

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise on this first day of the session to present petitions from people who are concerned about the way the current tobacco legislation is worded. The petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

I present this on behalf of citizens from the communities of Nipawin and Codette, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise in the House to present a petition regarding the condition of some of our highways in this province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 35 in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency in order to prevent injury and loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in this area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Francis, Fillmore, Weyburn, and most importantly, Williston area.

I so present.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the people from Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan concerned about tobacco control legislation in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition could be summarized as follows:

That the petitioners would like it to be made illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Swift Current and Pennant, Saskatchewan.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: for the fiscal year of 1999-2000, how many contracts were let for the construction, maintenance, and repairs related to Saskatchewan highways and the total value of these contracts; of the contracts let, how many came under legal dispute between the government and the contractor and what was the total value of these disputed contractors; and how much did the Department of Highways and Transportation pay in legal fees in resolutions of these disputes?

And I have the same questions for three years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 7 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: regarding the North Battleford Water Inquiry, what is the cost of the North Battleford Water Inquiry to date; what is the estimate of further costs?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all the members of this House, I'd like to introduce several guests I invited here for this day. It's a special day for me getting into this new job.

Up in the west gallery is my mom, Agnes Forbes from Mortlach, Saskatchewan. And I would like to say that she first brought me to this House when I was seven years old, some 39 years ago, on a bus from Mortlach with my brother — sitting beside her — toured this building, and then we took a . . . went to the provincial exhibition. So it was a pretty special day. And here I am now.

As well, up there is my brother Reg from Moose Jaw and my sister-in-law Collette from Regina here, and my brother Jerry and Sandra who operate an organic farm at Mortlach, Saskatchewan. And as well, my wife Dawn Martin and my son Reilly Forbes, of course from Saskatoon.

And further up, at the very top, my brother Mick — he's from Regina Beach — and Rick Forbes from Martensville, and his brother-in-law, Walter.

As well, I invited some guests in the gallery . . . the Speaker's gallery — Laura Kusisto, and I'll talk a little bit about her later, because we have a strong tradition of debating. That was one of my favourite things. And she brought a friend as well.

So I'd like you all to welcome my guests today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Canada's War Against Terrorism

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about an issue that's very important to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, no conflicts have been fought on Canadian soil since 1812. While we were involved in the two world wars and the Korean conflict, much of our efforts have been focused on peacekeeping throughout the world for the last 50 years or more. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we have become very complacent about our freedom, taking it for granted and assuming that it would always be there.

Mr. Speaker, that all changed on September 11. That day proved conclusively that we in North America are as vulnerable to terrorist activities as the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, in the past few years since 1989, governments have cashed in on the peace dividend. Yet while it seemed there is no need for military force as Canada kept a small but highly trained and efficient military contingent, Mr. Speaker, this contingent has now been called upon to help stop terrorism and preserve our safety and security here at home.

It has been asked to implement its tremendous skills in the very hostile conditions in Afghanistan. Our military is proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that it can stand shoulder to shoulder with the defenders of freedom and make us all proud here at home.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in paying tribute to our servicemen and women who are putting their lives on the line to protect the world from the evils of terrorism.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Thank You To People of Saskatoon Idylwyld

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank the people of Saskatoon Idylwyld for their support on November 8. I'm honoured to have received such a strong mandate — about 58 per cent of the popular vote.

And, Mr. Speaker, people took the measure of the opposition and cast a vote for the confidence for the Premier and the government that listens and has a positive, realistic, doable plan. The people of Saskatoon Idylwyld have rejected the opposition's ideology of cutbacks, and the people of Saskatoon Idylwyld want a government and society that is decent and caring, concerned about children and families and make these values part of its everyday affairs.

And no program better exemplifies these values than the Early Childhood Development Strategy that we're launching. This strategy focuses on special services and early intervention for children with serious health, education, or developmental challenges. And that's progress. Real progress that improves the quality of life for children in Saskatoon Idylwyld and in Saskatchewan. These challenges may change but the resolve and spirit of Saskatchewan remains the same.

The people of Saskatoon Idylwyld made their choice on November 8 and I'm happy that they chose us. Our plan is doable, positive, and realistic. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Z99 Radiothon

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a short while ago I had the honour of making an appearance on Z99's 15th Annual Radiothon. This annual event put on by radio station Z99 raises money for the neonatal intensive care unit at Regina General Hospital. For those of you who aren't familiar with the event Z99's morning hosts, CC and Lorie, stay up for 36 consecutive hours and ask for donations of support while doing so. The Regina community has proven over and over again how much it believes in this worthwhile project.

Mr. Speaker, since it started, Z99's Radiothon has raised about a million dollars for essential equipment for the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) at the Regina General Hospital. The outpouring of generosity and support for this event is incredible and it's a testament to the compassionate and caring nature of Saskatchewan's residents.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party caucus, I was proud to make a donation of \$500, and it may still be growing, to Z99's Radiothon. I wish CC, Lorie, and Buzz all the best, and congratulate Z99 on yet another very successful Radiothon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

University of Saskatchewan Graduates

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what do you and about a dozen members of this House have in common? Two things at least. You're all graduates of the University of Saskatchewan and you work here. That makes you and your colleagues, Mr. Speaker, like a very large number of your fellow graduates. The U of S (University of Saskatchewan) annual report proves it — and it's more good news for Saskatchewan.

According to the survey 90 per cent of graduates had good jobs five years after graduation and several others were pursuing further education. Here's the really good news, Mr. Speaker. Of the 1,600 or so graduates interviewed, more than 75 per cent continued to live and work in the province.

We have similar numbers for SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) students, graduates, Mr. Speaker — 93 per cent of those are working here. The children are staying here, Mr. Speaker, and they are the driving force behind our 21st century economy — more good news.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Winter Games

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from February 17 to February 23 the city of Humboldt hosted the best ever Saskatchewan Winter Games. Approximately 700 people from Humboldt and area came forward to volunteer their time and energy to make this event a great success. A total of 1,667 athletes, coaches, and managers were accommodated and cared for by these enthusiastic volunteers, spearheaded by Co-Chairs Val McNally and Michael Suchan.

Thirteen sports were offered to the nine game zones in the province. Zone 9 representing northern Saskatchewan participated as a separate zone for the first time ever in the Saskatchewan Winter Games. Zone 2, which is Regina, won the games flag for the highest point total. Zone 7, North Battleford Kindersley, was the recipient of the Joe Griffiths trophy, which is presented to the zone that improves the most in performance.

In the words of Co-Chair Michael Suchan, these games have showcased fine young athletes from all corners of this province and they provided exciting entertainment which will not be forgotten in a long, long time.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the 2002 Saskatchewan Winter Games was a wonderful week of friendship, fellowship, and a lot of fun. It was awesome, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Humboldt, for a job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Z99 Radiothon

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, CC, Lorie, and Buzz at Z99 are at it again. This is their 15th annual Radiothon. We are very, very proud of the job that the Z does and that their more than able hosts are doing.

Reginans are responding, as are honorary Reginans this day, Mr. Speaker. The 15th Annual Radiothon will result in money to purchase life-saving incubators and radiant warmers. The neonatal intensive care unit in Regina will benefit and will be even better able to provide a new level of support when babies need it most.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give out . . . to share how we can make donations. We can either show up at the Cornwall Centre in person or we can phone 522-5437 — that's 522-KIDS — or we can even make donations on-line at www.Z99. All of that's available to us until 6 p.m. today, Mr. Speaker.

This 15th annual fundraiser will make the total raised in excess of \$1 million, Mr. Speaker. I think we all owe CC, Lorie, and Buzz, and Z99 a tremendous debt of gratitude and our sincerest thanks for topping \$1 million in 15 short years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:15)

Congratulations to Saskatchewan's Brier Representatives

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, curling fans throughout Saskatchewan will be on the edge of their seats this afternoon as the foursome of Scott Bitz, Mark Lang, Brian McCusker, and Kelly Moskoway begin their final drive to the Brier championship.

After a slow start this week, the Bitz team has rattled off five straight victories to advance to the playoffs. Nowhere in the world is the popularity of curling higher than right here in Saskatchewan. Our history is filled with the best curlers in the

world. Names such as Richardson and Campbell and many, many others.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join with the residents of this great province to thank Scott and his team. We wish them the best of luck as they begin play on the final weekend of the 2002 Brier. They've already done this province proud.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Economic Development in Melville

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to present one of the first members' statements in the third session of the 24th legislature. It gives me even greater pleasure, Mr. Speaker, it is about my constituency of Melville, in particular the development in the city of Melville.

Every year in rural Saskatchewan, regardless of economics, residents work hard and they prosper. Some of the most innovative, enthusiastic residents live in the city of Melville. They believe in buying and investing locally. They believe in expanding their businesses and creating new interests.

The city of Melville has seen significant growth in the commercial sector over the past several months in the downtown area and on the outskirts of Melville.

Dale and Joanne Holowaty have opened a new A & W franchise on Highway No. 10 — home to good food and an employer of 20 full and part-time people.

Downtown, Garth Kowalchuk, owner of Kowalchuk Meats, has expanded his retail location.

Anchor Water Conditioning, owned by Frank Melanson, has opened a new downtown store. Donna Gadica has increased her business presence by opening a second store, the Cornerstone Market, Mr. Speaker. It's not just the business owners that are helping the community. The city council, led by Mayor Fisher, is considering hiring a full-time economic development officer to help with the expansion and attraction of new business opportunities.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think our prestigious editor of the Melville *Advance*, Lin Orosz, has it right when in a previous column, he said:

Economic development isn't a science, it's an attitude.

Come to think of it, Mr. Speaker, I think we have heard that here in the legislature from the Premier — something those people don't understand.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Plans for the Growth of Saskatchewan's Economy

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone is

painfully aware, earlier this week, census figures were released and a short time later, I received an e-mail from a young couple here in Regina. It said, and I quote:

Please get something done about the dwindling population of the province and of Regina. As a professional couple in our twenties, my fiancé and I are actually having to justify staying in this province. No longer is it a matter of coming up with reasons to leave, but rather reasons to stay.

Mr. Speaker, this is the problem. The NDP (New Democratic Party) keeps giving young people reasons to leave instead of reasons to stay. Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP have no plan to keep young people here? Why does the NDP have no plan to grow Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, two points.

Obviously the content of this session will be to debate plans. The debate will be between a plan outlined yesterday in the Throne Speech, a plan that talks about investing in our economy, a plan that talks about building our infrastructure, a plan that talks about building quality education and quality, healthy families in Saskatchewan; between a plan that talks about unsustainable tax cuts, major sell-off of our assets, and decimation of the public service. That will be the debate, Mr. Speaker. There's no debate — there's no debate that we have challenges, and there's no debate among us that we need to do something. We need to do something for our young people and the economy of Saskatchewan.

Point number two, Mr. Speaker. We know we're going to hear a lot of doom and gloom from that opposition during the course of this session. And I tell you today, Mr. Speaker, no amount of doom and gloom from that group of men and women is going to deter this government or the people of Saskatchewan from building the province of opportunity here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, those aren't my words. Those are the words of a young couple who would love to stay in Saskatchewan. They want to stay here but they say, and I quote:

Sadly we have reached the pinnacle of our job opportunities in this province. And these are our first jobs out of university. The opportunities for advancement in this province simply do not exist right now. We love living in Regina and in this province, but the sad fact is, if opportunities still do not exist in two or three years, we will be gone too.

Mr. Speaker, this heartbreaking decision is being made thousands of times across this province — people who love Saskatchewan, considering leaving.

My question again to the Premier: why don't you have a plan to keep these people here? Why don't you have . . .

The Speaker: — Before the Premier responds, I would just

remind all members including the Leader of the Opposition to address all remarks through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of the next several days in this House, we will be, in fact, be debating a substantive plan to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people, to grow our province, to build our economy, and to make this the province of opportunity in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

A plan that talks about substantive, substantive investments in our economy, partnering with the private sector, partnering with the co-operative sector; a government that works with people; a government that works with the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

A plan that talks about investment in education. And we've heard this morning how our students graduating out of university — by the report of the university itself — now indicates that 75 per cent of our students are finding employment in this province. And out of our technical schools, 93 per cent of those students are finding employment in this province.

But it's not good enough. And so we have a plan to build the economy, to build education, to build healthy and resilient families, and to build the infrastructure that makes it happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's response indicates he wasn't listening to the words of this young couple. Will he then listen to the people who create jobs in Saskatchewan?

Business leaders are saying of his Throne Speech that it shows no plan of the NDP to grow this province, no plan to grow Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce said:

I don't see anything that's going to stimulate the type of employment and growth the province needs.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that:

. . . the Throne Speech was a disappointment for small business owners . . .

Mr. Speaker, business has also lost confidence in this government and they too are leaving this province in record numbers. When is the NDP going to listen to somebody? When is the NDP going to put forward a plan to grow Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as Her Honour was pointing out in the Throne Speech yesterday, we have spent much of the time since this House adjourned in meeting with and listening to people of Saskatchewan. This government and this caucus travelled the province, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, visited 90 separate communities, covered 15,000 miles

and spoke to 6,000 people on what we called the summer bus tour. Since then we've been meeting with people right, left, and centre.

Now the Leader of the Opposition went out on his own tour to talk about his plan. I call it not a bus tour — it was a busted tour.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — How many people, Mr. Speaker, came out to hear the plan of the Leader of the Opposition? Well, minimal. We are listening to the people of Saskatchewan. We've developed a solid plan based on listening and talking with the people of Saskatchewan and we intend to implement that plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this couple wrote to the Premier several weeks ago and he hasn't even bothered to respond. I think that indicates how much he's listening.

There's a very clear way to measure the performance of a government: are more people moving in or are they moving out? In Saskatchewan today a lot more people are moving out. That's the record of this NDP government — no plan, no vision, squandered opportunities, and thousands of people leaving the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party is not gloom and doom. We have a plan to grow Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we have a plan; the NDP does not. When is the NDP government and when is the Premier going to admit that they in fact are driving people from Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated earlier, there is no debate about the challenge that faces all of us in this House, all of us as leaders in this province, that we need to attend to the challenges and problems that face our people and the dwindling population that we've seen in the last several years.

Mr. Speaker, the member . . . the Leader of the Opposition knows the challenge. He should know; he's from rural Saskatchewan. He knows the challenge that agriculture's faced in our province. He knows the twenty-six thousands of jobs that have left agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, he should . . . he should on occasion talk to some of his own constituents. Mr. Speaker, I understand that in search of a plan or to sell his plan, that the Leader of the Opposition, last night, spent time in Calgary, Alberta — Calgary, Alberta. Now I wonder, Mr. Speaker, when he was in Calgary, Alberta if he learned about their 11,000 jobs that have been lost in Alberta, while we've seen job growth in Saskatchewan. I wonder if he's learned about the tax increases that are coming in Alberta, while we're trying to hold the line. I wonder if he . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one year ago the new Premier took over from Roy Romanow. And we quickly learned that there's one thing absolutely certain, he is no Roy Romanow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Instead, Mr. Speaker, instead of coming up with a plan to grow Saskatchewan, the Premier decided . . . what did he decide? He decided to grow the government. And look at the results we have today.

Mr. Speaker, after Roy Romanow balanced the budget for six consecutive years, this Premier, this Premier sitting over here, gave Saskatchewan a \$500 million deficit.

Mr. Speaker, how did this Premier lose control so quickly? How did he go from a huge surplus to a massive deficit in one short year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is a interesting question from the particular member from Humboldt, who stands in her place today levelling criticism at a government who, in last year's budget when substantial resources were available to us, where did we put those resources, Mr. Speaker, we put them into child protection workers. Into child protection workers, an issue that I know that member has been bringing to this House for some years. We put revenues into, when available, into important public services for the children and families of Saskatchewan. She stands in the House today and criticizes.

Last session — we all remember, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan remember last session — when day after day after day, that opposition said spend more, spend more, spend more; spend the Fiscal Stabilization. They say spend the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Now when we use that fund to support the children and families of Saskatchewan, that member stands up and criticizes it. It's unbelievable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, there's one thing about spending; spending more is not necessarily the way, but spending smarter is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, it's now very clearly evident that growing the government is not the way to grow Saskatchewan.

Last year the NDP gave us more government. They gave us more government interference. They gave us bigger Crowns. They gave us more Crowns competing with private business. And what was the result, Mr. Speaker? Fewer jobs, and fewer

people, and a \$500 million deficit. And now we look at this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and what are they promising again? They're promising more of the same.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government learn that Crown corporations competing with private business is not the way to grow the economy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member suggests that government should spend smarter. Then I ask her, when she next gets to her feet, to explain to this government what would be smarter than spending on the children and families of Saskatchewan? What would be smarter than rebuilding the highways network and road infrastructure of Saskatchewan — 800 kilometres last year? What would be smarter than investing in internets to communities across rural Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear the answer. Nothing has changed. They just holler from their seats. What could be smarter? She said we're doing more of the same in this Throne Speech. You bet we're doing more of the same. We are building the road infrastructure of this province to build its economy. We are investing in our families. We are investing in education. We are investing in new technology. You bet we're doing more of the same because it's the right thing to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Response to Declining Provincial Population

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's not surprising that Saskatchewan is losing people today. We have an Economic Development minister, Mr. Speaker, who believes, if you can manage, that losing population is a good thing. He says that losing people, losing taxpayers, from the province of Saskatchewan is a good thing because there's more left for the rest of us, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Minister of Economic Development said in the face of the falling population numbers that came out from the recent census.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we understand that this particular minister . . . There's rumours that this minister has been casting around for other private sector employment. We'd suggest to him to stroke the London School of Economics from his list, Mr. Speaker, for theories like that.

The question however, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. His Minister of Economic Development has said that losing people is a good thing because there will be more left for the rest of us. The question is this to the Premier: does he agree with the Minister of Economic Development? Is that his policy as well?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I do not expect that member or members opposite to get things straight. Obviously he's misquoting the Minister of Economic Development. Why would I expect them to get it straight when they can't, even among themselves, get their own party policies straight?

We got their critic for Economic Development out here in the hallway saying, well no, we don't think, I'm not sure, we don't know if we can keep up the tax regime that's being put in place by government. We don't know if we can do that.

Then the leader of the party has to come out and say no, no, that guy he doesn't know what he's talking about, here's the policy.

Well there's the . . . you see there's the . . . How can we accept the quote from the member from Swift Current when they can't even explain their own party policies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well actually the quote from the Premier's Minister of Economic Development is exactly this, this is the exact quote:

What it looks like to me (in response to falling population numbers) . . .

What it looks like to me is more wealth for a similar number of people (the minister said).

That is exactly what he said, Mr. Speaker. And maybe we're being a little bit hard on the NDP, the minister, and the Premier, because maybe there is actually a case where this new ingenious theory from the minister actually works. Maybe there is one group of people whose out-migration from Saskatchewan may benefit the economy. It we could just get rid of that population right over there . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — If we could get rid of the NDP there might be more for the rest of us — more investment, more jobs, more opportunity, and more hope.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is this: will he stand up in the legislature today and reassure the people of this province that he thinks the statement by his Minister of Economic Development, that losing people is a good thing, is dead wrong? Will he do that today, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member, I think a few moments ago, talked about the London School of Economics. It's obvious he hasn't spent much time there. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, in the last decade — in the last decade — this province has shown growth in gross domestic product at a rate higher than any other jurisdiction in Canada, if not North America.

We have grown the GDP (gross domestic product). The result of growing your GDP is more wealth per capita. That's the simple, economic truth. And the member should be congratulating the people of Saskatchewan and the leadership of this government for growing the GDP. Never mind that we've been growing the GDP, we've been paying off debt, we've been lowering taxes, we've been making Saskatchewan competitive in the Canadian economy. And where does it show, Mr. Speaker? It shows in the optimism and confidence of

Saskatchewan people.

I have headline after headline: “Local businesses optimistic about 2002”; “Regina ranks high as a place to do business”; “Saskatchewan leads the way”; “Saskatoon ranked high.” And on and on it goes, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, recently it was announced that the NDP lost . . . confirmed the NDP lost \$28 million in potatoes, and the minister characterized that as, largely successful. They . . . the NDP racked up a \$500 million budget deficit; the Finance minister calls it good fiscal management.

And now the NDP drive out still more people from the province of Saskatchewan, and the Economic Development minister says, that’s a good thing. That’s apparently part of the plan. Mr. Speaker, God forbid, we have another depression, these people will be dancing in the streets.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people can’t stand many more NDP successes. Does the Premier really believe that losing taxpayers is a good thing for the economy? And if he does, he should let us in on his targets. What exactly is the NDP government’s target for how many taxpayers they need to get rid of before there’s enough for the rest of us?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, on the issue of diversification in agriculture, on the issue of meeting new markets, the member will know — or if he doesn’t he should know, and all members opposite should know — that the potato industry in this province has grown from an industry of about 200 acres to an industry of 10,000 acres.

It has grown from an industry in value about 4 million, if you were growing wheat on that land, to a value of 25 million. That’s what’s happening out there with Saskatchewan people leading the way. And on and on it goes.

We’ve just received, as a province, very good news from KPMG in the ranking of the competitiveness of our cities. Saskatchewan cities, more competitive — more competitive than Winnipeg, more competitive than Vancouver, and more competitive, if I may say, than Calgary, where the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues think they have to go to get public policy ideas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Safety Net Program

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while the Premier’s on the topic of agriculture, I have a few questions for him as well. This Throne Speech is a sorry excuse of a document when it comes to agriculture as well.

Saskatchewan has just gone through one of the driest years on

record, and with existing moisture levels, producers are not all that optimistic about this year, either. Yet there is not a word in this Throne Speech about the difficulties the farm people of this province . . . the farm families of this province face this year, as a result of last year’s drought and the prospects of another one.

In every Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, in every Throne Speech, in every budget since they ripped up the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts back in 1992 this government has promised a long-term safety net. And yet we see nothing in the Throne Speech whatsoever.

A program which the farm people of this province need in dry years like we’ve experienced and like we may experience again. But this Throne Speech only promotes the idea of . . .

The Speaker: — Would the member go directly to the question please?

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, will the minister or will the Premier explain to the farm families of this province why they have not established and implemented a long-term safety net for the farm families of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think even the member opposite would concede that in building a long-term safety net program for producers in Saskatchewan, that long-term program needs the involvement of our national government just as producers across the road in the United States or in Europe have the support of their national government.

Even that member, I think, would agree that a long-term safety net program needs the support of the national government. Our Minister of Agriculture has advanced such a program, has earned the support of producers across Saskatchewan and the farm organizations for just such a program.

Interestingly enough we have had Liberal members of parliament, members of the federal Liberal government are calling on their own government for support. There seems to be . . . there’s only one voice left in support of the federal Liberal government, and that’s the Agriculture critic of the Saskatchewan Party. He comes out in the press this past week in support of the Liberal government in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, this is just what we don’t need, is the support of the Saskatchewan Party for our national government. We need to stand together from this province, from this House, in involving and calling upon the national government to support our farm families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, the farm families of this province wonder from you, how long do you need . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the member to rephrase his question and speak to the Chair.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the farm families of this province

wonder from this government, how long do they need? They've had 10 years since they ripped up the GRIP contracts of farm families, 10 years they have promised in every Throne Speech, in every budget, that they would implement a long-term safety net.

And now we see the federal government saying, in negotiations with the Minister of Agriculture, that we can't possibly see one this year; we may not even see one in year 2003. These words came directly from the Finance minister at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention last week.

So I ask the Minister of Agriculture or the Premier, what are the farm families of this province supposed to do this year? They've drained their NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) accounts. They got nothing from CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) but a big bill from their accountant. And now they've had their provincial government slash the crop insurance program. They have cut the spot loss hail program. They have cut the variable price program.

Mr. Premier, why is the NDP government cutting the last viable safety net farm families in this province have — the crop insurance program — when they need it most desperately at this time when we're affected by drought?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, he hasn't paid any attention. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the recognition. I want to begin my comments by saying, Mr. Speaker, that the safety net programs in Canada, Mr. Speaker, have been there now for the last six years.

We've had CFIP. We've had AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance). We had crop insurance, and we have NISA. That's been our safety net program for the last six years, Mr. Speaker.

And we don't like the safety net program. But when the member opposite stands up and makes the comment that he supports the federal government in his approach to sustain the funding where it is today, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, the people at the plant biology centre in Saskatoon, if you were a plant, would say he's got head blight, Mr. Speaker. Because there's nobody in Saskatchewan today who believes that we should have reductions today in the money from the federal government.

We're working together, Mr. Speaker, to build a strong safety net in Saskatchewan and in Canada. The member opposite says we should do that on our own without federal government. That member is the only one, Mr. Speaker, who is standing alone in Saskatchewan today saying that provinces should be doing that on their own.

And I say shame on you, Mr. Member.

The Speaker: — I would like to remind the Minister of Agriculture to direct all of his remarks through the Chair.

(10:45)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

SaskTel Expansion of High-speed Internet Service

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce that SaskTel will expand its high-speed Internet service to 191 more Saskatchewan communities over the next two years. By the end of 2003, 237 communities or 71 per cent of the population will have access to SaskTel high-speed service. SaskTel is well on the way to achieving its ultimate goal of reaching 95 per cent of the population with high-speed Internet, Mr. Speaker.

This significant expansion is directly due to the technical synergies associated with the provincial government's CommunityNet initiative. CommunityNet, which was announced last year, will provide a high-speed Internet connection to more than 1,500 educational institutions, health care facilities, and government offices in 366 communities. SaskTel is a technology supplier for the program, along with SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network).

In 1996, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel was the first communications company in North America to offer high-speed Internet service using digital subscriber line technology, commonly referred to as DSL (digital subscriber line) technology. In December of 2000, just nine communities in the province had access to SaskTel high-speed Internet service. By the end of 2001, 46 communities had the service and that truly was just the beginning.

Today's announcement is significant for a number of reasons. First, SaskTel is one of the few communication companies willing to expand high-speed service to communities with populations as low as 500 people, Mr. Speaker. There are many locations with significantly larger populations that do not yet have high-speed Internet access.

SaskTel's mandate, as Saskatchewan's own communications company, is the highly . . . in the highly competitive converging market, is to bring Saskatchewan people the best technology at a competitive price to as many communities as possible. As well, expanding service to so many smaller communities will be a great technological and administrative achievement.

The infrastructure required to connect Saskatchewan people to the world is extensive. It requires a large capital investment and a tremendous amount of technical expertise. Economic development, educational opportunities, and improved access to health care are only some of the benefits high-speed Internet can bring to a community.

The Government of Saskatchewan is proud to bring high-speed Internet service to more Saskatchewan people. This expansion will connect our communities as never before, Mr. Speaker. As always, SaskTel is leading the way. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and respond to the minister's statement on behalf of the official opposition. You know what, Mr. Speaker? When any organization, including a government, runs out of ideas, when they have no

new ideas, when they have nothing new to offer, they tend to simply re-announce what they've already done. And largely, largely today, largely today that's what we're talking about. The minister was talking about CommunityNet and its benefits and so they wanted to re-announce something that, frankly, is old news in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now I think they're . . . I think that there is nobody on this side of the House that wouldn't agree that connectivity is important for rural Saskatchewan as well as it is for urban Saskatchewan. Nobody on this side of the House disputes that it is an important . . . connectivity is important for the entire province if we are to take full advantage of the knowledge economy.

But once again, we in the province . . . once again we in the province of Saskatchewan have taken a unique approach to this particular issue. And that unique approach, basically, is all government. As it is with this government in almost all of its initiatives that relate to the private sector and industry, it's all about government and SaskTel.

And I've met with several IT (information technology) companies, for example, in this province who are concerned with this particular initiative — concerned that SaskTel had elbowed them out of the opportunity that might lay ahead in terms of connectivity in the province.

It's the same old story we hear, Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporations bullying these small private-sector businesses from participating or perhaps from locating here and getting into this industry.

So we're going to continue to watch the CommunityNet industry unfold. We're going to continue to watch as SaskTel invests \$80 million in Australia and then has kind of a retreaded announcement about what they're doing in the province. People will know where our priorities are.

And we certainly, we certainly hope, Mr. Speaker, that in the future when the government looks at these sorts of things, they will look first to the private sector and lastly to the government sector. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is well known . . . By leave, to respond . . .

The Speaker: — The member from North Battleford has requested leave to respond to the ministerial statement. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. I'm pleased on behalf of the Liberal Party to say that we are, we are in favour of the announcement which has been made today and we are pleased to see the initiatives that SaskTel is taking.

I am aware that members of the Saskatchewan Party last year, in this House, ridiculed the idea of high-speed Internet in rural Saskatchewan and declared that it would do nothing to build

rural Saskatchewan.

With all due respect, I disagree. I think if we want to build rural Saskatchewan, we need to provide the tools for them to participate in the new economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is well-known that the Liberal Party and myself personally have enormous problems with many of the investments of SaskTel — both in Australia and also to go into direct competition in this province in the cable business and in the home security business. But this is one investment I am pleased to say with which we are in full agreement. I'm aware that DSL technology has run into difficulties in the American market, and I think that's an issue the minister needs to look at. But the idea of connectivity for rural Saskatchewan is one that I am pleased to congratulate SaskTel on. Thank you.

(10:45)

TABLE OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like to advise members that I will . . . Order.

Before orders of the day, I would like to table four sets of documents. First, the members' accountability and disclosure reports for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001. Second, the audited financial statements and schedule of assets of the party caucuses for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001. Thirdly, a letter of October 22, 2001 from Her Honour regarding the membership of the Board of Internal Economy. And fourthly, the business and financial plan for the Office of the Provincial Auditor for the year ended March 31, 2003.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I would ask the Assembly to give leave to move several routine motions with respect to referral to committees.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Referral of Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Communications

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That the report of the Legislative Assembly Library, as tabled in the present session, be referred to the Standing Committee on Communications.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Retention and Disposal Schedules to the Standing Committee on Communications

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move as well, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That the retention and disposal schedules approved under The Archives Act by the Public Documents Committee as tabled in the present session be referred to the Standing

Committee on Communications.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of *Public Accounts* to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That the *Public Accounts* of the province of Saskatchewan be tabled intersessionally and the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Bylaws of Professional Associations to the Special Committee on Regulations

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I move, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That the bylaws of the professional associations and amendments thereto be tabled in the present session be referred to the Special Committee on Regulations.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a great privilege for me to be able to represent the constituents of Saskatoon Greystone. I'm grateful for the support of the residents of my constituency and I hope I can continue to serve them well.

Today I want to express my appreciation to our Premier for the privilege of moving our government's Speech from the Throne. I also want to recognize the ability and the caring attitude of the newly elected member for Saskatoon Idylwyld who will second the motion in support of the Throne Speech, and who I know will represent his constituents in this Assembly with great distinction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — In addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to express special appreciation to my wife, Louise; to my mother, Trudy; to my sons, Mark, James, and Michael; and to my stepdaughter, Monte, for the wonderful support that they provide me in my role as a member of the legislature. I really function much more effectively in my role as a result of their wonderful support.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech now before us presents the people of Saskatchewan with a plan of action for the years ahead — a progressive plan of action. It is forged by a government that is committed to doing its very best to listen to public concerns, and to work with all residents of Saskatchewan to build a province of economic opportunity and a province where the values of caring, compassion, and co-operation guide our decisions.

Saskatchewan has an enormous amount to be proud of and much still to do in order that we may create an even better and more equitable society, and be part of creating a better world.

Let us reflect on what we have accomplished. Saskatchewan people are leaders in health care and education. Under the leadership of successive New Democratic Party governments, we have built one of the very best health care systems in the world. And we have led the way, Mr. Speaker, in not only building this kind of a health care system in Saskatchewan, but having all of Canada adopt it.

According to Statistics Canada youth transition survey, conducted in the year 2000, we have the very best high school graduation rates in all of Canada.

Saskatchewan people lead Canada in their willingness to volunteer, contributing their time to thousands of community-based organizations across our province.

We also lead the way in Canada by donating to charities at a higher per capita level than in any other province. Our citizens, Mr. Speaker, are people with a generous heart.

Saskatchewan, under an NDP government, is recognized nationally for our good financial management. Our credit rating has been upgraded nine times since 1995, a sign of confidence in our government's ability to manage the financial affairs of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is the fourth richest province in Canada now, Mr. Speaker, after Alberta, Ontario, and BC (British Columbia). After years of effort, we have now . . . have a diversified economy that focuses as much on high tech and value added, as it does on primary production.

(11:00)

We have an experienced cadre of seniors, an educated workforce, and a large number of youth pursuing higher education — the highest percentage of youth pursuing higher education in all of Western Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — We have a citizenry who have a zeal for justice, a great capacity for mercy, and a deep commitment to equality.

We are also blessed with remarkable gifts of nature. We have almost half the arable farmland in Canada. We are fortunate to have a large forest resource and a plentiful supply of minerals. In fact we have Canada's . . . we are now Canada's third largest mineral producer. We have a bountiful supply of fresh water with over 90,000 freshwater lakes in Saskatchewan. And we are blessed to live in a truly beautiful province.

The potential of our economy, the spirit of our people, the blessings of our natural environment, and the quality of our public services means that there is enormous opportunity to do exciting things in Saskatchewan. The key to our future is building wisely with these gifts, creating greater opportunity for all our citizens, and safeguarding and improving our natural

environment and our public services.

This Throne Speech lays out four pillars on which our future will be strengthened in the coming two to three years. The first is investment in the economy and in the environment. The second is investment in infrastructure. The third is provision of quality education. And the fourth is provision of quality health care and support to families.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by talking about the investment in the economy and the environment.

In terms of specifics, Mr. Speaker, before I get into the specifics of our strategy in this regard, let me say that for me a healthy economy is one with strong employment opportunities; a healthy mix of private, co-op, and public sector investment; low public debt with low interest payments to finance that debt; affordable tax levels; good-quality public services; and policies that ensure environmental sustainability is always protected.

A healthy economy is only part of what we as a civil society are about, but it is a very important part. A healthy economy allows us to provide fulfilling lives for ourselves and our families. And it enables us to provide the mutual amenities we cannot provide as individuals — good health care, good schools, good roads, good infrastructure — means to an end, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that we cannot do for all what we wish for ourselves unless the economy is functioning in a strong, sustainable, responsible fashion.

2001 was not an easy year for the Saskatchewan economy and many of our people. The financial consequences of the widespread drought, low commodity prices, the softwood lumber dispute, and a US (United States) recession — which of course negatively impacted on Saskatchewan exports to the US — made 2001 difficult.

But there are promising signs of recovery. And our long-term trend line over the past decade has been very strong. In the last two months, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy has grown by 10,000 jobs. Our unemployment rate at 6.1 per cent is the second-lowest in Canada. These are the early signs of what will hopefully be an economic turnaround in 2002.

In the 1991 to 2000 decade under the New Democratic Party, Saskatchewan's economy outperformed that of every other province in Canada in terms of gross domestic product on a per capita basis. That growth in GDP, Mr. Speaker, per capita was significantly greater than every other province in Canada including Alberta. This is a credit to the hard work of our citizens and to provincial government policies that are working for Saskatchewan.

Your government has also worked to make provincial taxes more affordable for families by reducing income tax levels by almost one-third since 1993. And eliminating income tax for over 50,000 Saskatchewan residents. This includes the elimination, Mr. Speaker, of the flat tax that the Progressive Conservative government brought in in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, for so many Saskatchewan families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — These NDP tax reductions were made possible in part by economic growth. And in part because your government has reduced Saskatchewan debt by \$3.7 billion, thus reducing the interest burden Saskatchewan residents are asked to carry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard members of the opposition during this question period just moments ago in this House say to the Premier — and claim to the Premier — that we were running a \$500 million deficit. That was the words of the member for Humboldt. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to set the record straight. This is not a deficit budget, Mr. Speaker. We have not run a deficit budget in this year.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done is we have drawn on a savings fund that we set aside two years ago when we could have run a large surplus, Mr. Speaker, but didn't. We put that money away in a savings fund. And what did the member for Humboldt and other members of the official opposition from the Saskatchewan Party say? They said spend the money, spend the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And we said, Mr. Speaker, we said no, we will not do that because that is the way of deficits and debt which the predecessors of the Saskatchewan Party run up to the amount of \$14 billion, Mr. Speaker.

We said no, we won't spend the money. We're going to set it aside in case times become more difficult. And they have, Mr. Speaker; and that money is now there to spend, there to balance this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, not . . . (inaudible) . . . budget, Mr. Speaker, has been misrepresented by the member for Humboldt, Mr. Speaker. This is a balanced budget, drawing on the reserves our government had the wisdom to set aside in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, this government has also supported and stimulated small business by reducing the provincial income tax rate for small business by 40 per cent over the past 10 years. Saskatchewan now has more small businesses per capita than any other Western Canadian province.

As Saskatchewan people, we have built our economy on a creative private-sector/co-op-sector/public-sector mix. Our Crown corporations are an important part of our economy. They provide reliable service to our people in all parts of Saskatchewan at the lowest possible cost. Overall we pay less for utilities in Saskatchewan than consumers in any other province.

Over \$400 million is spent by the Crowns every year to expand and improve their services, creating thousands of construction jobs in Saskatchewan. Because we own our Crowns, their profits stay in Saskatchewan to help develop our economy and pay for important services like health and education.

Our Crowns employ nearly 9,000 direct employees who work in head office jobs and communities right in . . . head offices and communities across our province. These jobs, Mr. Speaker, are all jobs that are in Saskatchewan. And many of these jobs would never exist here if these companies were owned privately by companies based outside of Saskatchewan.

As the Throne Speech indicates, our plan is to use our Crown corporations to partner with private companies in Saskatchewan in attracting investment for new and expanded industries.

Our strategy in the use of public corporations that are owned by the people of Saskatchewan is very different from that of members of the opposition. Progressive Conservatives destroyed our Crown sector during those years in office.

And many people in Saskatchewan will recall, Mr. Speaker, the sale of billions of dollars of assets by the predecessors of the Saskatchewan Party. The sale of those assets at a fraction of their worth, Mr. Speaker, and one of the biggest giveaways Saskatchewan people have ever witnessed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have spent the last decade rebuilding our Crowns, rebuilding their profitability for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They now contribute at least \$200 million a year to our General Revenue Fund, helping to keep taxes down for all Saskatchewan residents.

And now what is the Saskatchewan Party telling us? If they are elected to this Assembly, they are telling us, Mr. Speaker, that they want to cut the Crown Corporations to their core, as they say. In other words, Mr. Speaker, the plan of the Saskatchewan Party is another wholesale sell-off of public assets owned by the people of Saskatchewan.

And Mr. Speaker, it's this attitude that is clearly designed as a short-term strategy to generate the revenues that would be required to allow them to cut taxes in the short term and have Saskatchewan people pay for it in the long term, Mr. Speaker.

It's a strategy, Mr. Speaker, that is certain to result in the significant loss of public services for the people of Saskatchewan. So let me make it clear, Mr. Speaker, under an NDP government well-run, profitable, public enterprises that were built to serve the people of Saskatchewan and create jobs and revenue for our people are not for sale on the auction block, Mr. Speaker. They are not for sale on the auction block.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see the emphasis on research and development in the Throne Speech. The Saskatchewan Research Council, our two universities, Innovation Place in Saskatoon, the Canadian Light Source synchrotron in Saskatoon, and the new forestry development centre in Prince Albert provide a significant research capacity in our province.

In the past few months I have had the opportunity to meet with many graduate students and faculty in the health sciences at the University of Saskatchewan, and I know the commitment in the Throne Speech to substantially increase health research will be very much welcomed by them. This provincial investment in health research is pivotal to improving public health, attracting federal health research dollars to Saskatchewan, and helping ensure retention of our health care specialists in Saskatchewan.

Our province's cultural community is an important contributor to our economy. Our writers, our artists, our performers and technicians give form and voice to the values that define us.

This spring our government will introduce the Saskatchewan Status of the Artist Act and we'll open the new state of the art film and video sound stage in Regina, enabling Saskatchewan to fully participate in international film and video production.

Mr. Speaker, one of the important announcements in the Throne Speech is our provincial government's comprehensive energy strategy which will include an important focus on energy conservation, expansion of cogeneration, and development of safe, renewable energy resources, including wind power.

An office of energy conservation will be established within government, signalling the importance your provincial government gives to supporting efforts aimed at promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Prime rate loans are available to assist homeowners with the purchase of energy efficient furnaces and hot water heaters. And several major retrofit projects are now underway within government buildings to reduce utility costs, save Saskatchewan taxpayers money, and cut carbon dioxide emissions.

In the past two years, successful cogeneration initiatives have been launched at the Cory potash mine and the Queen Elizabeth power plant, and there will be more to come, Mr. Speaker. Measures to expand production of ethanol will also be announced in the months ahead.

Finally, your provincial government has worked with Ottawa and private sector firms to launch two wind power projects in Saskatchewan. Last week I had the pleasure to join the Minister of the Crown Investments Corporation in an announcement that there will be nine more wind turbines and wind towers built in the Gull Lake area of Saskatchewan, added to the 17 turbines that we built just southeast of Gull Lake last year. Hitachi Industries has been selected to build the project's wind towers, and Vestas Canadian Wind Technology Incorporated will supply and install the turbines. The total economic impact for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, will be \$4.1 million.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working to expand wind power in Saskatchewan. I look forward to working with the Minister of the Crown Investments Corporation in doing that. And I also want to work to promote creative applications of solar energy, especially for homes and business heating purposes.

Mr. Speaker, where do members of the opposition stand on matters of energy conservation and safe renewable energy development? We saw their priorities last time they were in government, Mr. Speaker.

(11:15)

Last time they governed the province of Saskatchewan — in fact 20 years ago — I recall, Mr. Speaker, that one of the first Acts of the Devine administration was to eliminate the office of energy conservation, which we are now re-establishing in this Throne Speech . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — They not only eliminated that office, but they

eliminated almost all programs in support of energy conservation and renewable energy in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I remember a few years ago the current House Leader for the Saskatchewan Party came before the environmental assessment panel that the federal government had set up that was examining a proposal for high-level nuclear waste disposal in Canada and came before that panel and advocated the establishment of a nuclear reactor in Saskatchewan and a nuclear waste disposal facility in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And my colleague, the member from Moosomin from the Saskatchewan Party, who I have a good deal of respect for, says, and what's wrong with that? And I say, Mr. Speaker, that members on this side of the House say that Saskatchewan people don't want a high-level waste nuclear repository in their province.

We stand against that; they stand for that, Mr. Speaker. The lines in the sand are clearly drawn on matters of energy policy, Mr. Speaker. And we will proudly go to the people of Saskatchewan on our policy rejecting their policy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — These members, as the member for Moosomin now says, they want to take high-level radioactive waste that will be hazardous for the next quarter of a million years, they want that trucked through the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Truckload after truckload for decades. I say we reject that plan, Mr. Speaker. That plan that they have just advocated.

As the member for Moosomin has just said, what's wrong with that, Mr. Speaker? I say there's a lot wrong with that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech notes that as the federal government considers ratifying the proposed Kyoto Protocol, our Saskatchewan government will continue to work jointly with Canada to evaluate implications of the protocol for Saskatchewan's environment and economy.

This detailed evaluation work very much needs to be done, Mr. Speaker. Moreover, provincial governments and the Government of Canada need to work out an allocation plan for greenhouse gas reduction that is fair to each province. And the federal government needs to fully cost share initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

With these conditions in place, Mr. Speaker, it is my own personal opinion as a member of this legislature that when our government makes a final decision on Kyoto, I hope it will be a decision in favour of ratification. I stand opposed to the view espoused by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Alliance, and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association that we cannot afford the Kyoto Protocol. Wise investments in energy conservation will reduce utility bills for homeowners and businesses with an excellent payback period in the three- to seven-year range depending on the specifics of

the work that is done.

There is enormous potential for this kind of investment in Saskatchewan. In my judgment, strategic energy conservation investments that pay for themselves through energy savings will make Saskatchewan businesses more competitive than ever. They will also create important employment opportunities with new jobs in home and business retrofit, wind power, public transit, shelterbelt planting, and many other sectors of our economy.

In the end, no country in the world, in my judgment, should reject the Kyoto Protocol because the costs of doing nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will be much larger than the costs of taking appropriate action.

If the people of the world do not invest to slow down climate change, we will pay a very high price in the form of more cyclones and tornadoes, more droughts, reduced crop yields in many parts of the world, the shrinking of our glaciers and the corresponding threat to the rivers that flow from them, rising sea levels, coastal flooding, and the spread northward of disease and pests.

In my personal judgment, an equitable and sensitively developed Kyoto ratification plan is an urgently needed first step for Canada and all industrialized countries in the world.

Mr. Speaker, our government is taking positive new initiatives to ensure that the citizens of Saskatchewan have a sustainable, safe, clean supply of drinking water. I strongly endorse this commitment in the Throne Speech. Many communities in Saskatchewan have already benefited from the investment of provincial-federal infrastructure money to upgrade water treatment systems. Monitoring of water quality in Saskatchewan is being improved and training requirements are being put in place for all water treatment plant operators.

These are very positive developments, Mr. Speaker, and I will be encouraging the adoption of either national or provincial standards for water quality rather than the water quality guidelines that are currently in place as one additional measure that we might look at.

Mr. Speaker, there are three other matters of environmental policy that I want to touch on briefly. I will be encouraging our government to ensure protection of the environmentally fragile lands in the Great Sand Hills that are being targeted for oil and gas development by the RM (rural municipality) of Piapot and some oil companies. And I'm very proud of the work that the province has done with many other municipalities in the Great Sand Hills to ensure that environmentally fragile areas have been protected to date, Mr. Speaker.

I will also be encouraging our government to examine a province-wide ban on the use of herbicides and pesticides in school yards, daycare grounds, and children's playgrounds, in light of the growing body of evidence that children, in particular, appear to be extremely sensitive to the harmful effects of pesticide use.

And I will continue, Mr. Speaker, as I have had in this House over the last 20 years, as a personal position, to advocate that

uranium mining in Saskatchewan be phased out because of the risks associated with high-level, radioactive, waste disposal; nuclear reactor accidents; and the diversion of Saskatchewan uranium into the nuclear weapons programs of other countries. And I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that this is my personal view and at this point does not reflect the policies of our government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the important matter of pay equity and minimum wage policy. Pay equity is an important principle in our contemporary workplace. Our provincial government has implemented pay equity for more than 25,000 workers employed by provincial departments, and agencies, Crown corporations, and several training institutions. This is a very fine accomplishment, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome the commitment in the Throne Speech to continue encouraging the application of pay equity for the benefit of employees in Saskatchewan's health sector. It is extremely important that pay equity be broadened, and the work in the health sector is a very important advance.

Also important is our government's commitment to improved wages for staff and community-based organizations; and our commitment to improving wages for the lowest-paid workers in our society, those on minimum wage.

I want to commend our Minister of Labour for her announcement that the minimum wage will rise to \$6.35 on May 1, and \$6.65 on November 1.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — These changes, Mr. Speaker, which our government introduces, will bring the minimum wage much closer to the poverty line. These wage increases will all be spent in Saskatchewan, and will increase the buying power of tens of thousands of Saskatchewan residents.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you combine these wage increases with the elimination of income tax for the lowest income workers in our society, with 50,000 people coming off the tax rolls, these two measures will clearly benefit those in our society who are less fortunate. And it represents exactly the kind of measures that this government stands for in contrast to the kind of policies the Saskatchewan Party would put forward.

An Hon. Member: — A stark contrast.

Mr. Prebble: — A very stark contrast, as my colleague from Regina says, Mr. Speaker. Because, Mr. Speaker, the residents of Saskatchewan saw with the former Progressive Conservative government that getting a minimum wage increase out of that government, you had to wait many, many, many years for it, Mr. Speaker. The minimum wage lost ground continuously and was constantly eroded by inflation while members opposite were in government, Mr. Speaker.

It's clear that this government, Mr. Speaker, is committed to making sure that there is a fair share for all in Saskatchewan and that those at the lowest end of the pay sector will be . . . their interests will be protected.

Mr. Speaker, a critical element in building a stronger Saskatchewan economy is providing greater economic security for our farm community. I therefore endorse our Saskatchewan government's proposal for a national farm safety net program. This would provide a meaningful insurance program, including both crops and forages and a crop sector revenue deficiency program that offsets the impact of international subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the second pillar in the Throne Speech in terms of developing a province and an economy of opportunity, and that is our plan for investments in infrastructure. In Saskatchewan, our population is broadly dispersed across our province and every one of us understands that our roads, our communication system, and our utility services are essential for everyday life and are also essential for economic development in our province.

Our government has a well-defined infrastructure plan. The Throne Speech signals that our government is committed first of all, Mr. Speaker, to fixing Saskatchewan roads. We began this process last year, Mr. Speaker, and communities across our province were excited about the construction happening in their local area, Mr. Speaker, and that commitment continues this year.

In this fiscal year, we will proceed with plans for 700 kilometres of highway reconstruction and paving. Moreover, in 2002 and 2003, your government will also extend high-speed Internet to homes and businesses in 191 more communities in Saskatchewan, and we just had an excellent announcement of the details of that from the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower and SaskEnergy will invest \$350 million in the year 2002 in infrastructure renewal in Saskatchewan. This is welcome news for all Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker, and in particular welcome news for residents of rural Saskatchewan who will benefit a great deal from these financial investments in rural revitalization.

Our Crown corporations play a pivotal role in this process. Without Crown corporations like SaskTel, SaskPower, and SaskEnergy that are owned by the people, the investments made in delivering services to rural communities would almost certainly be dramatically reduced.

The private sector would simply never invest in rural communities and in rural utility infrastructure at the scale your provincial government is able to by using publicly owned utilities and ensuring an equitable sharing of costs and revenues among all Saskatchewan people — the very principles, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite want to do away with.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word about the third pillar of our strategy for building a province of economic opportunity, and that is the provision of quality education.

Our Premier's commitment, Mr. Speaker, to public education cannot be in any doubt following our last provincial budget. What we saw, Mr. Speaker, in that budget is a commitment to increasing funding for kindergarten to grade 12 education by 9 per cent — a 9 per cent increase. In all, Mr. Speaker, provincial funding for K to 12 education has been increased by 24 per cent

over the past four years.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you to compare that to the promise made by the members of the Saskatchewan Party in the last provincial election that the Education budget in Saskatchewan would be frozen under their administration. Mr. Speaker, had that freeze been implemented, Saskatchewan children and their teachers would have been shortchanged tens of millions of dollars under a Saskatchewan Party government.

In conjunction, Mr. Speaker, with our coalition members from the Liberal Party, our government has doubled the number of community schools in Saskatchewan to 83 and has committed to the implementation of the concept of School^{PLUS}.

In Saskatoon we have seen this concept very successfully implemented at Nutana Collegiate, where important health and social services are delivered to students right in the school. I am anxious to see this excellent approach to service delivery being implemented in many other schools across our province.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, when the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children held public hearings in Saskatoon and Regina, concern was expressed about the number of children under 16 years of age who are not attending school. Despite Saskatchewan's very high percentage of successful high school graduates — the best graduation rate in all of Canada — we do face a problem with our urban youth dropping out of school at far too young an age. Over 1,000 children under 16 are not attending school regularly in Saskatoon, and the general pattern is similar in Regina.

(11:30)

Our government, Mr. Speaker, is anxious to address this issue, and I am anxious to see an expansion of resources aimed at assisting children who are no longer attending school being supported in a return to school. Where necessary, smaller classrooms and transportation should be provided to facilitate these children getting an education.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word about our government's plans for post-secondary education. In a year when revenues are tight, students in post-secondary education institutions will be glad to see that our government's commitment to post-secondary education will be maintained.

The University of Saskatchewan is particularly important to the residents of my constituency. With the implementation of the DesRosiers report, the University of Saskatchewan has received an operating grant increase of approximately 10 per cent in the last two years, well above the funding levels proposed by the Saskatchewan Party in the 1999 election.

The construction of the new Kinesiology Building and the capital renovations to the Thorvaldson Building have also been fully funded by our government. Moreover, the graduate student tax credit has provided a modest measure of tax relief to students who graduate from a post-secondary education institution and stay in Saskatchewan. This year more than 7,000 Saskatchewan students should receive the tax credit. I believe it is clear that an important reinvestment in public post-secondary education has begun under our administration, and I am glad to

be part of a government that is committed to such a reinvestment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the fourth pillar in our . . . in our strategy for economic growth and development in Saskatchewan and as part of our strategy for building a province of opportunity, and that is our strategy with respect to supporting healthy and self-reliant families.

This is an extremely high priority for our government, Mr. Speaker, and we are pursuing this priority through many strategies. The first, Mr. Speaker, is an investment in early childhood development, and I'll have more to say about that in a minute. But I want to lay out the overall plan, Mr. Speaker, which is an investment in early childhood development; an investment in expanding social housing in Saskatchewan; an investment in enhancing the building independence program to support low-income working families with children; and above all, Mr. Speaker, a very significant investment in our commitment to a publicly funded, publicly administered medicare program in Saskatchewan.

The Kids First program, Mr. Speaker, draws from the success of early childhood intervention work in Hawaii that succeeded in dramatically reducing the abuse of children in homes where children were judged to be at high risk.

Our Saskatchewan program is getting underway now in more than a dozen neighbourhoods and communities in Saskatchewan. It includes intensive prenatal outreach to pregnant women who are using alcohol or drugs. And our goal, of course, Mr. Speaker, is to reduce the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect.

This program, Mr. Speaker, is also providing intensive home visiting to provide support to families who are eligible for the Kids First program. These families also receive enhanced child care and enhanced early learning opportunities for their children.

The second part of our strategy here, Mr. Speaker, is the building independence program. And this is a program, Mr. Speaker, that I am very excited about. This is a program that is really part of our cornerstone for having significantly reduced child poverty in our province, Mr. Speaker. We are the only government in Canada that year after year over the past four years has reduced the level of child poverty among our citizens, and I think this is an extremely notable accomplishment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — I might add, Mr. Speaker, that this is an accomplishment that was in effect launched by our Premier when he was minister of Social Services and is now being continued by him in his leadership as head of our government.

And, Mr. Speaker, the net result of this has been that family health benefits in Saskatchewan have been extended to more than 20,000 families, and income supplements for working families who have children have been provided to thousands of families across Saskatchewan — thousands of working families who are able to better support their children and live in dignity as a result of the income supplements that are provided through

this initiative, Mr. Speaker.

I want to touch on the third element of our strategy with respect to supporting healthy and self-reliant families, and that is our commitment to expanding social housing. And you know, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan and the governments of Quebec and — during the NDP tenure in British Columbia — the Government of BC were the only governments in Canada for years that supported social housing. The federal government pulled out of social housing in 1995 and then 7 out of 10 other governments in Canada proceeded to abandon their provincial commitment to social housing. Saskatchewan never abandoned that commitment. We always provided funding to social housing in our budgets throughout this term, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm pleased to say now, Mr. Speaker, that in conjunction with a renewed interest in social housing from the federal government, we will be able to build 1,000 new social housing units in Saskatchewan over the next five years — an initiative that will be a source of hope and optimism to many lower-income families in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to now turn to the question of child exploitation in the sex trade which, as you know, is a matter of great concern to our government. And the Throne Speech makes clear, Mr. Speaker, that we are committed to responding to the work of the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade — a committee that was co-chaired by myself and the hon. member for Humboldt.

I will have more to say about this response in the near future, Mr. Speaker. But I am pleased that our government will be moving forward to deter sexual predators and to assist children who have been victimized. This Assembly has already passed legislation permitting the seizure of a vehicle when that vehicle is used to commit a prostitution-related offence. The vehicle seizure legislation will be coming into force as soon as the preparatory work necessary to enforce the new law has been completed.

This will add to the financial support our provincial government already provides to community-based groups working to stop child sexual abuse on our streets. In my home city of Saskatoon this includes covering two-thirds of the funding to operate the safe house in Saskatoon, providing financial support to parent patrol and sign campaign initiatives designed to deter sexual predators, providing financial support to the outreach work of Egadz, and funding three residential spaces at Calder Centre to assist youth on the streets with overcoming addiction problems.

Often, you know, Mr. Speaker, when you listen to members of the Saskatchewan Party you'd think that our government was not investing anything in this area. But in fact we're investing very significantly to support young people in need in our communities, Mr. Speaker. And we will continue that commitment, Mr. Speaker, in our response to the special committee report when that response is announced.

Mr. Speaker, the most important social program our provincial government delivers is health care services. And this is the final area, Mr. Speaker, that I wish to address this afternoon and it's a pivotal part of our strategy to help support and build healthy

and self-reliant families in our province.

Your provincial government, Mr. Speaker, is deeply committed to a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system that operates in the public interest.

Earlier this month, Mr. Speaker, our Premier presented our government's views before the Romanow Commission hearings, the federal hearings on the future of health care in Canada. And our Premier said, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

There are essentially two fundamentally different views of tomorrow's health care system. One vision is frankly defeatist. Its proponents say medicare cannot be sustained and therefore the well off are entitled to a level of service that we cannot provide for all.

The other view, my view (the Premier says and this is continuing the quote) and the view of my government is that the values underlying medicare are sound. Its current performance is pretty good and we need to act decisively to improve it.

The Premier concluded by saying, quote:

Let us strengthen medicare with the aim of building a better Canada.

To which I say, absolutely.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's health care system provided the following to our 1 million residents. It provided, Mr. Speaker, 4,761,800 visits to family physicians and 920,700 visits to specialists.

It funded 800,000 days of in-patient hospital care. It provided for our 1 million residents: 266,000 radiology services; 125,000 ultrasounds; 53,600 CT (computerized tomography) scans; and more than 10,800 MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

402,700 immunizations were provided for both children and adults; 44,000 radiation and chemotherapy treatments were provided for cancer patients in two dozen communities across Saskatchewan; and part of the costs of home care services were provided to 29,100 people.

Mr. Speaker, clearly this is a health care system which, while it needs ongoing improvement, is doing enormously good things for the people of Saskatchewan and is delivering those services, Mr. Speaker, in a very cost-effective way and in a way that is much less expensive than the privatized US health care system is able to deliver. Not only is a privatized system, Mr. Speaker, as exhibited by the United States, much more expensive but it leaves many, many people uncovered. In the case of the United States, 42 million of its citizens are uninsured in health . . . no health care services.

In the US privatized system, some high school athletes cannot compete because they cannot afford the private insurance needed to cover after-school activities. No Saskatchewan young person has to worry about that, Mr. Speaker.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that in the US system, managed care

plans in several states have actually delisted physicians because they insisted on treating their patients regardless of cost. Our physicians, Mr. Speaker, in Canada and Saskatchewan, need not worry about such measures being taken.

Most emphatically, Mr. Speaker, we know that the US direction and the direction of privatization is not a direction we want to embark on. At a time in Canada when our neighbour, Alberta, is beginning to privatize the delivery of medicare, when our federal government has reduced its total contribution including tax points to the funding of medicare from 50 per cent down to 20 per cent, and when other provinces are delisting services or increasing health care premiums, Saskatchewan, our government and our Manitoba partners, stand alone in the battle to protect and fight for medicare in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, we stand alone. And I think this is very important, because if Saskatchewan was ever turned over to a Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker, one of the last lines of defence of medicare, of a publicly funded, publicly administered medicare system in this province would be lost, Mr. Speaker. One of the last lines of defence, not only at the provincial level but for all of Canada, Mr. Speaker. This government is the most important defender of medicare that Canada has, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — I'm proud of the role that our Premier played when he went to Vancouver, Mr. Speaker, for the last Premiers' Conference. And with Manitoba, those two provinces stood alone in terms of defending our publicly funded medicare system against privatization and against financial erosion, Mr. Speaker.

(11:45)

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech clearly signals our intent to begin implementation of the action plan for Saskatchewan health care, including measures to better manage waiting times for elective surgery, create primary health care teams, increase recruitment of training activities, begin training of 240 emergency medical technicians, and establish a 24-hour phone line to offer immediate advice from registered nurses.

Saskatchewan's financial pressures will mean we cannot do everything as quickly as we would like to, but we will move forward in a very substantial way. These then are some of the important measures we will pursue as a government to support the families of our province.

It is a plan that is in sharp contrast with the plans of the Leader of the Opposition. Let us be clear, Mr. Speaker, about his proposal that would translate into tax cuts of approximately \$650 million per year. The Saskatchewan Party plans to eliminate the small-business tax, to cut the corporate capital tax by 50 per cent, and to further push down personal income taxes far beyond what our government has already done. And I remind listeners that we have already reduced personal income taxes in Saskatchewan through our own initiatives in this government by one-third since 1993.

The Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, says they want to go way beyond that, Mr. Speaker. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that that is simply not sustainable and can be achieved in only three ways, Mr. Speaker.

The first of those ways, Mr. Speaker . . . If you want to cut taxes by \$650 million in Saskatchewan, the first of those ways, Mr. Speaker, is that you would have to go into debt — big, big deficits, Mr. Speaker. That's the first option. Their predecessors, the Devine administration, took that course of action, Mr. Speaker, and took us \$14 billion into debt.

The second, Mr. Speaker, the second way of achieving that massive tax cut that the Leader of the Opposition talks about is by massively cutting health and education services and social services in Saskatchewan. The opposition, Mr. Speaker, say that . . . have already acknowledged, Mr. Speaker, that they would cut social services by \$50 million a year; that they'd cut child protection services in this province, Mr. Speaker; that they'd cut the building independence program. Those are the kind of measures, Mr. Speaker, that are in our Social Services budget. They say they'd cut that by \$50 million, Mr. Speaker.

They talked in the last election about freezing health and education services but let me tell you, to pull off a \$650 million tax cut they'd have to do a lot more than freeze health and education. They'd have to slash away at health and education in a way, Mr. Speaker, that the Gordon Campbell government in British Columbia is doing. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly who this government has been identifying with in the months past.

They said, Mr. Speaker, when Gordon Campbell undertook his core review of services, they said that's exactly what we'd do, Mr. Speaker. And Saskatchewan residents can be sure that the kind of cuts that British Columbia is seeing now to the public service and to health and education and social services is exactly what the Saskatchewan Party would do if they ever come to government, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I promise you and the people of Saskatchewan that members on this side of the House will never hand the keys of this legislature to the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, there's one other option they have in achieving this \$650 million tax cut and that, Mr. Speaker, is a massive sell-off of public assets. We talked about that earlier, Mr. Speaker. Their plan to sell the Crowns and be on this side of the House, say, Mr. Speaker . . . Assets that are owned by the people of Saskatchewan and that generate \$200 million a year for the people of Saskatchewan and that provide services, utility services, at the lowest cost of any province in Canada to its customers, those assets are not for sale, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — We are not into the Saskatchewan Party policy of short-term gain for a long-term pain, Mr. Speaker. We will not do that on behalf of Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by citing from the Book of

Romans, chapter 14, verse 9, where St. Paul tells us:

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that what makes for peace is a full stomach . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. I just ask members on both sides of the House . . . thank you. I'd just ask members on both sides of the House to permit all members to make their remarks and one by one everybody will get his or her turn.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I would like to close by citing from the Book of Romans, chapter 14, verse 9 where St. Paul tells us, and I'm quoting:

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

I would suggest that what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding is a full stomach and a warm home for every child, a fulfilling job and stable community for every adult, an equitable and caring society, and a sense of optimism and innovation for every community.

We can do that, Mr. Speaker. We can do that by working together by mutually upbuilding, as we are told by Saint Paul.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the message of this Throne Speech is a message of working together to continue to build a province of opportunity and compassion. Because I am comfortable in its message and confident in its authors, I am happy to move its acceptance.

I move therefore, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the hon. member for Saskatoon Idylwyld:

That a humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Lynda Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I so move.

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to second the motion placed before this House by the member for Saskatoon Greystone. I thank the Premier for this honour as I am privileged to be the newest member of our

government, led by a very capable cabinet and Premier.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm truly humbled to be standing here representing the good citizens, my neighbours, of Saskatoon Idylwyld. I have taken a deep interest in the workings of this House and how the members strive continually to improve the economic and social lot of the people here in Saskatchewan.

And members of this legislature have at times seemed both contemplative and even sensational, but I was always . . . and will be now fascinated by our actions. I'm looking forward to your wise and good guidance, Mr. Speaker, in facilitating our deliberations and discussions here in this third session.

We have new challenges ahead and I'm convinced that our government's plan as outlined in the Throne Speech will prove to be an excellent solution as we build Saskatchewan as a province of opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, first I want to acknowledge those who have gone before us. Today when we talk of our vision, our hopes and our fears, we should be clear we did not get here all by ourselves. As the member for Saskatoon Greystone pointed out, our government's core values are critical to building our province's future success.

Inclusiveness, accessibility, compassion, co-operation, and innovation, are such a critical part of our history because the men and women who have served this government so well in the past not only believed in these core values, but made them an integral part of their achievements.

In particular, I do want to recognize and thank my predecessor, Janice MacKinnon, for her outstanding contribution to our province in her many roles around the cabinet table and in caucus and throughout the province.

The times in 1991 were challenging, as they are today, but she was an eloquent spokesperson for compassion and responsibility. She rose to meet the issues with both determination and integrity. She served our province well. And I know, and I know all the members here would like to thank her.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — And as well, the other members who helped me get here, my own family, I want to thank them and their constant support.

Now as I said I am delighted to be here representing the constituents of Saskatoon Idylwyld. In the short four months I've been the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), I've come to appreciate the rich diversity of Saskatoon Idylwyld more than ever.

As you may know my constituency ranges from the Saskatoon John G. Diefenbaker Airport, much of the north Saskatoon business district, to include all of downtown Saskatoon. And so, Mr. Speaker, the state of the provincial economy is truly important to the people working in Saskatoon. And I was most happy to read of the optimism the Saskatoon businesses

declared in *The StarPhoenix* last Wednesday, March 6th. And I want to quote from the article:

Dale Botting, CEO of the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority (SREDA), says he had expected a larger number of businesses to be concerned with outmigration.

Instead, respondents reported booming business in the city.

“The confidence, the optimism, post-Sept. 11 was a nice, pleasant surprise for us,” Botting said. “We were all concerned as to how much we would be shaken by the events that happened there and through the global economy.”

Just over 93 per cent of the respondents said their company is either in a stable or growing stage, with just over half of those saying (that) their company is experiencing growth.

Truly our government’s plan of prosperity through partnership is taking shape.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, shortly after my election I was delighted to take part in the launching of Saskatoon’s new theme, Saskatoon Shines. And truly it does. And I’m so proud to be representing here the business community of Saskatoon Idylwyld, here in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I am a humble schoolteacher, not a voodoo economist like the Leader of the Opposition. When I buy two fishes, I know that they feed two people, not 5,000. But I do manage a family budget and I do know a couple of things about how our province handles our own budget.

I know, for instance, that if a family is careful with their finances in good times and puts some in reserves, we are able . . . better able to smooth over the tough times. I know you can’t buy a new set of snow tires with a maxed-out Visa. I also know that tough times don’t last forever any more than the good times keep rolling on. Historically this has been true in Saskatchewan, where the term boom or bust was practically invented.

Admittedly, as the Throne Speech says, we have been through a tough time, a time of uncertainty since . . . compounded by September 11, but underway well before then. North America has been through tough times, not just us. But we were smart, Mr. Speaker. We put some aside while we were balancing eight consecutive budgets. When the waters got a little choppy these past few months, we were able to weather the storm.

Voodoo, Mr. Speaker? No. Just good common sense.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — And common sense best expressed by the Provincial Auditor who said in a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio interview, quote:

The government’s financial condition has been improving

considerably over the last many years, so we are one of the provinces better able to withstand a downturn in our economy, better than most other provinces. And we are in a much better position to deal with it as we were even just a few short years ago because our economy has grown so much and the government has reduced its accumulated deficit over the past few years.

I needn’t remind us, Mr. Speaker, who gave us that accumulated deficit.

(12:00)

Now I know one other thing about the . . . I know one other thing about the economy, Mr. Speaker, not to get too far out of my element. I know that we are no longer one in a . . . (inaudible) . . . economy; haven’t been for some time now. When one sector of the economy suffers, others help out to take up the slack.

It is no secret that these are tough times in agriculture, especially for our grain farmers. And for the reasons also are no secret, unfair foreign subsidies, little to no help in the federal area, and bad weather.

The combination of September 11 and poor prices have admittedly led to some job losses. But as I said, nothing lasts forever, good or bad. And I’m very happy to note that Saskatchewan job numbers are improving — 10,000 more jobs in the last two months. And that’s very encouraging, Mr. Speaker.

And before the opposition throws our neighbouring province in our face, let me point out that in the last month of February when we gained 5,800 jobs, Alberta lost 11,000. Not to gloat — not to gloat over the misfortunes of our neighbour, but just to remind us that the grass can be cut two ways.

Now what picked up the slack? Oil and gas of course, but jobs were up in construction, manufacturing, services, transportation, retail and wholesale, and also in the livestock industry. We are no one-horse town, are we, Mr. Speaker. And speaking of diversification, has anyone mentioned the synchrotron lately?

Now more than this, Mr. Speaker, my Saskatoon Idylwyld is made up of vibrant neighbourhoods, our communities. And this is what I believe is the heart of representative democracy — our constant seeking of a common voice that speaks of the hopes and fears of our neighbours. And again I draw upon those core values: inclusiveness, accessibility, compassion, co-operation, and innovation that our government holds so important as the values that drive our communities throughout this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at my swearing-in December 19, our Premier movingly reminded me of my roots as he welcomed me to this legislature by saying, I’m convinced that the people of Saskatoon Idylwyld want exactly what people want throughout this province. They want to build healthy, vibrant, and prosperous communities and your election victory came about partly because of your deep involvement in your community.

Well the Premier is quite right about my history. It’s really

through my community, Caswell, and its community association. And we are the people who do the coaching, the programming, but most of all, we are the people who live and breathe the political consequences of government daily with our neighbours.

Caswell, like Westmount, Mayfair, Riversdale, Hudson Bay Park, Woodlawn, Kelsey, and so on, face challenges daily as we struggle to have good housing, good schools, in a safe community. And I believe our Premier and our government have a clear plan to accomplish this.

The Throne Speech yesterday clearly articulates our goals, and I'm so pleased to be here representing my neighbours, those who work, who go to school, who live together in our neighbourhoods, and that all of Saskatchewan can be a province of opportunity, and all our communities can be communities of opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I am particularly pleased by the announcement in the Throne Speech of our government's plan to pass the status of artists legislation. This is a true indication of our government's vision of connecting to all segments of our Saskatchewan communities. In fact, with this legislation we will be the first jurisdiction in North America that will formally begin to recognize the value of the artists to the community.

This is consistent with the Saskatchewan's rich tradition of valuing arts in our community. Our Saskatchewan Arts Board is a wonderful example of our province's pioneering spirit that was established in 1948, the first of its kind in Canada. And so this legislation maintains a commitment to culture here in Saskatchewan.

My own constituency has a vibrant, lively arts and cultural community that includes visual arts for our artists, musicians, actors and so forth. Culture does count in our communities right across this province as it engages our people in creative activity, it builds healthier lifestyles, and inspires social well-being. And for youth, and especially those at risk, it builds an inspiration and hope now.

In Saskatoon Idylwyld, we have a fantastic project today called the Circus Arts Project, that works with youth at risk in the inner city. Its goal is to build self-confidence, and self-worth, and this legislation to pass for the status of the artists is a clear message that artists do count and do make a difference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is of special significance that this Throne Speech speaks directly to a new vision of education. We, the government, like the people of Saskatchewan, are convinced that it is a critical time to be innovative in our services to the young people of Saskatchewan.

And as a teacher I am, of course, passionate about public education. Events in America in the fall only underline how fragile our world is, and how critical it is that we have appropriate tools to understand, develop empathy and compassion. But more than this, how we can develop or foster

capacity to care for one another. I believe public education is a strong agent for all of these, and we must ensure public education stays true to its best intents, and not just training but helping us all to fully participate, and to fully contribute to our society.

We have to, as the saying goes, recognize that it takes a whole village to raise a child and so it is in our communities throughout this province.

Now, School^{PLUS}, our vision of education in our province, is that every school will become a community school and that every school will ensure that children with needs will have them met so learning can take place, and this initiative is in the true innovative spirit of Saskatchewan education which has always been noted for searching for best practices.

I would like to at this time acknowledge Dr. Stirling McDowell, who passed away just a short month ago, but who personified education and innovation at its best in our province. Stirling worked tirelessly for the cause of public education, and I'm confident that School^{PLUS} will be in the spirit of best practices that will improve learning in the classrooms of Saskatchewan.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, as a representative for Saskatoon Idylwyld, that we have appreciated the work of our government, as we have five community schools and one of the first community high schools announced in this province last year in our constituency. And I, yesterday, was delighted, along with the members for Regina Centre and Regina Elphinstone, to see the students from Sacred Heart School here with their principal. This school truly personifies the intent of community schools in action. And I am sure that while we work through the processes, there will be challenges. It is clear, though, that neighbourhoods across this province are now engaged with their schools, and the supports for both the family and the schools are strong. The time is right for School^{PLUS}.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, today I invited a very special guest, Laura Kusisto, from . . . she's a grade 12 student from Campbell Collegiate, but I think she had to get back for afternoon classes. But I had the distinct pleasure of acting as a provincial debate coach at the junior national debate tournament in 1998 at Castlegar, British Columbia. Laura was one of six students that our provincial organization, Saskatchewan elocution debate society, sent. The topic was a very hot issue on the west coast — the salmon trees — and we were a fierce team, winning first overall in the debate category. Max Shapiro from Saskatoon was declared the best debater across Canada that year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Now, I was even more, though, delighted in the national speech competition because four of the nine semi-finalists were from our province, Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, Laura had come in a very strong second. I was so proud of her, not only because she did so well but she had a real message for all of us, and I believe School^{PLUS} speaks to the issues she raised some four years ago.

Now, Laura's speech was based on the saying, "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." Now, Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree there's much merit in this, but Laura recognized that there's a potential shortcoming in this plan. She very eloquently suggested that while we teach people how to fish, we must honour and respect their cultural diversity. And so it is in education. We must be inclusive, and we must celebrate the rich diversity of all our students in our classrooms. And if we fail to do this, then in the end our good, but short-sighted intentions will be our undoing. Our government is saying schools must be ready for all of our students, and I'm confident that Laura and Stirling would agree.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Now, Mr. Speaker, as a teacher I often spoke to my students about a positive attitude, hope, and optimism. I challenged them to develop a world view that is compassionate for others and I challenged them to develop a strong sense of stewardship for our world. And I often used this quote by Reinhold Niebuhr to spur on this discussion:

That nothing — nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime, therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good can make complete sense in any immediate context of history, therefore, we must be saved by faith. And nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone, and therefore, we must be saved by love.

I was so happy to see a former student, Jonathan Chow of Saskatoon receive recognition this past December from the Saskatoon public school division, a school division noted for its support for public education. Jonathan had received the award of excellence, a reward that was based on academic achievement, outstanding personal qualities, strong leadership, and participation in school activities and community. In fact, Jonathan was called Saskatoon's super student. But I was so . . . I was doubly happy, because Jonathan was so positive, recognizing the importance of education and how he had such a strong commitment to his community. He is a testament to our . . . that our province is truly blessed with wonderful youth. And our challenge is to ensure that our youth has a strong, healthy world view such as Jonathan's, and I'm satisfied that our vision of schools in the future will do this.

Now interestingly, Mr. Speaker, another of my favourite projects with grade 8s was a little Shakespeare. With Jonathan's class we put on a pretty good version of *Macbeth*. The students were fascinated with this study of power and how it can corrupt worthy citizens such as the good soldier Macbeth.

Mr. Speaker, I am struck by some eerie parallels in this House. I have come to notice in the last few months that the opposition have come to believe that it's their destiny that the next . . . that they will be the next government regardless of the merits of their plan or how much support they have from the people.

And I am not sure if the Leader of the Opposition has not been talking to a few witches, if not at least figuratively. And who might these witches be? Private communication consultants here in Saskatchewan or Alberta who are telling them all they

have to do is just wait — the government will be theirs.

I'm not sure if we should speculate on this but let me add this. As I was campaigning on the doorsteps this past fall, I must tell you of the great apprehension that the voters of Saskatoon Idylwyld held for the Sask Party. They were and are still very nervous of what might be in store for this province if the Sask Party were to come to power — the Crowns sold, cost of living soaring. And what would become of our schools and our health care system? And they are even more anxious now as Gordon Campbell in BC has come to power and shows what he really meant by efficiency. We know the high regard members across the way hold for the new British Columbia government. People are very concerned, Mr. Speaker, very concerned.

It reminded me of the lines, the uneasy lines, Macbeth speaks after he realizes he's committed himself to acquiring power at any cost. He has in fact lost all personal integrity and self respect, exclaims to Lady Macbeth:

Methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep!" the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,
Balm of hurt minds . . .
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

Still it cried, sleep no more to all the house:
Glamis hath murdered sleep . . .

Mr. Speaker, if the opposition were to form government I can see the headlines now, "Sleepless in Saskatchewan."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — "Citizens overcome with high anxiety as Saskatchewan Party comes to power" and this is indeed a troublesome image, a tragic image.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the good citizens of Glamis, Saskatchewan, through their elected representative, the member of Rosetown-Biggar, that Shakespeare was of course referring to Glamis, Scotland.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I truly do appreciate all things in my constituency but I must tell you I am certainly happy of the work regarding sexual exploitation of children that will come to pass this session. I want to thank the all-party committee for the tireless effort and in particular I want to acknowledge the leadership of the member for Greystone and the member from Humboldt.

The report underlines the urgency of this very sad and disturbing issue. Fortunately solutions are now taking shape as we as a society recognize the horrible reality of child sexual exploitation. This is a daily issue for far too many children in my constituency and I applaud the work of the members of both sides of this House to tackle this tragic fact of life in our country and in our province.

(12:15)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the member for Greystone who completely agreed with the Premier on his

presentation to the Romanow Commission. I was so pleased that he reminded us of the fact that for the most part those who are familiar with the health plan are satisfied with their care, and those who listened to the weepers and wailers and gnashers of teeth across the way worry about it. To paraphrase Churchill about democracy, our health system is the worst in the world, except for all the others.

Now I don't want to be negative, but I do want to remind ourselves about the one "other systems" the one to the south that the member from . . . (inaudible) . . . Greystone told us so much. He talked about the high school athletes who can't play sports because they don't have private insurance; the delisted physicians who do truly care about their patients; and over the 42 million uninsured Americans who can't afford health care. And we know a lot more.

So most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we know we don't need to go there. The lessons of 50 years and more tell us that in health care, as in so much more, we are not doing too badly in Saskatchewan and in Canada. We can, and we are, and we will do much, much more. The action plan for Saskatchewan health care provides that blueprint.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — As my roots are from rural Saskatchewan — in fact my brother and sister-in-law who operate an organic farm just west of Mortlach, which will be in the family come 100 years in 2007 — I have watched closely the Action Committee for Rural Economy. And I'm very excited to see that our government continues to maintain a determined commitment to the people of rural Saskatchewan.

We are engaging citizens right across this province, as we all recognize the challenges that exist in this country. But we know that the Saskatchewan spirit is strong, in creating opportunities such as organic farming, ethanol, the intensive livestock operations, wind energy, and so many more to complement the traditional rural way of life that we are so proud of.

And I'm particularly happy to see in the Throne Speech that our Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture continues to press the federal government for a national farm safety net program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, I want to say that I'm very excited about the future of this government, led by a very capable Premier. He has established an ethic within our government of listening and engaging the communities of Saskatchewan.

The summer bus tour is an excellent example of our government that is open to all and not by invitation only. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, this is in sharp contrast to our opposition across the way, that in this past month has sent so many mixed messages to Saskatchewan citizens. We want to hear from you. No, we don't want to hear from you. Now. Not now. And the only consistent message seems to be from the Saskatchewan Party is their inconsistency. What is their plan?

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we are without . . . we are without a

doubt facing challenging times and we shall be judged by the quality of our stewardship of our province, Saskatchewan. But I must say I was drawn to seek public office by the early evidence of an exciting renewal as we build opportunities in Saskatchewan.

This is the start of our Premier's very industrious and dynamic tenure. This evidence includes a strong commitment to quality public education, a vibrant sustainable health care system, the economy, but most of all to the people of Saskatchewan. And this commitment by our government continues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as citizens, we have choices to make about the kind of society we want to live in. I live in Saskatchewan and I have made my choice. I want a society that is decent and caring and concerned about children and families. I want a society that does more than spout slogans when it comes to improving life for every person. In Saskatchewan, our government has made these choices and we have a plan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say that as by the quality of their work you shall know the workmen, so too by the quality of our governance as outlined in this Throne Speech, you will come to know this government so aptly led by the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I am most happy and delighted to second this motion before us today. Thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin today by certainly welcoming you back to the Assembly and wishing you very well in the proceedings that take place in this Assembly over the next two or three months and apparently, according to some of the members of the government, may even be into October. So we're ready and we're certainly hoping that they're ready for what we're going to be presenting to them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also just like to take a moment to welcome the new member to our Assembly, the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld. And I wish you well in your work as an MLA for Saskatoon Idylwyld.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to give commendation to all the Legislative Assembly staff that support us so much in our work in the Assembly. And I would like to commend also our constituency assistants, and in particular my own, Mary Anne Telfer, who is just an absolute jewel and a wonder in being able to assist the people of the province through my office in Humboldt.

And while I'm on that note, Mr. Speaker, I was really quite thrilled to hear that — although I wasn't too thrilled to hear about the population decline in Saskatchewan; it's a really horrific message of the dismal failure of the government to stimulate economic activity in this province — but Humboldt was one of the three centres . . . three cities in Saskatchewan that actually grew in population. And I'd like to give you my view as exactly why that's happening and why it has happened throughout the history of the province.

That area is a people of faith. They have faith in themselves. They believe in themselves. They know that they can work hard and they have a good sense of values. They certainly have good

business . . . sound business management.

I can point to two very, very obvious examples in Bourgault Industries and Doepker Industries at Annaheim. These people have been successful in spite of the many deterrents that government, the NDP government, has put forward. And they will continue to be successful.

One of the problems they're facing right at this time is they can't seem to find enough skilled labour to work at their manufacturing industries there. A lot of our young people have left the province. They don't seem to be able to attain the training that they need here.

And both the . . . both Doepker and Bourgault mentioned this when we went . . . the Saskatchewan Party had our grow Saskatchewan meetings around the province and we went to Humboldt. That was one of the issues that was brought forward, was we need to make sure that we have the population here and we have to have in . . . an opportunity for youth to be able to have training in order to meet these job requirements.

So it is incumbent upon government in a sense to make sure that the atmosphere is here where our youth will feel that they do have an opportunity to train and then to access the jobs that are in place right now.

Mr. Speaker, I do welcome the opportunity to bring forward on behalf of my constituents some of their thoughts about the last 10 years and their hopes for the future.

They know, and we know on this side of the House, that the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow Saskatchewan.

We know, and my constituents know, that the NDP has no plan. They have demonstrated that in spades in the last 10 years. They have no plan for the economy. They have no plan. Obviously their deficit is in place and showing the true colours of the previous administration's ability — or lack of ability rather — to be able to have fiscal sound management. They have no plan for health or agriculture or anything in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this government certainly, as I mentioned today in question period, is not the Romanow government. They cannot manage finances. They're incompetent and they're obviously unable to provide the sound fiscal management that Premier Romanow did in the past.

But I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that it's the NDP government that is failing; it's not the people of the province. We have in Humboldt an exemplary model of businesses that manage to sustain themselves, and they've done that by being very prudent and very watchful of how they do their business plans. They've been very watchful that they don't unnecessarily, or as little as possible, get involved with government and government money. We have seen any . . . every venture in this province that has really suffered is generally related to government interference and government money being put into it. We don't need that in this province. The people of the province are quite capable of stimulating businesses, managing their businesses, and growing.

What we do have to recognize, Mr. Speaker, is that we need investment from private sources. And we need to invite that into this province in order to create business opportunities, to create jobs, and to have a reason for our young people to stay here and to prosper.

Mr. Speaker, in the past 10 years we have seen many, many NDP promises, most of them that were broken. One of them, for instance, was we are going to help to create 30,000 new jobs. Well the actual NDP record, Mr. Speaker, is that 12,000 jobs have been lost over the past two years alone. We have heard an NDP promise that we're going to keep the budget balanced. Well right now the NDP record is 478 million deficit in the year 2001-2002.

We have heard the NDP promise that there's going to be less crime. Well we all know what's happening, Mr. Speaker. We have . . . Regina is the car-theft capital of North America. There has been no change. There has been a lot of talk from the government side of the House on how they are going to address this, but the talk is not translating into action that is meaningful.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the NDP promise that surgical waiting times will be cut by at least 30 per cent. Well the real record, Mr. Speaker, is surgical waiting lists have increased — increased — over 50 per cent. Saskatchewan has the longest waiting lists in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the promise that 200 more police officers would be hired. Well I think we need do nothing but talk to the police officers in this province to find out just how very disgruntled and disappointed they are with the NDP government for not keeping that promise. They have a huge load on their shoulders and it's pretty well impossible to do a sufficient and efficient and effective job without having the police officers in place that are needed in order to effect a peaceful society.

We have 45 more officers that were hired but police officials are telling us that these hirings have been more than offset by the retirements that have taken place.

We have heard an NDP promise, Mr. Speaker, that there is going to be 500 new health care providers in the province, and the real record, Mr. Speaker, is 1,192 fewer nurses than in 1999, and that's according to SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses).

There is no plan by this government, Mr. Speaker. There is no vision and there certainly is no capability by the NDP government to change anything — otherwise it would have come forward by now; we would have seen it by now. The people of the province recognize this and they're very, very, disappointed.

One has to wonder, Mr. Speaker, how does it feel — I ask the members of the government side — how does it feel to have destroyed the fiscal accountability achieved by Roy Romanow and Janice MacKinnon in one fiscal year. The member from Saskatoon Idylwyld gave accolades to Janice MacKinnon, and I think she is very deserving of those. But she's not here any more. A number of the people from that side of the House that certainly did have some sort of conscientious ability and effort to move the province forward are gone. They're not here any

more and this government opposite is not what it used to be.

It has taken only one year for this government to destroy Mr. Romanow's legacy. They've gone from a major surplus to a deficit in one year. What does that say about this government?

(12:30)

Mr. Speaker, the Premier referred to himself last week, when he was talking to one of the media, as the wee Premier of a wee province.

Mr. Speaker, that comment speaks volumes about the vision of the Premier. It speaks of the Premier happy to maintain the status quo of growing smaller as a province, of getting nowhere as a province. It does not speak of creativity, of innovation, of abundance, and prosperity. Mr. Speaker, we need to have a more competitive atmosphere in our province and the way to do that is to get government out of business, to downsize some of the Crowns.

We have in excess of 50 Crown corporations in this province, many of them doing what business, private business, should be doing. That is chasing business out of the province. People that want to come here, build business and invest in the province, are facing competition from the Crowns and they're gone.

We have had many, many business opportunities, business people from the United States, from other places in Canada, that wanted . . . considered coming to the prairie provinces to build value-added industry. They took one look at socialist policies in this province and they were gone.

Mr. Speaker, earlier on today, during question period, the Premier charged me with asking for spending for children that were involved in sexual exploitation, for putting forward money to assist children into healthier lifestyles.

Well I thought that remark was a bit disgusting, misleading, and very improper for the Premier of this province. It should have been the government, if in fact they have the social conscience they're talking about, bringing forward some initiatives in the past 10 years to deal with this issue.

The very fact of the matter is yes, there will be some money needed for that. But we have to understand that it is not pertinent for government to be taking taxpayers' money, investing in places like the Saskatchewan Valley Potato Corp., losing \$28 million; experiencing a \$2 million loss investing in an on-line auction company — for what purpose we don't know.

There has been many, many losses of money in this province through this government that had that money been used I think more expediently and in a better and smarter manner, we would have money to help to raise children to a point where they do not have to be exploited, where they certainly do not have to feel that the only way that they can make a living is to go and sell their bodies.

So, Mr. Speaker, we find out a number of other things about this government and their sticking their nose in business, trying to become business people when they in fact are not.

We have to ask some questions. We asked, why did this government invest I think it was about \$15 million in a meat products factory in Yorkton — Premium Brands Harvest Meats — when the business owner clearly indicated that they would have gone ahead to expand regardless of government money? Why would this government do that? Is government so intent, so intent on owning everything in this province? And for what reason?

And, Mr. Speaker, we find out now that the sound stage that is currently under construction, and funded by more taxpayers' money, doesn't have a business plan. Well according to a CBC report, there are no projections for revenues and expenditures. That is not sound fiscal management, Mr. Speaker. A small-business person, Mr. Speaker, can't even get a business loan without a business plan that includes projected revenues and expenditures.

The people of Saskatchewan are very tired of this government's waste and mismanagement and their incompetence. Although there are a lot of good words, Mr. Speaker, that come from that Throne Speech, the people of Saskatchewan want some action. They do not want more broken promises.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to make it very clear that it is not the people of Saskatchewan that are failing. The people of Saskatchewan are working harder than ever before to make ends meet. It's this government that is failing, Mr. Speaker. This government is failing the people of Saskatchewan and this government is driving people away and business away. And the hon. Economic Development minister responds to the recent census statistics saying that there will be more wealth for those who remain.

One really has to shake their head, a person's head, with that kind of logic. Where's the wealth going to come from when this government continues to chase private investors out of the province? There is no wealth in the province if you do not have private investment, if you do not have people coming here who want to invest and have their families here and grow here.

We have such unfair competition in the Crowns that it's very, very disgusting. Right now, Mr. Speaker, there's a situation in southwest Saskatchewan where SaskPower is establishing and competing with a wind generation project. We have a private firm that has come in that are generating wind energy. They're paying taxes, Mr. Speaker. SaskPower in the next municipality is setting up the same kind of a wind generation plant. Are they paying taxes? No, they're not. They won't be paying taxes to the municipality and they won't be giving grants in lieu. So you tell me how the Crown in business is going to help to put more money into general revenue in order to pay for the very fundamental and basic services we need in health and education.

How is a shrinking tax base in this province, by the loss of population and jobs, going to support the public services that we need? How is it going to support the infrastructure? There is no way. We have a major problem with the mass exodus of business and workers from this province.

Mr. Speaker, this government has had 10 years to work on population loss and to react to trends in the economy. This

government has had 10 years to work on a plan for attracting new business into Saskatchewan. But we are no better off today than we were 10 years ago. In fact, population-wise we've gone backwards.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new proposed in this Speech from the Throne, not a thing. They're the same old words sang to the same old tune. This government has clearly proven that it has no plan to deal with the challenges that this province faces right now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make mention a bit to the government's words in the Throne Speech pertaining to agriculture. There were few words of encouragement there.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very grievous situation in rural Saskatchewan right now. Everyone knows about it. There is a major drought at hand; there was last year. And in fact in the northwest part of the province there was a drought for many years before that. Right now we have no water in any dugouts. We have no water in any sloughs. There is no water. There are farmers going to tap into a pipeline from miles away in order to get water for their home use, not to mention anything about cattle.

Mr. Speaker, we have now a Minister of Agriculture who is going to be slashing the crop insurance program, hitting the farmers even harder than they are. At a time when they need to have an enhanced crop insurance program, we have a Minister of Agriculture that is blaming the federal government for the 7 per cent increase this NDP government is going to put onto crop insurance premiums.

Now the Minister of Agriculture knows better; he knows very well that his government borrowed \$20 million from the federal government. He knows that. And he knows that he was supposed to repay that money. The federal government probably has a fair case when they're asking this government to at least show some initiative to repay that money.

But what's going to happen because this government has failed in that regard again — and God knows where the \$20 million went — the farmers are going to have to pick up the bill one more time. This is not concern for agriculture; this is not concern for farm families in this province, and the Minister of Agriculture should be ashamed.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked or the government at hand has talked about justice and security. We've talked . . . They've talked and they've talked. We have a number of studies that have taken place; a number of committees that are in place right now to study the justice issue. It's really very easy as a government when the only answer that you can find, the only intention you have, is to put another committee in place to study the issue.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, is some leadership. This government should know, if they don't know, only too well, what the problems are in our society. They should know very well that it takes leadership now and to get some action going.

Mr. Speaker, this government in the Throne Speech spoke of a province of opportunity. That is a very nice phrase. The people of this province know that we have the means for prosperity and

opportunity in this province. They know that. They know we have the resources, they know we have the hard-working people, they know we have the good sense to make this province thrive.

But this province will not end up to be a province of opportunity. The people here will not be able to pursue opportunities if we don't have a change in government and a change in policy that will in fact invite people into this province, will encourage the people of this province to invest because in fact there is going to be a new and better way.

It is not enough to say that we're a province of opportunity. We need to initiate policies that are going to encourage investment in the province, encourage job growth, economic growth all the way around.

Those people, Mr. Speaker, that are on poverty row right now, that are struggling within minimum wage, those people will have better opportunities for better and more jobs when the Saskatchewan Party forms government in the very near future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I can't say enough about the government's lax attitude on understanding and recognizing how important it is to diminish taxes for people that want to invest in the province, for people that want to grow businesses.

Taxes combined with excessive, I would say, and increasing utility rates, as well as red tape and regulation that puts a really, really regressive and repressive tone in this province is something that has got to change. We cannot continue to have this happen. There are people moving out of the province continually, because they don't have money in their pockets to invest in the province, to spend in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many things that could be changed; very simple things that can be changed. And yes, an attitude has to change. We need to have an attitude in this province where government is not here to lord it over, to control, and to exert their power over the people of the province. The attitude that must be in place is that we respect our people. We respect their abilities and their talents, and we will give them the opportunity to grow and to be very prosperous in this province.

Mr. Speaker, although I am very happy with the contents of the Throne Speech that spoke of the government taking some initiative to implement the recommendations of the committee that was dealing with the child exploitation in this province, I am yet to see what initiatives will happen.

I understand through the grapevine that we are going to be seeing a proclamation of the legislation that was passed last session. I'm going to be very happy to see that happen. The Saskatchewan Party put forward that initiative quite some time ago along with other initiatives to address this situation. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, the truth be told and the truth be known, the Saskatchewan Party has supported this initiative as they have many other initiatives that the government side has taken. We have had to tell them and finally they have listened to some of our ideas, to the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am very happy about those initiatives. I will be waiting with bated breath to see the implementation of some of those recommendations — for the sake of the children in the province, for the sake of the well-being of the province, for the sake of society.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the Throne Speech, because there is no plan overall for the economic prosperity and growth of this province, and that includes our children. Healing of our children is a necessary component. The support of our children is a necessary component. Opportunities for our children is necessary.

(12:45)

But those opportunities don't come about just by speaking of them. They come about by having an environment created in the province where there is going to be opportunity for children to have a good education, to be able to move forward into jobs, to create entrepreneurial activity themselves, so that they can own their own lives and that they can prosper within their own families.

So, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the Speech from the Throne for that reason, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a privilege to stand in this Assembly today to respond to the Speech from the Throne that was presented to us yesterday in this Assembly by Her Honour.

And it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, the comments that have begun to circulate around this province in regards to the Speech from the Throne. Certainly we saw a number of guests in this Assembly yesterday, much fewer than we've seen in the past, and what we've begun to hear, Mr. Speaker, is something that we knew all along — that this government is devoid of any ideas of how we're going to build on the province of Saskatchewan.

One of the headlines this morning, Mr. Speaker, that we see in *The StarPhoenix* was: "Throne speech ignores reality," the realities of the day. I think what that's saying to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is that this government has decided that it's going to bury its head in the sand rather than face the realities, rather than take a . . . and come forward with a sincere plan that would look at building and growing the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that this most recent Throne Speech has no vision and no plan to grow the province of Saskatchewan. It's painfully obvious this NDP government has run out of gas. It's painfully obvious, Mr. Speaker, that they have no plan and no idea what needs to be done today, and no vision for where Saskatchewan needs to go in the future.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think this government calls its Throne Speech . . . in its Throne Speech calls it a province of opportunity. But, Mr. Speaker, the realities are it's a province of squandered opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech alludes to the fact that we have so many opportunities in this province; that we have hard-working and well-educated people; that we have an abundance of natural resources; and that this province should be booming. Yet thanks to the NDP-squandered opportunities, we continue to see people losing . . . leaving the province; we see jobs and investment leaving the province. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's heartbreaking to watch this take place.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about job opportunities, and each and every one of us in this Assembly, the people across this province, are well aware of the most recent stint . . . census numbers — numbers that show that we're well below the million population that we were expecting that we would be close to in the province of Saskatchewan.

In fact as we've heard in times past, and we will continue to hear into the near future, this province continues to be . . . remain at a stagnant level of population growth in the nation. And, Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate part about all of that is, while in reality we have actually seen more people leave the province, the only positive thing we have in the province of Saskatchewan is that we have fewer people dying than the number of people being born. And that has kind of, in some ways, helped to stabilize, stabilize our population growth. But at the end of the day it really . . . what we have in the province in Saskatchewan, we have fewer people actually in the ages, the key working years, of 25 to the area of 60 when you look at the average across Canada.

What does that say to us, Mr. Speaker? It says we need to work harder at growing our province. Because that under-20 group of our population really aren't substantial economic contributors to this province because they're not . . . haven't reached that working age yet, therefore they're not generating the tax revenue that is needed for this province to continue to provide the services of health and education, and the need to meet the needs of the individuals through social services who, through no lack of their own, need an avenue of support that they are unable to provide for themselves — in many cases due to health difficulties and disabilities that they face.

And on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, when you get to that 60-plus population, our population in this province is growing substantially. There again, Mr. Speaker, while there are people in that age group who have sincere and significant investments and savings, Mr. Speaker, they are not necessarily a large contributor on the taxation side to build the province of Saskatchewan.

So what do we see from this Throne Speech? We see a Throne Speech that we were all hoping would show that this government, as the Premier had indicated, they had taken the time this past summer to travel to a number of communities, leaving out a significant number of constituencies that they didn't travel to; and actually going around listening, supposedly listening, to people.

And what we thought as a result of that bus tour, as a result of this consultation process, that this government in this Throne Speech would come out with a well-defined plan as to how they were going to build and to grow the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's important. It's very important

that political parties sit down and develop plans rather than continue to operate on knee-jerk reactions to the economy we face today.

And why is that important? Mr. Speaker, it's important because we need to provide opportunities, as we heard this morning, for young families to not only try to figure out and develop ideas, or tell them, give themselves reasons why they should stay in Saskatchewan, because they believe in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you have greater opportunities outside of the province and you're continuing to stay here because this province they believe so much in they want to contribute to it, Mr. Speaker, it's important that governments and political parties develop plans that would build on the province, build on the opportunities, build on that resource sector that we have so that these young couples have solid reasons to stay in this province because the opportunities are there for them.

So that they can have those quality jobs that allow them to continue to invest and to raise their families in a province that we all believe is a great province to live in. And unfortunately we use the words many times, to come from. Mr. Speaker, we want this province to be a province that people decide they want to stay and invest in because of the opportunities it has.

So why do we say we need to build a plan? We need to build a plan because as we look at the statistics; the statistics continue to tell us that jobs are leaving this province. In fact over the last two years 12,000 jobs have been lost in the province of Saskatchewan.

We also realize, Mr. Speaker, that people are going to invest and build in this province, we need a government that will bring a balanced approach to financing in the province of Saskatchewan. And unfortunately as we saw last year, the Minister of Finance stood in this Assembly and told us that while they had to withdraw on some funds from the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) pool of resources in order to balance this budget, he did have a fiscal rainy day contingency plan that he could draw on if need be, to balance the books.

And so what we saw, almost a \$400 million surplus, or supposedly surplus in the province of Saskatchewan today, less than a . . . 12 months later we basically are finding ourselves in a deficit position of almost \$500 million. So you wonder why we need a plan to build the province of Saskatchewan — a plan that is sustainable and that will actually encourage investment.

And my colleague, the member from Humboldt, talked about the fact that . . . of health care and what it's doing in the province of Saskatchewan; the long surgical waiting lists.

And I'm sure that MLAs, not only on the opposition side of this Assembly but MLAs across this Assembly, have been contacted by people who find themselves on extended waiting-list periods in the province . . . in this province and are desperate for the services that we brag about being able to perform. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues and I have found out, many of these people have found it easier to be referred outside of province for immediate attention versus using the resources and the personnel that we have in the province of

Saskatchewan.

And why do we need to look at building this province as well, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, there's no question, unfortunately, that this . . . certainly the city of Regina, and I must add that it's not just the city of Regina any more, even the communities in . . . some communities in my constituency have experienced the problem of car theft. And we need to look at how we address crime and that's why we need to build a province . . . build a plan.

We talk about the government promised a number of years ago to hire 200 more police officers in the province of Saskatchewan. And while their record shows that there . . . we have hired 45 more officers, police officials tell us that the 45 more officers hired have been offset by the number of retirements. And we also hear that that number, the number of retirements and people leaving the police force, is going to increase dramatically as their force actually ages as well.

Then in the area of health care . . . So many areas in Saskatchewan that need to be addressed if we're going to create a province and a place for people to come and look to not only investing in, but living in and raising their families because of the opportunities that we have here.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about the government's bus tour. And we saw that in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, the Premier and his government bragging about their bus tour.

Unfortunately as we look through the Speech from the Throne very . . . a lot more closely, as we took the time to put the microscope over it — or magnifying glass, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Speaker, we see that this Speech from the Throne has done a poor job of really bringing forward, I'm sure, many of the ideas that the Premier and his government, his cabinet, have heard from people in regards to how do we build the province of Saskatchewan.

Do we have a real plan? Are we looking into the future? Are we looking down the road just a few days, and then maybe in another month's time we'll come up with another knee-jerk reaction to the problems that we're facing, rather than building a long-term contingency plan to grow the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the people across this province were certainly awaiting with bated breath for a game plan. But unfortunately this Speech from the Throne I do not believe came very close to building and putting forward a long-term game plan that would grow the province of Saskatchewan.

And when we talk about a game plan we talk about census, we talk about the population. Unfortunately, the only reaction we have from this government when we talk about population and we talk about the census numbers that were released most recently . . . in a response to a question of the lower population, coming from the Minister of Economic Development, what was his response? His response was, more wealth for the rest of us.

And, Mr. Speaker, I wonder exactly if that's what the people and the taxpayers of this province really believe. Do we really believe that we want to have . . . see our population diminish

while supposedly the wealth of this province then can be divided amongst fewer? Or do we want to see our province grow so that we can create and generate more and greater wealth in the province of Saskatchewan.

While we may talk about greater wealth for the few of us remaining here, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we also have to be mindful of the fact that as fewer and fewer taxpayers live in the province of Saskatchewan, there's going to be a greater expense for each and every one of us as the needs of health care and education and social services and the other areas of responsibility are then off-loaded and carried by a smaller taxpaying population in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, this government should have been coming forward with a plan that would have offered encouragement rather than discouragement to the people of Saskatchewan.

There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this province is a land of opportunity, that we have unlimited opportunity and wealth. And while this Throne Speech, I believe, recognizes some of that opportunity, indicates that there is opportunity . . . and it talks about the fact that there's opportunity abounding in many sectors of our economy, in the areas of diversification and value-added processing and agriculture, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Members of the Assembly, it now being past 1 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.