

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon on behalf of the citizens of southwest Saskatchewan who have raised concerns about the implications of the Saskatchewan EMS (emergency medical services) development project. And their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and to affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, was signed by residents of Swift Current, Gull Lake, Tompkins, and other communities in the southwest.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the good citizens of Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency who are concerned about the EMS service in their area. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

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

And it's signed by residents of Pangman, Ogema, Kayville, Viceroy, and Bengough.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today to do with ambulance services within the province. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

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

The petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Eastend.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present today dealing with the EMS development project, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and to affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

And the signatures to this petition come from the community of Gull Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by the good citizens of Saskatchewan in regards to the EMS report.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

And the signatures on this petition are all from the good centre of Gull Lake.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to oppose the centralization of ambulance services; and

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly regarding a request for a new hospital in Swift Current.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Monday next move first reading of The Whistle-blower Protection Act.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 8 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: what were the official and specific reasons for the termination of Lynn Kuffner, Ken Dusselier, Colette Wilks, and Stan Abrahamowicz from

their positions with the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board; and how much severance did each receive or agree to upon their termination?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to the Assembly today many friends of mine in the west gallery, if I could just take a few moments. They are friends from the Onion Lake First Nation and also a number of people who I haven't met, actually, from the Little Pine First Nation who are walking . . . or who have walked, I should say, to Regina in an attempt to raise awareness around the elimination for racism.

Now we had a nice meeting just a half an hour or so ago with the Minister of Northern Affairs, the Minister of Environment, and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. And they tell me that coincidentally they didn't actually know or weren't aware that actually yesterday was the day for awareness of elimination of racism. So this is just a wonderful coincidence that they're actually here today.

The group started their trek on Tuesday morning from the Onion Lake First Nation. And if anybody knows where that is, that's way up north of Lloydminster, so it's quite a distance. What they did though is they stopped in every community on the way to Regina and walked through every single community, starting one kilometre on the boundary . . . one kilometre out of each community, walking through the community for another kilometre. So they've seen a lot of people on the way down.

A couple of things that I just did want to highlight as well. Their efforts are for the following: to show their children that there are healthier ways of handling racism and discrimination instead of using violent methods. Racism and discrimination is a social issue. It affects all people, not only First Nations people. Racism and discrimination is seen in First Nations bands as well. As human beings, they do not have the right to hurt another human being for the colour they were born in whether it be red, yellow, black, white . . . red, white, black, or yellow, I should say. So that's just several of their themes that they have in their literature that they gave to me today.

I understand that they will also be trying to meet with Premier Calvert and he's told me that he would try and meet with them for a few minutes, I suspect following question period.

And I do want to mention as well that I will be giving to several of my cabinet colleagues posters that speak to the issue and concern of racism.

Now I don't . . . I very rarely get guests from this far away so I would ordinarily just introduce the group as a whole, but they all would like to see their names in *Hansard* so I'll quickly run through and then at the end ask them to stand up.

We have with us, actually the person I believe who coordinated most of this, Darlene Chocan, Delia Waskewitch, Marlee Chocan, Rosalie Chocan, Vera Cardinal-Trottier, Sara Waskewitch, Arlene Lewis, Brenda Kam, Amanda Lameman,

Dallas Lameman, Vivian Littlewolfe, Marcella Pahtaykan, Brian Waskewitch, Kelly Whitstone-Dillon, Doris Bull, Arlene Bull, Bertha Kennedy, Jace Bull, Larissa Kennedy, Janess Bull, Daren Bull-Waskewitch, Laurie Bull, Deidre Bull, Dayton Bull, and Ursula Baptiste-Bull. I would like all of my colleagues in the Assembly to please join me in welcoming these guests who came so far to join us today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, but I would remind you that when you're referring to other colleagues in the legislature that you should refer to them by the riding or by their ministerial responsibility.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party opposition to welcome today all of the members of the Onion Lake First Nation. We welcome you here.

We're happy to have you here with us today and we certainly commend you on your efforts to raise awareness on the elimination of racism. Racism is a totally unacceptable thing these days and always has been. We certainly concur with all of the efforts that you are putting into to ensure that there is peace and harmony in our society and appreciation for every one of us.

So I welcome you today and I welcome too members of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs that are here and on behalf of the official opposition again, welcome and good luck.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker.

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

I would like as well to join the members from the Saskatchewan Party to welcome the people from Onion Lake and from Little Pine as well.

For the people who may not know the names, Onion Lake is Weecheguskoseehi- Saguhiguneeek, Mr. Speaker, and Wuskichooseek is the word for Little Pine.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important as we are looking at respect amongst all people, I would like to say a couple of words in Cree in addition to what I have said.

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

I guess, Mr. Speaker, as I said, it gives me great pride in this legislature, as I watch people stand up to the issue of racism, walk many miles to leave a message that the essence of this legislature and the essence of this province has to be based on pride and respect amongst all people. Haw egosi.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to the Assembly my office manager here in Regina.

And may I say to my former colleagues in cabinet that one of the problems when you leave cabinet is you have to learn to carry your own briefcase and open your own car door again. But fortunately my transition into private life has been eased by Mark Cooper, and he's joined today with his friends Sarah McQuarrie, Shawn Stibe, and Chris Eatrides.

I'd ask you to please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly two guests sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Gordon Boychuk who is a constituent of mine, and a good friend of his, Mr. Chris Wagner, who is a resident of Prelate, Saskatchewan.

And I'd like all the members to join me in welcoming them to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also want to join my colleagues on both sides of the House to welcome the Onion Lake people.

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

So I just said to the folks that Keith's Cree is from the east side and we're from the northwest, and I wanted to correct a few of his Cree mistakes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Swift Current Broncos in Western Hockey League Playoffs

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there are many Saskatchewan realities attendant with the arrival of spring in our province — the retreat of the snow, preparation for seeding, a disappointing NDP (New Democratic Party) Throne Speech, and the Swift Current Broncos finishing first in the WHL's (Western Hockey League) east division.

Mr. Speaker, with the WHL playoffs about to get underway, I thought I would try to help out other members in this Assembly who may represent WHL communities by giving them a way to help their team be successful in the playoffs.

We tried to provide this help in the past. We pointed out to the government in '97 that the 'Riders have never won a Grey Cup while they were in office and asked them to temporarily resign. And last year I pointed out that the only WHL team to advance in the playoffs was the one represented by a Sask Party MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

This year the Regina Pats and the Moose Jaw Warriors are also in the playoffs, along with the Broncos, and so I wanted to encourage the members for Moose Jaw and Regina to do the only thing they could possibly do to help ensure their teams' success in the playoffs. Mr. Speaker, I implore the members for

Regina and Moose Jaw, if they want to help their teams, cross the floor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Cross the floor, Mr. Speaker, and give them a fighting chance.

On a serious note, Mr. Speaker, I do want to take this opportunity to wish the Swift Current Broncos — the coaches, the players, the volunteers, all the staff — the very best in the WHL playoffs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina and Saskatchewan Economies Look Good

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, let me be the first government member in this session to steal a line from the member from Regina Dewdney — more good news for Saskatchewan. Front page stuff in *The Leader-Post* too, Mr. Speaker. "Regina's economy looks good," reads the headline. This, and according to the Conference Board of Canada, and I quote: "... you can expect good things for this year."

How good, you might ask. Well the board says: 2.5 per cent economic growth; 2.1 per cent employment growth — in real people, not numbers — a growth of 2,100 jobs.

And here's a line I really like, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

Spurred by tax cuts at the federal and provincial level, disposable income . . . will rise . . . 5.1 per cent . . .

So we can expect people to hit the stores, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition was present at the luncheon yesterday when these figures were announced. But he must have been away at the dessert table during the presentation because yesterday he told this Assembly a whole different story.

So quickly, Mr. Speaker, retail sales in Saskatchewan have improved 6.5 per cent January over January.

Mr. Speaker, so much good news and so little time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Condition of Highways

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well as it was mentioned by one of the other members it's spring time and thoughts in Saskatchewan often turn to things like potholes.

In my particular constituency, one of the things that's happened with spring is really a rather sombre thought because there's a lot of individuals have placed crosses in memory of individuals that have died on some of the highways in that area. And as the snow leaves we see more of those sort of coming back to light and it's a very sobering sort of a thought.

I want to commend this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, the individuals and the committees from my constituency that continue to work on behalf of the people of the constituency and other individuals that use those particular highways to try and get them improved. And I know we had one of the activists from the area met with the Minister of Highways recently and I appreciate that visit that was given to reinforce some of the concerns and the hardships that are caused by that highway and commend those people for working for continued dividing of Highway 11.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ownership of Crown Corporations

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand in the House again now that we're back in session and to bring to the attention of the Assembly some of the things which have been happening across my city and have been appearing in the local paper.

In particular I want to bring to the attention of members, although I'm sure the members opposite know about it, comments by a fellow from Regina named Richard Truscott. I think a former executive assistant of the Leader of the Opposition when he was in Ottawa, speaking about the Crown corporations.

The opposition, as we know, have a bit of a confused approach to the Crowns these days. Mr. Truscott seems to be one of the gurus in this effect. In the paper it says the government could open up private ownership of the Crowns without necessarily losing control. An interesting question as to how you would do that and I'm sure the members opposite as we move through the debate will do that, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is, is that this article, and I want to bring to the attention of people, shows clearly the Saskatchewan people do not support that. A poll done by *The Leader-Post* shows that between 50 and 60 per cent of Saskatchewan people favour retaining Crown ownership of every single Crown asset we have.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that the 60 per cent roughly corresponds with what the member for Elphinstone and the member from Riversdale got in the by-elections and the members opposite might take note of that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prud'Homme Priest Featured in Documentary

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pride and a sense of excitement that I make this announcement today to the members of the Assembly and to all of Saskatchewan.

A documentary film on French clergymen, Constant Jean Baptiste Bourdel will receive its world premiere March 24 at a

community banquet in Prud'homme, Saskatchewan. *Pioneer Priest*, directed by Donna Caruso, airs March 31 on the History channel as part of its series, *A Scattering of Seeds: The Creation of Canada*.

Shot in Prud'homme and produced by Toronto's White Pine Pictures, the documentary pays tribute to the courage and sense of duty of Monseigneur Bourdel who established the community's first parish. It explores the development of the town, the parish of St. Donatien and St. Rogatien, and the arrival of the nuns of the Daughters of Providence, who helped finance the church, presbytery, and the convent.

Mr. Speaker, a great deal of congratulations should go to the museum committee who are . . . certainly have made sure that this documentary has come to fruition in Prud'homme, Saskatchewan. And so I congratulate them, and I invite all the members of the Assembly to be at the Silver Age Hall in Prud'homme on March 24, at 6:30 p.m. to see the screening of the video. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Host City for 2002 Saskatchewan Winter Games

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to congratulate Humboldt, which has been proclaimed the host city for the 2002 Saskatchewan Winter Games. Congratulations to Humboldt Mayor Dennis Korte, Mark Mulatz, chairperson of the Saskatchewan Games Council, and the 2002 Humboldt Saskatchewan Winter Games Committee.

The Minister of Culture Youth and Recreation and Mr. Mulatz, also presented a cheque for \$220,000 to the host committee. This represents the government's commitment to the games funded through lottery proceeds.

Mr. Speaker, Humboldt is ready to meet the challenge of the games. It has an excellent organizing committee and a strong community of volunteers in place to help the athletes have a successful sporting event.

The winter games provide a wonderful opportunity for the youth of this province to showcase their athletic ability and talent.

Sporting events are just one of the many ways we can stand behind our youth. More than 2,000 athletes, coaches, managers, and officials will participate in the games next year.

Once again, way to go Humboldt!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cost of Ambulance Service

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, we must protect the integrity of one-tier, quality medicare which is accessible to all. In the recent Riversdale by-election the Saskatchewan Party offered voters in one of the province's poorest constituencies the prospect of superior health care if they could afford it.

Ambulance service is another example of two-tier medicine. At

present both the charges levied to patients and the pay given to workers depends on the district in which they live. The cost of the new EMT (emergency medical technician) contract is covered in those districts that operate their own ambulance service, but not in others. Workers in other districts did not receive an increase. In some districts there is no charge for inter-facility transfers. In others, such as my own, it can cost over \$200.

Rural residents are particularly hard hit. Residents in the large cities rarely have to leave their home in order to receive health care. Rural residents are routinely charged a thousand dollars and more to go to the city by ambulance.

Mr. Speaker, adopting the changes which have been recommended of one-tier health care, flat rate ambulance charges no matter where the patient lives or what district in which he lives, will go a long way towards ensuring one-tier health care. If the government does not adopt the recommendations of the emergency measures services report, they will be going down the same road as the Saskatchewan Party to a two-tier system where ability to pay and where . . .

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Alleged Comments by Aboriginal Affairs Minister

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Madam Minister, the First Nations Party of Saskatchewan issued a news release today demanding an apology from you. John Melenchuk the First Nations Party candidate in the recent Saskatoon Riversdale by-election is alleging that you made the following statement to him on Monday night at an NDP by-election party: Mr. Melenchuk, you should go home and lick your wounds like the rest of your people.

Madam Minister, Madam Minister, did you make those comments to Mr. John Melenchuk on Monday night in Saskatoon?

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Humboldt and to all members in this House I will say, categorically, no, I did not make that statement.

And if you will give me a moment I will clarify exactly what I did say because I believe very strongly that I must, and I will, accept responsibility for dumb things that I say. And people in this House will know that on occasion I have said some things which I regret and for which I have apologized.

However, while I will accept responsibility for things I did say, I will not accept people attributing false statements to me. It is absolutely not what I said, and there was a witness to my conversation who can corroborate my story.

At the victory party, after the Riversdale by-election this Monday, Mr. Melenchuk approached me. He was talking to me in a very angry and confrontative manner. He was demanding . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time is up.

Financial Assistance for Farmers

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier. Mr. Premier, yesterday you rejected our proposal to go to Ottawa to press for more farm aid, and we're very disappointed at that. But at the same, it must mean that the Premier has a plan, his own plan, to deliver this message to Ottawa.

Mr. Premier, we would like to know from you what your plan is. When do you plan to meet with the Prime Minister and how many hundreds of millions of dollars of federal dollars do you expect delivered to Saskatchewan farm families, and how soon do you expect that money to be available?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, I think as all members know, the ministers of Agriculture of the five provinces that contribute the largest contribution to agriculture production across Canada, added now by Prince Edward Island, have been regularly meeting and talking almost on a daily if not a weekly basis.

As the premiers of these provinces, we are taking good counsel from our ministers of Agriculture. Earlier this week, as we all know, a motion was debated in the House of Commons, which the federal government wouldn't pass. We then, as premiers, began the process, as I have done, of writing directly to the Prime Minister. Other letters have gone from other premiers to the Prime Minister.

Yesterday, in this House — and I appreciate the support offered by members of the opposition and all members — we passed the unanimous resolution in this House. Those resolutions are being delivered from Houses across the country to the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, yesterday, you said you had everything under control. You didn't need our help. All you needed was a strongly worded resolution and you would be able to deliver that message to Ottawa more effectively than 58 MLAs. Today the Premier doesn't seem so sure of himself.

Mr. Premier, you're the one that said you could deliver the message effectively. It's time for you to deliver, Mr. Premier. When will you be talking with the Prime Minister, how much money do you expect to get for Saskatchewan farm families, and when will this money be available for Saskatchewan farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before the Premier answers the question I would just like to remind members once again to address their remarks through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Quite the contrary, quite the contrary to the minister . . . to the

member's opening remarks, I said yesterday and I've repeated it again today, I appreciate — I appreciate — that members opposite stood with us in this emergency resolution to call on the \$1 billion from Ottawa. I appreciated that.

Now the fact of the matter is the most effective voice in Ottawa will come from a unified position of the provinces, will come from a unified position of farm groups, producers, and representative organizations, and if I may say, Mr. Speaker, will be most powerful if we have a unified voice from this House.

Last year we had a very bad experience, Mr. Speaker. We went with a unified voice. When we returned to the province, that group of men and women went somewhere else. So, Mr. Speaker, I plead with members opposite to work with us, stand with us in this unified voice from across the country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, we've been waiting a long time for you to come up with some kind of agriculture policy. Well this morning it finally happened. The minister announced his grand scheme for agriculture. He's going to pay \$15 per acre to convert cropland to pasture land to a maximum of, get this, 50 acres — 50 acres, Mr. Minister.

Is this your farm plan or is it a plan for people to help seed their lawns? Brought to you by the same government who wants farmers to haul their own grain in the wintertime.

Mr. Minister, what were you thinking? What difference do you expect that type of program to make when it's capped at 50 acres?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — When we talked to producers, farm organizations across the province today, they said to us that we needed to put some money into this kind of a program, and we have.

And I say to the member opposite, I say to the member opposite, where have you been for six months of this province? Where have you been? We have a crisis in Saskatchewan for farm aid and haven't seen you on one occasion anywhere — not anywhere. The invisible member from Kindersley — not seen him anywhere.

And then we have the Alliance Party of Canada, Mr. Speaker, who comes to Saskatchewan, of which the leader from the opposition supports, and we asked that government to participate in a program in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we don't get one iota of support from the member opposite or from the leader. Those fellows there have abandoned farmers in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — abandoned farmers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the only thing that's invisible in this province is any kind of farm policy coming from you or your department.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And when you do put forward any kind of a program it turns out to be totally insignificant, and not only that, it may be potentially dangerous in terms of foreign trade.

The Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association oppose this kind of cover program because they feel it opens us up for trade sanctions from the US (United States) and other markets. So you may be jeopardizing millions of dollars of trade as a result of your actions this morning, for a program that will deliver a maximum of \$750 per farmer.

Mr. Minister, have you looked into this possibility. Could you table for us today, any opinion you may have as to whether or not this violates any trade sanctions from the United States?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, we'd be happy to provide the member opposite with the program's design and its insurance of countervail. We'll provide that to the member opposite so that he can stay restful in terms of this issue.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that on that side of the House when we talk about developing agriculture policy we have a flip and a flop — a flip and a flop. And I want to tell you why.

Just a couple of days ago the member opposite said to me . . . yesterday in his speech, he said, flop says to us, have you talked about the cost of production formulas? — is what flop said.

And then what does flip say? Flip says, the day before that, he says, the Saskatchewan Party wants the province to participate in the Canadian Farm Income Program but it does not support the massive program of pay out farmers, at least the cost of production is not on — is what the Leader of the Opposition says.

And then just a couple of day ago, on the Sheila Coles program, the flop was asked here whether or not . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Safety Net Program

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Agriculture. For nine long years farm families have been waiting for you to develop a safety net program. In 1992 your government created the Farm Support Review Committee to make recommendations about the development of a new farm safety net program. This committee exists to this day. In fact, it was reappointed by you in October of last year.

Mr. Minister, could you please table the most recent set of recommendations that this committee made regarding a new farm safety net program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to complete my remarks.

I want to say that just a couple of days ago on the Sheila Coles show, there was a question asked about whether or not this province supports CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program). And the member from Kindersley says we support — Mr. Flop there says — we support the Canada Farm Income Program. And on March 16, in a newspaper article, in a newspaper article in *The Leader-Post*, the Leader of the Opposition here, he says, Mr. Flop, he says we now don't support the Canada Farm Income Program. Doesn't support the Canada Farm Income Program.

So we've got the minister of . . . the critic on Agriculture saying we support CFIP; we have the Leader of the Opposition saying we don't support CFIP. And you ask me the question about what the policy is? I say to you, we have a Canada Farm Income Program that on this side of the House we think doesn't support farmers. Why are you saying you support Canadian farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, since you obviously didn't understand the question, I actually do have a copy of the last report that was tabled in the House.

It lays about three different proposals for a new farm safety net program for your government. It was recommendations given to your government. And I was wondering if you could tell us, in the House today, what those three proposals are and which one your government is leaning towards for this time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite to that, in this province today and in Canada today, we have a safety net structure that's been put together by provinces and the federal government.

And this is what the programs are. You want to know what they are? They're a national crop insurance program, they're a national NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program, and they're a national farm safety program called CFIP is what we have.

And on this side of the House, Madam Member, we've said this. We said, our committee says this, that the Canada Farm Income Program does not work for grains and oilseed producers. Does not work. And we support that.

And you have on your side of the House, a leader and a critic of Agriculture who flip and flop everyday, who flip and flop everyday, who say . . . And we say we don't support the Canada Farm Income Program. What is your position, Madam Minister, on this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before I take the next question I would also request the members on both sides of the House to make their remarks to the Chair and through the Chair.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's sad to say that the minister doesn't even seem to know what's in his own . . . the report from his own committee. It's odd because you know you've had

a long time to study it. In fact, the committee's most recent report that was tabled was tabled in January. The problem is it was January 1994.

Mr. Minister, this speaks volumes about your commitment to a farm safety net program in this province and your commitment to our farm families. It's been over seven years since this report was tabled.

Mr. Minister, what have you been doing? What has your government been doing about a safety net for this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that the member opposite should know, but she doesn't, but I'm still going to explain this.

Over the last several months I've met with the farm safety net review committee on several occasions. And the farm safety net review committee has said this, they said, that the AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) program was flawed and we should fix the administration AIDA program. And that the new Canada Farm Income Program is deficient, Mr. Speaker, is deficient as it relates to the grains and oilseeds.

And I say to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that she on her side of the House has a leader and an Ag critic who don't know what their policy should be. And I say you have a flip and you have a flop.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, you have a chance to break the tie. You have a chance to break the tie. So you decide which way this ag policy that your minister . . . your two members should be deciding on. You should decide that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I just want to remind both members that they are to direct their remarks to the Chair and through the Chair — to the Chair and through the Chair.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, people who fail to plan, plan to fail. And your government keeps going back to Ottawa, and you keep saying we need more money and you keep saying that the current programs aren't working. And we agree with you.

But you have never once put forward your ideas. It's your responsibility. You are the government. And it is not an excuse to look at the opposition and ask what their plan is. Your last report has been sitting on the shelf collecting dust for seven years while thousands of farm families have gone under.

What are you waiting for? Why have you never acted on any of the recommendations in this report? And why have you done nothing with the recommendations that you were handed back in 1994 by your own committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — . . . the member opposite that in Canada, agriculture policy is developed by all of the provinces and the

federal government. That's how agriculture policies develop.

And today, Mr. Speaker, we have a crop insurance program of which we put significant dollars into on an annual basis. We have a NISA program which we put national . . . where we put substantial provincial money into. And we have a Canada Farm Income Program that we don't support. And we had an AIDA program which those members of the House did support.

And then, Mr. Speaker, when we tried to change the policy, when we tried to change the policy, those members on that side of the House aren't supporting us. In fact, they're busy fighting with each other about knowing whether or not they should be supporting us, supporting the program.

And then, Mr. Speaker, we bring into this Assembly a package for change and enhancement of \$5 million today in forage conversion — \$5 million. And what happens? The critic from Agriculture stands up and says that it's a joke, that it's a joke.

So when you try to do something in Saskatchewan to help agriculture producers, they don't support it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Whistle-blower Legislation

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the last set of questions to the Minister of Agriculture obviously went to the bin for an answer, but the bin was empty. So we'll try a different minister. So this question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Justice over there.

There's a great controversy, Mr. Speaker, at the University of Regina after a woman named Lana Nguyen passed herself off as an engineering professor. The man who discovered the truth about the phoney professor believes the university administration is now preparing to reprimand him for tarnishing their reputation.

Professor Ron Palmer did the right thing in exposing Ms. Nguyen. He did his professional duty, Mr. Speaker, and now he's facing retribution from his employer.

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party plans to introduce the whistle-blower protection legislation to provide protection for members of the public service or any publicly funded body from retribution.

This legislation will protect people who believe they should . . .

The Speaker: — Would the member put his question.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Minister, will you and your government support that legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me advise the member and indeed the House that these are issues that we have always treated seriously, the matter of

freedom at work to express concerns of all types, including where there are errors of judgment and where there are errors on the part of qualifications and so on as the member mentions.

I look forward to receiving his legislation on whistle-blowers and we look forward to considering it with haste and with due regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a fine answer, Mr. Speaker, and maybe that member should be one row nearer the front than he is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, back in 1997, the hon. member from North Battleford over there introduced a private member Bill entitled government whistleblower's Act. It was supported by the entire Liberal caucus at that time, Mr. Speaker.

The present Minister of Municipal Affairs was a member of the Liberal caucus in 1997 when the member from North Battleford introduced that Bill. The minister is also a former member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and spent his career upholding the law, as he likes to reiterate in most of his speeches. So I would like to think it would be very important for that minister to support the legislation that would help ensure the laws of the land are followed and enforced.

I would like to know whether the Minister of Municipal Affairs has abandoned all principles when he joined the NDP or, Mr. Minister, will you support the whistle-blower legislation as you have in the past.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I take it that the member's thrust here is to have us consider properly his whistle-blower's legislation when he introduces it, and we will do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a good question. It's a good piece of legislation and we're definitely very concerned about the kind of support we're going to get. It seems the Minister of Justice is interested in looking at it but we need to know what other support we have. So again, for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, he was sitting with his Liberal colleagues on this side of the House four years ago supporting a piece of Liberal private member legislation, Mr. Speaker. Now he's sitting on the NDP government side of the House saying he's not sure or he's not allowed to speak or he's muzzled. We're not sure. He still claims to be a Liberal to his party members. The minister claims to have a lot of influence in the NDP cabinet.

So, Mr. Minister, will you support this legislation that you supported so enthusiastically back in 1997?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important issue, a serious issue, of how one addresses within one's place of employment difficult questions of this sort, of identifying problems and raising those problems with employers and being free of sanctions as a result.

I don't think, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think anybody in this House would think that the person involved with the University of Regina would be pleased at the member opposite playing politics with this very serious question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Municipal Affairs probably knows better than anyone else what this legislation's all about because he, Mr. Speaker, helped to formulate this legislation. He spoke in favour of it and he also voted in favour of it every opportunity he had.

So this afternoon again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs what his position is. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Affairs had no problem getting up in this House and taking a position totally contrary to his NDP colleagues in agriculture. He said agriculture in his home constituency was great. The farmers were doing fine; they needed no help. So he's obviously prepared to take a position that is unique to himself.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question is today that minister has another opportunity. Today this legislation needs his support and today you can show where you actually are at. Today where are you at on this piece of legislation, Mr. Minister of Municipal Affairs?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has his answer. We have said now, on many occasions, just today, and I confirm it again for the fourth or fifth time, we will look seriously at the legislation he introduces. All members on this side will look seriously, as I'm sure on the other side, and we'll ensure that we do everything we can to do the right thing in this regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order I would like you . . . Today I've listened very carefully during question period to the line of questioning of the member from Rosthern with respect to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

My understanding of question period is that this is an opportunity for opposition members to question members of Executive Council with respect to their roles and their duties as ministers.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule . . . review *Hansard* and rule as to whether this line of questioning is appropriate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also on the point of order as raised by the House Leader for the government.

Mr. Speaker, the question was directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, a member of Executive Council. The whistle-blower legislation that my colleague was talking about would include third party, government-funded organizations which would include municipal governments, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it's our contention that his portfolio is as relevant as any other to that legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I thank the members for their comments and I will be bringing back a ruling.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Jones, seconded by Mr. McCall.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, as you will recall I began my response to the Throne Speech yesterday and focused primarily on agriculture. Today I want to deal with the remainder; the remaining issues of the Throne Speech which I feel are most relevant to the people of Saskatchewan.

It certainly was a bit of a debacle yesterday though, I must say. There was certainly a lot of talk on the other side. There was a lot of finger pointing on the other side but when there was . . . when the time came for action, when the time came to actually do something, this government — as is its way, as is its habit — decided to vote no to the only part of the resolution that had any meaning and that would require action on the part of their government.

Mr. Speaker, my father, whom I have a great deal of respect for — I think he was the hardest working man I ever knew in my life; very, very typical of the people of Saskatchewan — had a wonderful work ethic. He said that his motto in life was to wear out instead of rust out. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has not taken that motto for their own. They are now a rusty wreck. What they are doing is not working any more at all on the problems facing Saskatchewan.

And we might as well go right into the area of the economy. Mr. Speaker, how do you measure whether your economy is strong and vibrant? Well you look at the indicators. You look at job creation numbers. That's a very good place to start.

Job creation numbers in Saskatchewan have been pathetic ever since I became the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party back in the spring of 1998. Consistently, we were either in last place or second-last place amongst 10 provinces every time Statistics Canada came out with their report. Sometimes we had a slightly positive number. Sometimes we got right around zero. Occasionally we would drop below zero. We actually saw fewer jobs over a 12-month period.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what did the NDP say their goal was? They said their goal was to create 30,000 jobs. First of all, it was going to be over 10 years. And then in the last Speech from the Throne back in 1999, they said, I believe, that they would create 30,000 jobs over about a four-year span.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I look in this Throne Speech, I don't see a commitment to create 30,000 jobs. I think that the NDP government saw the Statistics Canada report — which said that over the last 12 months we've actually lost 13,000 jobs — and they realized they'd lose all credibility, even more than they've already lost, if they put a 30,000-job increase into the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government backing away from previous commitments? Is it because they've changed leaders? Have they changed direction? Or are they looking at their performance?

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that change of leadership means a small cent in regard to this government. I think that they just realized that they can't deliver and they're backing away from their promises.

Mr. Speaker, the one area that they did discuss job creation was in the forestry area. They said that they would create 10,000 jobs. This was a promise that was actually made earlier. It wasn't new to this Speech from the Throne.

But, Mr. Speaker, what . . .

The Speaker: — Excuse me. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Harper: — To ask leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for allowing me this opportunity.

And I want to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all the members of the House, Mr. Don Hallam, who is sitting in the west gallery there. Mr. Hallam is a long-time constituent of Regina here, a long-time friend of mine.

And, Mr. Speaker, there must be something very special about today because I see Mr. Hallam is wearing a tie, and that's something — for those of us who know him — is a very rare occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all the members to offer him a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Jones, seconded by Mr. McCall.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we're talking about jobs in northern Saskatchewan — 10,000 jobs. Well what is the evidence?

The evidence is that, for instance, the OSB (oriented strand board) plant in Hudson Bay has been closed — jobs have actually been lost. And so while the rhetoric in some areas continues on the NDP side of the House, the facts differ with the statements made in the Speech from the Throne.

I want to speak a little bit about the taxes fiasco of this government. I remember the budget last year when the Finance minister got up in the House and said this was a historical, tax-cutting budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, we hear about a government that talks about lowering taxes, and then we watch them raise taxes.

A few weeks ago it was discovered that Saskatchewan residents started paying, in some cases, higher income taxes at the beginning of the year 2001, as compared to December of the year 2000. The Finance minister said oh, this is just an anomaly. Yes, an anomaly that affected about 30 per cent of Saskatchewan taxpayers — most of whom earned less than \$30,000.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard the NDP rhetoric. They say oh, you guys over there, you're just out to protect the rich. Well, as we all know, there are hardly any rich people in Saskatchewan because the NDP have chased most of them out of the province. We have the fewest number of high-income earners, I would bet, of any of the Western provinces and perhaps any of the provinces in Canada.

So what do they do, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, when they're introducing their tax cuts, which were so minimal to begin with, what they did is they made them have the least impact on lower-income earners. Those who were in there earning around 20 to \$30,000 saw little or no tax relief when they got their pay cheques in the year 2001.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric again goes one way. The talk is one way, but the walk is in the absolute opposite direction. Mr. Speaker, this government, this NDP government does not care about low-income people. Mr. Speaker, if they did, they would have provided real tax relief.

(14:30)

What did they do when they lowered income tax so marginally that it doesn't even affect lower income Canadians? They turned around and increased the amount of PST (provincial sales tax) they had to pay. So, Mr. Speaker, the average taxpayer, in particularly the lower-income brackets, are paying more taxes to this government instead of less taxes. It's become a horrible tax grab rather than a historical tax break.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal briefly with the issue of health care. What we see in this Throne Speech leads us to believe that there will not be an improvement in health care under the NDP government. We see nothing there that really excites us at all.

The NDP has been in power for about a decade now, and I don't think there's a person in Saskatchewan — I haven't found them anyways — that would argue that health care is better today than it was 10 years ago. I hear lots of evidence, lots of complaints, lots of very, very sad stories, about where health care is worse today than it was 10 years ago.

So what did the NDP say in the Speech from the Throne? Well let's first of all look at what they said in 1999.

In 1999 they promised to reduce surgical waiting times. That was laudable. I don't think they heard the official opposition criticize them for wanting to reduce surgical waiting times. We applauded that; we said that's the way to go, that's what we want to see as well.

Well what's happened since the '99 Speech from the Throne? Since then the waiting lists in Saskatoon have increased from an average of 9,300 to over 13,000. And we see the same problems here in Regina.

So again, we have the talk going this direction; we have the actual results going in the exact opposite direction. The government talked about decreasing waiting times for surgery. The facts are that the waiting lists have increased. And the time they wait is even longer than it was a year or a year and a half ago.

Mr. Speaker, if this was . . . if we were talking about how long it took to build an automobile or to, you know, to construct a toothbrush or even perhaps to finish the overpass on the north side of Regina, that wouldn't be so bad. But we're talking about people's lives, their health, their well-being. And this government shows no care, no compassion, and now no credibility by saying one thing and doing exactly the opposite.

Mr. Speaker, they're now talking about highways — that's the big buzzword over there. We've talked about highways for two years on this side of the House. And my colleague from Cypress Hills has raised the issue many times in the House. Well now the members on the other side are finally, finally talking about highway construction — talking.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that I don't have to stand up here a year from today. I hope I don't have to stand up here and again point out to the people of Saskatchewan, that the talk went one way but the results went the other way. I hope we don't have to deal with the same pothole mess in the spring of 2002 that we're having to deal with in the spring of 2001.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the members opposite a story that happened during the 1999 election campaign where the Saskatchewan Party won the popular vote. I was at a medium-sized town in Saskatchewan — a medium-sized town I would say to the member from Regina South if he'll listen to me — and I asked the tourism person in that town, as I was asking for her vote, how are things going? And this young woman was crestfallen. She was totally deflated. She said to me, do you know what happened to me this morning? She said, I've spent the entire morning dealing with a pair of American tourists in a motorhome, and we've been pouring over a map of Saskatchewan, and I've been trying to show them the quickest way they can get out of Saskatchewan and do the least amount

of damage to their motorhome.

Did the members on the other side hear that? They seem to be visiting over there rather than listening about the problems that are facing Saskatchewan people, the people that are trying to provide tourism opportunities and build a tourism industry in Saskatchewan.

So here were some American tourists who wanted to spend their dollars in Saskatchewan, help our economy. They wanted to see the beauty of our province. They wanted to intermingle with the wonderful people in Saskatchewan but yet because the roads were so bad, the highways were so bad, they had to change their strategy and plan how they could get out of Saskatchewan as quickly as possible.

Well can you imagine what they're saying back home. Can you imagine what they're saying to their friends who are planning their holidays for this year. They'll say, well if you go to Canada, don't go to Saskatchewan; the roads there are terrible. Go spend your money in Alberta; go spend your money in Ontario and Manitoba. Go out to British Columbia. But whatever you do, don't go to Saskatchewan. It probably is a nice place; unless you really want to rough it out, you know, unless you're prepared to expend a lot of money on repairs for your vehicles, that's not the place to go.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what do we see in the Speech from the Throne? Well we see a commitment to accelerate the twinning of the No. 1 Highway west of Swift Current. We applaud that. In fact I think that was our idea. I think the member from Cypress Hills presented that very idea in the House last year. And I think I heard the other side scoff at the idea. I thought I heard them hoot and holler like they usually do when one of our members makes a suggestion.

Well lo and behold, lo and behold, here our idea finds its way into their Speech from the Throne. Well right now it's still talk, but I hope and I ask and I plead, and we'll share the credit with you if you complete that construction ahead of schedule as you have committed to in this budget or in this Speech from the Throne.

But the other thing that you've said that really concerns me when it comes to roads, you're talking about — and we've heard some evidence that the talk has also gone to the planning stage — of making municipalities . . . and I hope that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is listening to this because this affects him. Municipalities are being asked by the province of Saskatchewan, by the Highway department to build grid roads alongside existing highways so that the trucks can drive on the grid roads so they don't have to fix up the highways as well for everybody else.

Boy that sounds like a real winner of an idea. I think the last time I heard a better idea was when the old minister of Highways suggested farmers only haul their grain in the wintertime. Who's coming up with these ideas, Mr. Speaker? Who's the brain trust over there that has these crazy notions at how we should be more effective in providing transportation to the people of Saskatchewan?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about northern

Saskatchewan. I had an opportunity over the past few months to visit in northern Saskatchewan a few times. Mr. Speaker, the more I'm in the North, the more I love the North, the more I love the people of the North and the more affinity that I feel with them.

Mr. Speaker, recently I was up in the northwest part of Saskatchewan. We drove up through Meadow Lake all the way up to La Loche. And, Mr. Speaker, we're talking to community leaders in northern Saskatchewan particularly up in the northwest. And I said what are the barriers to you moving forward? What are the barriers to advancement? You know, is it the taxes? You know, is it lack of skills? And there were a lot of concerns that they raised.

But you know what the number one and the number two identifiable barriers to growth in northern Saskatchewan were from the community leaders of that part of our province? Number one — number one . . . I, the minister's not here, sorry. I hope the minister hears this.

Number one: SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management). SERM was the number one hindrance barrier to economic development in Northern Saskatchewan. There he is.

And you know what the number two barrier to economic development in northern Saskatchewan was: Municipal Affairs. Two government departments were the two primary barriers to economic development in that part of the North.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I was in the Minister of the Environment's riding and that was quite an eye-opener. I went into the hospital in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Well, Mr. Speaker, they have outdated equipment. They have equipment in that hospital that they're ashamed of. But this government won't provide them with any better health care equipment. They've got Third World health care equipment, facilities, in a very, very, very old hospital. A hospital with cracks in the walls. You know I thought I was in eastern Europe at the time when they were in the bottom of their economic cycle, Mr. Speaker, but it was here in Saskatchewan. It was in the minister's . . . minister for SERM's riding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard about housing in La Loche. And I heard about the fact that I think it's an average of 15 or 16 people or maybe it was even 18 — I can't remember the exact number — people living in each house in La Loche. And the housing conditions there were terrible. The social problems that associate themselves with overcrowding and poor housing were manifesting themselves in La Loche.

And they said, our minister doesn't care about us. They said, we never see our minister. After he left the Liberals and joined the NDP he deserted us. He never shows up. He doesn't come to the riding, he doesn't talk to us any more. He used to make promises to us. He used to tell us about all the good things he was doing for us — how he was pulling for us, how he was going to make a difference if only he could be in the government. Well then he ended up in the government, not even as a backbencher but as a minister, and he doesn't show up any more and he doesn't care any more.

Mr. Speaker, they're wondering about their representative.

They're disappointed with their representative. They know their representative is out of touch. And you know how I found out that he was out of touch with his constituents? It was amazing.

I went . . . I was in Ile-a-la-Crosse and I saw the sign on his office. It was a big . . . guess what the colours were? The colours were red and white. Liberal red colours, sort of, you could tell that's what it was.

You know what the address was on that sign, Mr. Speaker? It was the sign from my office. It said room 265, Legislative Assembly. This minister hadn't been to his office to even change his sign since the days he was in the official opposition as a Liberal. That's how out of touch this guy is.

Mr. Speaker, no wonder his constituents are asking questions about him. Well obviously the North is not in good hands in the case of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on to education because time is at a premium. And I won't spend a lot of time when my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena will talk at more length about education later on.

But I am shocked that this government is not ringing the panic alarm when they recognize that their department is suggesting that in the next few years we will lose 30,000 students. Enrolment will decrease by 30,000 people in Saskatchewan. Think about that. That's our future — 30,000 fewer students in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I think I heard the Minister of Education say, oh well, enrolments are decreasing all over the place. That's not good enough for me. Alberta, of course, is increasing their enrolment, so not all provinces are decreasing.

So he decides it's fine to be . . . if some provinces are losing enrolment, losing students, let's belong to the losing category. Let's be in there with the losers. That's fine with him. He doesn't want to be in with the winners.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to be a winner. I want Saskatchewan to be on the winning side. I want to see enrolments not even hold their own but actually increase. Mr. Speaker, I want to see people come to Saskatchewan. I want Saskatchewan to grow.

Mr. Speaker, what kind of a message is this government giving to young students that are looking at education for a future career? They're not going to be staying in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, if we have young people, if we have students leaving Saskatchewan, we'll have fewer teachers.

Mr. Speaker, we're cutting our own throat if we continue to follow the path of the NDP government.

And then the other thing that I want to say in regard to young people is in regard to their student summer employment program. I couldn't believe my eyes, couldn't believe my ears, when I heard it announced. The student employment program to provide summer employment for young people, primarily people that are trying to get their education, was only available to students who are prepared to take a job in the public sector. The private sector was totally excluded.

So what does that mean, Mr. Speaker? Well for one thing it means if you're a farmer, don't bother applying.

I think we lost a lot of jobs in the farm sector. I think I heard the government say we lost 16,000 jobs in the farm sector — 16,000 jobs. The member for Kindersley just confirmed that it is 16,000 members.

And so what does this government say to producers, to farmers in Saskatchewan? Don't hire a student. We won't let you do that. You may need help, but no, we're not going to include you in the program.

What does this government say to small-business people in Saskatchewan? You don't count. You don't count. You're not important. We don't care about you. The jobs you provide are not important.

The only job that's important in Saskatchewan is a job where the pay cheque is signed by the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And they wonder why young people are leaving Saskatchewan. They wonder why in droves they're going and leaving the province. Because they're finding jobs where they're wanted and where they're welcome.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk just briefly about the other highlight in the Speech from the Throne. I think it was entitled, open and accountable government. Well that's a good idea. That's something that I've been talking about for quite a lot of years. We want open and accountable government. We're in favour of open and accountable government. We're in favour of open and accountable government. So let's move in that direction.

(14:45)

However, if they really mean it, if they really mean it, let's see a little more than talk. You know the talk is fine — it's easy, it doesn't cost anything. You don't need to make any decisions, don't have to introduce any Bills to talk. But to do something you've got to have something concrete; you've got to have a piece of legislation that you pass in the legislature; or you have to have a decision made by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this year, as in other years, we'll be introducing various pieces of legislation that will make government more open and accountable. We will introduce bills that give more voice to individual members in this legislature, that will give our constituents the right to determine whether we as members deserve to continue to serve them between elections.

We will introduce a Bill that will take the power of manipulating the election date for the benefit of the party in power, away from the Premier. We've seen that abused by the former premier, Mr. Romanow.

I mean, Mr. Romanow called an election in harvest, and he also called it during holiday period — it was called in August. What insensitivity! Trying to shorten the election period by calling an election when many people are taking their holidays.

I remember being out door knocking in 1999 on Labour Day, you know, a week and a half or two weeks into the campaign. I

knocked on a door and the Minister of Post-Secondary Education will be interested in knowing that teachers — teachers, instructors of post-secondary education — came back to Saskatchewan two weeks after the election was called, and they didn't even know there was an election.

That was exactly what they wanted. They didn't want the people of Saskatchewan to know there was an election. They didn't want to have to defend their record for a full 28 days. So they called the election in holiday time and then they thought . . . then the election will actually occur in September when the farmers, who we've abandoned, are busy taking off their crops — they won't show up to vote. So we've won on both sides. Well, Mr. Speaker, it didn't quite turn out the way they wanted.

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to fixing election dates at a set time so everybody knows what's going on. The government has a set time to introduce and implement their plans, and the people of Saskatchewan know how long they have to evaluate the government.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is we intend and would introduce legislation that would make all Crowns, including Crown subsidiaries, accountable. They would all be under the same onus to be open and accountable.

Now if our new Premier, who has a chance to put a new stamp on things . . . he's starting from a bit of a fresh page, at least as a Premier. He's got some baggage when it comes to health care; he's got lots of baggage when it comes to social services. But at least as a Premier, this is a fresh start, a new start for him.

Let's see if he will allow his members to support these private members' Bills. He can set a new . . . He can actually do something. He can set a new course of action here if he takes a different road than his predecessor, Mr. Romanow, took.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a lot of my colleagues want to speak to the issues of the Speech from the Throne, so I'll wrap up my comments. But I want to say that there are errors in this document. And it would not be proper unless I pointed out the errors to the government so that they can fix them.

First of all, the first one was rather insignificant. It just showed a bit of shoddiness in which they say springtime is right around the corner, of course, the day that spring had actually occurred. I know, I mean the people that are writing the Speech from the Throne, you know, I guess they don't look at the calendar a whole lot and perhaps that's forgivable, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, you would hope that the numbers were right. That's kind of important. You hope that they get the numbers correct. Well, Mr. Speaker, they say they're spending \$170 million on infrastructure spending.

Well we just happened to do our homework as we always do, Mr. Speaker. This has already been announced. This is old news. Not only is it old news, but a lot of the \$170 million are not provincial dollars, they're . . . This government is misleading the people of Saskatchewan to think that they are implementing a \$170 million infrastructure program.

Well, you know, I made a comment. Maybe I shouldn't have

made it, but I said it sounded almost like this Speech from the Throne was written on the plane by the Premier, you know, coming down from Saskatoon the day after his by-election win. But when I looked closely at the Speech from the Throne, I think maybe not only did he write it on the plane coming down, but he perhaps used the Premier's laptop.

Because it looked like he just, you know, used the same file, opened up the same file and just changed a few sentences around a little bit, particularly when it came to announcing the Partnership for Prosperity program. Look at that paragraph there and look at the paragraph in the 1999 Speech from the Throne. It's announced twice. Same words, you know, a few words changed here and there. You can do that with word processors. Not a whole lot of reason to have confidence in this document, Mr. Speaker.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the last mistake, major mistake, and it was a huge blunder, a huge gaff by the Premier. You know it takes a lot to make me blush for the NDP, but I was actually blushing for them when I read and heard about the accompanying circumstances where the Throne Speech announced that there's \$73 million for early childhood development program.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the news conference that was held prior to the actual delivery of the speech, the Premier was asked, and he says, this is my government doing this. That was the wording. My government is introducing this program.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the media asked the Premier, is this new money and is this provincial money? And the Premier said, absolutely; I guarantee it, absolutely, stake my reputation on it — that kind of a strong statement.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he was categorically wrong. It was money that was already introduced, and what's worse, it was federal money and he was taking the credit for it. Just a total blunder, a horrible error. Simply a man that had no idea what was in his document, and that kind of mistake really causes one to lose confidence in this new Premier and his administration.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we can't afford any more mistakes in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier made some mistakes when he tried to rig the choice of Speaker, and I'm glad he wasn't able to do that, Mr. Speaker. I think it was a better outcome. But, Mr. Speaker, he made an error there.

And then he said that he was going to drop a cabinet minister so that he could make room for another member that wasn't going to be the Speaker, it looked like, and then that person could come into cabinet. I'm trying to be careful and not use names, Mr. Speaker, because I want to be consistent with the rules of the legislature. But I think we know, I think we know who these people are.

So we have the minister, we have the minister for the Crown Investments Corporation filling that role for a grand total of about two weeks. What kind of leadership is that? What kind of a Premier would appoint a member of his cabinet for two weeks and then either she had had enough of him or else he had had

enough of her, and they decided it wasn't going to work out so he's going to take one of the candidates for Speaker and put them in his cabinet.

And then, Mr. Speaker, he didn't do it. He gave that cabinet portfolio to another member. Mr. Speaker, this doesn't make sense. What's happening behind the scenes over there? Certainly, certainly it causes more questions to be asked than answers delivered.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the last goof, the last blunder by this government was witnessed last night when we had a vote in this House. And we had a vote, Mr. Speaker, whether we were going to actually act, whether we were actually going to do something, or whether we were just going to keep talking and do the opposite.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government stood in opposition to an amendment that would have required them to do something, to do something for one of the most important industries in Saskatchewan. They chose to vote no, Mr. Speaker. First vote in the legislature under the new Premier and they made a horrible, horrible mistake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan cannot afford any more mistakes. Please, please, Government of Saskatchewan, don't make any more mistakes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of our province and I'm going to continue to work hard on its behalf as are all my Saskatchewan Party colleagues. And I've had the opportunity over the last few months — since you know it has been quite a few months since we've actually sat in the legislature — and I've shared this story with many people outside of this Assembly. I want to actually share it with the members opposite. I know all of my colleagues have heard the story before, but I'm sure that if these members follow current events and follow international events, if they would just take a minute . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 15 months since we've sat.

The Minister of Post-Secondary Education doesn't know how many months it's been since we've sat in the House — 15 months since we've had a 15 months since we've had a Throne Speech debate. The minister for Post-Secondary Education, I think, needs to go back to school himself. And I can actually tell him about some good places. Maybe SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) would have some courses that would help him in memory or something. Maybe there's some memory courses that he can take. But anyways, I want to get to the story if the member would listen for a minute. And I want to be a little more serious.

I watched the Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, and I think one of the proudest moments that we as Canadians enjoyed was when we won our very first gold medal. You know it was in the triathlon event and there was a guy, a Canadian fellow by the name of Simon Whitfield, and he was a contestant.

He wasn't really well-known. I mean we've heard of, you know, some of the other more famous Canadian athletes; we've

had some of them in Saskatchewan. But Simon Whitfield was never on the list of best-known athletes in the world. Certainly not in the world. Certainly not even in Canada.

Well Simon Whitfield entered this race and he did the swimming portion and he did the bicycling portion, and he was in 21st place — 21st place — a long ways back. And he started running.

And you know all the commentators, all the experts, well probably all the university professors if they were tuning in had written off Simon Whitfield. He just wasn't part of the action. He wasn't considered as a real contender.

Well Simon Whitfield didn't know that. And you know this hot Australian sun was beating down but he kept running. And his goal was that before the end of the race he wanted to see the jersey of the front runner. He wanted to see the jersey of the front runner.

Well Simon Whitfield gradually, through the course of the running portion of the triathlon, moved up through the ranks and with 500 metres to go Simon Whitfield was in second place. You know he'd gone from twenty-first to second place. And finally, you know, some people were starting to take note. This Canadian might actually make the medals if he didn't falter, if he didn't stagger, if he didn't run out of gas before he got to the finish line.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know a whole lot about sports psychology. It's something like understanding Saskatchewan Liberal psychology. That's even harder to understand. But in sports psychology, you visualize things. And Simon Whitfield was told that if he could ever see the front runner in this race, he should visualize that he was lighter, stronger, and faster than the front runner. He was going to visualize that that's who he was.

And, Mr. Speaker, with 500 metres to go, Simon Whitfield went into a sprint. And I saw it on TV. I think most of you saw it as well. And he actually passed the German runner with about 200 metres to go and he did not slow down. He kept going. He looked like he could run forever as he crossed the finish line, and we were so proud that we had finally won a gold medal at the Sydney Olympics.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think Saskatchewan's a little bit like Simon Whitfield. Lots of people write us off. You know, I used to be a Member of Parliament and lots of people would say, oh, you're from Saskatchewan. And I'd say, well, I'm proud to be from Saskatchewan. It's a great province. And they said, well maybe it is — I've always flown over it, never really stopped, never really gone there. I really don't know what you have to offer.

And then you look at the statistics where Saskatchewan's always near the bottom, nearly in last place, way down the ranks, way down in the order. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think Saskatchewan is a winning province. I think we're going to win our gold medal. I think we're going to start catching up to other provinces. But I think we have to get rid of this NDP government that just talks rather than acts if we're going to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, right now the jersey of Saskatchewan is orange. And I don't really care about colours, but I'd rather see those Saskatchewan colours. I'd rather see the green and gold running in Saskatchewan. I want to see a Saskatchewan Party government. I get excited about the fact that we can move up. We can get ahead. We can catch up. We can win. We can be a gold medal performer if we do things right.

Right now we've got these NDP army boots on and we're just not doing very well. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's time to put on some Saskatchewan Party runners. It's time to start performing.

Mr. Speaker, for that reason I cannot support, I cannot support the motion to adopt the Speech from the Throne. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by my colleague, the member for Melfort-Tisdale:

That the following words be added to the end of the motion:

but regret that the government's Throne Speech fails to put forward any new vision for the future of Saskatchewan and does not put forward any innovative ideas to deal with challenges facing Saskatchewan in various areas such as health care, agriculture, education, or economic growth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:00)

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I rise to speak in this Throne Speech debate in favour of seconding the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, this is always an important part of the legislative series in terms of it's an opportunity for us to speak in general terms about what we think is important for this province of Saskatchewan, and I certainly would like to take my time in order to add my voice to this debate.

But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer you my congratulations on your election to the office of Speaker, and I would also like to extend to the member from Regina Sherwood my congratulations on his elevation to the role of Deputy Speaker as well. I'm sure that both of you hon. members will conduct your office very credibly and we look forward to working with you into the future.

Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to talk a little bit about my constituency. Melfort-Tisdale is a constituency that is sometimes referred to as Albert Street North. Unfortunately, it's 279 kilometres north, as I'm well aware on the many trips that I travel up the highway or Albert Street North to go home for the weekend, or weeks, or to spend time with my constituents, who are among the finest people in this province and the finest in the world.

Mr. Speaker, our area of the province is blessed with a very mixed economy, a very rich and fertile ground and agricultural base. But even with the fact that, over the last number of years, our area of the world has enjoyed bountiful harvests, I am detecting an ever increasing concern about the future of agriculture. And in an increasing way, I hear day after day after day their concern about the fact that there is a distinct lack of vision and commitment by the federal government and this provincial NDP government to the future of agriculture.

And when I think about what that means in terms of a comparison to some of the areas of this province in agriculture that aren't so blessed, I realize very clearly, that while many of the folks in my area are facing hardships, some people in this province in the agricultural community must be absolutely burdened with the great deal of difficulties that they have. And so I think that that's an important issue.

But yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I was quite encouraged to hear that the constituency of Melville is absolutely an island in the province radiating bounty and goodwill due to the coalition government, and particularly the Liberal members of it. And I didn't know at all, Mr. Speaker, that the bounty of the Liberal coalition members were going to be able to make sure that none of the farmers in their area, none of the businesses in their area, that no one was suffering any difficulties at all, and that it was all sunshine and joy in Melville. And I certainly congratulate the farm families in the Melville constituency for their good fortune.

But I suspect when they hear what their member said on their behalf, they're going to be ringing those phones and letting him know exactly what's going on in their lives because the member seems to be living in some kind of a never-never world that doesn't relate to the constituency of Melville.

Mr. Speaker, in my community, people are operating under a continuing commitment to this province. It's not a commitment to this government; it's a commitment to their families and to each other, and the advancement of the important priorities of their communities and of this province and of this country.

And I think that that's the same all over the province, that people are seriously and unconditionally committed to their province, but they're starting to despair, they're starting to give up hope. And increasingly, and increasingly I hear of families, not just young people who are free and footloose, who have their education degree or their professional degree, who are considering moving to other places, but I am increasingly hearing of established families who are considering leaving our area of the province and moving to other locations. And, Mr. Speaker, it troubles me dramatically.

When I read the other day the HSURC (Health Services Utilization and Research Commission) study that was done by the Department of Health, all the minister could do in response to the question yesterday is make a joke about citrus fruit instead of dealing with the serious problems that are implied in that study, a study that says over the next 15 years the population of this province will only go up 7,000 people. That's about 500 per year. That's nothing, Mr. Speaker. That's no growth. That's no solution. It's no direction.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, when you look at that study which was done by an agency of the provincial government and Department of Health they also said that in the age group of young people, the 25- to 40-year olds, there was going to be a drop of 40,000 people. And, Mr. Speaker, you obviously understand that that is going to be dramatically important to the future of this province. Because that age group are the people who look after the health care system. They're the people who look after our communities. They're the people who raise families. They're the people who have jobs and pay taxes. They're the people that volunteer and are involved with the Kinsmen and Knights of Columbus and the Rotarians and all the service groups and agencies in our province that make this province work.

So the whole statistic out of this study that's even more devastating than the fact our province is only going to grow by 7,000 people is that it's predicting we're going to lose 40,000 people in the category that should be the heart and soul of the future of this province. And all the Minister of Health could do yesterday in response to that is come up with citrus jokes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it simply is not good enough. It simply is not a statistic or a projection that is going to be something anybody in this province should be complacent or flippant about. It is serious, and it was done in a way that is professional and responsible and the results are very serious, Mr. Speaker, for the future of our province. And people in my constituency are concerned about those very trends that are occurring.

And it doesn't matter. There's communities in my constituency that are moving ahead and are trying to progress. In the major centres like Melfort and Tisdale are communities that have a vibrancy and a dynamism of their own, but there's a lot of smaller communities that are very fearful about where their future's going to be. And the statistics that we saw yesterday are not the kind of things they want to see and that gives them a lot of confidence about where we're going.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I hear everyday: where's the plan, where is the plan for Saskatchewan? What are the things that are going to be done and the conditions we're going to create in this province that are going to create an environment that'll make this study wrong? Where are they? Where are they in economic development and taxation?

Well, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, they're not there. All that we do is try to play second fiddle to our neighbour to the west and we do a very poor job of trying to play that melody.

We don't have any job at all, any vision at all about where we're going. All we hear from the government opposite is plans to increase the size of government, to increase the dependency of people on the institutions of government, and nothing that will liberate people to do for themselves as Saskatchewan people have always tried to do when they're given brief opportunities, an opportunity of freedom to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite simply do not understand what's needed in order to build a plan. They don't understand it in taxation and economic development; they don't understand it certainly in agriculture. You heard what the answers were yesterday in terms of the debate, and today. You know, it's

been 20 years since I lived on the farm in the area of Kelvington, and I can tell you that I would have been really happy about their new forage program because it allowed me to probably put in the lawn that I normally operated out there.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that's come up with by some urban cowboy that thinks five acres is a lot of ground. And I would be pleased if a urban cowboy doesn't understand what an acre is. I'm sure the member from Arm River will be pleased to explain it again in the House because he did a very good job last year.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to understand the magnitude of the situation and the need to have a plan in agriculture. And we don't have it. Mr. Speaker, we don't have a plan in regard to the revitalization of our communities. We have a minister now running around talking about building a plan. She doesn't have a department; she doesn't have officers or anything else. She's just running around.

And she's the same minister that ended up for the last year telling the health care system we don't have a plan either, but we've got some guy going around the province called Fyke. He's going to build a plan, we hope; and if he does, we're not sure if we're going to accept it. But in the meantime no decisions are going to be made, no budgets are going to be approved. Everybody's on their own. Let pandemonium reign supreme, and somehow or another if we shake the bag, some good things are going to fall out of it. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that's going to be the plan for rural revitalization, we're never going to change those statistics that HSURC talked about yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important in the whole field of this province's future that in the event and in the factual reality that this government is not going to develop a plan any time soon, that it is incumbent upon us as the official opposition to provide that plan not for this government but for the people of Saskatchewan because they desperately need something to hang on to. They desperately need to see something that they can believe in and that will move this province forward.

And so myself and my colleagues have been working diligently over the last month since the last election, realizing the vacuum that has been left by the government opposite in terms of the future of this province that something has to be done and it has to be put on the table sooner rather than later. And so, Mr. Speaker, I feel that it is important that we build a plan.

You know the government has said in the last while that we are going to do nothing while we await Ken Fyke's decision. Well, Mr. Speaker, what has resulted from that decision? We can see that we're ending up with a situation where the government promised in the last election that there would be a decrease in the waiting times, that it has gone the other way, and then they have decreased dramatically. So what are we going to do about it?

Well when the minister would be asked in the last session repeatedly, she would just say, we can't do anything, we've got to wait until Mr. Fyke gives his report. So in the meantime the waiting lists have gotten longer and longer and longer.

And that's not just a statistic, Mr. Speaker, that's the thing that involves people. It involves people who are in pain because their hips or knees are hurting. It involves people who are waiting for critical tests and scans, and while they wait for those scans and tests they're concerned about how serious their situation may be. We're talking about not statistics, but we're talking about real people with real concerns all over this province. It isn't just in rural Saskatchewan, it's in urban Saskatchewan, it's everywhere. People are the real result of these kinds of lack of decisions.

We see that health districts and specialists are complaining about the fact that this government has provided no budget for capital equipment replacement over the last years; and we hear time and time again where specialists stand up and they say that the equipment that they're forced to deal with is just not working. People come into a health care centre where they need a test to be done — they've fasted all night, they've driven in long distances — and they're told that there's been a problem with the equipment and they've got to go home and we'll try again another day.

That's the reality of what's happening in this province because there has been no vision by this government for a program of appropriate capital equipment replacement. What's happened in the health districts, they've robbed whatever reserves they've had to do the best they can, and they've actually taken money out of their operating budgets to try to provide the minimum amount of equipment replacement while this government has done nothing.

What are they doing with retention and recruitment? Mr. Speaker, as we've travelled around this province we've heard time and time and time again that this government is absolutely taking everybody who works in the health care system in Saskatchewan for granted. They absolutely just expect them to stay here under these conditions forever and ever and ever.

(15:15)

And Mr. Speaker, there was a time in this country when that was probably true. When we went through the early '90s and the Government of Canada backed out of funding their share of health care and there was a great deal of concern about the ability to continue to fund it, there was nowhere to go. In no jurisdiction was there expansion of money and investment into health care, so there were no new positions. And people were basically forced to make do with where they were.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's changed pretty significantly in the last couple of years, as there's been a reinvestment across this country into health care. And now there are literally thousands of unfilled positions across the country that people from this province can go to.

Just the other day, in Melfort, there was a conversation among a few nurses at a social event that compared the settlement in Alberta to the settlement they just received. And they're asking themselves, why would we stay here? And it's a good thing that many of those people have family connections and other issues that are involved with keeping them here. But, Mr. Speaker, we can't build a wall around this province.

And we see our young people that are graduating, not only leaving Melfort for our neighbouring provinces; they're leaving this country. And they can go anywhere in the world. Medical professionals, doctors and specialists, they're in a situation now that they're being actively recruited, day after day after day, to come to other jurisdictions where there's positions.

And so how are we going to deal with that? We can't just continue to say we're not going to make any decision, we're not going to put any plan in place because Fyke's going to come down with his report next month. We have to build a plan. There has to be some vision that has to be brought forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, we said that if in the vacuum that's been created by the government opposite, we're prepared to put a plan forward, and we did that in a presentation to Mr. Ken Fyke. The whole result of our effort . . . and our effort was based on a great deal of travel and a great deal of discussion by ourselves with health care groups in the province of Saskatchewan.

We met and travelled widely across the province, spent long days touring the Saskatoon Health District facilities, spent long days touring the Regina Health District facilities. We toured the Yorkton Health District facilities, the Prince Albert health care facilities in your constituency, Mr. Speaker. We talked with health districts around the province.

We met with agencies that represent professional associations. We met with doctors through the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Saskatchewan Medical Association. We met with nurses through the Registered Nurses' Association and the Registered Psychiatric Nurses' Association and the Licensed Practical Nurses. We met with agencies that represent advocacy groups and the Alzheimer society, and those kinds of agencies; we met with them to get their insight. We met with the Pharmaceutical Association. And we've tried to meet with everyone that we possibly could in order to harvest their ideas and their perspectives at what are the priorities for health care. We spent a great deal of time to talk to district health boards, to SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), the board of SAHO, and member agencies.

And so, Mr. Speaker, out of that exercise, we brought forward and presented to Mr. Ken Fyke on February 15th, our policy paper and our position paper, if you like, on what we think are the priorities for health care in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we think that it's important that we put that result on the record, so that people of this province will be able to understand exactly what our vision for health care is in the reality that there's a vacuum been created by this government.

Mr. Speaker, we've said that it was important that we deal with health care in a very responsible way. We've said that the current challenge for health care is really twofold. First of all we must identify the reasons for public dissatisfaction. And I've outlined some of the reasons for this dissatisfaction in the past. And we also said that we have to design a new model of publicly funded health care that addresses those dissatisfactions, and delivers high quality health care throughout Saskatchewan, no matter where you may be.

And we've said that any reform that occurs has to be consistent with the principles of the Canada Health Act. We've said that what we have to recognize is the NDP government's efforts at reform of the health care over the last 10 years have fallen short, and have largely been mismanaged in recent years, and there really has to be a real commitment to a plan for health care in Saskatchewan.

As you know, in the last campaign we called for a value-for-money audit, that would look at what was needed in the health care system, and we have expressed our hope that the Fyke Commission . . . the Fyke Commission on medicare will indeed address many of the issues that we expressed concern about. And we said that our hope is that Mr. Fyke will realize that in order to deliver quality care in the long term, value-for-money of the service delivery has to be an important consideration.

And I believe in listening to Mr. Fyke; he is in fair agreement that in order to have quality health care, you cannot ignore the value-for-money component of it, because if you do, it's going to end up evolving into a system that quite frankly is unsustainable.

We said if we were going to do this we should focus in a least five major areas. And those areas are as follows: empowerment of citizens; health care district reform; emergency medical response; recruitment and retention of health care professionals; and long-term care for seniors. And I'd like to dwell briefly on each of those components so that members opposite will understand what a plan really is when they see it, since they've been operating all these years without one.

Under the empowerment of citizens, we said that a very important component that has to happen is there has to be a relationship established between the people of this province and the health care system. And we believe that the way to do that is through the enactment of a health care Bill of rights and responsibilities that is consistent with the principles of the Canada Health Act.

We said that this Bill should clearly identify a number of things. It should identify what the responsibilities of the health care system is. It should identify what the responsibility of acute care and emergency health care providers are. It should deal with the commitment of long-term care. And it should deal with the responsibility of citizens, of families, and patients to the health care system.

It should really define a relationship between the health care system and the people of this province that is consistent with a fair, responsive, and caring support system that takes care of the people in this province when they're in need.

In order to make sure that this system is lived up to, we said there should be an independent health care commissioner that will see to it that this relationship is respected and lived up to. This health care commissioner would be an officer of this legislature and not of any government or any political party and would act as an advocate, a mediator, and a guardian of the rights and responsibilities that are outlined in the health care Bill of rights and responsibilities.

I think that that is a fundamental thing that has to be done first because it has to focus on the delivery of health care services in this province. It has to refocus what health care delivery is all about. It has to refocus on that relationship and a trust relationship between the people of this province and the health care system that has been badly eroded by the fact there has been no plan and no commitment to health care by this government.

Mr. Speaker, we also said in a second area that we have to talk about, is that we have to talk about health district reform. And we've said that there should be a . . .

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Jones: — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, a friend of mine sitting in your gallery, Ms. Kaitlin Stocks. Good to see you here Kaitlin, I hope you enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — While taking advantage of the other member's intervention, with leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Don Hallam. And anybody who's been involved in any kind of efforts to help people obtain their rights would certainly know Don Hallam. I've seen him many times on various picket lines helping people keep their spirits up while they fought for their share of the results of their labour. And I just would want the members to join me in welcoming one of my constituents, Don Hallam.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Jones, seconded by Mr. McCall, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Hermanson.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to the guests introduced as well.

Mr. Speaker, the second area of our five-prong policy paper deals with health district reform. Mr. Speaker, if I could briefly

retrace the development of health districts in the province, I think it's an important background to what we're suggesting.

In 1992 when the Minister Simard of the day proposed health district reform and moved from approximately 400 volunteer districts to a new health care service delivery model, the unfortunate problem with the lack of leadership that was exhibited on her part is that these health districts were formed based on inter-community competition and rivalry, rather than on looking how could health care services be best delivered to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, our point in this is, is that what we have to do is look at how is the best service delivery model going to provide the best level of health care to people of this province. And I think that that's the objective that I hear expressed by SAHO. I hear that objective expressed by the Medical Association. And quite frankly I think what everybody is articulating is that they want a model that meets the challenge of health care delivery in this province. And I think that that's what we've got to focus on, is health care service delivery, rather than on community co-operation.

The second thing that people are saying is they don't want some arbitrary plan that's dreamt up by this government and the Department of Health rammed down their throats without any consultation and any involvement in terms of meeting the challenge of the service delivery.

We believe in principle that a district model is the best service delivery model. But we know inherently that the way those districts are formed and organized, they're going to be done on the advice of the people who live in those districts and who are done on a basis of some important principles.

The first one is, is that members who serve as members of the board of that district will be fully elected people, and they'll be elected on the basis of a community ward system to make sure that every community and geographic area of a district is represented. They will be done on the basis of the fact that each of those wards, there's going to be a health care advisory body that makes sure that all of the hopes and aspirations and challenges of the local area are being represented and articulated.

And they're going to be done in a way that is designed to give everyone the maximum opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

This government when they elect board members, they set the election up at some cockamamie time that has no relevance to anything else and almost designed it to fail so they could just appoint people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe in the democratic process and we say that it's going to be done at the same time as school board and municipal elections so that there's a maximum amount of participation at the least cost to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — People who sit on these boards, Mr. Speaker, people who sit on these boards have to know that they

represent the communities in the area of the province that they come from, that they have a volunteer advisory body behind them to make sure everyone in those areas are fully involved and engaged in a meaningful way with the delivery of health care services in that district.

How many should it be? Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, we don't know. But quite frankly we think that people of this province, when they see our idea of a structural model, will understand that service delivery is an important component and not some arbitrary system set up by the government that's designed to fail.

And we believe that this will result in ownership for health care service delivery to go back to the communities that health care service delivery is designed to serve.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that once you establish these districts that you got to make sure that they have a clear mandate.

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

Hon. Mr. Osika: — With all due respect to the hon. member, leave to introduce a guest, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for Melfort-Tisdale.

I'd like to introduce to you and to my colleagues here in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, Wally Pregizer who is a resident of the community where I live. And Wally and I are acquaintances. We see one another in sort of like ships passing in the night. So I'm very happy to see that he took the opportunity to come to the Assembly this afternoon and watch the proceedings. Welcome, Wally.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:30)

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Saskatoon Sutherland on his feet?

Mr. Addley: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member from Melfort-Tisdale for giving me this opportunity.

I'd like to introduce to you a constituent of mine and the former minister of Finance — one in the long line of NDP ministers of Finance that balanced the budget and helped pay down the debt — Mr. Elwood Cowley. Please welcome Mr. Elwood Cowley.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Jones, seconded by Mr. McCall, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Hermanson.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too am pleased that there's a number of new guests in the Assembly. I didn't realize my speech would attract so much attention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I said one of the important things that needs to happen when we establish these new districts is they have to have a clear mandate in terms of what their roles and responsibilities are. In the past, in fact SAHO when it made its presentation to the Fyke Commission, said that what they needed was for the Minister of Health to stop micromanaging the system from Regina.

And so these health districts have to be empowered and they have to be trusted to do their job and do their job professionally. They have to be challenged to do it right. They have to be challenged to the Bill of rights and responsibilities that we will set up, and as moderated by the health care commissioner to live up to those challenges.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is not a role for the Minister of Health to micromanage and second-guess all their decisions. We have to respect their ability to do the job that they are going to be mandated to do.

And so, Mr. Speaker, coupled with this long-term mandate there has to be long-term funding. Mr. Speaker, what has happened in the past and this current situation is a good point where health districts actually went through 10 months of their budget without any approval. How in the world can any agency be asked to function when you actually go through 10 months of your budget year and you still not had the budget approved by the Department of Health?

Mr. Speaker, that situation is intolerable, and health districts have asked for long-term funding commitments and we believe that that's necessary to make so they understand where they're going. So they can understand that there is a plan and there's going to be the financial resources to meet that plan.

Mr. Speaker, that's leadership, that's a plan, that's what's been missing by this NDP government, and that's the kind of plan and commitment a Saskatchewan Party government would make to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, a major challenge in the whole exercise of organizing the health care system in Saskatchewan

in a proper way is to define some fundamental responsibilities. And they are firstly to define the role of primary health care, secondary health care, and tertiary health care. And finally we've got to decide how we're going to deliver what I call as advanced tertiary health care services.

Mr. Speaker, primary health care are those kinds of services that clearly every citizen needs on a regular basis, and has to be delivered as close as possible to where they actually live. It's a kind of service that deals with looking after newborn babies and to counsel mothers who have just had children. It has to be able to talk about immunization programs.

It has to talk about healthy lifestyles and helping people to quit unhealthy lifestyles, like smoking or excesses of eating or drink or anything else. It has to do with taking care of and monitoring people's vital statistics, like blood pressure and diabetes and blood sugar counts.

It has to deal with all of those services that need to happen on a daily basis close to the home community. It has to be able to respond to those kinds of things in an appropriate, timely way wherever people live in this province. To deal with the primary health care issues that everyone needs to have focused on, and also focuses on the indicators of health care so that we can help people build a healthier lifestyle for themselves, so that somewhere down the road they're not going to have as much of a need for the acute care system, that no one wants to voluntarily go in but has to be there.

We also have to sit down and talk about what secondary health care services can be delivered in all of the districts of this province. And I think of those things in terms of the core speciality areas that are either provided by resident or itinerant specialists to our communities.

We have to say, how can we do a better job of kidney dialysis, not just in Saskatoon and Regina, but in the Melforts and the Yorktons and the Swift Currents and the North Battlefords of the world. How can we provide for cataract surgery and advanced tests, like MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or CAT (computer assisted tomography) scan tests.

Can we do that in a logical way in the secondary services because, quite frankly, in the secondary centres, there are some opportunities to build on the infrastructure that's already there and take some pressure off the waiting times in the tertiary centres.

Right now what we have is — because there is nowhere else to go — everything is piling on Saskatoon and Regina that are our tertiary centres and there is no opportunity to use pretty sophisticated facilities in the regional areas in the districts that we're talking about.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that needs to be defined and organized so it's done in a co-operative, logical way instead of a way based on community competition. I believe that the people of this province understand that by working together they can actually have enhanced services in the rural communities if we work together. And we need a plan that this government has not provided and that we are prepared to do.

Mr. Speaker, we have the tertiary centres of Saskatoon and Regina. And we have to make sure that those centres are equipped with the appropriate equipment and capital equipment replacement budgets so they can do the advanced services and the advanced procedures that are needed. And we have to make sure that that happens in a logical, planned way that's going to make sure that they have the capacity to respond to the needs of the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, we also have to recognize that in this competitive world, there are probably some very advanced speciality services that we're not going to be able to provide in every city in the Western Canada. And so I think it's important that we set up prairie centres of excellence that take advantage of the fact that it is better to have a service provided in Winnipeg or Calgary or Edmonton or Regina or Saskatoon than nowhere at all.

So it was interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, when there was the smelter explosion a year or so ago in, I believe, it was Flin Flon. And when I was listening to the news reports of that incident, I thought it strange initially that the people that were most severely burned in that accident were flown to Regina and Edmonton. They weren't flown to Winnipeg in the province where they . . . you would think it logic to happen. And the reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is that the very best burn units in the Prairie provinces are in Regina and Edmonton.

And so there's a centre of excellence in that field in those two centres that are recognized across the Prairie provinces, and I believe that by co-operating with our neighbours we can build on that rather than sending people to the Mayo Clinic or other jurisdictions if we try to make sure we identify our strengths and make sure that happens.

Mr. Speaker, the third area that I want to talk about is emergency medical response. First of all, we said it is almost criminal that it has taken this government almost a decade to implement a province-wide 911 emergency call system. I recognize that it's coming, but it is coming so slow that people are almost despairing that it's ever going to get here.

In this day of technology you tell me how many people understand in rural Saskatchewan that the emergency number is 310-5000. I bet you can't find a handful. But everybody knows that you phone 911 when you're in trouble — every child, every student, everyone in this province understands that. So what's the problem about getting this system implemented in a timely way? And we say it's got to be done and it's got to be done immediately.

The next step of that puzzle is to make sure that there is an emergency measure dispatch system that coordinates with the 911 system. Now the EMS report that has come out has said, we've got have this super high-tech system set up in Saskatoon and Regina with all the monitors and screens so the Minister of Health can go there and feel good by looking at all this high-tech stuff and kind of visualize that she at the time — and he now — is in some cyber-centre that is going to make them feel good. That's sort of, kind of, like the high-speed Internet reality that we have.

Mr. Speaker, currently in the province there are five EMS dispatch systems that are doing the job quite adequately, thank you, Mr. Speaker. But I do believe, and the system believes, that there can be some enhancements made to it so that the equipment is such that it automatically coordinates with the 911 system. And we believe that's the way to go.

We thirdly believe in EMS that what we have to do is to work with the community-based ambulance systems that are in place today and to help them build an even better service in the future than what they have provided in the past.

You know that report of the government's that said, we don't have 24-hour, seven-day-a-week emergency measures system responses — it's just nonsense. It doesn't matter if it's in small town Saskatchewan, that the EMS provider works in the Co-op service station during the day. When they're on call and an emergency call comes in, they're at their ambulance in five minutes and on the road because they provided for that. They are on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and it's a disservice to these people that that report implies that they're not.

And we believe that by working with the EMS system as it currently exists to help them improve their equipment, their response time, and their training, we will have a better ground ambulance system and it'll be based on the people who are providing and have provided excellent care over the years.

We also think that we need to enhance the current fixed-wing air ambulance system with a rotary-wing helicopter system that will be in place to back up the emergency care needs that are going to happen right across this province.

You know people say well, why do you need a helicopter, it's expensive. Well yes it is. But if you can tell me what the price of a human being life is, I'll tell you if it's expensive or worth it or not. Because in other jurisdictions and certainly in looking at the STARS (Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society) program in Alberta, we're getting excellent advice about saying we need a system that has the advanced trauma capabilities to deal with a severe accident no matter where it happens or no matter to who it happens.

It's just not for rural people. It's for anybody that travels in rural Saskatchewan. And urban people go to the lake, they go to neighbouring towns, they travel in that environment as well. And, Mr. Speaker, we believe that this will be a significant and important backup to the current ambulance system, and we would definitely implement such a system.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, in the emergency system, we believe there has to be a communication support system for people who, quite frankly, don't know where to turn when something happens. It might not be the kind of emergency that requires 911, but if I'm at home and I'm a single parent and my child is running a fever, I have to understand if that's serious or not. There's very few family physicians that give everybody their phone number to phone them at home any more.

And so many times mothers or fathers are coming into the outpatient or the emergency room of a major hospital and their situation is such that it could have been dealt with in a more

appropriate way, but they have nowhere to turn for advice.

And so we believe a telephone support centre, province-wide based so that . . . being staffed by well-trained health care professionals — nurses, advanced clinical nurses — and established on the basis of a clear health care protocol would be a major support system for people who currently are accused of abusing the system but really do not have an alternative to use, to provide them with the service and the advice that they need.

And, Mr. Speaker, we think this is a comprehensive plan about dealing with the issues of emergency medical response.

The fourth area that we want to talk about is the recruitment, retention, and training of health care professionals. The first thing we said in this area, Mr. Speaker, is that we simply have to recognize that the status quo is not acceptable.

Here's a few facts, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Medical Association estimates that approximately a hundred physicians leave active practice in this province each and every year. Some of them retire, some of them leave the province, but we basically lose about a hundred physicians a year.

(15:45)

The College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan trains 55. Five of them are foreign and 50 are domestic students. They have increased their retention of people graduating from that college in recent years, and that's to their credit. A lot of programs by the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) and the College of Physicians and Surgeons at the University of Saskatchewan are resulting in some significant improvement.

But if you've got 50 potential graduates and they got it up to 80 per cent, that still is only 40 physicians. That means we're 60 short every single year, Mr. Speaker. We're 60 short. And we cannot no longer, and continue, to rely on countries like South Africa to provide those 60 short positions. Just recently the Consul General of the country of South Africa expressed his concern in Canada about the fact that we are raiding, we're poaching, their health care professionals and they need them desperately as well. And so what we need to do is see to it that we provide more training opportunities for physicians in this province.

The Minister of Post-Secondary Education chirps from his seat and says, oh isn't this wonderful? We up to 80 per cent — 40 people. Well I'm sorry, Mr. Minister, it isn't enough. You are coming short. We're falling short each and every year and we have to do something about it.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we've said is it's not just family physicians and specialists but it also is nurses, registered nurses, advanced clinical nurses, licensed practical nurses, members of the technologists group, radiologists and laboratory techs. We are graduating 16 radiology techs and 16 lab techs a year that the Regina Health District says they'll hire 10 to 12 of them each and every year. How in the world is this going to meet our needs currently and into the future?

Mr. Speaker, in the environment of where the world out there is willing to purchase our highly-trained, young graduates, our

best chances of having the people that we need to service in the future are the people who have grown up, who were born and raised here, who are trained here, who have family here, and the only way to do that is increase the commitment to training of these young people. And I challenge the Minister of Post-Secondary Education to disagree with that fundamental principle.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have said that in addition to making the commitment to these training seats, because it absolutely has to happen now because it takes time to train people, we are making the commitment to be supportive of our share as a provincial government of the proposal by the University of Saskatchewan for an integrated health sciences facility that they are planning. We believe that this is absolutely essential.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems and challenges of training young people is to make sure there's going to be an environment where professionals — the instructors — are going to come to train them, because again there is great competition for these individuals.

When you deal with someone who is a doctor at the College of Medicine you see that these people aren't just in here to make the big bucks. They're here because they are the very best at what they do — they're right at the advanced edge of their profession — and they want to show other people how that is done, and they're proud of what they've learned and what they know. So they have the teaching component of their mandate.

But they also have the clinical component because it isn't just enough to talk about what you know; you have to be able to show them in a teaching environment. And hence the very special role of not only the Royal University Hospital, but of the whole Saskatoon District Health in terms of providing that teaching environment. They need that.

But they also need an opportunity to do research because without research they can't advance their skill; they can't advance themselves beyond the status quo. And that's an area where we need to pick up our socks, quite frankly, because right now if you hire a new medical instructor they don't know where they're going to find laboratory space for them. And an important part of the integrated health sciences facility proposal is for increased research facility opportunities, not only in the College of Medicine but of all of the health sciences. You have the opportunity for the College of Pharmacy, of dentistry, of nursing, of physical therapy, or kinesiology I guess is they call it now. All of those areas need that research component.

And the further thing that we have going for us right now, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity created by the synchrotron, the Canadian light beam. Many of these medical issues and many of the scientific exploration of these issues are going to be really made an opportunity because of this light beam facility in Saskatoon. And if we miss the opportunity, all is we're going to do is provide a facility in the synchrotron where teams of medical professionals, teams of scientists, drop into Saskatoon for two weeks, run their experiments, and leave to do the advanced research and analysis of their study somewhere else. We definitely need that commitment if we're going to build a core of health care professionals that are going to be needed to serve the health care system in the future.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also have to look in addition to this single facility, we have to look at the opportunities at SIAST, to look at nurse training programs. They currently exist in Regina and Saskatoon. We have to look at Prince Albert as well. And I think there's a real opportunity to look at that campus as potentially a site to look at rural medicine or rural nursing practice. And I think we should look at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College as an opportunity as well to develop nursing programs, focusing particularly on the needs of Aboriginal people in this province.

We have to look at all of our resources to provide the capacity for the training that is going to be needed to see to it that we've got the health care professionals that we need in the future.

Mr. Speaker, we need as well to make sure we tell the people, when they're training for these professions, that they're needed, they're appreciated, and they're valued and we want them to stay and practise in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I know that there are efforts made in that field but, quite simply, we have to redouble our efforts to make sure that every single student studying in the health care fields in this province knows that they're going to have a job in this province, it's going to be a full-time job, and it's going to be an important job and it's going to be a job that we respect and appreciate them for. And we cannot simply tell them that often enough to enforce that point.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have to talk about the long-term care needs of our seniors. As I travelled around this province looking at facilities, I have seen some facilities that, quite frankly, are absolutely amazing. They're wonderful places that are institutions that have been designed to provide a family, homey atmosphere, and one of them, Mr. Speaker, is in your constituency in Mont. St. Joseph.

When I went there, I went there on the day when they brought the huskies in to visit the folks. And to see these dogs come with their high school student people that were training them — because I believe there's an active program between the grade 12 class at Carlton and Mont. St. Joseph where they kind of adopt each other and is part of a program — it sort of made you feel almost humble to see the beautiful relationship that was developed between these young people and these seniors.

It is beautiful for me to see how they designed the facility so it provided neighbourhoods and areas that didn't seem like institutions. It was the kind of facility that made you very proud of being a part of the population of this province, to see the way our seniors were cared in that environment. And I just use that as one example, but there are many others.

But I've also travelled and seen institutions, Mr. Speaker, where quite frankly I don't think people like Karla Holmolka would be kept in. They are almost like prisons for people that have nowhere else to go. And the health districts that have these facilities are crying desperately for replacement programs for those facilities.

And, Mr. Speaker, we simply have to make sure that we look into this into the future in a way that provides a proper plan for replacing those facilities for our seniors. Mr. Speaker, they're

the people that built this province. And the other reality for most of us here is, soon they're going to be for us. And if we don't make a plan to provide the proper care for these people, we're going to end up with a situation that our seniors, when they're at their time of need, are not going to be looked after in an appropriate way.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's other opportunities to make sure that we have appropriate housing for our seniors. We have to look at enriched housing projects. We have to look at personal care homes and make sure that they maintain adequate standards in the service care delivery field. We have to look at all of these options.

Mr. Speaker, this is our plan. This deals with all of the areas that we believe that need to be talked about in a general way. We don't pretend for a moment that it is the last word in health care delivery, or that it's going to be a model that's going to be appropriate forever. But we have to also recognize that it is a plan. It is a vision for the future about where health care can and should go in this province. It's a responsible plan. It's a plan that will challenge all of our people to be a part of it. It'll provide all of our people with an opportunity for a meaningful role in the plan, and we believe that it's a plan that will move us to the future.

Mr. Speaker, this plan is available . . . there are members opposite saying, well, why don't you table it. Well, I'd be pleased to do that. But I would also say that it's listed on our caucus Web site which is www.saskcaucus.com — saskcaucus, one word. And if you click on it there, it's all there and you can download a written copy for yourselves. I'd be pleased to give copies to any member who doesn't have access to a Web site so that they can look at, and I'd be pleased to hear any comments that members and individuals may have about this plan.

I've had many already from members of health boards, from medical professionals; and they say that it's a good plan. It's a plan that's worthy of support and consideration, and we presented it to Mr. Fyke.

And most important, Mr. Speaker, we're going to use this plan as our benchmark. I think we need a benchmark. We need something that states what we think is important and the important priorities for health care in this province, and we're going to use it as a measuring device, if you like, for Mr. Fyke's report. We're going to use it as a measuring device in measuring what the government plan may be, and . . . well that's pretty easy, because there is no plan. But we put it out there on the public forum so people could say we have a plan.

Mr. Speaker, it's been my pleasure to outline this plan for this Assembly today and for the people of Saskatchewan that are watching on the legislative network. Mr. Speaker, we, the official opposition, Sask Party caucus are proud of this plan, and we know that it'll move health care and the health care debate in this province forward in a very constructive way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to be

able to finally rise in my place to speak in support of the Throne Speech of the second session of the twenty-fourth legislature.

Listening to the previous speakers, I must say that I was a little disappointed in the Leader of the Opposition. He spoke mostly about personalities and criticisms of individuals and left aside the discussion of ideas and policies, thereby showing that he is bereft of ideas.

It sort of reminded me of a quote that the former US Speaker of the House of . . . US Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn, said. And I'll paraphrase it because there's some language in there that's likely unparliamentary, saying that anyone — I'm using the word anyone as opposed to donkey or what have you — anyone can kick down a barn, it takes a real carpenter to build one. So I'm very happy to rise in my place here today.

Before I begin I'd like to congratulate my colleagues from Saskatoon Meewasin and Saskatoon Elphinstone for their fine speeches yesterday about moving and seconding the Throne Speech.

I can say that after hearing the member from Regina Elphinstone who is now the youngest member of the Legislative Assembly, which bumps me down to the third youngest member of the Legislative Assembly — in fact I think we've got the five youngest members of the Legislative Assembly on this side — but I know we'll hear more from the member from Elphinstone.

I'd also like to thank the good people of Saskatoon Sutherland for making me their MLA. I certainly appreciate that. It's a great honour. Saskatoon Sutherland, there's lots of good people in that riding. It's one of the fastest growing ridings with lots of new homes being built in Arbor Creek. In fact, I haven't double-checked this, but I do believe that it has the highest per capita number of lottery homes. In fact, everyone seems to want to live there and they're able to buy a ticket to live there.

Also part of the riding is Muskeg Lake First Nations Reserve. Now I'm originally from Loon Lake and the Makwa lake band reserve First Nation is right next to Loon Lake, and so it feels like home living in Saskatoon with the Muskeg Lake band part of the riding.

I'll be speaking a little bit later about the partnership and the contributions that First Nations people have made in building Saskatchewan and some of the success stories that are available out there today.

I'd be remiss in not congratulating our new Premier on his decisive win this week. He provides a new face and an energetic leadership and the victory with the spirit of Saskatchewan.

(16:00)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — I'm looking forward to the new direction, the optimism, the openness, and the confidence that this government will be providing in the next several years.

I'd also like to congratulate the new Speaker for his knowledge

and his gentle humour. And I know as a former schoolteacher he will be strict but fair and impartial. I would also like to congratulate the new Deputy Premier for his intelligence . . . for his new position that he now takes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I wouldn't go that far, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, but for his intelligence and his quick wit and I do appreciate that he will also do his job well.

I would also like to thank the old . . . the former Speaker. I was going to say the old Speaker but I mean the former Speaker, the MLA from Melville, and recognize . . . and compliment him on his speech as well for recognition of the difficulty that some in our agriculture community are facing. But still examples of his enthusiasm and his optimism for the rest of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan today is thriving. It's a prosperous and growing and innovative province with an economy based no longer just on wheat and natural resources. Saskatchewan, and in particular Saskatoon, is becoming a world leader in ag biotech, in information technology, in new agricultural products and in research and development.

Some examples of the good news in Saskatchewan are the synchrotron, and even the member from Melfort-Tisdale has commented on what a good project that is. I was at the official opening on February 25 and it was on time and on budget.

Also the University of Saskatchewan which is also in my riding, which is probably the largest employer in all of Saskatoon and it continues to provide innovative education opportunities for all people in Saskatchewan.

We're able to continue to provide good government. In fact *The Globe and Mail* headline recently said Saskatchewan is the star of the 90s, leading Canada in the GDP (gross domestic product) growth. Saskatchewan is also the second highest net worth in all of Canada. Volunteerism is another example of good news in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan leads the way having the highest rate of volunteerism in all of Canada. Even in today's *Leader-Post*, some of the headlines: Regina economy looks good; Saskatchewan retail sales are up. There's more good news in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some other examples would be in taxation. On January 1 your taxes went down. The provincial flat tax, the debt reduction tax, and the high-income surtax were all eliminated, putting hundreds of dollars in the hands of every family in Saskatchewan.

At the same time provincial income tax rates were lowered for all income brackets. And the best news is there are even more tax cuts coming. Tax brackets will continue to drop in 2002 and 2003, and the child tax credit, and the seniors supplemental credit will be increased. It's all part of this government's commitment to put money back in our communities, now that our province's books are back in order.

It started in 1997, when the provincial sales tax was slashed from 9 per cent to 7 per cent, and continued in 1999, when the sales tax was cut yet again, this time to 6 per cent. As our province has become financially healthy, we've kept our commitment to putting money back in the hands of the people it belongs, the taxpayer.

Here are some examples of how this year's tax cuts will affect families. The single income family of \$40,000 will receive a total tax savings of \$869. A two-income family at \$80,000 will receive a total tax saving of \$950. A single income senior at \$20,000 will receive a total tax savings of \$450, plus the sales tax credit. Single part-time students earning \$12,000 will receive tax savings of \$173, plus the tax credit. Saskatchewan now has the third lowest taxes in the country. Not bad for a province that was nearly bankrupt a decade ago.

As well, the job figures are looking pretty good as well. Statistics Canada numbers show that Saskatoon had the second lowest unemployment rate of any city in Canada in December, 2000, with a rate of just 4.1 per cent. The province's unemployment rate was 4.9 per cent, well below the national average of 6.3 per cent. Four hundred and eighty-five thousand people were working in Saskatchewan last year, an increase of 5,000 over the previous year.

Another fact. Our health care system is the envy of North America. It's resources are being stretched to the limit, and it's undergoing change, but when has this ever not been the case. It bends, but it does not break. And those who have had direct experience with the health care system in Saskatchewan are pleased with the service they've received.

Here are just some statistics. In this year 4.76 million visits to family physicians, and 920,000 visits and consultations with specialists took place in Saskatchewan. Publicly funded and publicly administered visits. We're not doing too badly, Mr. Speaker.

Here's another fact — our roads are doing quite well. On November 30, 2000, the Finance minister announced that the province would use \$150 million of the projected \$370 million surplus for increased highway improvements over the next three years. This announcement will . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It's a great plan. This announcement will result in over 900 million, almost a billion dollars, being invested on the provincial highway system in the next three years. The province will easily exceed its 1997 promise and commitment to invest 2.5 billion over a 10-year period; as well, the 1999 commitment to invest a billion dollars over four years.

Over the next three years, some of the department's key initiatives will allow the province to improve pavement condition, move forward with improvements to the TMS (thin membrane surface) system, develop key transportation corridors, continue twinning, and develop a comprehensive, three-year capital plan. And this is important, Mr. Speaker — the province will deliver the additional \$150 million of additional work without increasing its administrative structure. Good news, Mr. Speaker.

I could say the same thing about education, about municipal government, and about social services, where social assistance caseloads are the lowest since 1992.

And this situation or this investment in highways is even more impressive when you consider that we have more roads than any province in the country. And when you take into the count that we get absolutely no help from the federal government in repairing the damage caused by its transportation policies, not

only are we holding our own, we're moving forward. The people of Saskatchewan asked us to fix the roads — Mr. Speaker, we are going to fix the roads.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be in Saskatchewan and delighted that the progress we're making on all fronts, despite serious challenges, and pleased that the government of which I'm a part has played no small role in what has been accomplished.

But there's another side of this story, Mr. Speaker. According to the opposition, and this is what they say, Saskatchewan is the most godforsaken place on earth — no one is working, our roads are crumbling, our health care system is a disaster as we just heard, our children are leaving in droves, our taxes are way too high, and our farm economy and rural life which form the backbone of our province has been betrayed by a heedless government that's lost touch . . . touch with rural Saskatchewan, taxes are killing us, and doctors are leaving the province. That's what the opposition seems to say; that's their attitude towards Saskatchewan.

I have to say that the litany I just recited is most of the part of the line that's been pedalled by the opposition party. It's their job, however, to criticize, though I'm not sure that that should entail belittling every aspect of provincial life.

The opposition is pretty good at practicing what an American journalist recently called, quote, "orchestrated outrage." The political tactic by which every problem is labelled a crisis and every group asking for change is a body ignored and dismissed by a government that's lost touch with the people. Those are good lines, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they use them well.

However in Regina Elphinstone and Saskatoon Riversdale, the opposition said just wait, the people will send you a message. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they did send us a message and they sent the opposition a message. They threw everything they possibly could have at us, Mr. Speaker, but they've learned that money, a dream candidate, a quality candidate, that they cannot buy an election, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan Party is bringing down Saskatchewan. It's a millstone around the public's neck. We will shed that millstone at the next election, Mr. Speaker. Voters had the opportunity to cast judgment twice, Mr. Speaker, and both times they rejected the radical right wing agenda dividing Saskatchewan.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the member from Swift Current said why don't we come and cross the floor and then we can help our hockey teams. Mr. Speaker, I honestly think that after the next election, I will be on that side of the House because we'll have 50 seats, Mr. Speaker and there won't be enough room . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, back to the good news. Canada's philosopher king, Allan Fotheringham, also a Saskatchewan boy, in a recent column asked why is Saskatchewan squawking.

He pointed out that there are 15 relevant economic indicators which tell the story of a province's economic health. Those include, just to name some, housing starts, unemployment

recipients, building permits, exports, and so on. Saskatchewan was ahead of the game in 13 out of 15 measures, Mr. Speaker.

But Dr. Foth says we live next door to Alberta, the hottest economy in the country. So anything looks bad by comparison.

The Sask Party, day after day after day, holds up Alberta as the nirvana, Atlantis, and the New Jerusalem all rolled into one.

Now I love to visit Alberta like everyone else, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has wonderful sights, beautiful parks, and great restaurants, and has increasingly all the attractions a big city can provide. And sometimes I do look at the money that they're bringing in on the sea of oil that's being currently sold at 25 to \$30 a barrel. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the surplus alone in Alberta from the oil revenue is \$5 billion. We run our whole province on a budget of only 5.6 billion.

We turned the corner on the millennium but we're still less than a hundred years old as a province. Within the living memory of many of our citizens we've changed from a pioneer society where there was a town every seven miles so farmers on their quarter section could haul grain in their wagon and be back by supper. Today we can be in Toronto, or as the minister . . . the member from Kindersley would like, in Ottawa in less time than that.

Our roads, our municipal structures, our grain-based economy were originally based on the realities of a long gone day. Much of what is good about Saskatchewan comes from those times — our sense of community, our eagerness to co-operate and volunteer, and our closeness to the land. And we must not lose that which has indelibly defined us.

But, my friends, those days are gone. We may like it, we may not. But thanks to paved roads, to television, and the Internet; thanks to modern medicine which demands elaborate equipment only to be found in large central hospitals; thanks to all this and more, our province is undergoing more rapid and fundamental change than any other place at any other time in North America. I think we do long for the old days; at the same time we want the advantages of the new.

We've got some bankable facts of some more good news, Mr. Speaker. And most of them are out of the paper, or out of a briefing note, as I have here. For example, the economy. The average growth rate for Saskatchewan economy from '92 to '99 was 3.4 per cent, matching the Canadian average and ranking third highest among all provinces.

2000 figures show increase in exports, manufacturing, shipments, oil and natural gas production, production of potash and other minerals, retail sales, and new motor vehicles. Stronger export sales, up in November 2000 by 8.8 per cent compared to November '99, and manufacturing shipments show healthy growth. Retail sales in November increased by 3.3 per cent, and new motor vehicle sales increased in the first 11 months of 2000 up by seven and a half per cent over the same period in '99.

(16:15)

High employment levels, tax reform, and income growth will

promote construction in Saskatchewan in the next three years. More growth — 94 per cent of employers in Regina and 80 per cent of employers in Saskatoon expect employment levels to increase or stay the same over the next year . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 90 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Labour. Saskatchewan's labour force increased 6,000 between December 2000 and January 2001. An increase by 4,700. We have to thank the former minister of Economic and Co-operative Development, the MLA from Idylwyld for a lot of these numbers. The 4,000 employed increase in January represented a .9 per cent increase which tied Saskatchewan with two other provinces for the largest percentage increase in the country. More good news, Mr. Speaker.

In 2000, Saskatchewan created a record number of jobs equalling 5,000 throughout the year. Saskatchewan's unemployment rate in January 2001 was 5.6 per cent. The third lowest, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the country and well below the national average of 6.9 per cent.

The unemployment rate in Saskatoon was 5.4 per cent, the fifth lowest among major Canadian cities; and Regina's unemployment rate was 6.5 per cent. Still lower than the national average.

I've spoken a little bit about tax reform but I think it bears repeating. Saskatchewan's personal income tax rate had been going up since the introduction of the flat tax in 1985. Taxes were going up in the '80s. By 1992 an average family in Saskatchewan was paying the highest income tax rate in all of Canada — in 1992, nine short years ago, the highest income tax.

This is no longer the case. Our income tax rates in Saskatchewan have come down four times in the last seven years thanks to our ministers of Finance. And they will continue to come down in 2002 and 2003. The reduction in income tax will reach an estimated savings of 442 million a year by 2003. As the Minister of Finance says, that's progress, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

At 6 per cent, Saskatchewan's rate is the lowest of the nine provinces with the sales tax, and only Alberta who has medicare premiums are lower than that. In 1992 the total tax bill for an average Saskatchewan family was the second highest in the country. Very soon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will be the third lowest. And we've maintained a balanced budget and tax cuts since 1995.

We've heard a bit about health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Saskatchewan, the health budget for 2001 is 1.978 billion — the highest ever in the history of our province and it's 5.9 per cent higher than last year. 4,761,800 visits and consultations with family physicians; 920,000 visits and consultations with specialists. Approximately 9,000 nursing home residents in special care homes, hospitals, and health centres. Over 800,000 days of in-patient hospital care; an estimated 650,000 emergency room or clinic visits. Twenty-five per cent of the families that use prescriptions receive financial assistance from the drug plan; 2,400 receive drugs free of cost for palliative care treatment.

We are committed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to providing accessible, quality health care services that are within our financial means. We also believe in a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system where access to care is not based on a member's ability to pay, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've achieved all of this. We've achieved upgrades as well by . . . Our economy is not overheated, but it is warm. Our job creation is not breathtaking, but it's steady and sustainable. Our variety of businesses and industries are growing.

Things are not that bad, Mr. Speaker, and like the true citizen of Saskatchewan I am, I'm being understated. Saskatchewan has received nine credit upgrades since 1995 — three in the last month alone. These upgrades have resulted in annual savings to the province of about \$3 million. And we've achieved these upgrades despite the fact we still pay \$600 million a year in interest on the debt we inherited in 1991.

People might be tired of hearing it and I'm tired of talking about it and the Saskatchewan taxpayer is tired of paying it, but boredom doesn't make it disappear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Saskatchewan is still the best place in the country in which to live and raise a family. That's true in good times and it's true in bad times, but today is good times, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the success . . . and I'm quoting from the Throne Speech, quote:

The success that we enjoy rests on the dedication and courage of people who dreamed of creating a society where the future would be as limitless as the very skies themselves.

We must build on that success and continue to connect to the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are three themes in the Throne Speech that I'd like to touch on. Number one, a thriving economy. The economy of our province is strong and growing and will achieve even greater success in technology, in community infrastructure, in rural Saskatchewan with increased expenditures on agricultural research and development and programs to help farm families take advantage of new opportunities.

Transportation by embarking on the largest-ever highway renewal program. Economic planning by moving forward with the release of an economic blueprint for Saskatchewan — Partnership for Prosperity.

Number two, the second theme: healthy citizens, families, and communities. It is our responsibility to ensure that every person can enjoy the fruits of our prosperity. We will build and expand early childhood development programs aimed at high-risk communities. We will amend The Labour Standards Act to increase maternity and parental leave provisions.

And we'll increase the number of community schools and expand this program to include secondary schools. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're making significant investments in renovating, expanding, and building new schools and post-secondary

facilities. We will amend the five-year centennial . . . implement a five-year centennial summer student employment program to provide summer jobs for over 10,000 high school and post-secondary students.

Through our excellent public institutions and innovative technology, our post-secondary system provides our young people with affordable access to the education and training that leads to success. Opportunities, for young people in rural and northern Saskatchewan as well as larger centres, that lead to job opportunities; to learn, live, and work right here and participate fully in our economic, cultural, and social life.

We'll also work side by side with the leaders of tomorrow, inviting and encouraging the use of their ideas, talents, and energy throughout government and communities.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, government recognizes the increasing important role that Aboriginal people will play in the social and economic future of our province. We're committed to working with Metis and First Nations people to secure that future.

I notice in the speech that the Leader of the Opposition gave, that he was taking on our Minister of SERM and touring in his riding. I find that odd that he took on the Premier in Saskatoon Riversdale and came up short. And in that riding we won 58 per cent of the vote.

An Hon. Member: — How much?

Mr. Addley: — Fifty-eight per cent of the vote in Riversdale.

What I don't understand the logic behind going after the Minister of SERM, is he won his seat last time with 93 per cent of the vote. So I don't understand why he would do that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of success stories in the Aboriginal community, the First Nations community, and I'd like to touch on a few of them as examples of what we'll be doing in the future.

I'm quoting from a magazine called *Seeds of Success* which is a quarterly publication produced by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. The first article makes reference to the First Nations Flying School in Western Canada:

The school located in Prince Albert is a joint venture between the Prince Albert Grand Council and the National Aviation College.

Another good example of First Nations people working together is a job fair which boasted great turnout in Saskatoon.

About 600 post-secondary students from all across Saskatchewan gathered recently in Saskatoon at the 2001 edition of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Corporate Circle Job Fair.

The fair offered not only one-on-one contact between potential employers and students seeking jobs, but also information workshops on resumés, job searches, and interviews.

This first-ever event brought together over 60 corporations, government agencies, and educational institutions seeking Aboriginal employees with the students from all over northern and southern Saskatchewan.

John Lagimodiere, who was covering the event for his new publication, *Eagle Feather Business*, said he's encouraged to see the corporate and Aboriginal worlds interacting at events like the job fair.

Speaking of Mr. Lagimodiere:

This 32-year-old Metis entrepreneur is the man behind Saskatchewan's newest Aboriginal business publication, *Eagle Feather Business*.

He says he's determined to tell Saskatchewan readers about the growing Aboriginal economies.

His company, Aboriginal Consulting Services publishes both *Eagle Feather News* and *Eagle Feather Business*.

Another good news success story, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One I'm quite pleased to talk about as well, another success story, is Mr. Ernie Scoles. He stacked up a clientele across Western Canada and throughout North America. His work is also founded in collections as far away as Europe and Asia. He has opened an art gallery and framing shop in Saskatoon.

Last June the painter decided to "step it up a notch" and he opened Scoles Fine Arts & Framing in Saskatoon, where he's made his home since the mid 1980s. The art gallery carries works by Scoles and other Aboriginal artists, along with the traditional crafts by Scole's wife Doreen, who also manages the gallery.

I also want to comment about the North Central Insurance Brokers Inc. in Saskatoon which also does business in the Muskeg Lake First Nations Band and they'll be expanding or have expanded their current operations. More good news, Mr. Speaker.

A couple more examples of good news would be Tasha Hubbard:

(who) candidly admits she never really aspired to become an entrepreneur or a business owner . . . explains the 27-year-old owner of Thursday Night Productions.

An Hon. Member: — How old?

Mr. Addley: — Twenty-seven years old.

. . . she views her film and video production company less as a business venture and more as a way to pursue her two passions in life — producing documentaries and exploring her Aboriginal roots.

Located on the Muskeg Lake Urban reserve in Saskatoon (which is in my riding), Thursday Night Productions was officially launched in September 1999.

More good news in the Aboriginal community, Mr. Speaker.

Some more examples of good news and what we'll be working with First Nations and Metis people. The development of a Metis and off-reserve First Nation strategy is an important first step in meeting that commitment.

The report and the recommendations of the commissions on medicare will require careful consideration. We will listen, Mr. Speaker, we will listen to the feedback from communities and stakeholders and make appropriate changes to ensure our health care system works well for the people of Saskatchewan.

Government recognizes the links between quality of our environment, strength of our economy, and the health of our people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Legislation will ensure that the oil and gas wells are properly decommissioned and reclaimed. We will focus our attention on wind power as a safe, renewable energy resource, and on energy conservations.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken on some of the issues that I think are important in Saskatchewan. I've highlighted some of the areas where I think the opposition is falling down in its breadth of ideas. And I'd like to say that I'm very happy to be part of a government that is responsive and effective, government which is dedicated to providing responsible and effective administration. Saskatchewan citizens expect and deserve no less.

Government will continue to demonstrate openness, accountability, and sound fiscal management, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have in this province the vision, the ideas, and the people to connect us to a future filled with promise and prosperity. Let us connect to that future beginning today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In conclusion, I'd like to again quote from the Throne Speech, and it goes something like this. Quote:

The success that we enjoy rests on the dedication and courage of people who dreamed of creating a society where the future would be as limitless as the very skies themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Mr. Speaker, we built a foundation in the last nine years under the leadership of Mr. Roy Romanow. I'm very happy to switch gears and build upon that foundation under the present Premier. So for that reason I will be supporting the main motion and opposing the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(16:30)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to stand in the House and add a few comments on behalf of my background, my experience, and my constituency, but in particular some comments pertinent to the debate at hand and that is the Throne Speech.

Before I do that I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment to the position you're in, and also to the

Deputy Speaker for his appointment just recently. We look forward to working with both of you.

One of the things that I wanted to comment, Mr. Speaker, was about . . . from the Throne Speech was, as I indicated in there, it is a spring of the season for us. They missed the date a little bit, but nevertheless it is springtime. And springtime certainly is a time for optimism. People look forward to this time of the year.

From my background in agriculture and farming, it was the time that we look forward to doing what we had to do with the optimism of certainly a bountiful crop coming up into the future. We knew if we did the right things at the right time, it would work out, and we would get the momentum of the seasons moving with us.

And I think it's on that point that I find most frustrating with this particular Throne Speech. Because I could not see in that Throne Speech any of the vision that we need. I couldn't see a focus of where we need to go. And really that is the part of the Throne Speech that I think is the most important, Mr. Speaker.

It is the opportunity of this government to lay before us and the province the direction that they think they want to go. It was a great opportunity for the government, the new Premier, to show us that there was a vision in place.

I failed to see, in almost all areas, where we were going to get a fresh vision and a fresh sense of opportunity for moving on into this particular year coming up.

That opportunity is a very important word, and I think it's a word that people in Saskatchewan desperately need. They want to embrace that particular word, that phrase, whether it's an opportunity for themselves, whether it's an opportunity for themselves in terms of their business, opportunity for their family certainly, and certainly they're looking for an opportunity in the economy that needs to be addressed in this province.

We've all talked about opportunity. We've all talked about the economy. We've talked about where we need to go in this province, and I really feel in my mind that we have an opportunity in this province. There is a very strong potential in this province. All we have to do is make sure that we can direct . . . put the right conditions in place and the potential of this province can be realized. And people are looking forward to the signals that will generate that particular direction.

The direction and those signals were sadly missing in the Throne Speech. Those signals are so badly needed because this is what people build their hopes, build their personal dreams on, and how they want to move ahead in making the decisions.

Really all they want to do is to develop some kind of confidence that we're moving ahead, and a confidence in something that is refreshing and new, and something that when they look at, maybe hasn't been tried before but there's enough confidence to move ahead that this can be done.

It's like people are moving along in a bus, and the province is a bus. Now I know that somebody else has used a reference to a bus in this province. And I think people want to move along

with this bus going in a particular direction, certainly to the destination that each of us feel that the bus has a potential of reaching.

And we have to be looking ahead. The leader of . . . or the driver of the bus has to be certainly focused on where it's going, and not looking in the rear-view mirror of this bus and looking to see where we've come from.

We noticed in this particular budget that the driver of the bus is looking back from past years — last year in particular — and building and trying to indicate that this is a new direction and something that will give us confidence.

Well I'm afraid that people in that bus were not aware of a great success at this point in following last year's road map and following that particular direction that the bus was going.

After all, I have five grandchildren. I have a son with families and now five granddaughters in this province. And all I'm asking is to see that they have an opportunity to move ahead in this province and stay in this province and be able to fulfil their destiny here in this province without having to move. If they wish to move that will be their choice certainly.

But I would like to see an opportunity continuing in this province for a long period of time — sustained opportunity. And it's because of the young people in this province that I think we really have to put our heads together and make sure that we try and achieve that.

Some of the statistics that have been displayed and some of the data that has been talked about in the legislature so far would indicate that the young people in particular might have a very difficult job in trying to remain in this province. The numbers that we've been seeing would show a bulge of the population certainly up to the 20- to 23-year-old range. We also see a bulge in the population from the 60 and on range.

The group of people that would be represented from the age of 20 to roughly 60, there is a deficit in this province compared to other provinces. That is the group of people that have looked at the opportunity potential of this province and have said we think that we will move somewhere else, we will try to achieve our objectives and our opportunities there. And it's very unfortunate because they are the ones that we need to be the taxpayers and contribute significantly both economically and socially to our province.

That is a real problem that it exists. And I want to use an example or two if I could of where this opportunity seems to be for these younger people.

I live in Lloydminster as you know, Mr. Speaker. That is my constituency. Lloydminster is a very unique situation. As you know the border between Saskatchewan and Alberta runs right down the middle. And it is very difficult for me not to make a comparison within my city, let alone between our two provinces, of the difference between the numbers of people living on either side of the border, where the opportunities are, where the investments are made. I have to make that observation because it's in my city particularly.

One of the things that was done recently was a PST exemption in Lloydminster on the Saskatchewan side. And I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for making that exemption very recently. That is going to be a great assistance to our city in Lloydminster.

The point being that in order to attract businesses onto the Saskatchewan side in development there, we have to be competitive. And in order to be competitive, that concession had to be made. And like I said, the city of Lloydminster, the chamber of commerce, and the people that live there are thankful for that exemption. Now I think we can expect to see some more development.

The Lloydminster area generally, Mr. Speaker, is moving along and developing very rapidly, as you're aware, primarily driven by the petroleum industry — there's no doubt about that. But it has become a very mature city as well. It has the largest canola crushing plant in Canada located in Lloydminster and is drawing canola from a very large radius indeed.

It has not only the petroleum industry but it has the Bi-Provincial upgrader, which is a very significant investment and a very significant employer in our area. And it's also an instrument that has allowed the oil industry to survive through the very peaks and valleys of the cyclic . . . normal cycles of petroleum prices. The upgrader provides a destination and price stabilization on that industry. Very effective.

And also in conjunction of course we have the cogeneration electrical plant there that is providing a very significant amount of energy to Saskatchewan. There is a . . . Nelson Homes is a very respected and a company that produces a lot of homes and employment for our area, and it's well known across both Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Now what I'm saying is that the city of and the region around Lloydminster is doing very well. But I can't help making the comparisons as to where the new investments are and where people are living.

At one time Lloydminster was considered to be a Saskatchewan city, and if you lived on the other side of the border, it was considered something like maybe across the track. Well here today, two-thirds of the population is on the Alberta side, one-third is on the Saskatchewan side, and that is changing daily. We're seeing people making the decision to move from one side of the city to the other. And those decisions are made, like I said, every day.

I've been getting e-mails from people. In fact two came in today. One of them was from one of my constituents who was talking about the taxes in Lloydminster. His statement in an e-mail to me was that he was going to have to consider making a move because of the lack of opportunity.

The other person that wrote to me was somebody by the name of Elizabeth Gauthier, and I wanted to just make a quick quote if I could, Mr. Speaker. She was telling me, and I quote:

The different situations are chasing all of our neighbours to the Alberta side. I'm not only disappointed, but also afraid that the investment in equity that I have in my home may

not be realized if nobody wants us on this particular side.

When I came to Lloyd I actually wanted to stay on the Saskatchewan side since we moved from Saskatoon. Now I feel that the decision may have been a mistake.

That's an example of the kind of reaction we're getting from that side of the border.

Now I'm using those examples for a reason, Mr. Speaker. The example is that whether you can document the difference in tax, you can document the difference in health care costs, whether you can document the cost of automobile registration, the fact is that people are moving to that side of the border. Why would that be if in fact it is so good on one side of the border?

We have to learn from what they're doing. We shouldn't be criticizing them. And when we're talking about a comparison in that scenario, we should be thinking of that as a model and maybe extrapolating what the reason is for right across Saskatchewan in terms of the economy and reasons for that kind of thing.

People are moving to Alberta. And not only are they moving to Alberta, but they are taking their earning capacity with them. Also people are moving in their retirement age and taking their investments with them. And I'm afraid that just won't come back.

(16:45)

There's an equivalent of the town of . . . the city of Humboldt moving into Alberta every month. Their population is going to be increasing to, at their estimate, to 6 million within 25 years. That's their projection of . . . and their vision. Whether that's right or wrong, whether it's true that there's a better rate on our side than others in terms of taxes, registration . . . car registrations, and health costs, the fact is, people are moving. And I think that's a lesson that we have to learn.

When we talk about the signals that I was hopefully looking for in the Throne Speech, and I think a lot of the people in Saskatchewan were looking for, those signals are so important because those kinds of decisions are made, and therefore confidence is built up as I talked about that before.

When we talk about agriculture for instance, Mr. Speaker, and we spent a great deal of time talking about agriculture and I won't spend a great deal more time, other than just to emphasize one or two quick points that I think will make the point about the signals and the direction.

What I noticed when we were debating, there was a call from the opposition . . . for people opposite, asking us what our program was, what our vision was. And that was astounding to me, because the government was elected to put those kind of programs forward, and they're just not there. We have asked time and time again, right from when AIDA was cancelled back in 1992, those kinds of things; those programs and safety nets in this case, have just not come forward. So where was the vision and where's the direction that came out of the Throne Speech.

Well we saw the conservation cover plan was an initiative

under agriculture, and I'm not sure that that's the proper vision that our agriculture needs. We also saw things like research and development, and I think those kinds of inputs are critical and they're needed in agriculture. And I'm looking forward to the budget speech to see more detail as to where the research and development are going.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, is to expand on a vision that is workable and a vision that will take us into the next century.

I've spent a long time, many years, almost 40 years in the grain . . . in the farming and the grain industry, one way or another. And I have found that this . . . every year, except for a very few, every year has been a crisis year one way or another. There has been a demand for payments because of whatever the situation is at that particular time. What we're asking for now is a payment to get us through yet one more crisis, and I think we have to do that. The sustainability of agriculture is very important in this province.

But there are other things that should be brought forward in the vision in agriculture so that confidence can start to be built toward where we want to go. Let me give you an example. In my constituency we are fortunate that we have the ability to grow a lot of special crops. That seems to be working well, although the prices need to be adjusted again, and for future work that has to be a consideration. But we also have the ability to maintain large herds of cattle and livestock, particularly livestock, and some hogs as well. There's an area where there has been an opportunity for farmers to be able to sustain themselves without total dependence on cereal grains, for instance. It is the cereal grains that seem to be causing us the biggest problem in terms of prices and sustainability. And there's lots of reasons for that and we've talked about them in our debates.

One of the opportunities that we have also is the ability to have, to sustain exotic herds of cattle, for instance elk and bison. The elk are certainly under some pressure now with the CWD, or the chronic wasting disease, which is somewhat related to the mad cow disease that Europe was really quite worried about, but it's been controlled. They've taken the industry, they have utterly controlled CWD, and it's recovering very well.

And I think the important part is that there's an area where there can be value added. There is a meat processing plant in my hometown; it's called Diamond 7 Meats. They are wanting to put in a processing plant for elk meat — that will in fact be a recognized slaughter and a processing plant that will be both recognized provincially and federally — so that they can then start acquiring elk from right across both Saskatchewan and Alberta and maybe from elsewhere too.

They have solved the problem in that industry and they want to move ahead with value added. Diamond 7 Meats is getting very, very little support in trying to move ahead with this initiative. He is virtually frustrated to the point where he is either going to give up or he's going to try to go somewhere else where the business opportunity is much more friendly.

There's lots of those kinds of examples. But that's the vision of where we need to go in that value adding. We need to encourage that and not put regulatory roadblocks or regulations

in place to stymie that. That's the kind of vision that I was hoping to see in the Throne Speech.

In another area that I would like to make a comment on would be the area, again around my particular constituency, that has to compete in this very unique situation so close to the border.

In my hometown of Maidstone, we recently did an inventory of the businesses that are there. We did an inventory of the businesses that were recently there and where they've gone. And as you can imagine they have disappeared. There's about a dozen of these businesses have disappeared out of my hometown of Maidstone and have re-established themselves in a area of Lloydminster, of course on the other side of the border.

The reason again — we can debate the reason — but the fact is there's a dozen businesses that have gone and likely not to come back.

In the Throne Speech we heard some idea that work was going to be done on highways. Highways, I think, are a very important part of our economy. Highways and transportation are certainly a economic tool that we have to look at if we're going to develop an economy, and I was very pleased to see that there was the direction in the Throne Speech of advancing the date of completion of one of the Trans-Canada Highways.

I guess my question would be: if that's the vision, why is the vision applied to just one area of the province? There's a Trans-Canada Highway through my constituency as well. It's being worked on. There has been some development, but it's not moving ahead nearly at the rate that the Department of Highways and Transportation had indicated it would. Hopefully they can pick up the pace, but the fact is that it's still going to take many, many years before it gets completed. We need a vision that the transportation link is in fact an economic development link. And that was missing from that Throne Speech.

The problem with — also in that Throne Speech — was that the, there was a reference to working with the rural municipalities, trying to put forward an agreement with them. I'm very interested to see how that evolves and what kind of a response they're getting. Because it would appear that the government again is trying to download some of their responsibility working with the RMs (rural municipality), but downloading some of that responsibility once again. Unfortunately that's, that's all too common a situation.

When we look at, for instance, the taxes in terms of, again under this downloading heading, there was a commitment to cut the family taxes by \$1,000. That was last year's commitment and I think that's, that's a very good objective. But what do people see? What is the signal that they get?

Last year they found that even though the promise was there, the vision was supposed to be there. In practical terms the tax was expanded and they found that there was actually an increase in tax. And so people are starting to say; gee, if that was the vision, the direction, what's really happening to that?

So I'm looking forward to that because I think it's been shown

that if you do in fact reduce the taxes as the Minister of Finance is promising to do, and in fact what this Throne Speech had talked about — although it's the taxes that were promised a year ago — those are the things, those taxes are the things that will drive the economy.

And that has been shown. As an example, the tax considerations given to the film industry has in fact spurred an advancement in that industry of some consequence. And I think that's an example of where we have to go. We have to keep reducing those particular taxes because they do have an economic generation and that has to be part of the vision. And I didn't see any fresh vision there at all.

One other comment, if I could, Mr. Speaker and that would be about the economy generally. I'm very concerned that the economy is very dependent upon the vision, direction and confidence that is in place.

The Throne Speech should have been the place for people to say yes, I can buy into that, I can see where we're going. I hope that will be corrected with the budget speech, but I really have a problem believing that it might.

In order to have a thriving economy we need to have people here and we need to have people that are paying the taxes. And actually, we have actually lost jobs this year even though there was an indication that we gained.

And I want to just quote briefly from the *Sask Trends Monitor* of the February edition that the employment actually reduced in Saskatchewan in that particular month. And compared to Canada, when employment gained 2 per cent and Manitoba gained 1.5 per cent, we did not. We were minus .9 per cent.

A lot of those details in the economy, Mr. Speaker, really indicate that things are not going the direction that we had hoped and certainly not in the direction that the government has promised in the Throne Speech. So I'm disappointed in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to close by indicating that I will certainly be supporting the amendment to the Throne Speech because I think it is a valid amendment.

But in fact, Mr. Speaker, I would at this time move to adjourn debate so that we can continue next day.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.

