

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I stand to present a petition on behalf of the residents of southwest Saskatchewan — residents who are concerned about the implications of the Saskatchewan EMS (emergency medical services) development project report.

And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents from Gull Lake, Shaunavon, and Eastend.

I so present.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are concerned about the EMS service in Saskatchewan.

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.

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

And this is signed by constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy, Radville and Weyburn.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Clerk:** — According to order the following petition has been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) it is hereby read and received:

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

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

To the Minister of Agriculture: how many times has the Farm Support Review Committee met in the current fiscal year; and how much has been expended for committee

costs and per diems in the current fiscal year.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure this morning to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all my colleagues here in the Assembly, 16 students from the great school in Springside, Saskatchewan.

And those students are accompanied by some great people, the teachers: A. Morgotch, Mrs. Banks, Mrs. Weber, Mrs. Madson, Mrs. Larson, and Mrs. Monka.

I want to welcome them here personally and would like all my colleagues to join me in welcoming them as well.

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

**Hon. Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House an additional supervisor that we have with us today, seated in the west gallery. We have the father of Lori Rosom, one of our pages. Don Rosom is here to help us supervise Lori today, and I ask all members to welcome Mr. Rosom to the legislature.

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

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

#### Expansion of Consumers' Co-operative Refinery

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And more good news for Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Harper:** — I rise today to advise the House that the largest expansion in the 65-year history of the Consumers' Co-operative Refinery is beginning — \$265 million of investment in the city of Regina increases the output of the refinery by 40 per cent.

Right now construction crews are busy on the site putting in 1,300 cement pillars to stabilize the foundation of the expanded refining units. The combined workforce at the expansion site will reach 400 later this year.

Completion of this project is targeted for September of 2002, with start-up in October and the first oil flow later that month.

Consumers' Co-operative Refinery will hire an additional 60 staff, bringing the total of employment up to 520.

I am proud of our co-operative movement, Mr. Speaker. More investment, more jobs, more people, more good news, and still so little time.

Thank you.

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

### Melfort Youth Wins Skating Championship

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate Nicole Watt of Melfort. On January 20, Nicole, who is only 15 years of age, competed at the Senior Ladies National Skating Championship in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Despite the fact that Nicole suffers from juvenile arthritis, Nicole placed second and brought the silver medal home to Melfort. The crowds loved her and she is viewed as a young lady who we'll certainly be seeing a lot of in the skating circuit.

Nicole travels to Saskatoon for her training, as well as continuing her high academic standing at the Melfort Collegiate. She has the most beautiful smile and always maintains a positive attitude that she will do her best and let the judges decide.

At the Four Continents Championship in Salt Lake City, Nicole's strong skate wasn't quite enough to earn her a berth at the World Championship. Nicole has, however, been named as an alternate.

Nicole is the daughter of Doug and Maxine Watt; her proud grandparents are Bob and Imogene Watt and Ross and Orma Taylor — all of Melfort.

Would the Assembly join me today in congratulating this incredible young lady.

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

### World Water Day

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, everyone in Saskatchewan is aware of the tragedy which befell Walkerton, Ontario when contaminated water took lives and threatened the health of residents in that community. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan recognized World Water Day yesterday with the announcement of an additional \$1.2 million to improve the quality of drinking water for the people of the province.

Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management announced spending of \$720,000 of these targeted funds as part of its water quality program. The Saskatchewan Water Corporation will conduct technical assessment of the province's water treatment systems with the goal of enhancing its rural water quality programs for families who rely on private wells for their water supply.

Saskatchewan Health has also allocated over half a million dollars to improve the water-testing capacity of the provincial laboratory to ensure that both chemical and biological contaminants are not present in the province's drinking water.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues — the ministers of Health, Environment, and Sask Water — are all working together to ensure the residents of Saskatchewan have safe and high quality water.

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

### Walt Disney Characters

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Sunday is Oscar night and the Liberals are obviously getting very excited about it. They've decided to put on their own little tribute to Walt Disney. The member for North Battleford is quoting Thumper. The Liberal president is calling his party Goofy and, Mr. Speaker, I guess it's no wonder Doc is Grumpy.

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

### New Doctors in Rosetown

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have some good news in the riding of the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. The good news is that two new doctors have been officially welcomed to Rosetown. Dr. Clint and Dr. Marguerite McDonald arrived in Rosetown on February 2 and were welcomed by the town on March 7.

The McDonalds arrived from their home in Durban, South Africa, where they've been practising medicine for the past four years. Young educated people like this arriving in our province further enhance our success.

Both doctors are specialists and have been granted privileges to continue the use of their specialities.

We want to welcome the McDonalds to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and trust they will enjoy working in one of the best health care systems in the world, and in a province that, despite the claims of the official opposition, is vibrant, thriving, and attracting many young well-qualified people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Men's Senior A Hockey Championship

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after a long winter such as the one we're experiencing and which is reluctantly coming to an end, we all know the importance of winter sports. And that's particularly true in small-town Saskatchewan where the hockey arena is the centre of winter activity — where in the arena many towns have minor hockey teams which participate and bring fans into the arena, where they have figure skating clubs, and also many towns have senior hockey teams which seems to the centre of attention in many small towns in Saskatchewan.

We all know of many, many rivalries that have developed between towns because of sports and particularly senior hockey.

I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, today that I can confidently say that the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood will certainly be the home of the Men's Senior A Hockey Championship, even though the final series, the championship series, will only begin on Sunday when the Raymore Rockets and the Cupar Canucks begin the best of three series on Sunday evening in Raymore.

These two teams rose to the top. They were among 19 teams

that entered the provincial playdowns back in early February with teams from towns such as Meadow Lake, Kindersley, Weyburn, Churchbridge, Outlook, and Kinistino, to mention a few towns that had teams participating.

Interestingly, three of the four semifinalists in senior A came from Last Mountain-Touchwood, with Southey being a participant. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to wish both teams the best of luck in huge crowds at their home games. Thank you.

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

#### Health Care Centre Expansion in Gull Lake

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More good news for Saskatchewan, in particular rural Saskatchewan.

I rise today to congratulate the residents of Gull Lake and area for their successful expansion of their health care services in their community. Gull Lake has a new addition to their health care centre. The addition was opened in early December, Mr. Speaker. It was built onto the Gull Lake and District Special Care Home. The addition was made possible by a local community contribution of more than \$600,000, Mr. Speaker, and a \$500,000 contribution from the provincial government.

With the new facility . . . health centre and special home under one roof, 24-hour services such as convalescent care, palliative care, and observation are now available in Gull Lake. Previous to this opening, residents had to be transferred to Swift Current or Herbert for these services, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to these expanded services, the health centre will provide and coordinate emergency trauma responses, home care services, public health nursing, X-ray services, and 33 other long-term . . . and other health care services, Mr. Speaker. We will also use the facility to serve local residents in many ways as special health care professionals come to the community.

Previous to this situation, Mr. Speaker, residents of Gull Lake had to travel for many of these services. It's good news for rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Volunteers Working in Brazil

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about a constituent of mine, whom I have the good fortune to say is also my good friend and colleague. This past January, Clark Puckett of Davidson travelled to northeastern Brazil as a volunteer with the Rainbow of Hope for Children. This non-governmental organization, whose members come from across Western Canada, raise funds through charitable events and deliver these resources, along with volunteer services, to the poor and struggling people of Brazil.

This mission, with Mr. Puckett as part of an eight-member team, landed in the city of Maceio, home to nearly 1 million residents — a large portion of which live in the over 200 slums where extreme poverty has left families near starvation and without hope.

Guided by team Al Gerwing of Lake Lenore, Mr. Puckett's group delivered much needed relief to poor families. Mr. Puckett indicated that living conditions he encountered would be unimaginable here in Canada. He states clearly that the aid from Canada and any form goes a long way to helping these people and that it is warmly appreciated by people who are largely ignored by their own government.

(10:15)

Mr. Puckett has informed me that Saskatchewan ranks as number one province in Canada in the high number of volunteer relief members that travel around the world to deliver aid to those in need.

I congratulate Mr. Puckett on his successful mission to Brazil and wish him well in his volunteer efforts in the future.

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

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Health Care Issues

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

Mr. Minister, on Tuesday the people of Saskatchewan got a sense of the NDP (New Democratic Party) vision for health care. And to nobody's surprise it turns out that you don't have one. No vision, no plan, no clue about fixing the mess that you've created and no intention of honouring the health care promises that your government made in the 1999 election platform.

Mr. Minister, the NDP's 1999 election platform promised to hire 500 new doctors and nurses. Well it's been almost two years. Mr. Minister, how many nurses has the NDP hired since you made that promise two years ago?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, we here in Saskatchewan are proud of the accessible quality health care system that we have. We are going to work together with all of the professionals in this province, and I would like to say there are tens of thousands of highly educated people who are all working to do a very good job to provide our health care.

We know that we have some challenges in recruiting people because they are North American challenges — they are right across the whole of the country. We have increased our nursing education positions, we have worked with the districts to find more people, we're recruiting people around the world. We are going to continue to do the best that we can for all the people of Saskatchewan and we would ask those members opposite to come on to the positive side of the fence, not the negative side.

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

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty obvious that the best this government can do simply isn't good enough. I didn't hear a number. Mr. Speaker, the minister gives some more worn-out old NDP rhetoric. And the truth is you're not hiring doctors and nurses; in fact you're

chasing them out of the province. And the truth is in addition to that you're laying off nurses.

Mr. Speaker, in the headlines you see things like nurses axed. There is a story from *The StarPhoenix* that illustrates that point. Remember that, Mr. Minister? Just eight months ago the headlines were saying 110 nurses were going to be laid off as part of 170 health care professionals.

Mr. Minister, is that your vision for health care? Doing the best you can simply isn't good enough. Why are you letting nurses and doctors leave this province? In fact you're chasing them out.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, with the help of that member opposite and his colleagues — that's exactly what they're doing. Because the people, the people in this province do not want to hear the negative comments there.

Last year there were 160 nurses . . . Mr. Speaker, last year there were 180 students in the class of nursing — this year there are 273.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — That's a large increase. We are responding to the requests of the people to train more people. We're recruiting more people. Give us a bit of help and put some positive sense about what we're doing in Saskatchewan, not the gloom and doom we're hearing here.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't believe my ears. Only the NDP Health minister would suggest that he's counting on the official opposition to run his department for him.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it would . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The members will allow the member to put his question.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, it would do the member well to listen and to read that *Hansard* transcript of my delivery to the Speech from the Throne yesterday because he might get some hints as what to do in this case, because he obviously is bankrupt for ideas of his own.

But let's take a look at another plan. Mr. Speaker, in 1999 the government opposite said they were going to cut waiting lists by 30 per cent but two years later it's getting worse. Waiting lists are not shrinking — they're growing. In fact Saskatchewan has the longest hospital waiting lists in the entire country.

Is this the NDP vision? The longest waiting lists in Canada? Mr. Minister, are you going to ask us to fix that too? What's your plan for fixing the waiting lists problem?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, any talk of bankruptcy in this province always references back to the forerunners of the members opposite — that's why we have a lot of difficulties in this province. And what we are . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Members will allow the minister to answer the question.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years we have made some special efforts to deal with the wait list question. What we do know, in emergencies there is no wait list. In urgent care, there's a very, very short wait list because you can get into the hospital right away. In the elective care area, there are some wait lists, and we have some concerns obviously about those people that have to wait as well.

We are working on that. We're part of a western Canadian initiative which includes all four Western provinces on addressing how these waiting lists are categorized. We're coming up with a common protocol. We are working with the professionals who know this — that's the doctors, the administrators, the nurses — and we are going to continue to solve this problem.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that the minister doesn't have all the tabs in his briefing book yet, Mr. Speaker. But I really would hope that he would at least read some of the headlines and talk to the medical professionals. And I quote from *The StarPhoenix* on February 15 in which it says surgery waiting lists grow longer:

Waits for (the) most elective surgeries — particularly joint replacement and gynecological procedures — continue to climb due to a shortage of nurses and anesthetists, says a Saskatoon District Health vice-president.

That's the professionals that he's talking about working with.

Mr. Speaker, unless you deal with the serious manpower issues in health care, you're never going to get these waiting lists down. And if you want us to show us the way . . . want us to show you the way, we're prepared to do that because we did it in our position paper.

Mr. Minister, if you need some more help just ask for it, but don't continue to blame your own inaction for a lack of . . . shortages and waiting lists.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, we know that there is some flipping and flopping on that side as it relates to agriculture. We also know that there's some flipping and flopping as it relates to health. On the 15th of March your . . . the Leader of the Opposition ended up saying it's not so bad to end up with private MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) systems within this whole country.

What we know is that the star candidate of the Saskatchewan

Party in the Saskatoon Riversdale by-election ended up going sideways on the opposition Health critic.

And so I would say, Mr. Speaker, let's get some clear message from what they're doing. We have a clear idea of what we're going to do. We have the best health care system in Canada and we're going to make it better.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question again for the minister. It certainly is obvious that he doesn't understand what the issues are in health care. It doesn't matter if we get another dozen MRIs in this province, unless we have people to run them, they'll just sit in mothballs.

Mr. Speaker, here's another question for the Minister of Health. During the 1999 election, your Liberal coalition partner, the Education minister, promised to strengthen regional health services. Remember that, Mr. Minister? There's at least one way to describe the government's attempt to regional health care reform, and that's been a massive failure. The people in every part of this province are paying the price. In Prince Albert, in Yorkton, and Swift Current, beds are closing, nurses are leaving, waiting lists are growing.

Mr. Minister, what's your plan for taking care of the regional health centres in this province, or are you going to continue to chase out professionals and ask the official opposition to solve it for you?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, what we do know in this health system in this province, is that we are trying to make the health care accessible. I would remind the member from Melfort that he now has renal dialysis in his community.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — That's an important step forward as we move out services to where people are. We also want to make sure that we have quality care in this province. The other thing is that we know that people who have actually experienced our medical system have a very high rate of approval of what we do, because we do have a very good system.

I would ask the member opposite to help us build a better system by getting rid of the doom and gloom kind of message that they're sending, and working together with us as we build the best health system in Canada.

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

#### SaskPower Rates

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in December SaskPower presented a proposal to the province's utility rate review panel. They were requesting a 3.25 per cent average increase across the province. In some communities, in Saskatoon and in my hometown of Swift Current, the increase would be 8 per cent. And we understand, Mr. Speaker, that the panel will be announcing this decision and

recommendation to the cabinet later this morning.

Mr. Speaker, it's pretty well known, homeowners and businesses across the province are not looking forward to paying higher power bills as well as the exorbitant increases in the . . . in their energy bills that they've had to deal with over the winter months.

My question is for the Minister Responsible for SaskPower. Has he received the final report from the panel; and if so, Mr. Speaker, what is the rate hike they are recommending that SaskPower receive?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've just received the report. We'll be reviewing it and cabinet will be making a decision in due course.

I do want to take the opportunity to thank the panels for the good work that they've done in speaking to Mr. Lacoursiere this morning. The issue of rate reviews is a very complex matter, much more complex than probably I or the public understand. And I want to again thank them and compliment them for the good work that they've done.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when residents, farmers, and businesses in Alberta were told that the price of their power was going up, their government stepped in to provide some relief. Each month this year, Mr. Speaker, residential and farm consumers in that province will receive a \$40 rebate. It'll be knocked directly off their power bills, Mr. Speaker.

SaskPower last year rang up \$114 million profit, and consumers in the province are asking why with profits this large are we being asked to pay more, when they look next door and see another government offering people a rebate instead of simply passing it on.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Members will allow the member to put his question.

**Mr. Wall:** — To the minister, Mr. Speaker: will your government be offering a rebate on SaskPower rates to Saskatchewan consumers? Have you considered that option?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to thank the panel for the good work that they've done.

But I do want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that SaskPower has had its rates frozen since 1996 — that's five years, Mr. Speaker. What other private utility, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member, what other private utility has had their rates frozen for five years? None of them, Mr. Speaker.

You look at Alberta, Mr. Speaker, you look at any other jurisdiction in Canada and for that matter across the world and, Mr. Speaker, it is only reasonable, I believe, that SaskPower

should ask for a rate increase. And, Mr. Speaker, we will be considering that proposal that the panel has presented to me this morning, in due course.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to read you this statement from a member of the NDP government on the issue of utility rates, and I'm quoting:

These families have kids who need clothes, they have mortgages, they have car payments, and the financial question becomes a stress on the family. And in that kind of situation what is this government doing? Well it's reaching deeper and deeper into the pocketbooks, the purses, the wallets, and the bank accounts of Saskatchewan families.

Higher and higher utilities meaning and less and less and less for Saskatchewan families.

Who said that, Mr. Speaker? Well it was a current Premier. The date was March 6, 1988.

(10:30)

My question to the Premier is this: was that statement just hollow politics or are you willing to walk your talk in response to the panel's recommendations later this day?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you when that statement was made. It was made when these people across were in government.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — That's when it was made.

Mr. Speaker, what is the solution of the Saskatchewan Party to public utilities? I'll tell you what the solution is, Mr. Speaker. It's to follow the path of their friends in Alberta — deregulation and privatization.

They want to talk about energy price increases. They should look to their friends in Alberta whom we hear about on a daily basis in this House where, according to the *Report on Business*, March edition, some industry in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, has seen their rates increase 250 per cent — 250 per cent. That's what we get with the kind of plans they bring to this province.

Mr. Speaker, right here, right here in the *Saskatchewan Bulletin* of the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers Federation), the Leader of the Opposition is quoted as saying he'll be, quote, "selling some of the Crown corporations" . . . (inaudible) . . . Crowns . . . (inaudible) . . . for sale.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier mentions Alberta. In our two provinces, two very different things have had a very negative effect on utility rates in our two provinces. In Alberta, it was arguably deregulation. In Saskatchewan, it's the NDP

government, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is this. SaskPower rates have gone up a total of 26.7 per cent under the NDP without considering this latest request. This, from a government and a Premier who, as Minister of the Crowns in 1994, said and I quote again, "rate increases in the future will be tied to the actual needs of the utilities, rather than any other consideration."

Well, Mr. Premier, with profits of \$114 million consumers don't believe SaskPower needs an increase. Will the Premier stand in his place today and justify an increase like that to Saskatchewan people?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the party opposite called for a rate review commission, which has been put in place.

The rate review commission has done its work. I understand it's reporting this morning. The minister responsible will be bringing this forward to cabinet and cabinet, in due course, will make its decision, Mr. Speaker.

But I tell you the decisions we're not going to be making. We're not going to the Alberta style of deregulation in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — No matter how much it might be recommended by members opposite, we are not going to privatize our utilities, no matter how much it . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — I'll tell you what we're not doing, Mr. Speaker. We're not taking the advice of the Saskatchewan Party and going the route of deregulation. We're not taking the advice of the Saskatchewan Party and going to privatizing our utilities. We are going to provide, as we have in past, solid utilities to the people of Saskatchewan at reasonable cost.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear the recommendations of members of the Saskatchewan Party and others that we should be looking at the deregulation of Alberta, I again refer you and members of the House to the *Report on Business* report in March where, quote:

A business person in Alberta says of that plan and that situation, I could have picked three monkeys from the Calgary Zoo and they could have done a better job with deregulation than this government (referring to the Alberta government).

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not about to put the monkeys in charge of the utilities of this province.

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

### Saskatchewan Indian and Gaming Authority Political Contributions

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Gaming minister. Mr. Speaker, in the Fall 2000 Report, the Provincial Auditor stated that SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) should not use any of its gaming revenue to make political contributions.

The Saskatchewan Party revealed that the NDP had received nearly \$10,000 in improper donations from SIGA, and the Liberals have received over \$5,000. The NDP promptly returned this money but the Liberals did not. They said it wasn't a priority and that they would deal with it sometime after the November 27 federal election.

Mr. Speaker, the election has been over for some time now. But we have heard nothing about the Liberals returning this money. Madam Minister, have you followed up on this matter? Has the Liberal Party returned this money to SIGA?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt the issue with respect to the expenditures of SIGA was of some concern to the people of Saskatchewan, and it is. This government has been working very closely with the Provincial Auditor to ensure that new rules and new regulations and new administration will ensure that those funds are properly expended.

Mr. Speaker, the policy of this government is to ensure that due diligence is done. Due diligence has been done. And, Mr. Speaker, it's my role today to speak to government policy. That is government policy with respect to SIGA and that issue.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, I would appreciate an answer from you this time. You'd think that after all the revelations about SIGA that came out last spring, you would be paying a little closer attention.

Why don't you ask your colleague, the Minister of Education? Why don't you ask the member from Melville who used to rant and rave every day in this House about improper political donations?

Madam Minister, what steps are you taking to ensure the Liberal Party repays the improper donations they received from SIGA?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, this is quite clearly a Liberal Party issue. This government is here to answer policy with respect to government administration, and that's what we intend to do.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, this opposition stands here today again, not focusing on the issues that the people of

Saskatchewan are looking towards them for assistance and some leadership in.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would want to ask those members, why aren't they asking . . . or answering to what their position is with respect to CFIP (Canada Farm Income Program) — are they in or out? Are they going to privatize the Crowns or aren't they going to privatize the Crowns?

Doom and gloom with respect to a growing economy daily in this House. Dirty tricks. Campaigns that they lost soundly two by-elections in, because they wouldn't focus on the issues.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, this government is focused on a number of things, and one of them is growing the Saskatchewan economy. And we're going to continue to do it.

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

**The Speaker:** — Before we proceed, I would just remind all members to put their questions to the Chair and through the Chair.

### Out-of-Province Investments by Crown Corporations

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, except for one ill-fated venture trying to sell insurance to Montana, the late Tommy Douglas used the Crown corporations of this province to build services and the economy in Saskatchewan.

My question for the Minister of Crown Corporations is: how much do the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) Crowns intend to invest external to Saskatchewan over the next five years?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — The member will well know, having served on this side of the House, that the Crown corporations are integral to Saskatchewan's economy.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's Crown utilities employ over 10,000 people in our province, Mr. Speaker. They employ people across the province; they contribute to each and every economy in most small towns in all parts of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we value our Crowns. We intend to keep our Crowns here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hillson:** — Mr. Speaker, my question was not about Saskatchewan and the Crowns' role in Saskatchewan. My question was about the Crowns' role in the Philippines, Chile, Trinidad, Uruguay, Australia, and on and on.

The NDP is fond of referring to Saskatchewan people as the shareholders of their Crown corporations. And it's true that the only way the Crown corporations can make money is either through the utility rates they charge us — Saskatchewan consumers — or by floating debt.

Does the Minister of CIC think that the shareholders of the Crown corporations have a right to know the investment plans of their Crown corporations? Do they have a right to say as to whether their utility rates will be used for global capitalist

investment around the world or building this province? Do you think we should have CIC staff scoping out investment opportunities around the globe by flying around the world?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, in a poll recently conducted — I think it was through *The Leader-Post* — it said that over 80 per cent of the public of Saskatchewan want to keep our Crowns and they want them to flourish and survive, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member well knows that in a deregulated environment here in Saskatchewan, we now have many private companies here in Saskatchewan competing with our Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, if we were to employ the method that the member opposite suggests, that suggests that Saskatchewan utilities should not be allowed to receive any revenue from any investments outside of our borders, it's a sure recipe and remedy for the demise of our Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I say the public of Saskatchewan wants to keep our Crowns. We will do whatever we can to ensure that the Crowns are maintained, that they are strong and viable, and if that means that we look for other opportunities outside of our borders, that's what the Crown corporations will do, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Farm Safety Guidelines

**Hon. Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. National Farm Safety Week has come to a close for another year.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order.

**Hon. Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. National Farm Safety Week has come to a close for another year. Continued vigilance is essential if we are to reduce or even eliminate farm accidents.

Every year, Mr. Speaker, too many Saskatchewan children are injured or killed in farm accidents, accidents that in most cases could have been prevented. Agriculture is one of our largest industries and unfortunately the one that experiences the most serious injuries. Increased awareness of the dangers that children may face on the farm and knowing how to avoid these dangers can help prevent these accidents and their tragic results.

The North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks was developed by experts across North America. It can help prevent farm-related child injuries by providing parents with information about the ages at which children can most appropriately take on farm tasks, Mr. Speaker. The guidelines provide practical safety standards for 62 different jobs that farm children from ages 7 to 16 typically perform.

Saskatchewan Labour will distribute the guidelines to more than 35,000 rural families across Saskatchewan. The first guideline, tractor fundamentals, will be included in this week's *Western Producer*. The second, animal care, will be distributed

through the *Producer* in April, Mr. Speaker. Copies of the guidelines will also be distributed through farm safety organizations, health districts, municipal governments, and agricultural representatives.

Information on the guidelines are posted on the Saskatchewan Labour Web site at [www.labour.gov.sk.ca](http://www.labour.gov.sk.ca) and copies can be obtained through the farm safety program by calling toll free 1-877-419-3510.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that by helping parents match children's chores with their abilities we can make farming safer. I ask all hon. members to join me in sharing this valuable information with their families, friends, and constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to respond to the minister's statement and thank the minister for the advance copy of his words.

(10:45)

As the minister mentioned, National Farm Safety Week has come to a conclusion and as we all know there are a number of Saskatchewan children injured and killed in farm accidents across this province every year. Agriculture is one of our largest industries in the province and unfortunately there's a number of injuries and deaths experienced in that industry.

Agriculture has changed dramatically in the last few decades and the skills and knowledge needed to operate advanced equipment has also increased as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that parents and children are very aware of the dangers on the farm and take steps to avoid these dangers and prevent accidents and tragedies in the homes and the farms of Saskatchewan.

I trust that the guidelines, tractor fundamentals, and animal care are well thought out and effective but also encourage all members to share this information with their families, friends, and constituents.

Thank you.

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

## STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

### Ruling on a Point of Order

**The Speaker:** — Before orders of the day I want to bring down a ruling on yesterday's point of order.

Yesterday the Government House Leader raised a point of order concerning the propriety of a line of questions directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing by the member from Rosthern during question period.

The minister was asked how he would vote on legislation presently on the notice paper. I can find no prohibition in either

precedent or parliamentary practice to say questions of this nature are out of order as long as they relate to government policy on a particular issue. It is clear questions related to matters of a purely personal nature or with respect to party responsibilities are out of order.

With respect to this point of order, I find that the questions are within acceptable limits. To ask whether a minister will vote for or support legislation is a legitimate vehicle for seeking information on government policy.

In response to the House Leader's point I find that the issue enacting whistle-blower legislation can be viewed as relevant to the role and duties of any minister.

But before concluding this, on this matter, I want to bring to the House another issue of concern that came to my attention upon review of yesterday's question period. That is the tendency at times for members to personalize the debate by not directing comments through the Chair or referring to members by names other than their title, position, or constituency.

Yesterday the Deputy-Premier referred to two of his colleagues as Mr. Flip and Mr. Flop. Just as ministers should not be referred to by their position titles, other members in this House should be referred to by their parliamentary position or constituency title. The reason for this is very simple. It guards against the tendency or temptation to personalize debate.

Without being overly restrictive, I ask that all members be mindful of these rules.

#### 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, and the proposed amendment moved by Mr. Hermanson.

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today on behalf of the people of the Humboldt constituency, and certainly all people in Saskatchewan that have an interest in what happens in this province and have a great interest in changing government soon.

My first reflection in hearing the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, was, my goodness, more of the same, a lot of nothing. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for the people of this province, this Throne Speech was anemic. It lacked in vitality and it is a reflection of the government's performance in the past.

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Speaker, before I go on, I would like to certainly congratulate you on your appointment to the Speaker's Chair and congratulate the Deputy Speaker. I'd also like to say thank you to the many people who staff the Legislative Assembly and thank you to them for all of their hard work and

their efforts in accommodating us in our work here. I'd like to say also today a special thank you to my constituency assistant in Humboldt, Mary Anne Telfer, who does a tremendous job, as I know many other constituency assistants do for the members in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion and debate surrounding the agriculture issue in the province, and rightfully so. We have talked about a number of things that may be done and some of the things that should have been done by the federal government that were not done by the federal government, not followed up on. But we also need to understand that the Minister of Agriculture of the province of Saskatchewan has some responsibility that he has not lived up to also.

Mr. Speaker, some time ago, Mr. Ralph Goodale, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, talked about a transportation strategy. This was after the Kroeger process. And he assured all farmers in Western Canada that if in fact there was a cap on the freight rates it would follow by a \$5.79 per tonne return to the farmer in transportation savings. That would have translated, Mr. Speaker, into \$375 million.

Well we saw the cap put on, we saw the transportation strategy go though but we did not see one cent of that money. In fact, as all of us here in this Assembly know, there are many, many farmers who are paying exorbitant prices for transportation.

Now there is an accountability that should come forward from the Minister of Agriculture federally and provincially. We do not need impediments to growth in this province. We have had impediments, we have had barriers put up, we had promises by the federal government, and if there's one thing that I think our Minister of Agriculture could do on our behalf is to ask the minister, Mr. Ralph Goodale, our minister from Saskatchewan, where that money is that was promised to us.

If in fact we had realized \$375 million in transportation savings because of the cap, because of the transportation strategy, we would not be today looking at trying to get money again from the federal government in some way for our farmers.

So, Mr. Minister, your responsibility and your accountability to the people of this province — which include the farmers of this province — means that you should address the minister asking him, where is that money?

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Speaker, there are a number of members on this side of the House who have made the point time and time again that if in fact we are going to thrive in Saskatchewan, and especially rural Saskatchewan, we need to understand the meaning of removing barriers to growth. That's part of the Saskatchewan Party strategy. It means get rid of the excessive regulations, bureaucratic red tape and ensure that we're not stopping growth, especially in rural Saskatchewan, where there is a great deal of suffering at this time.

Now I want to point out some impediments to growth. Our farmers on our land in Saskatchewan have been encouraged to

diversify time and time again. Well, Mr. Speaker, many of them have tried. Many of them are trying to get into cottage industries; many of them are trying to get into industries like bed and breakfast. They're trying to get into the tourism industry. Mr. Speaker, there's that segment of our population trying to diversify.

There are also other farmers, that I know personally, that have gotten into seed-cleaning plants.

Now, if this government wants to help rural people, to build rural Saskatchewan, to revitalize rural Saskatchewan, why for goodness sake, Mr. Speaker, would they put a \$10,000 charge on a second phone line so that these businesses can have a second phone line? \$10,000 is an exorbitant price. It's a deterrent to growth.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the very simple things that this government could look at. In the Throne Speech there are some comments about: my government will listen, my government will listen to the people of the province. Well please listen to this. Please make it more affordable for rural businesses to hook up to a second phone line. \$10,000 per kilometre is unreasonable, unacceptable, and deterring business in our province.

Mr. Speaker, another example of deterring business, of creating an impediment to growth in rural Saskatchewan is simply this: three-phase power — to get three-phase power hooked up, again, costs about \$10,000 a kilometre. How in goodness name can anybody move ahead in business like that?

And yes the member opposite says \$10,000. I'm really questioning whether or not members opposite have any idea of these exorbitant costs to rural business people, rural families that are trying to diversify, that are trying to build a business.

Another issue that I take quite seriously, because there are many, many organic growers in the province now, much credit to a great number of people. A great number of producers out there, they have attempted to get into the organic grains business. Mr. Speaker, these people are running into major problems with the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. Speaker, organic growers that want to . . . have secured a market in Europe, are being told by the Wheat Board that they must funnel that grain through the Wheat Board right now. The buyback is in place. They must buy their own grain back. And before they can end up selling it overseas they must secure a licence.

Well, Mr. Speaker, by the time the buyback takes place and the licence cost factored in, many of these people are looking at \$7,000 that they have to put upfront before they can even make their transaction.

Now, I have a letter, Mr. Speaker, from a very frustrated organic grain grower. This person has indicated to the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board, and indicated to our Minister of Agriculture in the province, some of the difficulties that he is going through in order to try to sell his product.

Mr. Speaker, if you would just bear with me for a moment. Mr.

Speaker, I'll be accessing that letter in just a moment here.

Before the letter, this organic grower has a bit of a preamble. Right at this time the Canadian Wheat Board is forcing organic growers to grade their grain. This must be done by the Canadian Grain Commission at a cost to the grower. But this is not required by organic producers or customers. The product is sold on its merit, and an agreement between the buyer and the seller.

Also he states, the Canadian Wheat Board is hiring an organic coordinator paid for, of course, by the farmer. But the Canadian Wheat Board don't handle organic grain. So what right, and to what avail is this?

Mr. Speaker, I have sort of explained what this organic grower has gone through, so I . . . I'm going to just mention again that by the time the buyback to organic growers happens, before organic growers happens, they end up paying about \$7,000 out of their pocket which they cannot afford, of course.

So the letter writer asked a few questions. And, of course, these questions that Mr. — not Mr., I can't say his name — but our Minister of Agriculture knows have been submitted to him.

Justify your position in compelling the certified organic producer to use the pooling system, when Canadian Wheat Board is not doing the marketing of the grain. Explain how the government classifies the organic industry is value added on one hand, but takes away any added benefits with the other hand. Explain where does this shortfall of moneys end up (and he's referring to the difference between the initial price and the final price).

(11:00)

Mr. Speaker, there are impediments to growth in this province and I think that the new Premier would do justice and certainly be doing his job if he looked at the impediments to growth, the barriers that we are looking at.

Not only are farmers dealing with high utility rates, their taxes are increasing at every level — municipal, provincial, federal — these people are struggling to keep their families here and many of them, Mr. Speaker, are leaving the land as we speak.

In my area, just east of Humboldt, we have had 10 farmers within a five square mile radius within the last year that have had to go out of business. That's within a five square mile radius. This is serious.

I've heard of farmers in other areas of the province who are telling me that they are leaving their farm because they cannot make it go under this system, under this regime, federal and provincial. And when asked where they were going to be moving, what they did indicate was they were not going to be moving to Regina or Saskatoon. And when I questioned them why not, they said because . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Exactly. They're going to Alberta.

And they're going to Alberta, why? Because they're in their senior years and they want to make sure that they can have accessible health care. So they are going to Alberta in order to have that accessible health care and timely health care when

they need it.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of other interesting items in the Throne Speech drew my attention. I couldn't help but notice the way the Premier was weaseling credit for a federal initiative — \$73 million towards the early development programs for children. Now that is, in itself, a very good way to look at how to use this money. I certainly have no objections to that. But I do take exception to the fact that the Premier certainly should be very clear and giving credit where credit is due to where the money is coming from.

Another item in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, that made me question a bit was the statement that the statistics on poverty had revealed that the poverty rate in Saskatchewan for children had been lowered. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, whether or not there has been consideration given for children on-reserve. I understand that children on-reserve are not taken into consideration when measuring the statistics.

Mr. Speaker, there is increasing public apathy. There is increasing public despair. The people of Saskatchewan recognize, through this Throne Speech, that this government has no plans, they have no vision for the province. We have a government that is not giving direction, either to its farmers or the people in the province. This government has left us. It has neglected us. And this government is doing a disservice to the entire province with its policy of tax and spend, power and control.

Mr. Speaker, there are people in this province with great innovative insights. People in this province that really have a great work ethic. There are people in this province, many of them, in fact just about all of them, who thrive on the spirit of volunteerism. And I think all of us thank our lucky stars for that kind of a spirit in the province. Because in spite of this government's repressive policies, some of our communities are thriving and managing to hang on.

And because, Mr. Speaker, there isn't the kind of direction and vision in this Throne Speech that I think the people of the province were hoping for, and because it does not reflect the vision of the people, I cannot accept the Throne Speech, but, Mr. Speaker, I do concur with the amendments put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. And congratulations on your election, you know, as Speaker of the House.

I would like to, in my speech, cover some items, Mr. Speaker, which will deal with of course my strong support for this Throne Speech and the Premier. As well, I wanted to cover that in the context of the economic development and social development balance. I wanted to talk about it in the context of family, community, and students and as well as on Aboriginal people in the North.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to cover an item that's on the news, particularly as it relates to the Saskatchewan Party and the First Nations Party. I know that the member from Humboldt

will be very interested in my comments in regards to the connection and the strong connection, continued connection between the Sask Party and the First Nations Party.

And the person says I am worried, and he is dead wrong. I am not worried. I just want to show the connection between the Saskatchewan Party and the First Nations Party, which they denied and which they showed very strongly that it's still there yesterday.

So my speech, Mr. Speaker, is first of all to talk about the positive progress in this province on government and in relation to the people from the North, the rural area, and the urban population.

Mr. Speaker, I see them squirming already on their seats trying to talk about legal cases and . . . (inaudible) . . . legal cases. I'll talk about that as well but first of all I want to talk about the issues in relation to the people of the province and the positive growth and the positive partnerships that we've had throughout.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Now I noticed one thing as I congratulate the member from Elphinstone and the member from Riversdale. I noted one thing during the campaign. I noticed that all of a sudden over the past six months, as the Minister of Agriculture has pointed out, there was absolutely zero being talked about by Saskatchewan Party on agriculture. Not a word. They were silent. They were trying to play politics in regards to trying to get some city votes.

And that's exactly what it was. And I watched it, and nothing. Every day I was waiting for some commentary on it. Nothing happened except there was a debate, as I remember, from agriculture talked about — the flip-flop debate — on the difference between the leader and the member from Kindersley.

So I know that they're fighting over this issue in the same way that Canadian Alliance has fought on this issue in regards to trying to get votes from Western Canada and trying to get votes in Eastern Canada. And there's a big split in the Canadian Alliance in Canada over this issue. And I know that they're debating that within the Sask Party, and I know that they are arguing amongst themselves on this issue.

So when I look at the issue, Mr. Speaker, and I look at the development of this province, I wanted to look at the good news. I wanted to look at the good news first of all, Mr. Speaker. Because all I hear from over there is a bit of sour notes, all the negativity, and some people . . . I heard a new word this week — trash talk — you know, that they're not proud of this province. All they hear about is negative and terrible stuff.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you something. As a member of this NDP and Liberal coalition, that indeed I am proud of this province. I am proud of this province.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — And I'll tell you, I am proud of what's happening in regards to people from the rural area, people from

the North, and people in regards to the cities. I am proud to be from this province.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — And I will tell you something. When I listen to the commentary and I listen to the negativity that I hear from the Sask Party, you would think that they are not proud of anything in this province. All they talk about is Alberta. But they don't talk about the over \$800 in regards to the health costs in regards to families in Alberta, although they have money that's equal to our total budget in regards to a surplus. And yet they will not spend it properly in regards to that.

But I'll tell you something in that regard. And again they're squirming on their seats, Mr. Speaker, and I know that I've hit a nerve in regards to their division and their politics of division. Because they want to divide rural and urban; they want to divide the North. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the only politics that they know. It's the same old Grant Devine politics that I fought against in this House during the '80s.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Now when I've got the issue on the floor in regards to economic development, I will tell you this as in regards to northern development because I heard the Leader of the Opposition say a couple of words in the House yesterday on regards to the North.

And I will tell you something. For two years I have been waiting for a question. Last year I waited in the House for a question in regards to the North. I never heard any questions. All of a sudden they feel they can go into northern Saskatchewan and try to challenge my member from Athabasca who got 93 per cent of the vote. You know, when they trounced the Sask Party up north.

And in that regard I thought that . . . I don't know who their political adviser was, but I will tell you I must indeed, on the contrary, congratulate the leader at least mentioning two sentences about northern Saskatchewan since he's become a leader.

Now I will tell you this much. On the mining sector, for the leader's information, when the Leader of the Opposition was around supporting the Grant Devine government, and when a lot of his friends over here were sitting with the Grant Devine Tories, that indeed the North went way down, the unemployment levels went high up in regards to the mining sector. We used to have half the workforce in the mining sector and they went down to about 20 per cent. And that was a record of the Tories.

The amount of contracts that we had on the northern contractors went way down. For a comparative record, Mr. Speaker, I would say this. On the entrepreneurs who have built this province and this North, when we took over from the Grant Devine Tories, there was \$20 million worth of contracts. Mr. Speaker, we have now come up to \$200 million, a tenfold increase since 1991.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, that is through partnership, not simply too little commentary from the Leader of the Opposition. Now the member from Kindersley says, why I am so mad. I am not mad. I am absolutely, tremendously happy about the people of northern Saskatchewan and their partnership with the government.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, I may be a little frustrated with the negativity and also the terrible negative statements that the members opposite have about the North and in regards to Aboriginal people.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would say this. I am proud of, for instance in the mining sector, Kitsaki Development Corporation from La Ronge. Now note that they started out in the '80s and during the Tory period they were struggling. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will report to you that their contracts and their businesses total about \$50 million.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, that's what makes me not only happy, but proud of Kitsaki Development Corporation and other northern development corporations.

(11:15)

Now we read that the member from Kindersley may not know, because he wants me to now . . . he wants me now to quieten down. He wants me to stop. He doesn't want to hear the good news about northern Saskatchewan.

And so I will give him a little bit more good news, Mr. Speaker, because I think it hurts him very much. It makes him sad that we have good news. It makes him sour that we have good news.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would say this. That we have a . . . along with the Cree and the Metis in northern Saskatchewan, we have the Mudjatik Corporation from the people of Patuanak and the surrounding areas and they're doing excellent work in the mining sector. We see the tremendous example put forth by Meadow Lake Tribal Council, leaders in forestry — not only in Saskatchewan but across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this. When you look at all those corporations they're not only being involved in jobs, in doing partnerships on training, they're doing ownership and entrepreneurial development in this province. Mr. Speaker, now they're moving forward in forestry in regards to the issue of resource management.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, in my commentary on forestry I would say this. As I look at Meadow Lake Tribal Council who set the stage in terms of leadership, we are now moving right across the North and we're looking through the North in regards to the issue relating to Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation on the East and their industrial partner. We're looking at the issue in relation to La Ronge Indian Band and Zelensky brothers, their partnership with a major partner in industrial development in forestry. We're looking forward to that.

We're also looking forward to the northwest communities. Many of the Metis communities felt that they wanted to be involved as strong players in forestry, and now they will be part, not only in the training, in the jobs, in the ownership, but in being part of forest management agreements.

Now this is true on strong partnership for the people of the North. A lot of people may be listening in and looking at not only the balance of social development but we've also got a balanced view on economic development and the environment.

We're the only place in Canada — and this is a very important place — we're the only place in Canada which has environmental quality committees. People from the local community level sitting together looking at environment policy in mining and dealing with the issues with Atomic Energy Board of Canada and being able to deal with those issues not only from a technical nature, but dealing with jobs, health and safety, and so on.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that is progress and that is leadership, not only in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but across Canada. Many people come to our location in La Ronge and they're saying, this is the model . . . one of the models that are important for development.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to my commentary vis-a-vis the social, health, and educational development, I would say this. I want to make my comments on some of the great challenges that we have in this province. One that I did pick up was the issue relating to both educational side on the youth, as well as on the . . . dealing with early childhood education.

A lot of research . . . we've had the best child action plan. We've got people that have recognized us from across Canada. We have won awards. We're the only place in Canada where in regards to child development, we are recognized, and we are being progressive and positive and moving upwards. Elsewhere, they're going downwards.

I would say that this type of approach where we have a child action plan, we now have in addition this new program that will deal with early childhood education and dealing with critical issues like fetal alcohol syndrome. There'll be \$73 million over the next five years in that regard.

I might add that as we're doing the health policy, we have done the partnerships in dealing with diabetes. I know how much it is a struggle for a lot of people on the issue of diabetes and that we have been moving forward with that. And that again is reflected in regards to our total policy objectives of this province.

Now we're looking at the health. And I noticed the member was saying that we have done nothing in health in the North, because I know that when the Tories were around they said it was Third World medicine. When there was a report by the Murray Commission, they said it was Third World medicine in northern Saskatchewan. I'll tell you something. Since we've come in we have improved the budgets in northern Saskatchewan every year. We have been playing catch-up from what the Tories were before. They neglected the North and we have moved forward.

We have, since that time, built health centres. We built health centres in La Ronge; we built health centre up in Stony Rapids. On Athabasca side, on Stony Rapids, is also included La Loche. These were sadly neglected by the right-wing approach of the Tories, which is now reflected by the same rhetoric that comes from the Saskatchewan Party.

I would say that . . . I wanted to deal as well with the issue on the Throne Speech on Aboriginal peoples. You've heard me make a lot of comments in the past on the progress of First Nations and on the issue relating to education and economic development. I would like to deal in this Throne Speech with the Metis Act. I know that those members from across may be fidgeting on their seat when I talk about the Metis Act. But I will tell you that indeed we are strong supporters in that regard.

And I'll tell you why we are supporters. Because in that Act, we will be dealing with not only the important contributions of Metis people in this province, what we will be dealing with is recognizing that Metis people went side by side with fellow Canadians to die for this country in the two world wars.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — We will be recognizing the Metis veterans in this province — in this province — in the legislative piece of Act. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that this government is indeed honouring the Metis people of this province and the Metis veterans.

We would like to say that historically, too, we are doing the work in regards to the entrepreneurial level. Many people, when they read history, will recognize that during the early settlement, Metis people played a strong role not only in the transportation of a lot of the buffalo, dried meat, and pemmican across the North on the Red River carts, but also in regards to the settlement base of the Hudson Bay Company around Cumberland House, Ile-a-la-Crosse, and other areas throughout the province. And they played a key role in regards to the young, small-business development in this province. And I might say that in this Act we will be recognizing that.

We are also recognizing, of course, the symbolic elements of the Red River cart, the Red River jig, as well as the fiddle, because you always need a little bit of humour. I know that the people from across may not know that from what they always say, but the Metis people and Aboriginal people know that humour is a strong part. The culture and the vitality is also required in regards to daily life.

Now on the aspect of Aboriginal institutions, I would look at the Metis institutions and I would say this much, that . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — You keep that up, you're going to lose your voice.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — The member from Kindersley says I'm going to lose my voice. I'll be very, very . . . Well I'll tell you, I'll disappoint him. I don't think I'll lose my voice.

**An Hon. Member:** — He'd be too disappointed if that happened.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes. Yes, I think so. I think he might be disappointed if I lost my voice.

Now on the institutional side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say this, that on the institutions that people build, people build agricultural institutions — you know the College of Agriculture. We build institutions on commerce, we build institutions in education.

And I'm proud to say that as a Metis person that the institutions built by Metis people have been very strategic in terms of the progressive moves in this province. The Gabriel Dumont Institute, the SUNTEP (Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program) program as well as the Dumont Technical Institute, the Gabriel Dumont College — these have been strong institutions in regards to the education of not only Metis people but First Nations people and other non-Aboriginal people who attend those courses.

The aspect of that is this, Mr. Speaker, on the information as regards the institution, I would like to say that for teacher education now a lot of people may not know that SUNTEP has now graduated 500 teachers. They teach in our cities, they teach up in the rural areas, up in the North country.

They are a very important addition because they have not only the skills of teaching mathematics, the skills of teaching science, but they also in addition have knowledge about the cultural history of this province — not only in regards to the new settlers, but in regards to Metis people as well. And I think that's very important, as we look at our history, to do a policy of inclusion of our peoples in regards to our educational system. And that is what Gabriel Dumont Institute, SUNTEP, DTI (Dumont Technical Institute), and GDC (Gabriel Dumont College) does.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also say that for this year, there is about 200 and . . . this past year there is about over 200 students in teacher education. I might add that on Dumont Technical Institute, the technical institute arm, there was 362. And of that there was people doing computer specialist programs, they had licensed practical nurses, they had upgrading on ABE (Adult Basic Education) and GED (General Educational Development), they had carpentry, they had tourism, and they've had business administration and other courses in the past.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a sign of the vitality of the Metis people and it's a recognition of Metis people, not only in the historic sense of the Red River cart period but in the modern-day sense of building and being part of mining development and forestry development in the North, and also in the cities in the workforces and the establishment of businesses. And I think it bodes well in regards to the future.

When I look at the courses in the North, as the Minister of Northern Affairs, we had about 2,400, last year, students who went to school. And I'm going to remind people that when I went there was only a handful of us — you could count all of the people on one hand — who went to school in the '60s. And

now we have 2,400. I would say roughly about a thousand of the people would be Metis people. So they present a strong part of the education just within in northern Saskatchewan alone, not counting the institutions that I mentioned before.

On the Metis side we will be negotiating. And I'm pretty sure that the Metis people will be presenting a pragmatic, clear plan in regards to the issues relating to capacity building, on the issue of land, on the issue of harvesting, and governance. And we know that we've had a lot of good discussions initially on that.

So those are the types of issues that will be discussed. And like I said, coming back to the issue, it's a recognition of people. Not only are Metis people builders in terms of Western Canada and this province, but of this course. Metis people are part of the fabric not only in historical terms, but in the modern-day sense. People want to be part of the system being a strong partner in whatever role that we play, be it political, economic, cultural, social, or in regards to the health and educational systems. So, Mr. Speaker, that is the essence of our strong support on the Metis Act.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Now I mentioned that I would say a few words in regards to the connection between the Saskatchewan Party and the First Nations Party. I notice that there was an article in the paper which I will make some comments by one of the writers on the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* today as well.

Now on the First Nations Party and on the Saskatchewan Party connection, I looked yesterday with interest because it was not the First Nations Party doing their own separate event outside the legislature and going to the press on it. They had a pipeline in this House and the pipeline was the Saskatchewan Party.

The Saskatchewan Party may have decided to let them speak on their own — on their own independent level outside the House — but no, they joined with the First Nations Party, the member from Humboldt, to make a commentary in this House. And I will tell you this . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — What? Where did you get that from?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — That is exactly what you did. Now that is . . . Whether or not you agree or disagree what you do in the backrooms, the fact is that you made a statement yesterday and I will tell you when you made that statement in the House . . .

(11:30)

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I'd just like to remind the hon. member to direct his comments through the Chair, please.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — I'm sorry about that, Mr. Speaker. I'll be speaking through you as the Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say this. That when I saw the . . . (inaudible) . . . I made a charge earlier on last year that there was a connection between the Saskatchewan Party and the First Nations Party because everybody knows about the Manitoba story.

There was a big scam in regards to Manitoba where the Tories over there, knowing that they get very few votes from Aboriginal people, so they funded an Aboriginal people's party in Manitoba. And the idea behind it was to try and get votes away from us, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And it was then found out that they had money that was channelled through the Tory Party and into the Aboriginal people's party in Manitoba. And a lot of the people knew that in the news last year.

But the creation of a First Nations party, the Aboriginal People's Party, a Native people's party, is not a new one. We knew that there was one in the '70s, we knew that there was one in the 1980s.

And I recall in the early '80s, we were suspicious that the Tories may have been funding the Aboriginal People's Party. So I confronted the leader of the Aboriginal People's Party at that time.

The Tories are the same as the Sask Party or the same as Canadian Alliance. That is what us Aboriginal people know. And he was a former Tory, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, please. Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a point of privilege.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Will the member please state his point of privilege.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member opposite, the member from Cumberland, is iterating that the members of the Saskatchewan Party are guilty of a breach of law that happened in Manitoba, the example of one party funding a second party. He clearly stated that just minutes ago in his speech and I ask that this be brought before the rules and privileges committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order please. Order. Mr. House Leader, I will have to take a close look at the verbatim and we will get back and make a report on this at the next sitting, upon careful review of the verbatim regarding your point of privilege.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, on the Tories in Manitoba, that's what they did. And it's a very important point. And then I was suspicious and I asked the question earlier on last year. I didn't say that's exactly what they were doing, the Tories in the province, the Saskatchewan Party.

What I did was, I asked the question. And the question was, is there a connection between the Sask Party and the First Nations Party? Because I knew that the leader, Brendan Cross, was a member of the Saskatchewan Party. A member of the Saskatchewan Party. But I'll tell you something, he's not a member of the NDP.

He was a member of the Saskatchewan Party but not only simply a member, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he was a fundraiser for

the Saskatchewan Party. He had even a dance for the Saskatchewan Party, and that is what they did.

So when I raise that connection, obviously there was a connection between the leader, Brendan Cross, and the Saskatchewan Party because he was a member of the Saskatchewan Party. That is clear on the record.

That is what is known, that he was a fundraiser also for the Saskatchewan Party, and that is what is known. Because he had a dance and it was in the paper, it was printed up in the paper that he had a dance on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party for the youth of the Saskatchewan Party.

You should read your own history. That is exactly what he did last year. But now they're rumbling around there, they're getting fidgety and getting worried and all of that, Mr. Speaker, because the key point is this, that indeed there is a connection yesterday when the Sask Party person is the one who raises on behalf of the First Nations Party a question in the House. Whoops, whoops.

And I think that it raises that question and I still raise that question in the House. What is the connection? They may deny a connection, but why is it that they get together and join forces together and raise a question in the House, the member for Humboldt picked up.

Because the point is this. The member from Humboldt could have chosen not to raise the question. The member from Humboldt could have chosen to get the First Nations Party to do their own questioning in their own . . . outside the House. But they didn't do it. She didn't do it. She raised it in the House on behalf of the First Nations Party, and that is very curious. And when you talk about a lot of these issues, that is the question.

So that is the question. Because I remember the other story, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I raised it back in 1982 and there was this story going on and I asked one of the leaders of the Aboriginal People's Party that I thought that he was supporting the Tories indirectly by creating the Aboriginal People's Party, because I said a lot of our people support the NDP and they support the Liberals at the federal level but that very few of them support the Saskatchewan Party or the Canadian Alliance because of the right-wing nature that they do have.

And I will just read a commentary in regards to *The StarPhoenix* today on that point, because Doug Cuthand is a well-known reporter in this province. A lot of people read Doug Cuthand in relation to Aboriginal issues, and Doug Cuthand simply says on Friday, the 23rd, 2001, he says:

The opposition Saskatchewan Party has a Reform/Alliance agenda that is anti-First Nations, redneck and based on fear and division.

Now that is a statement by Doug Cuthand and I knew the politics of division, Mr. Speaker. There is a politics of division that these people support. Stockwell Day does the same thing and I will tell you that when you look at that type of politics, that is the reason why, when you look at the margins on Aboriginal vote, when it comes down to Sask Party, it's way, way low. Same with the Canadian Alliance, they're way, way

low.

People know that you're the same as Canadian Alliance, the same as Sask Party, and same as the old Tories in this province.

So I would say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say this in closing. I would say this in closing, Mr. Deputy . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, please. Hon. members, I'm having a little difficulty hearing the Minister of Northern Affairs carry on the debate with the debate that's going back and forth. I just ask if we could . . . Everybody will have a chance, all hon. members, will have a chance to debate during this debate for the Speech from the Throne and I'd just like to ask you to be a little quieter in your exchanges across the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — It's an interesting point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because when I raised this in the House last year and when I raised this connection in the House, you know what happened? The Sask Party tried to muzzle me.

**An Hon. Member:** — Why?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — They tried to muzzle me because they sent me a letter saying, you ought to cease and to desist, from their lawyer.

**An Hon. Member:** — Really?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, that's what they did. Here they're the great champions of freedom of speech. But they sent a Saskatchewan Party lawyer to say, cease and desist from making any connections between the Sask Party and the First Nations Party.

And I would say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, now they're trying to muzzle me by yelling out there again. But I will tell you something, I will not keep quiet when I stand up for the people of northern Saskatchewan and for Aboriginal people in this province.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they may deny it, they may do it, they may say this, they might say that, but, hey, the record shows that indeed the question was raised by the Sask Party in this House yesterday on behalf of the First Nations Party. And I rest my case on that.

Now as I look at . . . I wanted to make my concluding comments this way, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make my concluding comments in this way. And I say this with due respect, of course, to all the languages of the House, whether it's German, Ukrainian, or French, and so on.

But I would say this, that I've always listened to the veterans that may be out in the hospital who are speaking and understanding things in Cree. And I see a lot of the elders out there listening into the House, and seeing from the hospitals and also from the North as they watch. They are proud of our language which is Cree. So I will say a few words in Cree outlining the basic points that I have made.

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

(11:45)

I guess in closing . . . I did a quick summary in Cree in regards to the overview that I made. But I would like to say this in closing: I am proud to be a Saskatchewan person, as a Metis person doing the Metis Act and then moving forward to dealing with the positive issues on economic development.

You know, the family and committee working with students, it makes me feel good. It makes me feel good that we can work with people.

It makes me feel good that we can work on a step by step with people whether it's fetal alcohol syndrome or whether you get a few million dollar contract, you know, at the mining sector.

It makes me feel good when I see a lot of our people getting trained. It makes me feel good when I see the partners between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal peoples in this province.

It makes me feel good when I see the changes that I saw when I was growing up, because I knew I felt the hardship of racism in my heart and in the practice that I saw. I'm seeing improvements in those areas. It still lingers around, but I'll tell you something. When I see it, I will expose it and I will fight against racism in this province. I saw people from Little Pine yesterday and also from, I guess, Onion Lake and it made me feel proud to see them come here dealing with that issue.

Because deep down, all of us are the same. We are all people. Deep down, whether our cultures and our languages are different, we are people with feelings. We are people that should have the rights, the responsibilities, that indeed that we need to be working together.

Yes, we can work with autonomy from time to time. But in my dreams, as I work with the new Premier . . . as I work with the new Premier with compassion and with a certain great degree of strength and conviction on the Saskatchewan people, as I work with this great party, and as I work with the people from the opposition, the coalition government — but I work with the people in this province — I still feel proud.

I still feel proud because although there is a ways to go in this century, although there is still a ways to go in this century, we have made a dent. We have made improvements and we will continue to make improvements.

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

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — This Throne Speech is a sign of this modern century. A sign of balancing social and economic development; a sign of respecting rural, urban, and the North; a sign of respecting all peoples — and that is the symbolism of this Throne Speech.

Some people may have negativity about that. But me, it makes me feel good. It makes me feel good to support this Throne Speech in 2001.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had a number of remarks I wanted to go over in my . . . when I join in with the debate on the Throne Speech. After listening to the member opposite, I felt like I should erase all these notes and start again.

Some of the things that he was talking about . . . but I'm going to try and make this a little bit more pleasing to the ears and even the truth, I think, because some of the statements made were quite a stretch I think.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you and also the Speaker on your recent election to the Chair. It's great to see the process work — the democratic process work — which was put into place a few years ago.

This is our second opportunity to see an election. The first time unfortunately it wasn't put that way. There was an appointment, I would say, for the Speaker's Chair. And I think the intent to be an appointment to the Speaker's Chair was in the works this time, and I really want to give the Speaker, and yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of credit for standing up and going . . . letting the system work the way it's supposed to.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — I admire someone when they believe in something and they feel they can do the job, that will take the challenge and put their name forward, which you two did and unfortunately some others didn't.

Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to join into the debate, as I said, on the Throne Speech . . . Speech from the Throne. It's been 15 months, I believe, since the last one, since I had my opportunity to join into the debate. And it has been a long time. And I must admit that, standing here, I feel much more comfortable than the first time I stood here 15 months ago. It was a bit of a nerve-racking experience but I got through it.

And you know we had a lot of first-time members speaking in the House, doing their maiden speeches. Of course most of us now have had experience, and there's only one, I guess, maiden speech from the opposite side. And I think after listening to that speech, I was really . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Two. Two, I guess. I stand corrected. Our member from Wood River is yet to give his maiden speech.

But I was quite interested in seeing that a young member, very young in age, first-time speech, and going through some of the language that he used. You know when I was talking in my first Throne Speech, I wanted to talk about my constituents and get through that. And when I look at how aggressive that member was, it was just absolutely amazing. I was astonished. And I think each and every one of us was astonished on what he was saying, you know using language like you're enthusiastic to roll in the gutter.

You know, perhaps that's parliamentary. But I really question, on a maiden speech, that's what you want to address. It was really astonishing to me. But nevertheless, we'll keep that in the

back of our minds and, as he stands to speak in the House and express his views in the future, we'll certainly keep in mind what was said in his maiden speech.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity, in between sessions, intersessionally, to travel my constituency quite extensively. And I really enjoyed the time that I had going to the number of different communities that I have in Indian Head . . . that I represent in Indian Head-Milestone. And there are a number of communities.

The constituency of Indian Head-Milestone is really not made up of any real large community. I guess Indian Head and Fort Qu'Appelle would be the two largest. But there are a number of smaller communities. And what I did to try and get a grasp and to keep in touch with the constituents in my area, I decided to go to every town and advertise it through the paper and rent space, in whether it was a senior hall or the Elks hall or the town hall or wherever it would be, and spend three hours in every town; put a formal invitation in the paper and every mailbox, and invite people to come in and have a coffee with their MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

I was in towns . . . I think we had about 20 or 22 towns that we visited in the month of January and February, and had very good response. Some higher in towns, some lower in other towns, but ended up with probably two to three hundred constituents that had come by and wanted to express their views.

They wanted to express their views on the government; they wanted to express their views on a lot of things. Now I have a constituency office, as every member probably does, but I thought what we would do is take our constituency office to that community and invite them in to come and share their views.

And it was really quite interesting, some of the views that a lot of the constituents had. Although, after touring and ending up in 20 to 22 towns — I'm not exactly sure how many in total; I believe it was 22 towns — I found that a lot of the concerns were the same.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was very interested, how when the House reconvened and we'd be hearing the Speech from the Throne, to see had they really hit the mark on what was going on, for example, in Indian Head-Milestone, in my rural constituency.

And I'm going to start listing off some of the concerns and addressing some of those concerns that were raised from my constituency and then I'm going to try and relate it back to what was said in the Throne Speech and see if there is any connect there, you know. And I think as we draw to a close on that process, we'll find that, when you look at the Speech from Throne, it was really lack of any new ideas. It really didn't address the situations that the people of Indian Head-Milestone raised, every town that I went to.

Some of the concerns were highways. Highways are a major concern. The one thing that I will applaud the government for in the Speech from the Throne is they say they're going to

accelerate the twinning or completing the twinning of the No. 1 Highway west by 2004, and I applaud them for that.

You know our member from Cypress Hills brought that forward a year or two ago, a year ago, after a very tragic accident. And I mean some of those accidents are still continuing. But he raised it and I'm glad that the government picked up on that and is going forward with it.

But there are a lot of other highways in our province, Mr. Speaker. I think of one main highway that runs north and south through my constituency, No. 35 Highway. It goes from Weyburn all the way up . . . actually it goes from the US (United States) border all the way up to Nipawin and past. And it's a major artery, north/south, through our province. And I think if you were to drive up and down that highway you would be absolutely amazed at the condition that highway was in this past summer.

In fact a constituent of mine, whose daughter was driving on that highway late at night, was travelling approximately the speed limit, potholes all over, nighttime, couldn't see them, and lost control over her vehicle, rolled the vehicle — thank heavens she wasn't injured — but totalled a vehicle off.

So about a day later, this mother who was quite concerned on the condition of that 35 Highway — which is a major north/south route through our province, bringing tourism in from the south, taking them up through the whole province, through the heart of the province, up into the Nipawin country where there's fishing and everything else — she wanted to go see where this rollover took place.

On her way there — of course this was July/August; the ditches hadn't been mowed yet — and on the way there she runs into a deer and totals off another vehicle. It's two vehicles out of one family in two days on 35 Highway.

Concerns like that are raised over and over and over again when you talk to constituents, and this is just one highway of many in the constituency that we feel needs work.

Ag was an issue that was raised at every one of the coffee parties that we had, even in the community of Fort Qu'Appelle. And Fort Qu'Appelle, as some members will know, is more of a resort-type community. It's not as reliant on agriculture as every other community in my constituency is. But agriculture was raised there because people in Fort Qu'Appelle realize that when the farmers don't have money, it filters into town. Their businesses suffer also.

I'm going to go into agriculture quite a bit more in depth a little bit later on in the speech, but that was something that was raised.

(12:00)

Health care was raised over and over again. At almost every community there was concern over the way the health care system is run. Our member from Melfort-Tisdale went through, really, a great plan of what we see for health care. We keep hearing from the members opposite, what is your plan, what is your plan? We lay it out. One of the members opposite said,

well table it. It's on our Web site. These aren't secrets. This is good stuff — take it. And the member from Melfort-Tisdale went through that.

But you know, I've got case after case after case of people that, until they access the health care system, they don't think it's that bad. You know, I really have . . . honestly have to say that I've been very lucky; between myself, my wife, and my kids have never really had direct access as far as needing the system to be fixed up. My wife works in the health care system as a registered nurse but we've never accessed it.

But go to these communities and invite people in and ask them to tell you their stories of accessing the health care system, and then you get a real grasp on how the system is falling down.

It's falling down in Montmartre where they had a hospital which was closed to a health care centre. It's falling down in Indian Head where they're fighting to keep their hospital. They've got a support group going because they're scared of losing it. It's falling down in most every community because the health care system, until they access it, until they need it, they think it's fine. They need it, and it's just not there.

I've got people . . . It was mentioned today during question period some of the concerns regarding MRIs, for example. And they throw a whole bunch of accusations over on our side that we're into having people pay for MRIs. Well I want the members opposite to know people today are paying for MRIs from Saskatchewan in Alberta.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — They're doing it today. I had a fellow who helped . . . I saw during the election campaign. And about eight to nine months later he phoned me and wondered if I could come by his farm. And he's really had some back problems. He had a disc that was out and he just was in pain continually. He was in so much pain that in the last six months he had lost 55 pounds because he couldn't eat and he couldn't sleep.

He had seen a specialist and the specialist said well, you're going to have to have an MRI. He goes on a three-month waiting list. And then after that it was going to be three months before he could get back in to see the specialist.

This person could not stand it any longer. This person was not full of cash, but he thought I can not live this way any longer. I have to wait three months before I get an MRI and then another three months before I get in to see the specialist.

And we sent letters and we tried to speed up the process, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I have a problem with that — speeding up the process. Because you know when I speed up the process, that means somebody else gets pushed further back down the line. Is that fair? I don't think it is, although I felt so sorry for this fellow.

He ended up pooling as much money as he could, went to Alberta, and within two days had the MRI. Came back; then he had to wait three months before he could get in to see the specialist. But at least in his own mind he's not sitting there, laying in bed, not being able to eat, hardly able to move, losing

weight because he can't get an MRI. He's cut the time in half at least. And it drives you nuts when you hear of stories like that.

And then you hear the members opposite yelling at us and heckling at us because we have no idea. We are the ones that have the idea, I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker. We are the ones that see what this health care system is doing and they're not . . .

Mr. Speaker, to think that people aren't spending money outside of the health care system is like sticking your head in the sand, and no wonder they are unable to address the system. Because people are spending money every day outside this system because they can't get the services right here in Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, we could go on for the rest of my time and for the rest of the clock talking about health care, but those are a couple of situations that I had people come to my office, or in this case, come to a community and say, this is what's happening to us. They've accessed the system and it hasn't worked.

And I could go on and on and on about different anecdotal situations, but that's not why I'm here. There's many other issues that I want to touch on.

Energy rate increases. Energy rate increases are affecting all of us, you know. And they're going up and I realize world prices are driving that. And I realize that after attending a rate review committee meeting here in Regina — and the member from Swift Current and I were the only elected officials there — here in Regina, that a lot of the energy being produced in Saskatchewan is due to natural gas. Natural gas turbines. And I realize that there is going to be some increase in prices.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know if they realize how it's affecting the people in Fillmore, Saskatchewan; the people in Indian Head, Saskatchewan who are on fixed incomes and they're not seeing the same rate of increase in their fixed income — their pensions, their wages — as they are in the increase in energy rates.

And they're getting squeezed. And they're getting squeezed very much that they're seeing property tax increases, they're seeing SaskPower probably increases, SaskEnergy increases, and their fixed income is not increasing accordingly. And there's less disposable income then. And they're really being squeezed.

I had a phone call just the other day from a lady in the community of Fillmore, who was saying, you know, I don't think I can keep my house any more. It's impossible to keep my house with the increase in taxes, property taxes, because of the downloading of this government and the increase in energy rates. And they're getting squeezed and they're having to make very, very difficult situations. So that's another issue that I heard as I travelled from community to community in my constituency.

Property taxes is another one. And I look at property taxes and I look at, again, the Speech from the Throne and what they had to say on restructure . . . on infrastructure and money that was

going to go to infrastructure. And it does address it. But with further research we find that every cent that was talked about in the Throne Speech was talked about before — in the last budget in the year before. There is no new money there. And property taxes are increasing. Because what is happening is, first of all, I guess some of the municipal rates are increasing but education especially is driving property taxes up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last time I spoke in the House, I spoke quite a bit about tax revolt meetings. Last session I spoke a number of times on the tax revolt meetings that were happening within my constituency. And those tax revolt meetings have quietened down a little bit but, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't mean that the problem has gone away. The problem is still there. People's property taxes are increasing because this government is relying more on the property base to fund education than it ever has before.

It's relying more . . . this government has forced municipalities into relying more on property tax to supply their services than it ever has before. You talk to SUMA in their last position and they were showing the discrepancy of the government's payments towards municipal governments. And it's just shrinking and shrinking and shrinking and shrinking.

The mayor of Regina, Mr. Pat Fiacco, had mentioned the same thing. Now you see in SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), the organization for all urban communities, say the same thing. And I heard exactly the same thing when I visited every urban community in my constituency. Property taxes are killing them and it's driving them out.

I also heard a lot of talk on the coalition. It's interesting when you go and you sit around and you have coffee with a number of the people in my constituency, is how you know they talk the issues. They want to talk about property taxes. They want to talk about health care. But they also start . . . You see a smile come across their face and they start shaking their head: they want to talk about this coalition government and how long do they have to endure it. It's not how long it's going to last — it's how long do they have to endure it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the coalition government is a very, very interesting topic because it's forever changing . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We're going to get into ag here in a little bit, and I'll certainly be reminded of that and mention about whether that's the lowest expense you've got.

I was talking a little bit about the coalition government and how things are always changing. We now have a member from the Liberal Party sitting on our side of the House, and we have two on that side of the House, and now we have the Liberal leader suing the Liberal Party. And we have the minister that was in the Chair step down from the Chair and now sit on that side. And we've asked a couple of questions of that minister over there and they've failed to answer. And so you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people are always wondering what's going to happen with the coalition government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the reasons why they're very interested in the coalition government is because they really felt that we had a minority government going in the province until

of course the Liberals joined along. But probably more importantly is a lot of people remember in the last provincial election, there was one party that garnered the most votes.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — There was one party that garnered the most votes, and it was neither party on that side of the House. And people wonder why either one of those parties should have any right in governing this province when they had the least . . . they didn't get the most votes as our party did over here on this side of the House.

We had the . . . we won the vote total; unfortunately we didn't win the bidding war. Or maybe I should say, fortunately enough, we didn't win the bidding war but we won the vote total.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one other topic that they talked about and came up almost at every community was the issue of taxes. Taxes was an issue that came up at every, every, every community that I visited. And you know, I think there was not a person in any of those coffee parties that didn't think that we need to grow our province. And one way we're going to grow our province is going to be by reducing the taxes and inviting more people back.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I found it very interesting when the Premier stood up and answered a question today in the House, and the Premier was talking about energy rates, Sask Energy, SaskPower, and he read from an article there on how terrible it was in Alberta. And it's gone up 250 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Or 150 or whatever number . . . Well, you know, we might as well use 250 compared to the way they talk over there.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask that Premier then, how many of those companies that are complaining are jumping back into Saskatchewan? None are jumping back into Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Taxes, taxes, taxes, taxes in this province are driving them out. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the whole issue last year of broadening the PST, it hit this province and it hit it hard.

You talk to municipalities, and I talked about it earlier, where they're seeing their grant money go down and they're seeing their expenses go up by 6 per cent, as any professional consulting service they use charges them an extra 6 per cent. You know, it's the government downloading its responsibilities onto municipal governments because they don't put the transfer payments in, and then it's raising their expenses on the other hand.

And so what does the municipality have to do — raise property taxes. And as I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's driving people out of this province.

**An Hon. Member:** — Very good speech.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are the issues that I have seen and I heard from the constituencies of Milestone or Montmartre

or Creelman and Odessa and every community up and down the number of highway miles that I have in my constituency, whether it's Edenwold or Qu'Appelle.

And sometimes, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'd only leave an hour to go the 30 miles from one community to the other. And after that 30-mile ride, we needed to sit still for a while and not worry about potholes and not worry about all the hazards that we had to face on the highway from community to community.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to talk . . . see how that relates to this — the Speech from the Throne. And I've gone through this Speech from the Throne and I've looked at it, whether it's tax reform or whether it's Aboriginal people or whether it's connecting to youth and things like that, and I find very little from the communities that I visited that is brought out in this Speech from the Throne, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The one I mentioned was increasing the funding to increase the acceleration of the four-lane highway.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I go through it and I look at an issue in here where it talks about fetal alcohol syndrome. \$170 million, I believe this government was promising to address the problem . . . \$73 million, over \$73 million to address the fetal alcohol syndrome. And I thought when I heard that in the Speech from the Throne, I thought great. That's a great idea. Because you know the youth that that is affecting have no options, it's done to them.

(12:15)

And you know we've heard of stories throughout the province, whether it was the issue in North Battleford, different stories where crimes have been committed and after, you know . . . I mean, the major contributing factor was that this person had fetal alcohol syndrome and it had absolutely no choice.

So then we find out, not less than — what? — half an hour later, the Premier made a mistake. Whoops, that's not quite right. So finally I found, okay, something that was good, and it wasn't good.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I looked at the municipal renewal money and they were promising, I believe, let me just leaf through it here . . . \$170 million is what this government — my government — is putting into municipal affairs. My government is putting \$170 million into municipal affairs. I would like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is his budget going up \$170 million this year? Not a chance. Not a chance.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he forgot to mention that this is for an infrastructure program that was tripartite, that was shared by the municipal government, the federal government, and this provincial government. He failed to mention that but he did take credit for the \$170 million. There was another topic I was going to say great, until we did further research and it just wasn't there. They missed it by that much.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I looked at the line, here is their plan is to set out a partnership for prosperity and I thought

great idea. Great idea. Until I picked up the Speech from the Throne from 1999 and I read exactly the same line. That's their view for the future. It is exactly the same line. It had no . . . I think there might have been one or two letter . . . words changed but that was about it. It was really, really tough to grasp anything that I could go on.

The other area that I thought I was going to be able to speak about today in my reply to the Speech from the Throne was the issue of Conservation Cover Program — the CCP, Conservation Cover Program.

And you know, to the Minister of Agriculture, if I could have spoke a couple of days earlier, I would have given you a lot of credit for that program. Because you know, you mention it in the Speech from the Throne last year. You said there was going to be a grassing program and it mentioned it again here, in this Speech from the Throne. And I was going to applaud you and I was going to give you all the credit in the world because I've had a number of farmers say we need something like that.

But I haven't had a farmer yet that came to me and said, I only need 5 acres of it or 50 acres of it. I haven't had one farmer that says, now that I can seed that 50 acres, I guess I can crop the other 110.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I realize that the Speech from the Throne doesn't give all the plans of the provincial government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when I spoke last year I made a point that when there is something good, I want to say it's good. But when I can't find anything good and after hearing of all the concerns and the issues that could have been addressed that weren't, I find it very frustrating, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find that when I go through this there really isn't a plan. And you know this government, ever since the election of the government's new leader and now that he's in the House, the Premier of this province, I was thinking that he was going to put his stamp on this government. And I was looking forward to the future of this government because he would be putting his stamp on this document here.

But when I talk about the CCP — the cover crop program or whatever it is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, the LCP, the lawn covering program. And I look at the prosperity for . . . the economic development plan, when it's words from the last Throne Speech, how is that a stamp of the new leader? I can't see anything that the new leader has put in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I followed the election of the member from Riversdale. I followed the election and I also followed quite closely the leadership race. And as there is a number of members from that side opposite that were in the leadership race, including the Minister of Environment who was quite comical through a number of speeches I heard and gave some very good speeches — a little short on substance but pretty good on the comedy end of it.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker and Speaker, I did notice that there were the two front-runners which really scared me after finding out who the third front-runner was. I found that the minister from Saskatoon Fairview, I believe, and now the elected member from Riversdale . . . and I looked at their plans and

what they had to offer. And with all due respect to the new Premier, I would have gone with the Saskatoon Fairview guy. He had a plan; he had some really good stuff there that I thought made a lot of sense. And I thought, you know, had that minister . . . had that member won the leadership race, would this Speech from the Throne be the same? I don't think so.

I think there would have been . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I think there would have been some . . . I think there would have been some content, and I think there would have been a direction and a view for where this province has to go. But unfortunately, I haven't seen it.

Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to get to the agriculture part of my speech. That was just my introduction part. I do want to get to the agriculture portion of my speech, and I realize that the time is slowly ticking by for some members.

The agriculture in our province was by far the major topic that was addressed from community to community to community. And it's not surprising because my constituency, the constituency that I represent, Indian Head-Milestone, is an agricultural-based community . . . is an agricultural-based constituency.

I, myself, farm; my father farms; my brother farms; my grandfather farmed. My great-grandfather came to this country in about 1901, 1902 and were in the Indian Head area, and they ended up settling in the Lewvan area, where I was born and raised.

I still farm. My neighbours are farmers; my best friends are farmers. And it's a crisis. You don't have to have an ag debate or anything else. You've got to go out to the country and see. It is a crisis.

People all over this province are suffering, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I don't think, I don't think there was a community that I went to — and I talked to people in those communities — that didn't say that we needed some sort of a long-term safety net. A long-term safety net has been talked about and mentioned many, many, many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Mr. Speaker.

And we have some safety nets in place. And I want to review the three that are in place right now, and the one that we're talking about — CFIP. But I want to just touch on the three that are in place right now.

We have AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance), we have NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account), and we have our crop insurance program. The provincial-federal crop insurance program.

As far as NISA is concerned, it's a great program. As long as you're making some money, you can put money into it. But one of the concerns that I heard over and over again with the NISA program — and this is to the Minister of Agriculture because I think some of these views you may know, but a lot of them I don't know if you've not heard, or you refuse to react on them — the NISA program is there to, when times are good, to put money in, and when times are poor to take money out. And it's a stabilization program.

But the problem is the regulations on when you can draw out and how much you can draw out are so difficult that . . . I've got people in my constituency that finally said the heck with it, I'm going to take all my money out. Then he gets into a tax problem. Get out; then they don't allow you to get back in. There's so many guidelines that the program . . . the concept is good but . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order.

**Mr. McMorris:** — The concept is good but they need to do a little work on the regulations and the guidelines of when you can receive the money and things like that.

The AIDA program . . . and what are the results? I'll be very interested to find out what the results are . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — That's what we're working on, all of us are.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Good. The minister's saying that it's already been reviewed, and I'm sure there's going to be some changes and I hope the changes are in the right direction.

As far as the AIDA program is concerned, we talk all the time in this House that it's flawed. And you know, I've listened to a number of the members opposite say yes, we know it's flawed. And I talk to the people on our side of the House and yes, it's flawed. The AIDA program is flawed and we all know it's flawed, but do we know why it's flawed and do we know how it's flawed?

I want to talk to the members opposite and some of their talk when they say yes, we know it's flawed and we know it's got to be fixed. Do you know how that affects . . . how it's flawed and how it's affecting the actual producer? Do you know how it's affecting it?

Some of the issues. You know, I want to give you an example of why this program doesn't work. An example of a person that got back to me and showed me exactly why he was not able . . . eligible to get an AIDA payment and his next door neighbour was. And it was over a simple thing like how he rented the land.

If I've got a half section of land here and a half section of land here, I grow 30 bushels on each half section. Let's say I get 10,000 bushels, okay. On this side I got 10,000 bushels. I sell it for \$3 a bushel; I got \$30,000.

If I cash rent it, over those two quarters, 5,000 a quarter; if I cash rent it, I take \$10,000 off the top. As a producer I've only got \$20,000 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There'll be numbers in the mail.

On the other side, if I crop share. I grow 30,000 bushels; I give a third of it away. So I only have 20,000 bushels now . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You guys are . . . (inaudible) . . . I have \$20,000, the point being.

The problem is, is when I cash rent I get \$30,000 and the \$10,000 I use for renting that land is not deductible. So I show a \$30,000 income. Whereas if I crop shared, I only show a \$20,000 income. I don't have 30,000 over here, I gave 10,000

away for rent. Simple things like that that don't allow the program to work.

People don't understand why the AIDA program doesn't work. They just think it doesn't work. Well it doesn't work and it affects guys. It picks winners and losers — the guy that cash rents compared to the guy that crop shares — it makes a huge, huge difference.

There are a number of . . . and the whole point of a program, AIDA, that our province bites into it and signs onto has to have some leadership from the government. And where was the government when this program was designed? Was the Minister of Agriculture at that time aware of what crop share was, what cash rent was?

Some of the other areas that aren't allowed: if I was to lease a combine or lease a tractor, those are legitimate expenses that are not allowed in AIDA. I've got a list of expenses here that aren't allowed in AIDA. And it's absolutely ridiculous.

Let me read them for you. There's machinery lease or rental, okay. In other words if I lease a combine, as I mentioned.

There's land clearing and draining. If you want to increase the production, if you want to increase the acres and the production of your land and you clear some land or you do some ditching, it's not deductible. It's not allowed in AIDA.

Interest on real estate, mortgage or whatever. You know interest rates, the interest that we're charged in . . . through the tax system, that is a huge deduction. But it's not a deduction for AIDA. And why is that? Where was the Minister of Agriculture when they were drawing up these rules? Perhaps his interest — talking about interest — was in Mexico and not in Ottawa where it should have been.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — There are a number of other items that are not allowed in AIDA. And I guess what I . . . the whole point of this is, is that if we're going to have a Minister of Agriculture going down to Ottawa to negotiate on CFIP, I sure hope he understands what the issues are. Because we don't need another AIDA program.

(12:30)

And if your money, as I heard speak in Saskatoon, if your money is on the table, you better know what you're talking about. Because we cannot stand another AIDA program and we cannot stand another CFIP program in this province until you get those fixed. But you're not going to fix them, if you're like the last minister, in Mexico.

One of the other areas that was addressed a number of times — and it's an area that I just can't understand why the government is so slow moving on — is crop insurance. Crop insurance in our province has really deteriorated, although they're saying that the coverage is up and the premiums are down this year. And that's what they're trying to sell people on as far as crop insurance.

My crop insurance, the coverages, if they went up, they went up about .01 per cent of a bushel and the price went down 2 cents. That's not enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker.

Crop insurance is a program that hasn't changed with farming practices. In my area where I farm right now, when I get my basic coverage and I look at how much I'm guaranteed for stubble and how much I'm guaranteed for summerfallow, every time the summerfallow outweighs and out yields my stubble.

Well I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture, that is not the way the farming is done in our area right now. There is very few people that would . . . There's many, many people that could prove and show the record that they'll produce just as much, if not more, on stubble than they do on summerfallow but it's not reflected in the crop insurance premiums and the crop insurance coverages.

I look at the coverage that I'm guaranteed on certain crops like lentils. And every year at the end of the year, I have to do my crop production report and I send in exactly how much I grew on each quarter and which . . . on each commodity. And have I seen the increases of the yield go up? Right now I believe my lentil production is guaranteed for 12 or 13 bushel an acre and I haven't been even close to 12 or 13 bushel an acre.

I had a crop insurance fellow come out the other day . . . or last fall after I combined, straight cut my flax crop, and he said, well you know, it's only for a disaster. My flax crop last year was a disaster and it was still above the coverage of what crop insurance was guaranteeing.

You need to take a serious look at crop insurance, bring it up to the farming practices of today, increase the yield coverage. Because the program right now . . . And, you know, you could argue that in our area very, very few people take crop insurance. And, you know, the problem is, is you talk to some people from . . . whether it's from the city and they say, well, you know what if they can't cover themselves, then why should we be covering them.

If they had to cover them with the insurance program that we're offered, they wouldn't buy into it either. People don't buy into the crop insurance program because it's just not working right, it's dysfunctional, and it needs to be addressed — it needs to be addressed.

So those are the three main areas in the safety net program that we need to look at. And we need to look at those in a total package. Because in 1992 we had a GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program, and yes, you've heard us talk about the government ripped it up. But the thing is, is that nothing has ever backfilled that. Nothing has ever replaced that.

And as a consequence, when we rode through some highs in the '90s — and we did have some highs through the mid-'90s when grain prices were up — there was nothing in place to help stabilize the lows of the year 2000 and the year 2001.

And this government had nine years to put something in place, had nine years to work on it, and it has failed. And it failed not only in the long-term safety net program, but it failed in the last provincial election when it lost every rural seat because of those

identical things, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — I guess in closing, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech after 15 months of really kind of looking forward to it and knowing . . . seeing what the issues are and hoping the issues would be addressed is that they just weren't addressed. I have a hard time, I would have a very, very hard time sitting on that side of the floor voting for something that has as little substance as this Throne Speech does, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, I was talking to some of my constituents last night. And they happened to be watching the legislature channel the other day because it's real good viewing and they heard the minister talking about flip and flop. And you know what they said to me, Mr. Speaker, is that this Throne Speech is a flop and it's about time we flipped the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — So, Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to support the amendment by the Leader of the Opposition. I will not be supporting a document that has as little substance as this Throne Speech.

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

**Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin my statement in support of the Throne Speech by congratulating you on your election as Speaker. I'm sure that you'll do a tremendous job. I've appreciated serving on the Tobacco Control Committee with you and seeing the work that you did there. And I'm sure that you'll do a good job of helping both sides of the House be able to work as effectively as we need to throughout this session.

I would also like to thank my colleague . . . or congratulate my colleague from Regina Sherwood and wish him the best in his role as Deputy Speaker. I'm sure he will also do an excellent job, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to be able to stand here and speak in support of this Throne Speech. It is a Throne Speech that I see as full of possibilities.

We have heard many criticisms. We have heard a negative image from the people across the way as they look at this Throne Speech. The last speaker was unable to see anything positive in it. And I understand that, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there are people who simply cannot see the positives.

This Throne Speech outlined and gave us a glimpse of an agenda that will enable our government and the people of this province to develop and use this province's resources for the good of all. Our government has hope for the future — hope that is based on experience; hope that is based on vision.

Because of our experience, we know that we can weather hard times and prevail. We know that there are hard times for some in this province, and we know that working together with those people, we are going to be able to make a difference. We are going to be able to prevail and we are going to make a

difference in this province. We'll thrive and prosper and grow.

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

**Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Speaker, our government has had experience, tremendous experience. Experience that helps us to know what is necessary to govern effectively.

When we inherited this government, this province was on the brink of disaster. Saskatchewan was almost bankrupt when our New Democrat government took over in 1991.

The right-wing predecessors of the SPs (Saskatchewan Party) had robbed, mismanaged this province, and put it in dire straits. The future did look bleak. They had stolen, wasted, and given away money as if it grew on trees. With their goofy ideas, Mr. Speaker, ideas that were almost as goofy and maybe even more goofy than the idea of flying this whole Assembly down to Ottawa, these people had wasted the resources of the province.

These pre-SPs were driving people out of the province in record numbers. You look at the statistics and you see clearly that this province was being depopulated at unprecedented rates because of the actions of that right-wing government.

But enough about those depressing days when the province suffered under such right-wingers.

In 1991, the Romanow government won the confidence of the people. They had the wisdom and the courage that was necessary to rebuild the foundations of this province. With very careful planning, with fiscal prudence, they rebuilt, and they helped diversify the economy of Saskatchewan.

Building these foundations is essential, Mr. Speaker. We cannot be frivolous about the development of this province. We must make sure that the development we have is well-grounded. And that's what the government of Romanow did, built a solid foundation and developed throughout the years, an economy that is diversified, an economy that is able to weather the vagaries of an agriculture system that sometimes works against the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a history of sound financial management. We will continue to manage in that sound and fiscally responsible way. We are very clear that in order to have good social programs, in order to care for this province and help this province develop, we must have good, sound economic development. And this government is committed to that sound economic development.

Monday's Throne Speech provides a glimpse of this government's priorities for the months ahead. We have a new Premier who loves this province, who is committed to developing an even more accessible, an even more responsible and responsive government.

One day, during the leadership campaign, somebody asked our Premier if he was tough enough to be Premier. Mr. Speaker, he responded by saying well, the Lord didn't bless me with a body like Jesse Ventura, but he blessed me with a mighty fine set of ears, and I can listen very well.

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

**Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Speaker, that listening is absolutely vital to successful government — to hear the concerns of the people of this province; to understand where the pain is; to understand where the opportunity is and to be able to respond to that opportunity; to be able to respond to that pain, in responsible ways.

Mr. Speaker, our new Premier has a tremendous vision for this province. As he made clear in his leadership campaign, his government will be grounded on the best of the spirit of Saskatchewan. And we know what that spirit is. It is community pulling together. It is people who look at incredible odds, and continue to build and develop.

I think of the very beginnings of this province. I think of our ancestors who came to this land; who came to a land that was flat and barren, and they looked around, and they saw a future. They built their houses from the very soil of this land — sod houses. They built those houses and they looked out and they saw crops in the future. And they built farms and they built communities that we have inherited. And they gained much from the people who were already here in this land at the time.

They gained an understanding of how to survive through difficult seasons. They gained some insight into what it means to care for one another, to give away. I was taking Cree classes at university and our teacher, Ida McLeod, taught us some tremendous history of the Cree people as well as the language.

She taught us that when the missionaries first came to this land, they came and they were treated with grace, with compassion, with care. And they looked at the people who were so generous to one another, who had seasons where they gave away from their wealth so that others would have more — a generosity that was unprecedented to these missionaries.

They looked at these people and they said they were so Christ-like — or in French, Christ — that they called them the Cree. This story indicates some of what our ancestors, our European and other ancestors gained when they came in contact with the Aboriginal peoples of this land.

Mr. Speaker, we have been blessed by a heritage that sometimes we have not accepted. We have gained much. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the indications in this Throne Speech is that we will be more respectful and more responsive to the people from whom we have inherited so much. The Metis Act will help in that process.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are many other things that we are doing so that we can work in partnership with First Nations as we help develop this province. There are steps that are taken in education, in post-secondary education that will help develop partnerships, that will help bring people into the workforce who might not otherwise be able. Tremendous partnerships that have been developed with business, with government, with First Nations and with Metis groups, and they will continue to be developed.

Working together in a spirit of Saskatchewan we will build a future that will benefit all the people of this province, not just

some select group.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the Throne Speech:

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

(12:45)

Today we dream of such a society — limitless, tremendous possibility, tremendous future for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we, my colleagues, have talked about the thriving economy of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland the other day referred to an article from *The Globe and Mail*. That article stated emphatically that Saskatchewan has led the nation in economic growth in much of the past decade. Do we hear that from the members opposite? No. They don't acknowledge the breadth and the depth of economic growth in this province. They can't see it. Why don't they see it? Why won't they see it?

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we even led oil-rich Alberta through much of the past decade in economic growth. Yes, despite the struggles in agriculture, we led this country in economic growth.

The Throne Speech makes clear that this growth will continue. Exports of potash, oil and gas, other products and manufactured goods, will continue to increase.

One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that has amazed me over this past decade of financial challenge and determined economic development has been the continued commitment of this government to develop programs which care for the poor of our society. Given the harsh realities that many still face in this province, it's inappropriate to brag, but I must say that I am thankful that this province has continued to care for the weak and the poor throughout these years of hardship.

Mr. Speaker, I was amazed when I heard that we were the only province that had reduced child poverty in a decade when every province in this country said that they were going to reduce child poverty. I am thankful that we have continued to develop programs which help reduce poverty and will continue to help reduce poverty and will help people get a hand up, not a back of the hand that so many would give.

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

**Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Speaker, we will not penalize people who are on welfare. We will help them find a way to work their way off of welfare for all those who are able. For the disabled, Mr. Speaker, we will work with them and we will make sure that they have every opportunity, every possibility of developing the fullest potential possible for themselves; that they will be able to participate as fully as possible in the life of this province.

Mr. Speaker, our government's vision, in contrast to those in opposition, our government's vision is not negative. Our vision is not the gloomy and unrealistic vision articulated by the Alberta-envy party opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we have a vision of hope. We are committed to building a society, indeed a world, where all who are . . . all will be enabled to share the resources, the privileges, and the responsibilities. They will help all those things which help make life meaningful and enjoyable.

We do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that these goods and opportunities and responsibilities should be only the rights of the lucky, the rich, the aggressive, the powerful, or the greedy. Our vision of Saskatchewan is a vision of courage, innovation, and co-operation. It is a vision of individuals and groups and organizations and communities pulling together to make good things happen, which will bring benefit to all people, not just a few.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I remind the House that this vision is well-grounded in experience. It is a vision built on the very spirit of Saskatchewan. It is a vision that has been articulated by this government through the past decade.

There are so many facets of our economy, Mr. Speaker, which are poised on the edge of growth, some which have been growing steadily and others which are ready to move ahead.

There are exciting plans to expand the information highway so that more and more people and communities will be able to participate in the global economy. Over \$70 million will be invested in the next six years.

Now I could hardly believe my ears the other day when I heard members opposite paning and mocking the government's plans to expand access to the Internet. All I need is a cellphone, said one of them. All I need is a cellphone? What century is he living in?

They talk about freer markets for farmers. They talk about more access to open markets. The farmers I know who are engaged in more open markets, those farmers find themselves dependent on the Internet to help market the products that they are growing. Mocking it out, paning it, doesn't make sense from people who claim they are supporting the future of agriculture.

The farmers I know who are dealing in these open market commodities successfully use the Internet to access information that is absolutely essential to marketing those commodities. They use it for all kinds of information.

I think of somebody this morning from the other side that was giving some message that I found very positive and hopeful. It was about some of the work that's being done in ag tourism. And I think there's tremendous possibility there.

But some of the, some of the people that have brought information about ag tourism to this province have made very, very clear that in order to market those possibilities, you need access to the Internet. It's one thing that can help in the development of agriculture. It's not the whole picture, but to mock it and pan it doesn't make sense.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Throne Speech should have spelled things out in more detail because there are some tremendous plans and possibilities which are opened up for us through Internet access.

I find it tremendously exciting to think about the possibilities for distance education. I think about the potential for getting the best of education into remote communities. I think about the possibilities for health care as that information is there instantly. What potential we have by this tool that is being made more and more available in this province.

No, Mr. Speaker, Internet access alone will not solve all the needs of farmers or of rural Saskatchewan. But combined with many other things, including cellphones, it may be a part of the solution.

Mr. Speaker, rural economic development is absolutely necessary. Much is being done in this province; much has been done for the last few years. I have met with some of the REDAs (regional economic development authority) and I have seen that they have been doing a tremendous job of developing the rural economy in this province. They have tremendous ideas.

I think about the Action Committee on the Rural Economy — ACRE — and I think of some of the tremendous ideas that they have generated. And that, my friends, is one body which has said very clearly that access to the Internet is essential as we develop our rural economy.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the work that ACRE is doing, we look at the work of the REDAs, and we see tremendous possibility for rural Saskatchewan, and we are committed to developing that potential. Combining the aspects of economic development, of agriculture, and highways and transportation, our new ministry of Rural Revitalization shows our commitment to rural economic development, Mr. Speaker. We will do whatever we can to help develop this whole province, both urban and rural.

Mr. Speaker, when I mention the urban and rural components that we are committed to developing, I do so out of a constituency which is both urban and rural. Regina Qu'Appelle Valley is a tremendous constituency that combines the best of urban. We have good residential, we have some of the best manufacturing in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have rural . . . we have tremendous farming out around the edges of this city and we have small communities — all this in one constituency, Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

The people of this constituency speak to me regularly about what their needs are, Mr. Speaker. And I tell you that our government is responsive to those needs and we will continue to be responsive to them. We will develop our rural economy and we will develop our urban economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is the whole province, every aspect that we care about. We do not agree with the divide and conquer, that politics of division that we have seen so often from the other side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we have, looking at the needs of this province, committed tremendous amount of dollars to the development of our transportation system. Our highways will get all-time high amounts of money in 2001 to help rebuild and develop those highways.

Mr. Speaker, for those with a positive attitude, for those who look at the future with hope, for those with eyes to see and a

will to understand, this province holds limitless possibilities. Our government has shown and will continue to show that it is committed to help turn those tremendous possibilities into realities so that this province will thrive and develop.

In northern Saskatchewan, our Minister for Northern Saskatchewan has made clear that many new jobs have been developed. That there are tremendous partnerships that have been developed with mining and manufacturing, with the development of a rice industry out of La Ronge. Mr. Speaker, there have been tremendous developments in forestry that will provide over 10,000 new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, northern Saskatchewan is a full part of this province and we will not divide that one from the rest either.

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

**Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Speaker, given the time . . . I've heard a very, very positive comment from one of the members opposite. I appreciate the wisdom that this member has as he points to the fact that it's close to the weekend and it's time for us to move adjournment on this . . . move adjournment of debate for this day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Debate adjourned.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn.

**The Speaker:** — Members, this House will stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. In the meantime, I would like to wish each and every one of the members, indeed everybody in this building, a wonderful, sunny but brisk weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:58.