

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. I'd like to present a petition this afternoon on behalf of the citizens of Cypress Hills. It relates to the concerns that they have expressed about the implications of the Saskatchewan EMS (emergency medical services) development project.

And the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by residents of Gull Lake, Tompkins, Webb, and Hazlet, as well as Success.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the conversion of paved highways to gravel.

And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to set aside any plans to revert Saskatchewan highways back to gravel, commit that the government will not download responsibility for current numbered highways onto local governments, and to consult with local residents, and to co-operate in finding and implementing other alternatives.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Briercrest, Claybank, and Drinkwater.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of people in Swift Current and the southwest who are concerned about the regional hospital in Swift Current.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to carefully consider Swift Current's request for a new hospital.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from the

city of Swift Current, from Lang, from Ernfold, and from Wymark.

I so present.

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

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

And this petition is signed by residents of Radville, Trossachs, Gladmar, Minton, Ogema, and more from Minton.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters:

Opposing reverting of highways to gravel;

Opposing the centralization of ambulance services; and

Requesting a new hospital for Swift Current.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and all members of the Assembly I would like to introduce in your gallery, Ms. Joy Johnson who is the executive director of the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan. Ms. Johnson is here today to watch the proceedings and with great interest in the concerns of registered psychiatric nurses in this province.

Would all members please welcome her.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine, a friend of mine, and a farming partner of mine I guess at times, Mr. Troy Arndt from the Colfax area. Troy has been one of the farmers that we've talked about so often in diversification. Not only is he into grain production but they also have a number of alpacas on their farm. I'd like to welcome Troy to the Assembly and hope you enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government I also want to welcome Joy Johnson to the legislature this afternoon. I really appreciated the work that the Registered Psychiatric Nurses did along with the SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) and the LPNs (licensed practical nurse) in putting together the nursing articulation document. Joy represents the psychiatric nurses very well in the province of Saskatchewan, and I'm sure she will enjoy the proceedings this afternoon. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

First Nations First Responders

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — There is good news from a First Nations community in the South and a northern community. Piapot First Nations near Regina and the northern community of Sandy Bay have recently certified their initial groups of first responders. The people in these communities are excited to be a part of the solution that contributes to the well-being of their people, Mr. Speaker.

First responders are specially trained front-line medical staff. They provide basic emergency care before the arrival of police, nurses or emergency medical services personnel. As such they are vital links in the delivery of health services, especially in rural or northern Saskatchewan.

Piapot had 11 students certified, the initial First Nation community in the Regina district to do so. Sandy Bay now has six local residents trained to assess patients and give basic immediate care.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Chief Murray Ironchild of Piapot and the graduates. I also congratulate local fire chief Lazar Morin of Sandy Bay and the five members of the department who successfully completed the course.

Mr. Speaker, this is dedication which builds strong, vibrant, healthy, and safe communities. This is an example to follow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all the members of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Region 4 Saskatchewan Drama Association Competition

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, nearly 200 students from eight different schools took part in the Region 4 Saskatchewan Drama Association competition held in Yorkton on March 22 to the 24. Productions from schools in Nipawin, Kamsack, Sturgis, Wadena, Invermay, Broadview, and Yorkton entertained audiences for three full days.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to inform you that students from Invermay School received numerous awards for their outstanding performances. I want to recognize Wesley Setre, runner-up for best actor; Elyse Franke, Jeremy Andreas and Lindsay Krawetz for acting awards of merit; Krystal Chicilo, a certificate for an acting performance; Julie Velichka, award for lighting; Krystal Nieckar, award for sound, and the entire crew for properties.

Other awards were also presented to the Invermay group. And I'm extremely proud to say that the 17 Invermay students received the Most Courteous Cast and Crew Award. And they were also named the best overall performance for the second consecutive year.

I want to commend the students for their dedication and commitment, but especially congratulate co-directors Diana Driedger and Gail Krawetz. Your dedication to your students brings out the best in each of them.

I want to wish the entire cast and crew from Invermay School all the best in the provincial finals on May 3, 4, and 5 at Campbell Collegiate here in Regina. And if I may, Mr. Speaker, a special best of luck to my daughter, Lindsay, and my wife, Gail.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Twine Manufacturer Praises Saskatoon

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Speaker, more good news for the province and the city of Saskatoon.

Tim Mason, the president of Bridon Cordage, stood up at the Canada-Minnesota business council trade mission to extol the virtues of doing business in Saskatoon where Bridon Cordage has a branch plant.

This plant was initially supposed to be constructed in Calgary, Alberta, the opposition's favourite city, but aggressive marketing by the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority caught the eye of Mr. Mason and convinced the company to open in Saskatoon in 1997.

The company's key requirements for location were transportation and a quality labour force, both of which Saskatchewan has. Because of the positive support by Bridon Cordage at the trade mission in Minnesota, Saskatoon caught the eye of companies interested in the new, not yet operational synchrotron.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is creating jobs and opportunities to carry us into the future. Mr. Speaker, our vision for this province is strong and I am proud to be a part of that vision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Comment on Legislative Proceedings

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not a great sports fan so I don't listen to sports news very often but this morning coming to the Legislative Building I had on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) and they had an interesting item on the sports relating to a pitcher by the name of Johnson who pitches, I guess, at close to 100 miles an hour.

Yesterday he threw a pitch and it hit a duck. The duck died — a flurry of feathers and the duck was dead.

It reminded me very much of the legislative proceedings yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party Health critic threw a question. It hit the Minister of Health. Fortunately

the Minister of Health is still in good shape. He does however have a serious limp.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Recognized by Conference Board of Canada

Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for recognizing me. I was a little taken aback by that last statement and have lost my own. But I have found it now.

And what I wanted to do was to bring to the attention of members that for the second year in a row the Conference Board of Canada has recognized one of our home-grown companies, SaskTel, for their excellent work as one of Saskatchewan's top youth employers.

SaskTel, as we know, is a very important company in our . . . in our province and does a lot of work with young people. Three of the programs for which they've been recognized for, Mr. Speaker, include the construction technology for women program, the First Nations school-to-work transition program, and of course the work they do year around in terms of hiring co-op students.

This is an excellent, excellent set of initiatives on the part of SaskTel and on behalf of all of us I know we want to recognize the good people who work over there and who are an important part of helping mentor our students.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Archer Honoured As Junior Male Athlete of the Year

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon in this Assembly to share with my colleagues and yourself the astounding accomplishments of a young man who resides within my home constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, 17-year-old Owen Gunther of Spruce Home is one of our province's best in the sport of archery.

Gunther is the first Canadian ever to win individual medals at tournaments that took place overseas. He won the bronze at the world junior championship in France and also became the first archer in Saskatchewan history to win what is the so-called FITA Star 1200 from FITA international, the International Archery Association, which is based in Switzerland.

Owen Gunter has also set numerous Canadian archery records and has received gold medals in the US (United States) nationals.

Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise that now another prestigious honour has been bestowed upon Owen Gunther. He has been named Saskatchewan Junior Male Athlete of the Year. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Owen on these many accomplishments and wish him the best of luck in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Film on Painter Count Berthold Von Imhoff

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Sunday I had the privilege of attending a unique event in the village of St. Walburg in my constituency. The evening consisted of a banquet in honour of and the preview of a film dedicated to the life and work of Count Berthold Von Imhoff. The film is called *Servant of God: German Painter Berthold Imhoff*. The film is produced by White Pine Pictures of Ontario and will be shown soon on public television.

And to ruin the suspense of the movie, Mr. Speaker — the Count did it. He created and he created much. In his career in St. Walburg during the 1920s and 1930s, Count Imhoff created over 250 works of religious art which can be seen in churches and galleries across North America, Mr. Speaker. He was a remarkable immigrant who was knighted by Pope Pius XI two years before his death in 1939.

(13:45)

Mr. Speaker, the evening had three connected purposes. To preview the film during an evening of good food and fellowship, to raise funds towards the preservation of Count Imhoff studio located between the metropolises of St. Walburg and Paradise Hill, a studio where many of his paintings can be viewed, and to remind all Saskatchewan people that this studio has been declared a municipal heritage site, with recognition by Saskatchewan Heritage, with yearly visitors, literally, from around the world — a site I invite all members to members to visit on their way to and from the beautiful North on both ways.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hayley Wickenheiser Homecoming

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the weekend of the 17th and 18th of March the town of Shaunavon hosted a fundraiser for a new omnplex, but also as part of their weekend festivities, it was a homecoming for Hayley Wickenheiser. The event was a huge success, meeting all expectations, and one of the real reasons of the weekend was to pay tribute to Hayley Wickenheiser for her accomplishments.

And Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to read some of Hayley Wickenheiser's accomplishments. She was a member of Canada's National Women's Hockey Team since 1995; played on Canada's world championship teams in '94, '97, '99, and 2000; captured a silver medal at the '98 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan as a member of the national women's hockey team; became only the second Canadian woman in history to take part in both the Winter and Summer Olympics, after being named to Canada's women's softball team that competed at Sydney, Australia, last September.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this event in Shaunavon, and also in the House, I would like to acknowledge Hayley Wickenheiser for her exceptional accomplishments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Provisions in Upcoming Budget

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, confusion reigns in the ranks of the NDP. The Minister of Health, the Minister of Health doesn't know how many nurses there are in the province, the minister of Gaming doesn't know how much money SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) owes the province, and the Minister of Agriculture doesn't know if he's in or out of CFIB.

It reminds me of the same kind of occurrences last year at this time when the Minister of Finance was so confused he promised to cut taxes, and then he went out and raised them.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, have you learned anything from last year's budget disaster? Will you cut taxes in Friday's budget without raising other taxes to offset the benefit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the fifth question period we've had in this House since the House resumed sitting, and the opposition has had 50 opportunities to ask a question about taxation. And I noticed, Mr. Speaker, this is the first question about taxes. And I think the reason, Mr. Speaker, is because the people of the province and the opposition know that our record on tax cutting is good, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We can listen to the doom and gloom from the member from the opposition, Mr. Speaker, or we can listen to the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce which says in their latest edition of *Business View* that the province with the second-lowest marginal income tax rate today is — guess where, Mr. Speaker? — Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Or we can listen Joanne Paulson of *The StarPhoenix* who says that when, quote:

Ken Krawetz, Finance critic for the Saskatchewan Party, was not comparing apples to apples when he said there was no tax cuts . . .

Mr. Speaker, she says, naysayers aside, tax cuts are for real.

The chamber . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Would the member please put discussion through the Chair in the third person.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it would be good if the Finance minister would pay as much attention to counting the people leaving Saskatchewan because of his high taxes rather than counting our questions.

The Minister of Finance blew it last year, Mr. Speaker. Yes, he

cut income tax but he also raised the PST (provincial sales tax) and he raised other hidden fees and surcharges. And a result, Mr. Speaker, families ended up with less money in their pockets — not more.

And what are the results? Over 13,000 jobs lost in the last year. Nearly 6,700 people lost to other provinces in the last year.

Mr. Minister, you blew it. Have you learned from your mistake? What tax cuts will you be providing to small business? What tax cuts will you be providing to Saskatchewan families in this Friday's budget?

The Speaker: — Order. I just want to remind the member to take a good look at his question please, and to address his remarks through the Chair and to the Chair. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, we can listen to Mr. Doom and Gloom over there in the opposition. Or we can listen to the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* saying, naysayers aside, tax cuts are for real. The *Saskatchewan Business* magazine, which says, the first pay cheque of the year for Saskatchewan workers contained a pleasant surprise. Norm Halldorson from the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce saying that the tax cuts met the chamber's highest priority. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation — get this, Mr. Speaker — saying that the net result of the government's tax changes is \$43 million in 2000, and \$260 million by 2003.

Or we can listen to the CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business) that says we think the budget was positive because taxes went down. Or the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. Or the Regina Chamber of Commerce, where the member and I were at a meeting January 29 and they praised the tax cuts, Mr. Speaker.

Who are we going to listen to? All of those people, or the Leader of the Opposition? We're going to listen to the people, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've heard the people calling in to the call-in shows and complaining about this minister's so-called tax cuts. They said, we got our pay cheque and our taxes went up.

Mr. Speaker, though, the minister's pockets are fuller than they've been. Friday's budget will show a surplus of hundreds of millions of dollars due to windfall oil revenues. This money should be given back to Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan businesses through meaningful tax cuts.

Right now Saskatchewan has the second highest small-business tax in all of Canada. At 8 per cent, Saskatchewan's small-business tax is nearly triple that of Alberta's. Where do you think the new businesses and jobs are going?

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party believes we could provide a major boost to our economy by eliminating the 8 per cent small-business tax.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Finance. Will you make Saskatchewan a small-business tax-free zone? Will you cut the small-business tax, and will you cut it all the way to zero?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the last time I heard this kind of snake oil from Mr. Doom and Gloom was in the context of the Riversdale by-election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Members are asked to address members of the legislature either by their constituency or by their title — no other name. The members, in addressing their questions, should use the pronoun he or she, not you.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last time I heard the member from Rosetown-Biggar selling this snake oil was in the context of the Riversdale by-election. And, Mr. Speaker, they had billboards up that said that everybody was being taxed to death.

Well the people know, Mr. Speaker, that we're not being taxed to death. Taxes are coming down in Saskatchewan. And the people in Saskatoon Riversdale had an opportunity to judge the doom and gloom for the Leader of the Opposition and they rejected it resoundingly, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I want to tell the member from Rosetown-Biggar, Mr. Speaker, that a one-income family earning \$50,000 a year would, today, have had to pay \$5,203 in provincial income taxes in 1999. By 2003, Mr. Speaker, that will be \$3,229 — a reduction of . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, if the Finance minister would eliminate the small business tax, it would cost his government less than \$70 million. Think of the powerful message that that would send to business owners all across Canada. The message is, we want you to come to Saskatchewan instead of leaving the province. Saskatchewan's a great place to start a new business. That's the message we should be sending.

Instead, what is the message that this government is sending? They are saying get out and stay out. That's why businesses are leaving. That's why people are leaving. That's why the NDP have the worst job creation record in the entire country.

My question to the Minister of Finance. On Friday, you can take one simple step to change all that. You can eliminate the small business tax; make Saskatchewan a small-business tax-free zone. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition something that he apparently doesn't know and it's this, Mr. Speaker, that this province is a great place to live.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And this province has a great future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — One of the highest priorities of the business community is to cut personal taxes, Mr. Speaker. And I said in my last answer, a one-income family of \$50,000 with two children will save \$1,974 in income tax by 2003. A two-income family with two children, Mr. Speaker, will have a reduction of over a thousand dollars; 55,000 people will be taken off the tax rolls.

Mr. Speaker, that member wants to tell people that their taxes are going up. I've got news for him — nobody believes him, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Staffing

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, last week you asked the Saskatchewan Party to run the Health department. Yesterday you needed the Saskatchewan Party to do research and it looks as if things haven't changed much today.

Mr. Speaker, it appears the NDP's record on health care is worse than we thought it was. In 1999, the NDP promised 500 new nurses but according to the SRNA there are 48 fewer nurses practising in . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Please allow the member to put his question.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, and today the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan says that there are fewer psychiatric nurses working in the province today than in 1999 — fewer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, what are you doing to stop the exodus of nurses from the NDP's crumbling health care system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the September 1999 campaign, the promise set forward by our party was to add 500 health providers. I've received information from SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) this morning . . . or yesterday afternoon, basically saying that at the end of 1999 there were 36,074 people who were part of their system of registration of employees. That number at the end of 2000 was 36,891, an increase of just over 800 members within the year 1999.

What we do know is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what we do know is that the

lemon of a plan that they had in September of 1999 would have had zero increase for Health and there would have been no increase at all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

The Speaker: — I would ask the . . . we ask the member to also put his question in third person.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, doesn't the minister understand that what we're concerned is about health care professionals, not about administrators and janitors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, the minister simply cannot count them as health care professionals. And while they are important to keep facilities upgraded, they're not the kind of people that are going to be at your bedside when you're needing health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, doesn't the minister understand how critical it is to have psychiatric nurses in this province? There's more stress on Saskatchewan families today than at any time in the past due to this government's mismanagement. According to the Psychiatric Nurses' Association, there's almost 250 fewer psychiatric nurses than when the NDP (New Democratic Party) took government in '96, and almost a hundred and sixty fewer than when the government made the promise of more health care professionals in '99.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister understand how important psychiatric nurses are in this province, and what is he going to do about getting health care professionals staying in our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we care about all the workers in the health system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We care about all of the workers because if we don't have the full team working to provide the care for the patients, then the whole system doesn't work. We are very concerned that the members opposite would devalue part of the health system with part of those workers.

I'd also like to point out that the numbers that I have provided from SAHO do not include the number . . . the increase in the number of medical doctors in Saskatchewan. The numbers from the College of Physicians and Surgeons show that in 1997 there were 1,493 doctors registered at the end of March. At the end of December, 2000, there was an increase of 151 up to one thousand . . .

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, while the minister is busy bloating the bureaucracy, psychiatric nurses are having too few positions in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association is also saying that a nursing shortage caused a closure of six acute psychiatric beds at City Hospital in Saskatoon last Friday. Six more beds on top of the few that there already are.

Mr. Speaker, just the latest hospital bed closure that has taken place, thanks to the incompetent health management of this government and their increased bureaucracy.

Mr. Minister . . . The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that while the minister stumbles through question period, he isn't aware of the impact of his decisions on real people. Mr. Speaker, now it's confirmed that six more acute psychiatric beds are closing at City Hospital in Saskatoon, what's the minister going to do except hiring more bureaucrats?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we are doing in the nursing profession is working with the various professional groups including the Registered Psychiatric Nurses, the Registered Nurses, the Licensed Practical Nurses to increase the number of places for them to study and basically regenerate the profession, get more people involved in the profession.

And we're working together with those people because we know that they know how the system works and what the needs are, and we will continue to work with those people. We won't listen to all of that negativity that comes from across the way. We ask them to come and help us create a climate in this province where we can invite people to come and work here and build a career.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if the minister won't listen to us, perhaps he'll listen to the chairman of the College of Medicine Budget Committee at the University of Saskatchewan, and he says that if the NDP government doesn't wake up, the College of Medicine is in danger of shutting down.

Mr. Speaker, the College of Medicine plays a critical role in the recruitment and retention of doctors in Saskatchewan. And now senior university personnel are saying that the college could close because the NDP government has neglected to provide sufficient support.

Mr. Speaker, this government and the minister doesn't have a plan, doesn't understand what's going on. What are they going to do to save the College of Medicine?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think maybe the members opposite today have been chewing on crabapples.

But what I would say, Mr. Speaker, is that in 1999 we received a report called the Blueprint for Change about the College of Medicine because we were concerned about the future of the

College of Medicine. And we are working together with those people at the college, at the university, and throughout the health system so that we can continue to support and build on our college.

And what we have also created out of that process is a Health Sciences Advisory Council where all of the people involved are part of setting out a plan which will make that school better. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hope you'll impress upon the minister how serious this issue is. Professor Roger Pierson is an internationally recognized scholar. He is known around the world for his work in developing new health care technologies. He's chairman of the College of Medicine Budget Committee, and I'm quite sure he doesn't appreciate the trite jokes that this minister is putting out in this question period. And he is saying that the NDP's failure to manage health care could force the College of Medicine to close.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party is not willing to allow that to happen. In our submission to Fyke, we said that we would recommend and support a world-class integrated health care science facility at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health go on record and indicate unconditionally if he will support our submission and the call for an integrated health sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think he's referring to the plan that they had which he had a great deal of difficulty explaining the costing of the plan. And so what I would say is we are working with the Health Sciences Advisory Committee, with the university, with the various professions within the health system to see whether the whole plan around a new health sciences faculty makes sense.

But we are going to work with the people in a planned way like we've always done on this side of the House. We're going to make sure that whatever we do we can afford and we can do it in a way that benefits everyone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Utility Rate Increases

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister Responsible for SaskPower announced a one-time rebate of \$25 to help Saskatchewan families deal with the exorbitant price of energy. That's \$2 a month.

Mr. Speaker, last year SaskEnergy received government approval to increase their rates to the extent that many Saskatchewan families have seen their energy bills double in the last few months. Now SaskPower, we hear, will be getting an increase for their homeowner rates for electricity of between 5 and 6 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, on the question of SaskEnergy, the president of that corporation was quoted earlier today. He was indicating, Mr. Speaker, that we can also look forward to another SaskEnergy rate increase later this year.

To quote him, he said, there's no question there's another hit out there, but it's not fun, he said.

Well you can imagine how tore up we all are that Mr. Clark isn't having much fun. Frankly we're not either, and the people of Saskatchewan aren't having any fun putting up with this government and their rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this: when will SaskEnergy be hitting Saskatchewan people, to quote the president of the corporation, and how much will the rate increase be?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, to the member, there is absolutely no application by SaskEnergy for a rate increase.

But I do want to point out right now, Mr. Speaker, that SaskEnergy currently charges \$4.52 per gigajoule. If you cross the border into Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and guess what they charge — \$9 per gigajoule — \$9.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote if I could, from the *Melville Advance* on January 3, 2001, Mr. Speaker. A small steel mill in Calgary . . . It says the following, Mr. Speaker. The mill's energy bill would have gone from \$17,000 a month, Mr. Speaker, 17,000, to, get this, \$75,000 a month, Mr. Speaker. And the most important words, Mr. Speaker — had the company decided not to close, Mr. Speaker, in Alberta.

A 441 per cent increase. And that member, Mr. Speaker, has the nerve to complain about what we might apply for here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people are doing a little comparing today too. They're comparing the NDP \$25 per year rebate to the \$1,600 that people in Alberta are getting, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we understand today that SaskEnergy officials are informing certain people that their costs for gas have gone up between 50 and 60 per cent and that even if they undertake some cost-cutting measures, they will be asking for a 40 per cent rate increase.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm — and surely he will have talked to Mr. Clark in SaskEnergy by now about this — will he confirm that SaskEnergy will be asking for a 40 per cent increase in gas rates for the people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I repeat, there's no application at all by SaskEnergy for a rate increase,

but I've given the history of what SaskEnergy is currently charging.

The member referred, Mr. Speaker, to the credit that we announced yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and he's complaining about this. Mr. Speaker, if we'd have raised the rates by 441 per cent as I pointed out, I suggest we probably could have provided a larger rebate as well. But we didn't, Mr. Speaker. We cared about the public of Saskatchewan. We kept our rates down, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out some rate differences here. This is with reference to power. In Grande Prairie, the monthly bill is \$159. In Calgary, it's 140. In St. John's, Newfoundland, it's 123. And in Regina, Mr. Speaker, it's 113.

Mr. Speaker, and with the number of lights that I see on on that side of the House, my guess is it would actually be considerably less over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1 — The Partnership Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, The Partnership Amendment Act, 2001, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 2 — The Securities Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 2, The Securities Amendment Act, 2001, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

(14:15)

Bill No. 3 — The Historic Properties Foundations Act

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, The Historic Properties Foundations Act, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

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 thereto moved by Mr. Hermanson.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can tell from the thickness of this sheaf of papers, I haven't got very far with my speech.

And given the fact that several members from the government side and my own side were not privileged to hear the substance nor the sum of this speech, I believe it to be important, Mr. Speaker, before proceeding with the balance of my comments on behalf of the people of Cypress Hills, to reiterate some of the more salient points from my presentation yesterday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — I began, Mr. Speaker, yesterday, by expressing my thorough disappointment with the lack of direction and substance provided by the government's Throne Speech agenda.

However, I did give the government due credit for its promise to twin the remaining section of Highway No. 1 West in four years. Having said that however, I pointed out that even this promise is less than the government acceded to in April of last year when this House unanimously passed a motion to twin all of Highway 1, east and west, as well as Highway No. 16. And the promise at that time was to do it in four years, provided the federal government cost shared the project to the tune of one-half of the price.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we haven't got the federal government's share, but neither have we got this government's full commitment to the project. We got about half the money, but only about one-third of the project as promised by this government and last year's unanimously passed motion.

Mr. Speaker, nor did the government commit itself to any other specific activity on highway reconstruction, except to say that we will see the biggest budget ever. More money doesn't necessarily mean quality work, Mr. Speaker.

Where is the plan? What will the emphasis in transportation requirements be?

These are questions that went unaddressed in the Throne Speech as they relate to the issues of Highways and Transportation.

Let's look briefly again at agriculture. Mr. Speaker, the word agriculture, as I alluded to yesterday, is only mentioned one time in the entire text of the Speech from the Throne. That's really not much credit given for what was often called Saskatchewan's number one industry.

I spoke too about AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) and the inequities that that program has produced among farmers in rural Saskatchewan. I addressed the psychologically degrading impact of sending cheques to farmers who are financially stressed and then demanding repayment with interest for the mistakes made by the AIDA administration.

I talked about our concerns with CFIP and the appropriateness of this son of AIDA to address the needs of rural Saskatchewan without substantial changes to address the problems inherent with its predecessor.

I addressed the current and potentially devastating effects of drought in the Cypress Hills constituency, on ranchers particularly. And I alluded to the inadequacy of the new cover conservation program which is limited to 50 acres per year. How many decades, Mr. Speaker, will it take for a program with such severe limitations to have any positive effect on the herd size to the ultimate benefit of this province? That's the question I think that needs to be addressed with the limitations of that program.

On rural revitalization I spoke about the disillusionment of my rural constituents for the appointment of the new Minister of Rural Revitalization because of her track record in the field of health care. The people of Cypress Hills have experienced demoralization and alienation from this government as a result of diminished health care services in our part of this province.

This new Minister of Rural Revitalization was responsible for much of that angst; through programs, reduced services, closed beds, slashed budgets, and the resultant loss of doctors and other health practitioners in the southwest. The people of rural Saskatchewan see the minister's appointment as a cruel irony, especially since she was the architect of most of the debilitating policies and governmental activity affecting rural regions.

We say clearly from question period yesterday, that this minister's agenda is to negatively impact the economic vitality of rural communities with her solutions to commercial truck traffic on provincial highways.

Rural revitalization, Mr. Speaker, requires dependable infrastructure in the way of highways, not for the convenience of people only, but to achieve the benefits of expanded economic activity. Infrastructure is the basis on which all economic activity is built. The two items go hand in hand; you can't have one without the other.

This minister seems to think that rural revitalization is possible without highways. The people of Saskatchewan know better and they will expect better than they are getting already from this minister.

If Crown corporations are going to be major players in rural revitalization, they need to address the ways in which they can help as opposed to hindering the process. The cost to non-profit recreational facilities of power and natural gas need to be reviewed. Increases there have put such a strain on many of these important community facilities that several of them are already under threat of permanent closure.

Mr. Speaker, reassessment formulas imposed on small town hotels by Saskatchewan Assessment Management Authority are about to make many of them virtually unprofitable. Who, Mr. Speaker, will revitalize those businesses when they're forced to close their doors?

I address the issue of expanded PST (provincial sales tax) on used inventory by this NDP government in the budget a mere

one year ago. Once again we have a situation that makes doing business in this province more onerous and uncompetitive than neighbouring jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, rural revitalization is absolutely essential to the long-term viability of every community and region outside of Regina and Saskatoon. If the matter isn't going to be taken seriously, Mr. Speaker, it would be better if the government didn't try to address it at all. Half-hearted measures are not needed nor acceptable, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately I don't think this government is up to the task because too many of the factors that currently assail rural business development were put in place by this very government or various early versions of it.

Literally dozens of problem areas exist which, if attended to, would allow the people of rural Saskatchewan a real opportunity to revitalize the regions by their own initiative. They don't need government help, Mr. Speaker. They need government gone — out of their way and out of their wallets.

Mr. Speaker, several times we on this side of the House have been accused of doom and gloom. We don't celebrate the successes of the province; at least that's what we're told. Mr. Speaker, I'm here to tell you today, and the members opposite, that I am happy to report several successes in my constituency. But from every one of them I have been told the same thing: they succeeded in spite of this government, not because of it. They have surmounted every bureaucratic obstacle, overcome every hindering policy, and survived every malicious or malign attempt to prevent their successes. They are survivors of this government's business and economic policies and I can truly celebrate their persistence and contribution to our communities.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite that I am a member of the official opposition. It is not my job to be a cheerleader for the government of the day. It is my job to hold the government accountable for what it does or doesn't do on behalf of the people of Cypress Hills and by extension, the people of all Saskatchewan.

And we will do our job, Mr. Speaker, to the best of our abilities, whether the government is comforted by the efforts of our party or left feeling uncomfortable.

Mr. Speaker, much of Regina and Saskatoon appear to be doing quite well from an economic perspective, and I appreciate that fact. But for government members to say that we are preaching doom and gloom when we point out that there is more to this province than two major cities and that there are real problems outside those two major cities, is doing a disservice to the very people they purport to properly govern.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, again, why rural revitalization is so very urgent to the future of this province. Let me tell you why it's important to do something about this issue rather than just speak about it.

I had some research done by my office through the regional library based in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. I'm told that statistical information indicates that the area served by that regional library, which includes my constituency of Cypress Hills and parts of several others, has lost a population of nearly 15,000 people since 1972 — 15,000 people gone from

southwest Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's almost the equivalent of the entire city of Swift Current — gone, just gone.

Gone from southwest Saskatchewan to who knows where. Gone from the farms and the small villages that dot that region. Gone from jobs that have disappeared for all kinds of reasons. Gone with little likelihood of returning unless someone takes the issue of rural revitalization seriously.

I'm certain that the current government is not up to the task, as I mentioned before. And I've already indicated some of the individual areas of concern. There are literally dozens more that affect rural Saskatchewan in the most deleterious manner.

What troubles me most about this situation, Mr. Speaker, is the cavalier attitude expressed by the members opposite when we tell them that people of my region are leaving in droves. The numbers prove it, but the members opposite think it's a big joke.

I've heard the laughter and the derision emanating from government benches when we say things are not good in the province. I've felt the scorn and the contempt being directed to the concerns raised in these matters. I've heard us called the Alberta-envy party, with a hint of a sneer, Mr. Speaker.

But, sir, such derision just proves my point. This government and the members opposite are so out of touch with the people of this province that they don't understand the depth of distrust they have inculcated in the very people they once . . . who once believed in them.

Fifteen thousand people gone from southwest Saskatchewan, and nobody on the government side cares. They laugh at that statistic. They laugh at the problems created by that. They charge us with doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker, while the figures tell the telling results — 13,200 jobs gone in this province according to StatsCanada. And the government tells us that things are great in socialist utopia. Daily the NDP is becoming more like Nero himself — fiddling while Rome burns.

Mr. Speaker, I heard today a new definition for an optimist. It's someone who insists that black is white in spite of the evidence. The Premier stands in this House and says the loss of jobs is due to weakness in the farm economy.

Mr. Speaker, just last spring when faced with the same kind of information, the former minister of Economic and Co-operative Development insisted that our economy was so well diversified that any downturn in farm figures would not affect our overall economic performance.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the question is, which is it? It looks like StatsCanada has provided the answer. The numbers on job creation for this government are going south faster than snowbirds in November. The crisis of numbers was really put to the test, Mr. Speaker, when the government announced, yet again, the creation of 10,000 jobs in the forest industry during their Throne Speech. That same announcement has been made before, leading me to believe that I have now clearly discovered the government's job creation strategy.

You announce the same 10,000 jobs on three separate

occasions, and voila — there you have the magical 30,000 jobs originally promised several years ago. Such enlightened job creation strategies do not only boggle the average citizens' mind, it stretches the government's credibility into incredulity.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech says with great pride, that we have 485,000 people currently working in the province of Saskatchewan. That, in turn, indicates that we have at least 525,000 people who are not working. That's the unstated corollary to the 485 that are working. And what we hope . . . excuse me, and what hope do we have for all these people? There's no significant new job-creating initiatives; there's not even modest ones in this Throne Speech.

We have measly prospects, all with the civil service. Six thousand temporary jobs, to be exact, all on the public payroll. And an invitation for young people to look seriously at working for the government as the only career choice of any consequence.

With these types of proposals, Mr. Speaker, for employment, the job growth projections look bleak indeed.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have one . . . well under one half of our population employed in this province, and even with the significant numbers of two income families, that isn't all that good a record. And we have taxes, Mr. Speaker, which discourage job creation. And the loss of a population in the southwest alone, equivalent in number to the entire population of the city of Swift Current. I can't stress the significance of that number enough, Mr. Speaker. It's completely unacceptable. And I think the government ought to be ashamed of that record.

Mr. Speaker, this government has become smug and unapproachable. This government has become arrogant. But worst of all, this government has become completely self-satisfied. So easily self-satisfied it acts as though it alone is responsible for increased oil and gas activity; that by its own power, potash sales were increased and wild rice grew in abundance.

(14:30)

The fact is this government is satisfied with a record of poor performance, while the members opposite stand and defend it daily. Satisfied with falling job numbers. Satisfied with a loss of population in vast parts of the province and a projection for an unsustainable population growth. Satisfied with a workforce that is contracting and growing older. And satisfied with incomparable outward migration.

Mr. Speaker, all of this happens under the watch of the current regime. This province has so much to offer but has so little to show for its riches. More resources than its neighbours in almost every category, but squandered opportunities on every hand.

Mr. Speaker, we are not the party of Alberta envy. We are a party of people who believe in this province and the people who live here. We believe that we have a future full of promise and prosperity for all.

But we are disheartened by the failures of this government to

allow the natural abilities of our people and the boundless resources of this province to be loosed for our greater benefit.

The government of the day, Mr. Speaker, is self-satisfied because the members opposite don't have to live with the economic consequences of their decision. Their paycheques arrive each month at the expense of taxpayers that do suffer the consequences of this government's policies.

But the people who actually create wealth within this province, as opposed to those who merely redistribute it, are calling for relief. The people need relief from the policies that stifle their initiative. Mr. Speaker, we have the people and we have the talent to turn this into a land of opportunity.

So I ask, Mr. Speaker, what is there about this government's policies and philosophies that have kept our population numbers at just over 1 million over the last 60 or more years, while turning Calgary into Saskatchewan's third largest city.

I have many more examples of government regulations that are driving business and people away from this great province. I have names of individuals who would give their eye teeth for a chance to come home and contribute to our economy if circumstances were right.

However, Mr. Speaker, those opportunities will not be realized because this government insists it knows better than anyone else how business ought to be done and how they can spend your money and my money better than I can. With such an attitude, it is difficult to see what chance there is for a change in direction.

I hope something happens soon, Mr. Speaker, before the countryside in Cypress Hills constituency is decimated any further by the wisdom and largess of this government.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment as put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member from Rosetown-Biggar, and will oppose vigorously the government's motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I begin this debate by congratulating you, sir, on your election as Speaker of this great Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

And I'd also like to congratulate the member from Regina Sherwood on his election to the role of Deputy Speaker. I have every confidence in each of you that you will do a fine job and will make us all proud of both of you.

The role of Speaker, Mr. Speaker, is one that I enjoyed very much because of its challenges. But there was a greater challenge facing myself and the Liberal caucus — a challenge I felt I had to meet because of the needs of not only my constituents, but of everyone in this province.

It is a challenge of how best to serve the people who put their trust in you to represent their interests. Service, Mr. Speaker,

towards others is nothing new. It is what separates us from the lower forms of life whose sole purpose in life is perpetuating their own species at the expense of others.

As a former RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officer, my job was to serve and protect all people, a job description that continues as an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly). When I served in the RCMP it was not unusual to be transferred or to be assigned new responsibilities as the occasion warranted, or as the need was seen fit.

What has happened to me recently in my political career is almost no different. I simply wish to serve the public where it is felt I can serve best. Public service, Mr. Speaker, has been my life's goal. Integrity and teamwork have been the code of honour under which I operated, Mr. Speaker, and I will not stop living up to that code now.

In 1999 I felt honoured to seek re-election as the Liberal candidate in the Melville constituency. I was truly, truly, humbled, Mr. Speaker, by the huge majority I received as the Liberal candidate.

When the provincial results of that election consequently presented an opportunity and challenge for me to serve as Speaker of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, I accepted that challenge. I was convinced that to serve as Speaker was in the best interest of the people of my constituency and this great province of Saskatchewan. I accepted because I am convinced that stability is important to good government.

There are people who believed that I discharged the responsibility of Speaker of the Saskatchewan legislature with impartiality and distinction. It is no secret, Mr. Speaker, I was deeply, deeply touched by that honour. I am truly grateful to have had that opportunity to serve.

There are people who disagree with the choice I made, and I respect the right of others to hold an opposite view. However, I want to make it crystal clear that I do not share their view.

It is not my intention to question their integrity. It is not my intention to impugn their motives. And it is certainly not my style to attack the personal political agenda of others. I will never fan the flames of discontent in an attempt to advance my own personal agenda. I want to build, Mr. Speaker. I will not work to tear down this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I will not be frightened by false personal accusations or innuendos. We must have the courage to dare to do our duty as we understand that we must enjoy faith in the wisdom of Saskatchewan voters.

For 25 years I was a proud member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and during those 25 years I learned to appreciate that order, peace, and good government were fundamental to our Canadian democracy. My faith in peace, order, and good government is as firm today ever. I will serve the cabinet for this province, of this province, with courage and determination.

A few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, I made a very difficult decision. I resigned a position that I clearly enjoyed. I left that position because I judge it important to support a coalition government. A coalition government that provides Liberals with an opportunity to propose legislation that is important to this province. I believe we can draft a legislation particularly important to rural Saskatchewan.

I look forward to the challenge of my new role as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Sask Water. I have already been able to meet many of the fine municipal leaders of our province and I look forward to meeting many, many more and listening to their ideas in order to forge this province forward.

I hope that they will regard me as a sincere partner in creating effective municipalities. I think you will see an increased effort on our part to serve those needs.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I would just like to tell you a little bit about my constituency, of which I'm very, very proud. And I make no secret of the fact that I represent a rural constituency. I am proud of that fact. And I am proud that the voters of my rural constituency gave me a resounding vote of confidence. I will not destroy their confidence through partisan party politics or personal political bickering.

And, Mr. Speaker, it has been an exciting year in that constituency of mine in Melville. And we expect more exciting things to happen in the coming year.

First of all, I would like to welcome any and all my constituents who might just be watching these proceedings in their own homes, checking up on their Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Melville people believe in the values of families, of working together as a community. There were many homecomings held in our constituency in 2000. Homecomings that brought people together. They were an outstanding success. And I was proud to represent the province at these events, letting Saskatchewan people know we are one community, that in the words of our provincial motto: "from many peoples, strength."

That community spirit continued, Mr. Speaker, with fowl suppers held in rural communities around the Melville constituency — communities such as Grayson, Abernethy, Killaly, Dubuc, just to mention a few. These dinners and these events also brought together people, allowing that community spirit to continue and their pride to show.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Melville constituency still believe in this great province of Saskatchewan. They have not given up on this province of ours.

There have been other events in my constituency that have provided further evidence that this coalition government provides real, tangible benefits to Saskatchewan people. The hospital sod-turning in Melville was a landmark event. It brought health care in our constituency into the 21st century by providing a truly vital and essential service to the surrounding area. I look forward to that facility opening in the year 2002.

Mr. Speaker, this did not come about easily. This was as a result of hard work through hospital fundraising events, dedication of community volunteers — people who put community first, ahead of trying to destroy it.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years, 10 years of hard work paid off in being noticed and supported by this coalition government. Communities such as Goodeve and Neudorf are still holding hospital fundraisers. Communities of a few hundred people, Mr. Speaker, that are raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for this particular project.

Again in this area of health care, I'm pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that in Ituna, the provincial support from this coalition government's Centenary Fund helped replace their handivan for the transport of people with disabilities. We would not have seen this under Saskatchewan Party government which would have frozen all support for health care and helping people who need our help the most.

Another moment of community pride in the Melville constituency was winning the bid for the Canada Cup, including a 256,000 Centenary Fund to improve Melville's baseball facilities for the midget national baseball championships. Many community leaders from Melville and area realize the importance and the potential of holding a national tournament, not just for the city of Melville, but for all the communities in that constituency and beyond, Mr. Speaker.

Another great athletic event was the performance of zone 4 athletes who competed in Yorkton for the 2000 Saskatchewan Summer Games, very successful games. And those young people that participated brought back medals, and the thrill and the joy of competition.

Mr. Speaker, this coalition government has brought other tangible benefits to the people of the Melville constituency. We have seen highway construction on Highway No. 10 and Highway No. 310, projects that continue to improve the opportunities for transportation in the Melville constituency.

We have other ways the coalition government has worked on in responding to the needs of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We have seen a number of provincial municipal infrastructure projects in the year 2000-2001.

Included in these infrastructure projects, just to mention a few, is \$80,000 to the town of Ituna water project. There was \$105,600 going to the Ituna Bon Accord Rural Municipality for rural roads. There was \$286,000 that went to the Grayson Rural Municipality for rural roads.

There was \$67,046 to the village of Lebret for a water project. The city of Melville street project, Mr. Speaker, received \$160,000 from this particular program. The village of Neudorf received \$30,000 for their water project.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I did not mention one of the most important roles that I see as an MLA, and I'm sure that it's shared by other MLAs in this Assembly, and that's the opportunity to help individuals, to help people, Mr. Speaker, who come to us for assistance through our constituency offices.

And just on that note, I would like to express appreciation to those people in our constituency offices — to Candace, and all the other constituency assistants who are there taking care of business while we are here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. They work very, very hard on our behalf and we should really recognize and appreciate their efforts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

Hon. Mr. Osika: — There are other people that make our life a lot easier while we're here, Mr. Speaker. And that's to the Table officers; it's to the Legislative Assembly staff; it's to the SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) staff; our legal counsel here; and all the folks in this particular building that help us in our day-to-day efforts representing the people of this great province of ours.

But let me get back to more great news from the great Melville constituency. There is good news from all those who work on economic development in all our small towns throughout the constituency. They're working very, very hard to keep rural Saskatchewan alive, and I plan on continuing to give them my full support in helping them to do so.

Mr. Speaker, that's just a brief snapshot and good example of the Saskatchewan spirit and endless talent that we have in this great province of ours. It takes more these days for small communities to survive. And I would like to acknowledge the tireless effort of those residents in their communities who continue to give of themselves to continue to maintain a healthy community spirit.

These efforts allow our community to showcase the most important part of living in rural Saskatchewan — the relationships and the friendships that we have within those communities. Each day, Mr. Speaker, these people work extremely hard to maintain the quality of life in our communities. They provide a vital service and stabilizing force in small town rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the coalition government has done much for my constituency, but my constituents, myself included, will expect more. And this coalition government will continue to make all people of this great province a priority.

This coalition government has provided much for other constituencies as well. An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) for southern Saskatchewan; the farm education rebate program; Centenary Fund grants; highway construction; job creation; an infrastructure program; an enhanced provincial disaster assistance program; elimination of the farm fuel tax. And that's just naming a few initiatives, Mr. Speaker, and there are more to come.

Mr. Speaker, now turning to a vital sector of our economy, one that is struggling in our province — the agricultural sector. Melville and district have some of the finest farms and farm families. They have tried to make a success of the family farm.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my next comments are going to be said very slowly so the opposition members can understand, including the

member from North Battleford. Farm families in my area, despite their innovation, are struggling; they're hurting. They need help as does the entire agricultural sector in our province.

Earlier in this session, Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosthern and the member from North Battleford suggested — and it's in *Hansard* and people can recognize that — they suggested that I said everything was wonderful on the farms in my constituency.

I looked over the record, Mr. Speaker, and I found I did not say that at all. That was said by members opposite for whatever reason, whether it was meant to intentionally mislead this House or the people in my constituency. And they do owe an apology to those people. They do owe an apology to those people for having misled and twisted what was said in this House.

For whatever reason I guess, Mr. Speaker, desperate people do desperate things and say desperate things. Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosthern and the member from North Battleford clearly misstated my remarks about the state of farms in my constituency.

Certainly not everything is perfect for farm families in the Melville constituency. And as I have said today, Mr. Speaker, despite great challenges, farm families in my seat are resilient and innovative like the people of this province. They have been doing everything in their power to take each and every opportunity that comes their way. They do not buy the negative trash talking of the members opposite. They believe in themselves and in their farm. And they've done much to diversify and will continue to do so.

They do need short-term help to fight the treasuries of Europe and the United States. But despite these challenges the farmers in my seat don't give up on Saskatchewan like the members opposite do, Mr. Speaker, and this coalition government will not give up on farmers either. We will continue to fight for agricultural producers right across this great province of ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — In the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, our coalition government is proposing to expand access to high-speed Internet service right around Saskatchewan. Recently in this House, we heard the member from Kindersley scoff at the need for such a service, particularly during a farm crisis.

In recent weeks, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to talk to many rural residents. Despite what the member from Kindersley says, I've spoken to rural people who are deeply concerned about rural businesses being at a disadvantage with the cities because they do not have that kind of an access.

The member from Kindersley should remember that the world will in fact continue to forge ahead regardless of whether or not there is a crisis on our farms. This government has had the good sense and foresight to make sure that Saskatchewan does everything it possibly can to keep rural areas in tune with the rest of the country.

Mr. Speaker, we should not be surprised however, that the

member from Kindersley is opposed to bringing rural Saskatchewan into the information economy. After all, he is the person who thinks that smaller family farms have no future in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have a case of envy. It's not just any type of envy, Mr. Speaker, it's Alberta envy. And they have an acute case of it. They think everything in Alberta is better. They think that unless you live in Alberta there is no hope that you'll ever achieve your dreams, Mr. Speaker.

They believe there is little chance of achieving prosperities in one's community and for one's family here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, our good neighbours to the west live in a province which no doubt has many, many attributes, but its success by no means prevents Saskatchewan from obtaining a more prosperous and bright future.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite spend so much time telling the people of Saskatchewan how much better off things are in Alberta. It's shameful that they devote so much effort telling everyone in Saskatchewan that this is a bad province to live in. It's shameful under any circumstance, but even worse given that they want to call themselves the Saskatchewan Party.

Even though, even though, Mr. Speaker, we're not very far into this session we've heard plenty of trash talking from the Saskatchewan Party about Saskatchewan. According to their brain trust our economy is faltering, our health care workers are all packing their bags, our schools are all soon going to be empty, and our farmers and our agribusinesses are all going to close up shop because there are no opportunities here.

You'd think this was the end of the world, Mr. Speaker, as we know it. Well, those of us in this coalition government know however that the world will be fine so long as the Sask Party is kept on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, certainly Saskatchewan has had its share of problems. Sure we face a number of challenges and some of them will be very difficult to address. While the Sask Party laments the fact that these problems exist and uses them to try to get power, the coalition government colleagues — my coalition government colleagues and I — are going to face them head on and do the work needed to rise above these challenges. That is what this province has always been all about. That's what it's always been about.

Rather than scoring political points by painting a negative picture of Saskatchewan and the challenges it faces, the Sask Party should remember how this province was built. When your parents grew up in this province things were not always perfect. When your grandparents and your great grandparents arrived to settle Saskatchewan they faced far greater challenges than we face today. Rather than giving up and saying let's move to Alberta or somewhere else, they stuck it through. They believed in themselves. They believed in their communities. And they believed in this great province of Saskatchewan. And they did build a brighter future for all of us.

Under Liberal governments in the early decades of the last century, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan settled the

prairie, built numerous communities, set up local governments, schools, universities, and founded union hospitals which serve as a basis for medicare. Within a few decades . . . despite, despite a war, an epidemic, and many, many untold challenges we built, we built the third most populous province in Canada.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province more than ever want to believe in their province and to continue to be proud of who they are and where they live. That is unfortunately made difficult when the members of the Saskatchewan Party constantly trash Saskatchewan. It's made tough when they tell people this isn't the place of opportunity. This isn't the place where one can meet their needs or fulfill their dreams.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members opposite to remember what their parents and grandparents did. Saskatchewan people are resilient, innovative, and patient and they are capable of overcoming any challenge that they confront. Rather than trash talk Saskatchewan every time they confronted a problem, our parents and our grandparents believed in themselves. They dealt with these problems and they built a brighter future to ensure that we could enjoy a better future in this province.

In the Throne Speech before us today, we are offering to connect with the future. The sooner we believe we can connect with the future and make this a better province, Mr. Speaker, the sooner we will be able to do that. The sooner the members of the Sask Party join us in reminding Saskatchewan people that we can overcome challenges, the sooner we will build a brighter future.

Saskatchewan people have it within themselves to make the future whatever they want it to be. They don't need to live in Alberta and they don't need an Alberta-style government to make their dreams come true either. Like our parents and our grandparents, it's not where we are that matter, it's who we are that matters.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people will meet challenges face to face, determine their own destiny, and plot their own course in history. Despite whatever the members opposite suggest, it's who we are that counts, not where we are.

We are a creative and an innovative people. When we combine this with our willingness to overcome any problem we face, we can assure ourselves that we will connect to the future.

Mr. Speaker, as I travel around the province today, I detect a real concern, almost a fear, about the political future of this province. People are expressing a real fear about the extreme agenda of the party opposite.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Saskatchewan Party have a vision that's scary. They seem to think it's important to sully my reputation and my personal integrity. Well I take their interest as a compliment. But I want them to know that I will not sit idly by while prominent members of their party, Mr. Speaker, meet to fan flames of separation from Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in this province and this country of ours. I was in the service of this country to help keep this country together through enforcing the laws of this country that promote peace, order, and good government. Mr. Speaker, wasn't that

long ago that I got up in this Assembly and spoke about the importance of national unity in this great country of Canada.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in the agenda of division, of tearing this province and this country apart as a way to distract the people of Saskatchewan from the fact that that party has no vision of the future. In fact, they have nothing to offer Saskatchewan people but a return to the past and a betrayal of the future of this province — a future that, to date, has been free from their talent for deficit budgets and crippling debt.

Mr. Speaker, I will not betray the people of Saskatchewan by going back to the past. Mr. Speaker, I will not betray the people of Saskatchewan by not offering a future. And, Mr. Speaker, I will not take part in the effort to tear our province and our country apart.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — This Throne Speech builds on the present for the future, Mr. Speaker. It builds by offering a vision, a vision that is lacking in the opposition benches. Mr. Speaker, it continues to build a legacy that I'm proud to build on and take part in. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I will support this Throne Speech put forth by the coalition in 2001, but I will not in good conscience support the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start this afternoon by first congratulating you. Certainly those of us who are from the more central part of Saskatchewan are very proud that you've attained this position and I congratulate you.

At this time, I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the new Deputy Speaker, the Chair of committees, the member from Regina Sherwood. We look forward to working with him as we do look forward to working with you now and in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, again the people from Saskatchewan Rivers are pleased to have the opportunity to be able to get up this afternoon and to spend some time alluding to this airy-fairy Throne Speech that was presented last week by the NDP government.

And what we need to do is take some time and go through the Throne Speech and help everyone to understand what this government is trying to do as they completely accede to the possibilities that they have completely devoided themselves, Mr. Speaker, of any vision for the future of this province.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's become painfully clear and with a great deal of disillusionment in the Saskatchewan Rivers constituency that the lack of vision by this NDP government is causing a great deal of concern, and right now, Mr. Speaker, it is become the number one priority in my constituency to work hard with my constituents, to convince them that, yes, there is a future in Saskatchewan. No, you don't have to move to Alberta, such as the members in the government keep alluding to; that

we shouldn't be talking about Alberta — and they're right, we don't talk about Alberta. We want to keep our children here for the future of this province. But unfortunately with speeches from the throne such as this, that opportunity is not going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, over the years the citizens of Saskatchewan, when spring arrives, look forward to the opening of the session, the Speech from the Throne, later in the week we're going to get the budget from the Minister of Finance. Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan and certainly those people in rural Saskatchewan always see spring as a sign of hope. The world is turning green again. The snow is melting and lushness starts to build in our province again. This will be the first time probably ever in the history of this province that when we go through a Throne Speech when it is presented that there is no hope for Saskatchewan.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, when the Throne Speech was presented by this NDP government, they didn't even know what season it was. Spring is here. Spring has been here for quite a while, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the Premier of the province had to be told by one of his cabinet ministers that it was spring, so it leads to a great deal of disconcertment, Mr. Speaker, that anyone over there has any idea what time of the year it is. And quite often, we've heard in their speeches, they don't know if it's morning or afternoon or evening.

Now in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, there were very, very little here that the province can look forward to. In fact, there's virtually nothing that the province can look forward to. I think we need to spend some time taking a look at this budget speech, how it's going to reflect upon the constituents of Saskatchewan Rivers, and in fact, whether there is anything in this budget speech that the people of Saskatchewan Rivers can look forward to that will build up their hopes.

The Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, spoke about a thriving economy in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers they don't see a thriving economy. And so for . . . they are very concerned that the government of the day, this NDP, so-called NDP government, would stand up and proudly say that there's a thriving economy.

Mr. Speaker, I spent several hours on the phone with several different constituents of mine this spring — hours, Mr. Speaker, literally hours and hours — of people saying, what can we do? We want to stay here in Saskatchewan and work. We know there's opportunity; we know there's potential, Mr. Speaker, in this province, for growth, for wealth creation. We know that we can provide the goods and services that are needed by the people of Saskatchewan, by the people of Canada, by the people of North America. Everyone in the world can use the goods and services that could be — and I emphasize the word could, Mr. Speaker — that could be produced in this province.

Unfortunately, after listening to the people from Saskatchewan Rivers, as they explained to me very, very clearly, there is only one problem that is preventing them from creating the successes that they would like to see for themselves, that they would like to see for their children, and that they'd like to see for their grandchildren, they would like to see for their great-grandchildren. And that number one problem, Mr.

Speaker, is that NDP government sitting opposite.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about a thriving economy . . . Of course those of us on this side of the House understand the term thriving economy. That is when the people in this province feel that sense of pride as they rise every morning and go off to their workplace, go off to their businesses, go to work for their employers with a sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment.

And in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, that is disappearing on a day-by-day basis. In the town of Choiceland, Mr. Speaker, a mirror has been held up for the province of Saskatchewan to take a look at what this NDP government has done for Saskatchewan.

This winter alone, in the period of time that there was snow on the ground . . . in the wintertime, we have lost five businesses. Five businesses, Mr. Speaker, in one town alone.

Now if you take this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It is so. It is so, the member from Indian Head-Milestone. I must reiterate, it is so. That is exactly what's happened. And if it's happening in Choiceland, we know it is happening elsewhere in rural Saskatchewan. Everywhere in this province.

Five businesses. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool elevator is closing. The Bank of Nova Scotia had to close its doors because of a downturn in business. The service station with a restaurant had to close because of a downturn in business, because of the increase in taxes.

Two other businesses also, Mr. Speaker. There was a machinery dealer that had been servicing the people of Choiceland and the community surrounding it and the entire farm area from Nipawin to Prince Albert had been there for decades, and this winter, Mr. Speaker, they had to close their doors.

And the last business, Mr. Speaker, was the fertilizer dealer in the town of Choiceland; again, a long time business that had been providing a service to the farmers in the Choiceland, Smeaton, Snowden, Garrick, Love areas for decades, and last winter, Mr. Speaker, because of the regressive policies, the lack of vision by this NDP government, they too had to close their doors.

Now that's not to say . . . There's something I have to say about a thriving economy. This NDP government has talked many times about potential. And certainly, we all want to agree that there is potential, Mr. Speaker. But we need to take a look at the work potential. How long do we just sit back, Mr. Speaker, and say that this province has potential and then simply do nothing about it.

That's what we see now in the last 10 years is a do-nothing attitude by this NDP government and their desire to gain control of the economy rather than allow the economy to provide the goods, the services, the jobs, and the dynamic economy that could and should make Saskatchewan the envy of the world.

Mr. Speaker, the town and the rural municipality of Birch Hills actually are trying — are trying — their very hardest to create an opportunity for economic development in this province. There is a firm from outside this province that is looking at

creating a medium-sized business in Saskatchewan that is going to generate tens, nay, hundreds of millions in opportunity for the people in north and central Saskatchewan.

But as hard as they try to create this opportunity, the local governments are doing their utmost, providing the opportunity for this business to come and start up opportunities. There's infrastructure that needs to be taken care of; these communities are working hard to ensure that this infrastructure is going to be in place.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's also going to have to come out of the local tax base to do that, because they're not hearing anything from this NDP government that is showing encouragement for job creation in the Saskatchewan Rivers constituency.

Which reminds me, Mr. Speaker, that it's unfortunate that my constituents are not able to reap the same benefits as the constituents of Melville. I'm sure that they're very pleased, and we're very pleased for them, Mr. Speaker, that things are doing very well in Melville, even though the farm economy is not as bad there as it is in the rest of the province. And we feel very proud of that for them. But in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers, we are suffering a great economic disaster.

Now this corporation that I spoke of, Mr. Speaker, that is really working hard to try to get a foothold in Saskatchewan, they've met with the local governments, reached some very good understandings, setting some agreements in place. Some long-term, short-term intermediate plans are all being put in place so that we can put in a corporation, develop jobs, job strategies that are going to have long-reaching and far-reaching effects in north central Saskatchewan.

Yet when we talked to the corporation about what is the province doing. Nothing, the province isn't going to do anything. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what this corporation is telling us is that even though they're coming in and providing hundreds of jobs, many of them unionized — many of them unionized — what they're hearing is that because of the regressive tax policies of this government, they're going to have to wait for a change in government, for the Saskatchewan Party to become the government of this province, before they're going to be able to come in here and do business.

Now one of the areas that I noticed, Mr. Speaker, in the budget when we talk about a thriving economy, the opportunity that there's business actually taking place in this province. And certainly we've heard many times from the members opposite, from the NDP government members, that there is good business taking place in this province. Unfortunately they're only able to hold up one example at a time.

The government has said that there's about three areas in this province where the economy is doing well. And that's in potash, it's in the oil and gas sector and in wild rice. So we have one area of farming, Mr. Speaker, according to this government, that is actually doing well.

Now of course the member from Melville will lead us to believe that the farm economy is only bad outside of Melville.

Now unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there are many other areas of the economy that are trying to take place in this province, Mr. Speaker, that are not tied up with these three — the potash, oil and gas, and the wild rice, Mr. Speaker.

(15:15)

In fact the wild rice producers, Mr. Speaker, in this province, would like to see a lot more, a lot more value added put on their product, Mr. Speaker. But again they're finding the restrictive NDP government with their regressive tax policies, it's much easier to ship out raw product than it is to develop value added in this province.

Now they also talk about the boom in the oil and gas. And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) must be absolutely dancing in the sand because there's an NDP government here taking credit for oil prices in the world.

But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we understand very clearly that this NDP government has no effect on world gas prices. And for them to take any credit for that is an insult to the people of Saskatchewan, to the citizens of Saskatchewan, and it's an insult to the oil producers of the world. And it's an insult to those people who work in the oil field industry when they hear statements by this NDP government that they are responsible for the boom in oil prices and everyone should be proud of their ability to manage the books, Mr. Speaker.

What we do know, we do know something on this side of the House that they don't understand on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and that is when you look at economy, you look at thriving businesses, that you can actually reduce taxes. You can reduce royalties and even have more tax dollars to work with in government coffers than you would have previously.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the NDP socialist philosophy is, is that the pie is only so big and so if you take a little bit out of it you have to find . . . you have to take away from someone else to put that back.

Now that is really an astounding belief, Mr. Speaker, that in this day and age the economists have established centuries ago that wealth can be created, that you can create new and more wealth and everyone can benefit.

Everyone can benefit, Mr. Speaker, whether you live in Saskatchewan Rivers or you live in Regina, subsidize Regina. That the Minister of Crown Corporations got up and proudly boasted today that it is the responsibility of the citizens of Saskatchewan to subsidize Regina when he announced that the average household only pays \$113 for power this winter, when I know very well that the people of Prince Albert paid significantly higher — significantly, Mr. Speaker — probably in the range of \$50 a month more in Prince Albert.

So I think for you and I, Mr. Speaker, to know that we — even though we live in the banana belt in Prince Albert which was significantly warmer all winter of course than Regina because the hot air hadn't showed up here yet — that in Prince Albert we have to pay more for power, for hydro, than they do in

Regina. And I think the people of Prince Albert are going to be outraged finding out when the Minister of Crown Corporations got up and made that astounding announcement this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, we want to take a look at some other things in this budget speech that are having a significant effect upon the citizens of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Now this government, again for the 10th time, has got up and talked about the health of its citizenry, the health of its families, and the health of its communities. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that the people of Saskatchewan and their resilience in spite of this NDP government . . . that the people of Saskatchewan are healthy in spite of the health care system that is being provided by this NDP government.

In fact we're disconcerted on this side, and certainly we're hearing this week and through the weekend when the Minister of Health is unsure of whether anybody even works for the Department of Health outside of Regina, the citizens of Saskatchewan Rivers are saying, well what is with the Minister of Health? Doesn't he know that there's nurses in this system, or does he think that none of them have left or none have retired? Doesn't he understand that when they made the promise of 500 more nurses in the 1999 campaign . . . that's exactly, Mr. Speaker, we both remember that clearly, is that this NDP government promised 500 more nurses; that there was actually when all is shaken down, by the time this government is replaced, there'll be probably 500 less nurses in this province, Mr. Speaker.

In health care, Mr. Speaker, it's amazing to listen to this NDP government and all the credit that they take for all the good work that is being taken by the volunteers in this province.

Now we've heard this government and we've heard the minister get up and say how well the government is doing in health care; how well the bureaucracy is doing in wealth care . . . health care. And how that by having less nurses in the health care system, the health is now better. By having fewer doctors in the health care system, it's now better. By taking money out of services, capital services, the health care is now better.

Well what's happened in reality? There's a reality that has taken place, Mr. Speaker. And the reality is the good citizens of Saskatchewan and certainly the good citizens of Saskatchewan Rivers have taken it upon themselves, they've taken it upon themselves, Mr. Speaker, to take over the health care system and look after the health care system and look after their citizens so that they know, they know very clearly that this NDP government has decided not to do that. They're more interested in trying to solve their problems, internal problems, the inner fighting that is going on in their caucus, rather than to look after the health of the citizens of Saskatchewan.

In fact communities in my area of the province, Mr. Speaker, as you may be aware, as in other communities, the communities have had to set up hospital foundations so that they can do fundraising. Communities are doing their own fundraising, Mr. Speaker, to replace dilapidated, antiquated equipment so that quality health care and quality services can be provided to the people of Saskatchewan.

And then this government, in their complete lack of wisdom, Mr. Speaker, is actually taking the antiquated, broken-down, useless equipment that is of no value to southern Saskatchewan and shipping it to places such as Ile-a-la-Crosse. And the staff taking a look at this and saying, we need a manual to operate this stuff, Mr. Speaker, because nobody here was even around when this stuff was built.

But that's the kind of quality health care that they're providing in northern Saskatchewan — second-rate, second-class health care for northern Saskatchewan — an area of this province that is vital, that is an absolute necessity to continue this drive and for the exciting economy that could be in Saskatchewan and is an integral part of the potential this province could have for success.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's so much in this budget that has to be gone over to point out to the people of Saskatchewan its negative impact upon the people of Saskatchewan, the people of rural Saskatchewan, and specifically to the people of Saskatchewan Rivers.

In my area of the world, we're certainly highly amused — and it is an amusement, Mr. Speaker — that the government is looking at investing through the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, \$70 million dollars so we have high-speed Internet access. Now this sounds like a wonderful, wonderful opportunity for the people of rural Saskatchewan, the people of northern Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there's a terrific, horrific downside to this announcement.

The first part of it, Mr. Speaker, is that the technology, the technology that this government is going to invest in to provide high-speed Internet access — they call it. Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's not even high speed, it's medium-speed Internet access they're going to be provided. It's already outdated and this government is going to make a \$70 million commitment to outdated technology — outdated, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd like sometime this spring or this sitting, Mr. Speaker, to have someone from the government explain to those of us on this side who are more interested in moving into the 21st century, why it's important to invest in the 20th century, even though the 20th century has long past.

Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be able to find the money for \$70 million worth of Internet access taken out of taxpayer pockets — the taxpayers of Regina, taxpayers of Saskatoon, the taxpayers of Moose Jaw, the taxpayers of Prince Albert — and taking those peoples' taxpaying dollars, the people who create . . . who are trying to create wealth in this province, and investing it in second-rate technology for Internet use in rural Saskatchewan.

Now what we could have, we could have, Mr. Speaker, have taken that \$70 million and looked at tax reduction. We could have done that, Mr. Speaker. But I didn't see that anywhere in the budget speech, Mr. Speaker; there is no talk here of tax reduction. In fact what the . . . we can hardly wait to see the budget speech and the rampant spending that we're sure there's going to be brought down in there.

But in the meantime we have to take a look at what's in front of

us now, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure the farmers of Saskatchewan are going to be highly interested, or maybe the better term is they're going to be non-interested in receiving medium-speed access to the Internet when in today's day and age, this government, if they had got on their bus that the Premier promised — he's going to get a bus although the wheels have fallen off, as we're all aware on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker — if they had gone on the bus and went out to rural Saskatchewan where there is not the cable service that they have in the cities and saw that on the farms that they're actually using wireless technology. Wireless technology, Mr. Speaker, which is incredible, which is incredibly much quicker than what the province here is promising in this so-called Throne Speech.

So we're going to set up in rural and northern Saskatchewan technology that is already outdated and nobody is looking forward to. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there have been proposals made to this NDP government to provide high-speed access, not medium speed that they're talking about in this Throne Speech, but actual high-speed Internet service to northern Saskatchewan and this government said no, we can't do that. We have to have medium-speed service. The people of northern Saskatchewan have got to crawl, even though they're already walking, we're going to slow them down to a crawl first.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure and I know that the NDP government is not sure how this is going to benefit the people of northern Saskatchewan by introducing a regressive technology that is not going to provide them with the needs and the services that is going to be required to encourage thriving opportunities in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just touch a little bit on . . . I noticed in the Throne Speech there was some talk by this government investing, the government investing — because they certainly don't want private corporations or the public to participate in investing — this government is quite, this government is quite sure that the only way that what can happen in this province is for the government to take control of the economy.

What this government has talked about is that we have opportunities in this province for the growth of research and development. We have a large opportunity. The University of Saskatchewan has the synchrotron there. We have the Petroleum Technology Research Centre here in Regina. There's massive opportunities for research and development here in Saskatchewan.

(15:30)

But what this government is promising the people of Saskatchewan is that no, we can't have tax cuts because we need those tax dollars to fund research and development because we don't want the private sector doing this. This government is saying that it's more important for the government to participate in research and development than for the people who actually use it to participate in research and development.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers . . . Of course it's mostly a rural constituency. The largest

community, Birch Hills, is between 900 and a thousand people. The next largest, Mr. Speaker, is Choiceland, which is about an hour and a half north and east of Birch Hills. It has about 5 to 600 people living in it. We have no large towns, Mr. Speaker. It is very much a very rural — very rural — constituency. Very scattered. Very few farms any more because of the rationalization that has taken place.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, agriculture is one of the largest areas of economic opportunity that we can have in my constituency. Now there are some others but agriculture is one of the biggest. What is in this Throne Speech that would speak to a thriving agriculture economy for an opportunity for the agriculture community to feel comfortable, that things could look up, that this government actually supports agriculture in this province? Well what have we heard from this government, Mr. Speaker? They're going to buy a bus. They're going to get a used bus and haul the caucus around so they actually show them where rural Saskatchewan is.

Now we're not sure, Mr. Speaker, what having a bus is going to do for the people of rural Saskatchewan. I'm not sure what it's going to do for the people of Saskatchewan Rivers, for the farm community in Saskatchewan Rivers. Does it mean it's going to lower their taxes? Well that's not in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, one of the largest expense items — one of the largest expense items — for the farm community in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, is property taxes. And what's happened with property taxes, Mr. Speaker? In the last 10 years, this NDP government has downloaded education property taxes on to the local tax base at a rate that's unprecedented in the western world — unprecedented in the western world.

And what has that provided in my constituency? We have high taxes, reduced services for students. Reduced services, Mr. Speaker, from an NDP government that over the years has kept saying the children are the future, the children are the future. But we're not going to do anything for them. The children are our future but we're not going to do anything for them. In fact, what we're going to do is punish them for even being here.

What do we find from this NDP government? They're actually putting plans in place — putting plans in place, Mr. Speaker, if you can believe that — that we're going to have fewer children living in this province in 25 years. Now as a province, we should be looking at ways to build the province not tear it down. But they're actually putting plans in place how to run this province with fewer people in it. Why don't they put plans in place how to run this province with more people in it?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that the Saskatchewan Party, when the member from Rosetown-Biggan becomes a premier, has the plans in place to run this province with more people in it, more than 1 million, more than 2 million and maybe even more than 3 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from Cypress Hills spoke at length last night and did a little wrap-up this afternoon.

Now the member from Cypress Hills, who has keenly taken on the responsibility of keeping track, from the opposition point of view what is happening in the Department of Highways.

Now we understand clearly that the highway system in Saskatchewan is in a great deal of disrepair. Fortunately for me, apparently, there is no disrepair up in my area of the world, because there's no work going on. So therefore, it must all be good. Although we can't convince the people who drive on them that the highways are good because the Department of Highways have said so.

But what we have noticed is the little fix-it and little patching jobs that this NDP government has directed the department to do throughout the province, and certainly in my constituency; these little projects that you go over here and do a couple of miles for one day and then you go over and do somewhere else and do a couple miles rather than taking the whole project on and getting it done all at once. They do these little patch and repair jobs that are providing no services to the people of Saskatchewan, and are certainly are just providing the employees from the Department of Highways a large degree of frustration because everyday they come to work and they have no idea what they are going to be doing next because they have to wait for orders from Regina.

One of the projects, a very small project that took place in my constituency . . . actually according to the Department of Highways it was a large project; the people of Saskatchewan Rivers called it a small project because it would only encompass three kilometres. Three kilometres, Mr. Speaker, according to the Department of Highways and according to the minister, is a large project but the people of Saskatchewan Rivers call that a waste of time.

What they did, Mr. Speaker, is that they tore up a reasonably good piece of road, a highway, a heavy haul road, that was subsidized by a corporation in this province, Weyerhaeuser — at one time would, Prince Albert Pulp Wood Corporation was called at one time — they actually subsidized the building of that highway. The department in their wisdom tore the surface off it, tore the heavy haul surface off of it, and replaced it with a thin membrane surface, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker?

They tore off a heavy surface and replaced it with a thin membrane surface for heavy haul trucks, for heavy haul trucks. These are trucks that are permitted to haul very heavy weights on our highways, Mr. Speaker, on a year-round basis. They replaced a heavy haul highway with a thin membrane surface.

Now we don't know what that is supposed to accomplish, and of course I'm sure we are not going to get a straight answer from the minister in the future should we ever ask her that; in fact it's probably a waste of time to ask so we won't bother anyway.

Now we've also heard when we talk about transportation, Mr. Speaker, is that the government has a plan for strategic corridors, strategic corridors. Now there's quite a term. Now strategic corridors, from an economic point of view, is that you develop a road system that would funnel traffic from the regions onto major highways in areas of the world and certainly

in areas of Canada. We're hoping that would translate into Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately a strategic corridor . . . a strategic corridor for this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, means that they're going to get rural municipalities to build heavy-haul roads and then we can get the heavy traffic off the highways. And then the Department of Highways won't have to spend as much money to fix them even though they're taking all the gas money and not giving any of it back to the rural municipalities who are going to be bearing the brunt of the cost of building these roads and all the cost, all the cost, Mr. Speaker, of maintaining them in the future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in my critic area of Northern Affairs, I have a great deal of interest, a keen interest, in what's happening in northern Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker, throughout my life I've had a great many opportunities to live in northern Saskatchewan, to work in northern Saskatchewan, to make friends in northern Saskatchewan. And certainly I know that the members opposite think northern Saskatchewan starts just north of Ring Road but unfortunately] for those of us who are from the North know that northern Saskatchewan starts somewhere around the Churchill River.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the third time, and this is the third time this government has announced a strategy for new initiatives in forestry. This is the third time they've announced it, Mr. Speaker. How many times are they going to announce it? Do we hear it next year? Maybe it'll come true, or the year after, maybe it'll come . . .

Well what we're hoping, what the people from northern Saskatchewan are hoping of course, is that by next year there will be a different government sitting on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and then there will be 10,000 jobs in forestry in northern Saskatchewan rather than what's happening.

And what's really happening, Mr. Speaker, and we've spoken . . . we on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, have spoken to the citizens of northern Saskatchewan. We've said to them, now the government's promised you jobs. Where are they? We'd like to see them. And they stand up, every one of them, every one of them, Mr. Speaker, and say the same thing. There are no new jobs; the 10,000 jobs don't exist.

In fact what they're telling us, the people of northern Saskatchewan are telling us, Mr. Speaker, is that we have lost our jobs because of this so-called initiative in forestry . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you, member, I will do that.

Northern Saskatchewan which encompasses about 57 per cent of the land mass of this province is an integral part, Mr. Speaker, of the future, of the future promises, and is an integral part of the potential for the province of Saskatchewan. It is integral for job creation; it is integral for wealth creation. It is integral so that we have the resources that are necessary in the future to look after our senior citizens. It is integral that northern Saskatchewan enjoy and reap the same benefits as southern Saskatchewan.

Do we see that, Mr. Speaker? Well the Throne Speech, again,

talks about it. But as we've seen in the last two years talk is cheap, because nothing's happened. There's been job losses. Sawmills have closed, people are laid off, used up their EI (Employment Insurance), forced to go on welfare, and then this province says, oh, we don't have unemployment in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Well of course they don't — they're all on welfare.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, when I talked to the council at La Loche, they were outraged that this province, this government is saying that unemployment rolls . . . unemployment has been reduced in northern Saskatchewan. When they were able to stand right in front of us holding up the document that showed that what they had in fact was 90 per cent, Mr. Speaker, 90 per cent unemployment in La Loche.

Now I want, Mr. Speaker, desperately to try to understand how this is beneficial to the people at La Loche, how this is beneficial to the people of northern Saskatchewan. And I hope some time in the future that this NDP government, or the minister from northern Saskatchewan, or the minister from Environment and Resource Management, be able to explain — he'd probably have to explain it to his own colleagues first, because they don't understand it either — how 90 per cent unemployment is good for the people of northern Saskatchewan. But only in Saskatchewan would a government brag that 90 per cent unemployment is a good thing — a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

So what we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome to the Chair this afternoon. It's a pleasure to have you presiding over the affairs this afternoon. This government says that the people . . . that the members on this side of the House promote doom and gloom.

Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing could be further from the truth than saying that the members from this side of the House are promoting doom and gloom. We are the only ones that have a positive, aggressive agenda so that the people of northern Saskatchewan are going to be able to look forward to a future of wealth creation and job creation that is not, that is not a part of the agenda of that doom and gloom NDP government. In fact, they insist — they insist that the people of northern Saskatchewan are now and should remain second-class citizens.

(15:45)

We on this side of the House however, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are bound and determined that what is going to happen, that the people of northern Saskatchewan will not remain second-class citizens, and in fact will become full participants in the economy of Saskatchewan where they have the right for the ownership of property, where they have the right to have jobs for themselves, Mr. Speaker, with the opportunities that already exist in northern Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I notice in the Throne Speech, the so-called Throne Speech, that this government is talking about improving education. That is certainly a magnanimous stance to take, Mr. Speaker, that this NDP government is going to look at. And that's exactly the term they used. They were going to look at improving education. They're not sure if they want to do it or

not, but they're going to take a look at it.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, they have 10 years of undoing to do first before we can even start the process of improving education.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous life, I spent quite a bit of time going over education budgets, trying to figure out how we're going to cut staff to absorb the cutbacks that this NDP government inflicted upon educational organizations in this province.

Now this government talks about improving education — improving education. They took \$200 million, Mr. Speaker, \$200 million out of education in this province, and now they're going to start talking about improving it. Well before they can even start the process, they need to put \$200 million back into education. But are they talking about that in this? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What they're talking about in this Throne Speech is going back to a time when instead of investing money in people, we're going to build a building. We're going to build a building and everything will be much better. We'll build a building and it's going to be so much better for education because we have a building.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the children of Saskatchewan are just absolutely jumping up and down in their chairs knowing that they're going to have a building. We're not going to have teachers for them, Mr. Speaker. Now that would be a bit of a problem, having the teachers in them, but we're going to have a building.

Now what's needed is a commitment from a government in Saskatchewan that education is important; that it's one of the big-ticket items in this province that deserves more attention, far more attention than it is getting from this NDP government.

In fact, all we've seen in the last 10 years of NDP government is downloading, downloading, downsizing, cutting of education, and making the children, making the children and the future of our province, Mr. Speaker, pay for their complete lack of vision and the necessity and the need that education is one of the very basic tools, one of the founding principles of having a thriving economy, of having a booming economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The necessity to have the skilled labour force, the skills that are necessary to create jobs, the skills that are necessary to fill job openings that are going to take place, that can only take place, Mr. Speaker, through education. A lot of infrastructure is in place, but this NDP government has chosen not, not to participate in education that is required in order to have the skilled labour force that is necessary to carry this province into this century.

Now we found, Mr. Speaker, as I get closer and closer to the end here, that there are some opportunities in this . . .

An Hon. Member: — Tell us what's happening in the forest industry.

Mr. Wiberg: — Well I haven't got there yet.

Mr. Speaker, we see in the Speech from the Throne that the government is talking about connecting, connecting to Aboriginal people. What a phrase we want to put in a Throne Speech — connecting to Aboriginal people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, apparently we're going to have to give the members opposite, the so-called NDP government members, a lesson in connecting. First off, Aboriginal peoples were here first; and those of us who moved from the European countries, whose ancestors came from the European countries in the 1800s, we're already connected to the Aboriginal people. We work with them on a daily basis in our communities. We work with them in a daily basis in our job sites. We work with them on a daily basis in education, in health. But now, after 150 years, suddenly this government has come up with this wild concept that maybe they should start, should start connecting to Aboriginal people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, again the NDP government is a day late and a dollar short.

The fact of the matter is the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan have been making presentation after presentation after presentation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to this NDP government about what needs to happen for job creation in Aboriginal communities; for job creation, for wealth creation in northern Saskatchewan. And now for the first time since 1944, this government has come out with a catchphrase — 66 years to come up with a catchphrase.

Mr. Speaker, the Aboriginal people and the people of northern Saskatchewan deserve more than a catchphrase of, connecting to Aboriginal people. The people of northern Saskatchewan, the Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan not only want to connect with Saskatchewan, they want to be an integral part of the future, of the wealth creation that is going to take place in this province after this NDP government is removed from power.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Now, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan Rivers, I spoke about . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke about agriculture, the impact it's having on the communities in my constituency. The negative impact it's having upon farm families. The negative impact it's having on the communities because of the downturn, because of the regressive tax policies of this NDP government.

But there is another industry that has a very, very large impact also in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that area is forestry.

Now in Saskatchewan Rivers we're quite blessed being close to the northern forests with the job opportunities that become available; for the opportunities for small business to be able to establish businesses because of the forest, in the area of sawmills, logging operations to feed Weyerhaeuser. The opportunities are boundless and many people have taken advantage of that opportunity over decades and decades, going back into actually the 19th century, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately this winter has been their bleakest ever in forestry, the bleakest in more than a century, Mr. Speaker, in

forestry. We've had town hall meetings. I've had meetings in my office. I met with individuals at coffee shops. To a person, every one of them has said the same thing: there's only one thing preventing the 10,000 jobs from being created in forestry and that is this regressive, tax-grabbing NDP government.

This NDP government has seen fit, is seeing fit, it continues to see fit, is planning for the future to continue to tax out of existence the small-business men that create the wealth in the forest industry that is vital — is absolutely vital, Mr. Speaker — for job creation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province.

If we're going to have the 10,000 jobs that this NDP government is promising, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must take a hard, hard look at how this government operates. We cannot continue to have the regressive tax policies that are in place and we must, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must streamline the red tape that this government has put in place for forestry operators to operate.

In my area of the world, in Saskatchewan Rivers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I can count weekly, I can count weekly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the operators, the sawmill operators, the logging operators that have packed their equipment up and left this province. Every one of them has said the same thing. Every one of them has said the same thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We cannot continue to operate in this regressive regime, under this regressive regime. We must have the freedom to create wealth. We cannot, we cannot, Mr. Speaker, even create enough wealth to create the property taxes that have been downloaded by this regressive government through the education system.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's . . . as we look at the Throne Speech we see no hope, we see no vision. Again we see a government that is rehashing, to a large degree, promises that were made in the early '90s, promises that were made in the mid-'90s, and promises that were made in the late '90s. Promises, promises, promises, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They announced so many of these programs so many times, we're beginning to wonder on this side of the House that if you announce the same program enough times, you actually get to believe it yourself over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that they believe it. They need to convince themselves that they're believing it first and then they're going to try to convince the rest of Saskatchewan.

When you talk about 10,000 jobs in forestry when there was actually job losses, Mr. Speaker, I guess the NDP government feels, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they need to announce it over and over and over again and maybe they'll start to feel better themselves, rather the extreme economic downturn that they have forced upon the people of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with a great deal of regret that I wish to inform you that I will not be able to support the Throne Speech; and it is with a great deal of pleasure, a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, that I wish to inform you that I will be supporting the amendment proposed by the member from Rosetown-Biggar.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First I would like to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker, and I'd like to also extend my congratulations to the member from Prince Albert on his election as Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am certainly proud to be able to represent the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood constituency. It is a constituency that is largely rural based, with the largest community being Wynyard of a little over 2,000 people; the rest of the towns are quite a bit smaller than that. So agriculture of course is certainly a major concern in our constituency.

But there are also a number of other concerns that the citizens of Last Mountain-Touchwood have and have asked me to advocate for them and to raise for them, and I intend to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today and in the future days during this session.

Some of the issues that we have in our constituency are not unlike issues that are in most members' constituencies, particularly those members that represent constituencies outside the major urban centres. They centre around health, agriculture, infrastructures, highways, municipal roads, water and sewer, and those sorts of things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we often hear the government talk about value added and we need to add more value to the products that we produce here in Saskatchewan, and I'm happy to say that that is . . . has been going on for some time in the community of Wynyard. Wynyard is the home to the only poultry processing plant in Saskatchewan.

And I have been in discussion with members of town council recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they have some very real concerns that centre around the poultry processing plant. As you may know, to process . . . to do this processing requires a great deal of high-quality, good, clean drinking water. Water so that we can prepare the food so it's fit for consumption. And these added costs of providing more and more water are falling on the laps . . . in the laps of the town councillors of Wynyard. The poultry processing plant in the last two years have seen an increase in water usage of some 35 per cent. And this is causing a real, as I mentioned, a real strain on the water supply in the town.

(16:00)

The town has undertaken a study to look at future water supplies. They have talked to the government about perhaps having some assistance in at least developing a plan and so on. And they seem to be running into a number of roadblocks and experiencing some frustrations in that area. And I'll be working . . . I'm working with the town to help solve their problems.

Another community that has been in discussions with this NDP government and haven't had the type of results that they would like to have seen, is the small town of Kelliher. Some far-sighted folks in that community had the vision . . . had the foresight to seize on an opportunity that presented itself to . . . so that they could enhance their emergency measures services in their town.

They were made aware of a lot . . . of a portable power plant that was being removed from one of the office buildings here in Regina, and they followed the . . . these people from Kelliher followed up on this. They went ahead and purchased the power plant. This power plant has the capability of providing power to all the skating and curling rink waiting rooms. It can run their water system and those sorts of things, so that in the event of a Saskatchewan ice storm or some such natural disaster, the people in the community and surrounding communities would have a place to go to be warm, you can look after the seniors in the area, and so on.

And as I mentioned, they went ahead and purchased the power plant. They've got all the plans in place to locate it in . . . and hook up to their essential services, but for a small town it's a fairly sizeable cost and they were looking for some sort of assistance, whether it be through the federal government or provincial government. And to this point in time, they haven't been able to be successful in obtaining that sort of assistance.

But we are continuing to work with them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and hopefully we will find a solution to this problem, which will certainly be a valuable asset to that whole general area of my constituency.

Highways, as you can well imagine, are certainly . . . are a major importance to the constituency. We need good highways to move our products to market, to move products to a number of pulse processing plants that we have in the area.

We have a number of inquiries from within and outside the province to develop some major agricultural facilities and one of the first things that they ask is, what are the highways like? Do we have a primary highway to serve . . . if we go ahead and build a feedlot will we have a primary highway to serve that feedlot? They talk about a number of trucks a day moving back and forth between the facility and so a primary highway is of utmost importance. In fact when you, as I mentioned, when you look at a list of the things they're considering, highways are right up at the top of the list.

One of the highways that is causing some major problems to the citizens of Last Mountain-Touchwood is the No. 22 Highway, which happens to go past my home community, to the east of it. It was one of those highways that this government really didn't know what to do with last summer so they just didn't do anything and allowed sections of it to go back to gravel and that caused a whole host of problems, everything from people losing windshields to losing their . . . holes in their oil pans and those sorts of things. And the people are certainly looking for some solutions because gravel certainly is not an option.

This whole plan that the Minister of Highways and Rural Revitalization, has, to have a two-tier highway system, a thin membrane surface for light-weight vehicles and a gravel service for heavy trucks, is not a solution, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's an insult to the people that have to use those roads. It just goes to show that the people who concocted such a ridiculous plan have never really been out and had to use those kind of roads and drive down them after an eighteen-wheeler has gone by to see the dust and the stones. If nothing else, it's a safety hazard and it's certainly not a plan that should be pursued. If this government has additional money from oil and gas revenue,

develop a plan to fix the highways and get at it and get it done.

Last Mountain-Touchwood citizens, like many other citizens across this province, certainly know what waiting lists are all about. It seems like it's almost on a daily basis where we have people call my office and relate stories of having to wait anywhere from 10 months to 2 years for elective surgery; people who are waiting for MRI scans. I recall a case in particular, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where this lady in my constituency phoned the office and had indicated to my assistant that she has a medical problem and that she was diagnosed with a growth in her head. And her doctor told her that she would have to wait between four to six months for an MRI before he could operate.

Well this isn't . . . that's not a solution to have to wait four to six months. And so what do these people do? They cashed in some of their savings and went off to Alberta to get the MRI. They got it within two or three weeks. And hopefully her medical problem will be resolved. And that's what people are doing. They're not accepting these long waiting lists, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The whole area of emergency medical services is certainly an area of concern, particularly in the Wynyard area and Foam Lake and Kelvington where the plan that was presented to government calls for removing ambulance services out of those three major communities and centring it in the small town of Elfros. The people in that area certainly feel that this is not an acceptable plan and they would be very unhappy if that was the final plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Many of our small towns, and we have quite a number of small towns in the constituency, many of the citizens, or a high percentage of the citizens living in these small towns as you can well imagine, are seniors. They are people who have perhaps farmed in the area or ran a small business or perhaps a retired teacher or an RM (rural municipality) administrator or a town administrator — those kind of people. And they choose to retire in the small towns. They feel safe in their small communities. They would have that they have the necessary services that they will need as they grow older. And as I mentioned, medical services and emergency medical services are certainly high on their priorities.

Many of these folks live on fixed incomes whether it be a small pension from their place of work or those folks who perhaps were self-employed and weren't able to accumulate large savings live on Canada Pension and Old Age Security and so on. So any additional costs in utility bills certainly has a major impact on their cash flow.

And I've often been told by some of these citizens, whether it be widows or widowers living in their modest homes, that whenever there is an increase in their electrical bill or their gas bill, they sometimes are faced with the choice of paying the bill and doing without, making those savings in their grocery . . . when they go grocery shopping or perhaps trying to stretch their medication a little bit longer and those sorts of things.

So now today when we hear of a possible, another 40 per cent hike in energy rates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these certainly will be serious concerns for some of our seniors.

Another need that our seniors have is there's a real need and there's a void in housing for those folks who no longer can live in their own houses but certainly don't need to go into a long-term care home. We need to have something in between there. There are a limited number of facilities that fill the need, but that need is growing. We know what's happening to our population, it's aging, and we certainly need to look in that area and see what can be done.

There's also a number of people that are looking at this area in the communities and are saying, you know, we're ready to put up some money, we need to have some . . . we need a plan from this government to know what their plan is in this area, and if we see that there's a definite plan there we'd be willing to invest. And so we don't always need government money, maybe we need a little bit of seed money, but maybe that's all we need; but what we need is a plan and that's what's lacking.

Now we've heard much talk about this high-speed Internet that these folks are going to, they're going to hook everybody up in Saskatchewan on high-speed Internet and that's going to solve all our problems. Well it's going to save our farms; we're going to have a whole bunch of small businesses jump up and start operating out in all parts of the province, and that sort of thing. Well I have a number of questions about that program.

First of all I'd be interested in knowing what communities are going to be hooked up to high-speed Internet? Are all of our communities going to be hooked . . . receive this high-speed hookup or are there going to be some? I've heard it said that what they're looking at is they're looking at putting the service into those communities that have either a health facility or a school.

Well if in fact that is true, I did some . . . I looked at my constituency and I found that there are 10 small towns and villages within my constituency that don't have a school and they don't have a health facility, so they would be out; if that's the plan they won't get it.

Well interestingly, interestingly, the latest statistics that I was able to get, there was over 2,000 people live in those communities so we're writing those folks off. And then what about the people that live out on the farms and the ranches and the small acreages, what are they to do? What's the plan to provide them with high-speed Internet? It'd be interesting to see what the answers are. I wonder if there is a plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Last Wednesday, the Minister of Agriculture initiated an emergency debate on agriculture, and I was pleased to be able to participate in that debate. And so therefore I won't spend a lot of time in that area, but there are a couple of things that I would like to cover dealing with agriculture.

We often hear the . . . Since this session has started, we notice that the government has taken a new tactic. They ask us what our plan is. And the reason they do that is because they themselves don't have a plan. So they're reaching out and they're trying to see if we've got a plan. When we present a plan, then they'll say, oh well we didn't think of it so we can't use that plan.

So let's look at what their plan is for agriculture. Well last year they brought in this rebate, education tax rebate on farm property, and they say they're going to spend \$25 million a year for two years on that plan.

Well I wonder if any of them . . . I would think maybe one or two of members opposite actually had to sit down with this six-page form and fill it out to qualify for this rebate. And the frustrating thing about having to do that, if you went through that process, is that all the information you needed was on your tax notice. There was one piece of information missing and that was your health card number, which I'm sure the bureaucrats could have figured out a way of incorporating the information on your tax notice with your health card number.

I understand that SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) made a proposal to the government, to the minister responsible, saying that they would administer this program. After all, it's the RM administrators that prepare the tax notices that provide all the information. So wouldn't it make sense to have these people administer the program, where a property owner walked into the RM office, the administrator would have calculated the taxes owing, could have calculated the rebate, and you would have given that person a cheque for the difference?

People are saying, you know, it obviously was too simple, because the government didn't take SARM up on this sort of thing. No.

What did they do? They said we're going to administer this program. They hired some additional staff to administer the program. Then they found out that the staff couldn't handle the workload, so they had to hire some more.

And there are people waiting right now for these cheques. They said that they would have them within the next couple of months, that everyone would have their cheques. And we get calls on a constant basis — what's happening; can you follow up on this?

(16:15)

So this is just another example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of these people having an idea, trying to do something, but they just can't seem to quite get it right. It's not unlike when they talked about cutting taxes, but yet they had to go and they expand the PST because they just couldn't get that part of it right. And that's . . . there are numerous examples.

Then here, just the other day, we had this announcement with the Conservation Cover Program. This is their plan for agriculture. They're going to help farm people convert cropland to grass. They're going to give them \$15 an acre to a maximum of 50 acres, which works out to \$750.

So if you do a little bit of work, and obviously the people that designed the program didn't do it, if you just . . . a simple phone call, I mean one phone call on Friday, and got a bit of information that just would point out the shortcomings of this plan that the NDP are putting forward.

It costs anywhere between \$25 and \$30 an acre for grass seed

alone, to seed an acre down to grass. So let's just use \$30 an acre as a happy medium.

So in my area of the world where there's some . . . people have been doing this for quite a number of years, and I'm sure it's been going on throughout the province. People have been seeding some of their land down to grass, some of the more marginal land, and where they've been expanding their beef herds and require more pasture and hay.

An average quarter of land that a farmer would consider to seed to grass would have about an average of 140 acres cultivated. Because normally you don't take land that is top quality farm land and seed it down to grass. The majority of the land is somewhat marginal, so there is already some wasteland on there.

So at \$30 an acre the seed costs alone are \$4,200. So do you think this \$750 is really going to make a difference? I don't think so.

According to the news release, \$5 million will be spent on this program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Well according to the most recent statistics, it seems like there's about 50,000 farmers in Saskatchewan. Well if all 50,000 farmers decided to take advantage of this program, do you know how many acres each farmer could seed? — 7 acres; 7 acres. That's about the size of their yards.

So basically, what is this program? It's a program to help farmers seed their lawns, and not a whole lot more.

Last Friday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Cumberland stood in the House and made some, what I consider, disparaging remarks about our party and our relationship to First Nations. And I was really disappointed with those negative comments. They're counterproductive.

The First Nations people, particularly the youth, they're . . . Many of those young people don't see a future; they have no hope for the future. And when we have people like the member from Cumberland make those kind of remarks, I don't think it helps in promoting hope for these young people.

We in the Saskatchewan Party have worked hard to connect with First Nations people. we've met many . . . with them, we've exchanged ideas, and we're working hard on developing policies that will be of benefit to all of Saskatchewan, and particularly First Nations people.

And there are members on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who have very close connections to First Nations people. Some of us have family members; some of us are related in other ways. And so I don't think that that side of the House has the only insight to the issue. I think we have a very good insight on the issue and we will certainly be presenting more ideas as time goes on.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me turn now to Post-Secondary Education, since I'm the critic for Post-Secondary Education. I

see this area as a very important area in today's knowledge-based economy. I think some of the things that we have to do is we have to identify our strengths and then we have to build on them. We can't expect our post-secondary education institutions to be everything to all people. And I'm happy to see that that's already happening. And I think that has to be encouraged.

In this province we have a number of problems, of issues that need to be dealt with, issues such as health care, highways, and agriculture. It seems to me that we can take these issues and use the resources that we have within the province, primarily at our universities and other research facilities to turn these areas into opportunities — to seek some innovative solutions to these problems and come up with Made in Saskatchewan solutions. And I'm convinced that we have the ability to do that. All we need is some co-operation and coordination in that area.

As most members of this Assembly know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are very fortunate here in Saskatchewan to have the biggest scientific investment in 30 years in Canada, right here in Saskatoon, and I'm talking about the synchrotron — the Canadian Light Source. I think this is a tremendous opportunity for our province.

I've had the opportunity to tour the facility on several occasions and I urge all members who haven't been to that facility to take the time to go there. The people there are very accommodating. They take you through the facility. They explain the operations and, most importantly, explain the opportunities and the potential of that facility. It's a world-class facility. When it's in operation, it will be the fourth strongest light source on the face of the earth — not just in North America but on the face of the earth. And that's pretty . . . that could be a powerful tool, not only for Saskatoon and Saskatchewan but for Canada.

But it's imperative, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to, we in Saskatchewan here, have to be users of that facility. We've got a great opportunity and if we don't . . . but if we don't get our ducks in a row, if we don't do our homework, if we don't make the necessary investments, all we'll end up is being the operators and we'll have the users coming in for two or three days, doing their research, and then leaving. And we'll be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. And I'm afraid that if this government doesn't get their act together that's all we may be and it would be a real shame. It would be a real lost opportunity.

I am told that it is already possible to operate these beam lines from a remote city such as Edmonton. I understand that there are some folks in Edmonton that are already working on plans to operate one beam line on a remote basis from Edmonton. So in other words, they wouldn't even have to send their scientists here. They could do it on a remote basis from Edmonton and that would be a real shame.

So what do we need to do to attract these folks? Why do people come to a city or a facility? Primarily it is they come to a university or a research facility to talk to people, to talk to other researchers. And so it's imperative that we have a core of researchers who use the synchrotron, who are doing research in various areas, whether that be in the health care area, in the health area or in the environment area or numerous other areas

that this research tool can be used. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see the integrated health sciences facility that has been talked about, that the president of the university has talked about, that our own Health critic has talked about, as an integral part of that whole research atmosphere and activity at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan).

I had the opportunity to attend the grand opening of the light source building late last month, and at that time, for those people that were there they may have noticed that there was in the corner of the building, near the podium, not too far from the area where the dignitaries were speaking and so on, was a display manned by some folks from Alberta, and it was entitled the Alberta Synchrotron Institute.

And I kind of thought about that. I mean here we've got a sister province, a neighbouring province who has invested money here — which is great; we like to see that sort of thing — and they've already got their Alberta Synchrotron Institute at least in its formative stage. And they were there; they had people manning their display. They're getting their act together and they're going to be up and running very shortly.

And it struck me: where is the Saskatchewan synchrotron institute? Does something like that exist? I think this is where this government has a role to play, to encourage, and to facilitate those sorts of things.

Just a little further on down the mezzanine there was another small display. It was manned by a young student from the university in Saskatoon who basically would show you some features of the synchrotron, some of its uses, and that sort of thing.

So I got talking to this young person and I asked him what, you know, his education activities are, what courses he's enrolled in and that sort of thing. And if I understood him correctly, he was doing his master's in Engineering. And I asked him about his future plans, and he said, well, once he obtained his master's he was going to go to Calgary and do his Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy).

And I said to him, I says, what would it take for you to come back once you've got your Ph.D.? What would it take for you to come back here and work in Saskatchewan? And you know what he said, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What he said is he wants a job, a position, in this research community here. And that is the important thing.

And these are some of the things that we must do as a province. And it's incumbent upon the government. These are the folks that are so desperately hanging on to power, so it's their responsibility to do the things that are necessary to attract young people like this person back to the province to do the research.

There is a real lack of graduate students at both our universities. We compare the ratio of graduate students that we have at our universities to other universities — we are at the low end of the scale. And it's imperative that we increase those numbers, that we have more graduate students in our universities, so we develop the scholars that will be able to go and do the research. And not only the research. We also need them folks to take the

basic research and apply it.

And that's where the real benefits to this province can be. Once we take this basic research and move it on into the commercial world and develop those economic activities and those spinoffs that can develop from this, this can be . . . this facility can be a major player in our economy.

But do you know what my greatest fear is, Mr. Deputy Speaker — is that this government, this NDP government doesn't recognize the type of opportunity that we have right now. They don't know how to capture that opportunity. And they don't know . . . and they won't make the investment that's necessary — the investment in people, the investment in facilities, the investment in our universities.

And as a result of this lack of action, we could lose this tremendous opportunity. And I certainly hope that that doesn't happen, but it's certainly a great concern of mine, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In conclusion, I would like to say that after hearing the Speech from the Throne, I realized that it lacked a lot of substance, although there was one or two things that I must say that I found encouraging. And one of those things was the reference to fetal alcohol syndrome and some initiative in that area. And I certainly encourage the government to move in that area because it is a serious problem. We've all seen the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome and we certainly . . . more needs to be done in that area.

However, looking at . . . as I mentioned, looking at the Speech from the Throne and thinking back to last year's Speech from the Throne and last year's budget, quite often these folks over there, they'll have an idea but they don't take it to fruition; they just don't go far enough.

And a prime example of that is the recently announced centennial student employment program that the Premier announced about a month ago in Saskatoon, where they're going to take some funds, some money from the centennial fund and put it into this program so that they can create more summer jobs. But what area are they going to create summer jobs in? Well is it a surprise that an NDP government is going to create summer jobs in the public sector and forget about the private sector, about small business? I was disappointed I must say when I saw the announcement, but I certainly wasn't surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So having said that I will be certainly not . . . I will be opposing the original motion but I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(16:30)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'd like to congratulate you on your position. I know that you do a lot of important things in the community and your constituency. I've attended your business dinners and I know that you make a great effort to work on behalf of the community. So I think you're just the right choice for that job

and I congratulate you.

As well I'd like to congratulate our Speaker who certainly served long and well as an MLA and I think many people in our caucus have many good memories of working with him over the years. And I'm certainly hoping that he'll carry on the fine tradition set by the previous two Speakers in the school program that helped a lot of our students in the province learn about democracy in the parliamentary system.

As well I want to say how pleased I am to be working with our new Premier. I certainly give recognition to all the work done by our former leader, Roy Romanow, and our new Premier, also the member from Riversdale, has certainly shown that he is going to be a great inspiration to all of us in carrying out our work in the House.

And I'm going to move now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to respond to the Throne Speech.

You know one of the great things about democracy is that people do have a choice about what happens. And part of what this legislature is all about is helping articulate those choices for people. So I'm going to make an attempt as I go through my remarks today to talk about the kind of choices I believe the people of the province have and how our Throne Speech and our budget speech will help people think about those choices.

Our theme of course is to build on our success that we accomplished under our previous leadership and now to connect to the future — a thriving economy, healthy citizens, families, and communities, and responsive and effective government. And I think it would be very hard to disagree with those broad objectives.

But I want to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that this is a province that sets records. We have 485,000 people working in Saskatchewan in the year 2000 and that's 5,000 over the previous record set in 1999. 2000 was a record year for potash, sales over 14 million metric tons, an increase of 11 per cent over the previous year; a new record for drilling natural gas wells; a new high for oil production; wild rice over 80 per cent of Canada's production; and we have world class writers, filmmakers, athletes.

But that's not enough for the opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Their case of Alberta envy is so great that their leader's thinking of changing his name to Ralph.

But Mr. Speaker, I want the opposition to know that it's okay to have self-esteem, it's okay to care about who you are, and it's okay to be proud of who you are. If I wanted to join the rat race, I know where it is. But I like the pace of life and the values in Saskatchewan — the respect that we have for achievement, for community, and for involvement in the way that we believe that every person has the right to an opportunity and a chance.

I like the way we continue to set records. On the fiscal side, in debt reduction; on the credit rating side, in improving our credit ratings; on the social side, in child poverty reduction; and on the innovation edge, in having the largest number of patents per capita of anywhere — not just in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And so we are a record-setting province. And if that is troubling to the members of the opposition, they're going to have to go to one of those social skills classes where you learn about developing self-esteem and being proud of who you are, your roots, and where you come from.

I want to talk just a little bit about my constituency because it's such a terrific place. There's always something new there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's new music stores, new organic food stores, a new organic bakery, new restaurants, and it's always growing and changing. But the one thing that never changes, the high value that we place on community.

I'm going to talk a little bit today about how pleased I am with the new responsibilities that I was honoured to be given by Premier Calvert . . . oh, by the Premier. They're about community and how we prepare our communities to connect to the future, and how we prepare the young people in our communities, but also our very society to have options for the future.

And I want to begin by saying that in our lives probably many of us think about what our dream occupation would be, should we ever be so lucky as to get the job of our dreams. And I keep pinching myself thinking that maybe I'll wake up. But I do believe in this portfolio I've found a home for many of the experiences and talents that I believe I've developed over the years.

Certainly in the past I've been involved in many cultural pursuits — in music, the arts, and social change. I've worked for many years with youth organizations and in recreation. In fact I was even a member of the swim team at the university. You guys didn't know that, did you?

And I spent many interesting years as assistant director of personnel for the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. And these areas all link strongly to the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation and to the Public Service Commission. But as well, being responsible for the office of information technology, I do understand the profound effect that satellite TV, deregulation, the Internet are having on our constitutional, democratic, and cultural diversity.

We're in a situation now where the world could reach into the very heart of our province and pluck out our identity unless we ensure that we're thoughtful about how we include our youth, our new technology, and our cultural workers in helping to ensure the future survival of what we call the Saskatchewan way.

These new responsibilities are partly about handing over the torch to the next generation of young people. I don't know if you know, Mr. Speaker, but in the next 10 years 70 to 80 per cent of our existing workforce will retire.

I don't know about . . . well you're a little younger than me but this is not something that I'm sorry about. I will be quite prepared to be part of helping prepare people for that changeover. And this year, as you know, we established the

centennial youth employment program because we want to ensure that the youth of today understand the need for a strong and vibrant public sector but also an ethical and successful private sector — all working in support of prosperous and healthy communities.

Now people have talked about some of our youth leaving. And some youth are leaving, particularly for jobs in the information economy. And we have to think about what this really means. I've been very concerned about the lack of understanding the members opposite seem to have about the effect this is having on the way that we do everything in our society.

The Net is rapidly becoming the new way of reaching out, providing services, and overcoming distance. The technology has been adopted more quickly by more people than any other technology in the history of human endeavour. And certainly we have to ensure that our students, our residents, our businesses have access to the infrastructure necessary to meet the demands where much of the work, the information exchange of the future will be done.

Now you may already have heard about CommunityNet, an advanced high-speed, digital telecommunications network for Saskatchewan that will link health care, libraries, schools, communities, organizations, and government. And I think I heard one of the members opposite — it might have been even the member who just spoke from Last Mountain-Touchwood — talk about we could have spent that 70 million some other way.

Well pardon me, you might as well close the door to the future if you don't provide that broadband Internet service to those communities because it'll shut off all the possibilities that the rest of the world is rapidly becoming part of. And I don't think that's something that we want to do to our communities.

This is a very powerful tool for both economic development and for community. Increasingly businesses will choose where they locate based on issues like bandwidth. Communities that can't provide the link will be left out. It'll be a little like a hotel without a waterslide.

And I think we have impressive examples already with the land corporation. There's a project that's taking place I think in North Battleford — I think the other community is P.A. — where they're experimenting with thin appliance networks in the school. And the very attractive thing about these thin appliance networks is that each school doesn't have to have its own technical support. That's provided at a remote location, so you're able to provide a higher level of technology and more ease of use for the teachers and the students, without having the high costs of the support infrastructure and technology support that goes with it.

And I don't know if you know this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we're one of five locations in the entire world that was chosen for this project. And certainly along with developments like the synchrotron, I think people will understand, and along with the records that I mentioned to you earlier, that this province is on a leading edge of many of the developments that are taking place in the world today.

Now I just wanted to say that this generation is the most

educated generation in the history of this province. They have the skills, the technical knowledge, and there's just no way that we can afford to do without the skills of these students.

So again, I mention the centennial youth employment program because whether students are from rural areas, Aboriginal students, students, graduates from our universities, our technical institutes, our high schools, all of them will have an opportunity to participate in these jobs, and help become linked to the workforce.

You know, I want to talk a little bit about the culture and recreation area. Two weekends ago, I attended a workshop on free trade as it relates to culture. And there was a teacher there, and what that teacher said was a bit troubling. He said when he goes into the classroom every day, he's standing in front of a classroom of young Americans. And by that he doesn't mean to demean America, but his point is is that this is where we live. And certainly I don't think we need to teach our children to be young Americans; they're bombarded on the commercial networks daily with movies, with film content.

And of course, one of the reasons why I've been a strong advocate of a film industry of the Saskatchewan Communications Network is because we need a way to convey our information, our film, our stories, out to the world, so that we can continue to have people know who they are and a world who knows who we are.

And I think it's the work of educators. But it's also the work of workers in arts and culture and recreation because it's about development of the intellect, the spirit, and the soul. It's about healthy activity and teamwork. It's about provincial pride. And it's about a winning attitude, being the best we can be and sharing that in a spirit of achievement and celebration. And today we find that it's also about cultural industries, economic development and cultural tourism.

The Premier and myself and many of my colleagues attended the Amateur Athlete of the Year Award in Saskatoon a couple of weeks ago. And by the way, we outnumbered the Saskatoon party at that event and I could tell that it particularly bugged them. So we'll have to continue to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — But, I want to mention the pride that the young people had there in the achievements — even if they weren't the people who won first prize — their achievement in reaching so far into the ranks of the most talented athletes around the world. Their pride in being the standard-bearers for Canada at these international competitions. You couldn't help but be very impressed by the important work that all our coaches and whatnot are doing throughout the sports sector as well in Saskatchewan.

And you know, the opposition gets pretty frisky and critical, but you know, the fact of the matter is they try to distance themselves from the previous Devine government. And while you can try to do that . . . but see, it doesn't matter that you weren't actually part of that government, even though some of them were. And it doesn't matter if you didn't actually work for that government, even though some of them did.

But what does matter is the philosophy. Because a philosophy that is always attempting to get something for nothing is going to be a philosophy that continues to produce the same results that that particular philosophy has produced every time it has managed to get the reins of government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And I just want to give you one fact that the members opposite probably don't know and we'll just have to hope that it sinks in to a few over there. But do you know that . . . I want to give you a little comparison figure. Now I don't have all the most up-to-date figures right up to today, but I think this will give you a general idea.

During the last time that their philosophy was operative in this province, there was a loss of over 33,000 youth jobs in this province — 33,000 youth jobs over the time that they were government — compared to 5,900 new jobs for youth created.

Now you can argue that isn't fast enough, but at least it's on the plus side of the equation. At least we're operating in the black, not in the red . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — . . . which is where they were operating.

So the members opposite might feel they're a little more responsible than the previous government, heaven knows it couldn't be possible to be less responsible. But the fact of the matter is, is the type of policies they advocate were disastrous before and they would be disastrous again. And if they want to know what to do for the youth of this province, they can stay out of government. And that'll be the best thing they can do for the youth of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(16:45)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now I want to talk a little bit . . . We have a very good organization in Saskatchewan called the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board. And they do a lot of work about connecting youth to the workplace, about attracting and retaining young employees.

And here's some pointers that they've given about attracting and retaining young employees, and hopefully the young people that are listening will know whether this is accurate or not, but: be open and honest about the opportunities your organization offers; establish co-op education and mentorship programs to help youth learn about your company and the people that work there; ensure that your programs provide a positive, memorable experience; differentiate yourself from the competitors — youth have choices about where they want to work, give them a reason to want to work for you; diversify your recruiting techniques, don't look for new employees in the same old places; create an environment for continuous learning — money is important but it's not the only reward mechanism; create a sense of community; give youth the opportunity to interpret the company vision; and give youth the opportunity to become

entrepreneurs in your company. I think this is all very good advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we should pay attention to.

And I want to just mention a couple of recent events that I was involved in. I went a few weeks ago to a book launch which was an anthology of well-known Saskatchewan writers and the interesting thing about it, it was produced in a partnership between the K to 12 department, the Writers Guild, the SaskTel Pioneers, and Coteau Books. The purpose of it being to bring Saskatchewan writers to grade 12 students in the province. And I use this again as an example of how we can reinforce our province to the young people, whether it's in the education system or in our film and publishing industries.

But I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a government is only as good as the people it employs. And the fact of the matter is, is that the public service is a very important part of what we do. And I'm very troubled when I hear the opposition referring in a derogatory tone to bureaucrats.

A bureaucrat is nothing more or less than the best person who applied for the job, who was hired on the basis of their skills and abilities, and who takes their direction broadly from the government but also uses their own professional judgement to put forward the best advice they can about what should be happening. And I want to just read to you something that one of the members opposite said before he was elected. It says here — now this is one of the opposition members and it was published in the Moosomin *World Spectator* on March 23, 1998. You can guess what picnic basket this came out of. But:

The whole bureaucracy, the whole civil service has to be cleaned out (he said). Every socialist system in the world has collapsed under its own weight. I can wield a pretty good-sized broom. And you know what I would do with the broom in there.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can this member opposite talk about the future when he is so obviously stuck in the McCarthy era.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Because, Mr. Speaker, governments do have choices. We can be constructive forces or as the opposition wishes, they can be destructive forces. I don't think their mothers ever told them that you catch more flies with honey. I think this is a missing part of their education.

The other choice I think people have to make is, whether you're electing people who want power for the sake of getting something done and for the sake of sharing that power with the community, or whether you're electing people who want power for the sake of power.

I understand that sometimes division erupts in that caucus opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they're angling for power even amongst the slim power pool that exists over there.

And I find that it's a very poor spirit that traps itself in worshipping the dollar. Tax cuts are important, but the fact of the matter is the most important things that society has ever done are the things we have done by pooling our resources

together. And one of the ways we pool our resources is through our tax system.

You know I was at an event a couple of weeks ago for a speakers bureau for athletes. And at this event one of the young athletes — a well-known athlete who is part of the speakers bureau to inspire school children to adopt healthy habits and healthy attitudes — he said to the students, isn't it wonderful to be in this great gymnasium built by taxes.

And I was so pleased to have someone recognizing that that's what taxes are used for. They build schools, they build roads, they build health care, they build all kinds of community services. And the fact of the matter is, is you can go down the tax-cut road and I think we have an obligation to provide effective and efficient services, but to demean the role that taxes play in pooling our resources so that we can provide a higher level of service than we could afford to provide as individuals, that's a goal that I'm never going to be ashamed of, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I want to talk just for a minute about the coalition government because I know that one of the problems with the opposition is they can't stand to see people co-operate. There's something that frustrates them about that. I think it has something to do with power for the sake of power.

But the fact of the matter is the coalition partners have the maturity, the maturity to use the power they have to be involved in every single decision of government in a democratic process. It takes a lot of maturity to use democracy. We see places around the world that haven't managed to achieve that level of maturity in their operations. And I commend our coalition partners in understanding the power of having a say in every single decision of government.

Now for some reason the opposition, they can accept this at the municipal level. People at the municipal level work this way. All of a sudden when you translate it to the provincial level it becomes a concept that's hard to understand. So I don't know what gets lost in the translation.

But I did find out the other day that the member from North Battleford is running for the Senate. And in fact one of the other federal MPs (Member of Parliament), Lorne Nystrom, is running his campaign because he figures that would be the quickest way to destroy the Senate. That was just to see if any of you guys were paying attention.

I don't have much time left, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll no doubt have to come back to this tomorrow. But there's one thing, one thought I'd like to leave you with. Tomorrow I intend to start out on the theme of looking forward. And one of the things that certainly the government is looking forward on is the whole health care file. And we initiated the Fyke Commission which will be a matter of public discussion not too far in the future.

But I just want to emphasize that I do wish if we're going to have a discussion, that we have a factual discussion. Because I'm looking at a platform from the New Democrats from the last election. It says in the platform, we will hire another 500

health care providers. This is the original copy — 500 health care providers.

Now I'll just mention that somehow through the opposition filter that turned into 500 nurses. But I do have the original copy here and I'll just mention that we now have over 800 new health care providers of which many of those are home care nurses, which they neglected to count in their equation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to continuing tomorrow on the topic of being forward looking. I thank you for your attention today and I'll adjourn debate for today.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:55.

