subvote (HI01) agreed to.

Subvotes (HI02), (HI04), (HI10), (HI03), (HI06), (HI11) agreed to.

Vote 16 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Lending and Investing Activities
Highways and Transportation
Vote 145**

Subvote (HI01) agreed to.

Vote 145 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Lending and Investing Activities
Saskatchewan Land Information Services Corporation
Vote 159**

Subvote (SL01) — Statutory.

Vote 159 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Highways and Transportation
Vote 16**

Subvotes (H104), (H103) agreed to.

Vote 16 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund
Lending and Investing Activities
Highways and Transportation
Vote 145**

Subvote (H101) agreed to.

Vote 145 agreed to.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Okay. Thank you. I want to thank the opposition on both sides for their questions. I also want to thank the members of my department that were here in order to help respond to those questions. Thank you.

The Assembly recessed until 6 p.m.