

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today in the Assembly to present a petition on behalf of citizens of our province who feel it is unfair that SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) is refusing to waive the \$700 deductible for vehicle owners whose cars are damaged but not stolen as a result of using an anti-theft device. And the petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to work with SGI to develop more fair guidelines for deductibles on vehicles that are damaged as a result of an attempted car theft.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Allan, Bradwell, Saskatoon, and Watrous.

I so present.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present on behalf of constituents, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation, and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The constituents are from the communities of Langenburg and MacNutt, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the 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 ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Fillmore, Creelman, and Francis area.

I so present.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of people in my home community of Swift Current, concerned about tobacco control issues. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of their

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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Carrot River Valley concerned about certain omissions in the tobacco control legislation. The prayer 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.

And the petition is signed by the good citizens of Nipawin and Arborfield.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition dealing with tobacco legislation.

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 be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Davidson and Saskatoon.

I so present.

**READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the government to amend tobacco legislation; and

To make necessary repairs to Highway 35 in Indian Head-Milestone.

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Ms. Draude:** — I give notice that I shall on day no. 8 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food: to date, how much of the farmland property tax rebate has been returned to producers?

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

To the minister responsible for SaskPower: how many accidents were reported to SaskPower in 2001 arising out of the use of a knife in a live toaster; (2) what personal injuries or damage to property resulted from the accidents so reported?

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — Members of the Assembly, I would ask that you indulge me in making some rather lengthy introductions first of all, please.

In the Speaker's gallery there are four young people that I want to officially introduce to the Legislative Assembly today, despite the fact that they are already becoming known — well known — to many members. They are the very first interns to participate in our newly established Saskatchewan legislative internship program.

They are: Jessica Waiser from Saskatoon, who earned a B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) with high honours in political studies and a minor in women and gender studies at the University of Saskatchewan; Wendy Moellenbeck from Englefeld, who is currently working on her B.A., honours in political studies at the University of Saskatchewan; Maria Kurylo from Saskatoon, a recent graduate of the University of Saskatchewan where she obtained a Master of Arts in political studies after completion of a B.A. with a double honours in political studies and French; and Tim Baker from Regina, who studied both at the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan and recently completed a B.A., high honours in international studies from the U of S (University of Saskatchewan).

I would ask all members to officially welcome our four interns to the legislature.

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

**The Speaker:** — Members, the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan, in conjunction with the Legislative Assembly, developed this new program. I want to introduce the first academic director for the program, Dr. Gordon Barnhart. Gordon is no stranger to this Chamber, having served as clerk of the Assembly for 20 years. He is now university secretary for the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Barnhart.

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

**The Speaker:** — It is also my pleasure to introduce and thank two former members who have assisted with the selection process by serving on the selection committee. With us in the

Speaker's gallery here today are two former Speakers of this Assembly, Herb Swan and John Brockelbank.

The other members of the selection committee are Dr. Barnhart, a representative for the U of R (University of Regina), and Dr. Phillip Hansen, and the Clerk of the legislature and, in the future, a former intern — but for this year, a current intern is serving and that is Maria Kurylo.

But I want to welcome our two former Speakers, Brockelbank and Swan, and I think we should all look so good after politics.

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

**The Speaker:** — My last introduction is to introduce four young people from Korea and Australia who are here as exchange students at the University of Regina.

Mijin Lim, from Seoul National University in Seoul City. Mijin's home is in Masan, Kyung-sang-nam Province in South Korea. And Megan Gibbens is a student from the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia. Courtney Trenwith is from Adelaide; Courtney is a student at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst Campus in Australia. Rachel Thornton is from Charles Sturt University, as well, Wagga Campus in Australia.

They are accompanied today by Clinton Kleisinger, son of Speaker assistant Margaret Kleisinger, a University of Regina student who has just returned from a year in Australia as an exchange student at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Campus, New South Wales.

Welcome to the students from Korea and Australia.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and you've done an excellent job of welcoming a number of guests to our Assembly. And I would like to share in also welcoming each of the people that you did, but a particular notice of my former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), Mr. Herb Swan, who represented Rosetown-Biggan for a number of years. Not only was he at one time a MLA but he happens to be a neighbour coming from the community of Beechy, the same community I'm from.

Mr. Swan has had a very dignified career, not only in agriculture but also serving as the president of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, serving as a MLA for a number of years including sitting in your chair, Mr. Speaker, for a number of those years. And currently as you noted he is on the selection committee for choosing the interns that serve the MLAs.

So I particularly would like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Swan on his attendance in the gallery today.

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

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you, seated in the opposition gallery, Mr. David Karwacki, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party. He is accompanied today by his brother Grant Karwacki. I would ask

hon. members, especially those who plan on being around after the next election to welcome two of their future colleagues.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to join you in welcoming colleagues, former colleagues, to the Saskatchewan legislature, former speakers, Herb Swan and John Brockelbank, as well as the interns and our guests from Korea and Australia.

In particular I want to pay special tribute to Herb Swan who I served with when I was a member of the opposition between 1986 and 1991. And I want to particularly note that Herb Swan was the Minister of the Environment when I was a member of the opposition. And I want to thank him, Mr. Speaker, for all of the work that he did as a result of people raising the whole issue of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl), particularly in my constituency of Saskatoon Nutana.

I happen to have an old electrical substation that was . . . which was storing PCBs; I raised it in the legislature for many days, and Mr. Swan and his government responded by having those PCBs moved to Estevan and then destroyed.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, that members of the opposition can have an impact and private members can have an impact with ministers. And I want to thank Mr. Swan for the work that he did around that issue.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the interns to the Assembly today. Two of the interns serve on our side of the House — Jessica and Maria. And we look forward to the other two interns coming to us in the middle of next month — Tim and I . . . Wendy. Sorry. I haven't had a chance to get to know her yet; we're waiting until April 15.

I'd also like to welcome the two Speakers and Dr. Barnhart to the Assembly.

And while I'm on my feet I would like to include in that welcome the students from Australia and Korea. I and a number of my colleagues had an opportunity to visit Australia last year; and we visited both Sydney and Adelaide and the legislatures there and found it to be very rewarding and refreshing. And we hope that we can take some of the ideas that we learned in those jurisdictions and implement them in Saskatchewan.

I ask all colleagues to again welcome all of our guests. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleagues on the government side of the House, I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome the interns for the internship program.

I've been very fortunate to be able to work with Tim Baker. And we've had many experiences together; he's been to a lot of

the committee work of the Assembly before we arrived here. He's been assisting in some research projects. And we've had some good opportunities to share ideas and the knowledge and experience that I'm sure he'll find useful in later life.

Also the other interns, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure they'll have experiences from both sides of the House to be able to add to the resumé's that are certainly lengthy and we have . . . we are very fortunate to have very qualified individuals.

I'd like to also welcome the foreign students and the support to the internship program that are here with today — Dr. Barnhart, Mr. Swan, and Mr. Brockelbank. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Saskatchewan Tourism Awards

**Hon. Ms. Lorjé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that Saskatchewan is a pretty special sort of place. Indeed some once suggested that Saskatchewan is spelt s-p-e-c-i-a-l, and there is nothing easier than being an ambassador for this great province. Despite the doomsayers, we definitely have something wonderful and magical here — and some very special people.

That's why at the recent annual gala Tourism Awards of Excellence, 14 different organizations and individuals from all across Saskatchewan were honoured by the tourism industry. From corner to corner, from border to border, all across this great province, tourism organizations and businesses gathered to celebrate the essence and spirit of Saskatchewan. Our living skies, endless rolling plains, vibrant forests and lakes, our multicultural and ever-fascinating people were all enthusiastically acclaimed.

And who can blame them. Saskatchewan is great — peaceful, clean, and safe, with a good quality of life. When we think back over the events of this past year — the September 11 tragedy, the war against terrorism, the voting problems in Zimbabwe — it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the world could use a little bit more Saskatchewan.

Congratulations to all the winners and nominees for the Tourism Awards of Excellence. They are truly ambassadors for Saskatchewan.

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

### Return of Member from Battleford-Cut Knife

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm particularly pleased to have the hon. member from Battleford-Cut Knife back with us in the House this session.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — In the last session the member was diagnosed with leukemia. The prognosis was indeed very serious but there was hope offered, to which the member grabbed onto as best he could. And with the determination that

encouraged all of us, he was prepared to beat this cancer no matter what the odds were against him.

He tells a story about his minister, and as we know ministers — and these are not ministers of the Crown but ministers of the gospel — was even skeptical that he would survive, and perhaps he might want to think about changing churches. He enjoyed the wonderful support of his family, particularly his wife, Shirley, who was constantly by him and made sure that he obeyed the doctor's orders.

The member for Battleford-Cut Knife must continue to be closely observed but his recovery has been truly remarkable. We would wish that every member in this House would join with me and say welcome back, Rudi. Well done, Rudi.

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

#### **Regina Community Clinic 40th Anniversary**

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Regina Community Clinic has just celebrated its 40th anniversary. And I would publicly like to applaud those who have contributed to its longevity and success.

Mr. Speaker, the Regina Community Clinic was created in 1962 during the medicare crisis. From the beginning, Saskatchewan people recognized the value of coming together for the common good. No endeavour is more central to our well-being than universal health care, and for 40 years the clinic has ensured quality care for its members according to the principles of universal health care.

It is Regina's only health care co-operative with a membership of 11,000. The clinic focuses not only on diagnosis and treatment but it also promotes good health and preventing disease. It has built significant partnerships in the communities and continues to be on the leading edge of our approach to health care.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely congratulate the staff, the volunteers, and the clients who have made the Regina Community Clinic truly a success story for the past four decades.

Thank you.

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

#### **Dana Antel Appreciation Night**

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night the Premier and I had the opportunity to attend a Dana Antel appreciation night in Esterhazy.

Dana, along with Kelly Bechard from Sedley, Colleen Sostoics from Kennedy, and Hayley Wickenheiser from Shaunavon were Saskatchewan members on the Canada women's gold medal winning hockey team.

That night Linus Westberg was MC (master of ceremonies) who many would remember from his TV days in Yorkton. He did a great job and broke the crowd up many times. Bob Hughes from *The Leader-Post* was guest speaker and also did a

masterful job.

The evening brought back many memories and stories about Dana growing up and playing hockey in Esterhazy. Len and Arlene Antel, mom and dad of Dana, were beaming with pride along with a large crowd from Esterhazy and area.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this on behalf of everyone here and congratulate Dana and for that matter the whole Antel family. They have every reason to be very, very proud.

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

#### **Local Company Exports Organic Canary Seed to US Markets**

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a while but I have more good news for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, organic canary seed, grown right here in Saskatchewan and now being shipped to Texas, California, and other points in the US (United States) market with interest being expressed in Europe, South America, and Asia.

Mr. Speaker, during the recent Team Canada trip to Texas, Randy Johnson of Harvest Sun Seed & Grain Company here in Regina travelled with the Premier. During the trip he signed a two-year distribution deal with Western Organics.

As one would expect, Mr. Johnson and his partners, Donna Flaman-Johnson and Jerome Flaman, did their homework before the trip so they knew people in areas like California are looking for environmentally friendly, quality products. They did their homework and brought their reputation and their Premier, whose participation assisted them in opening doors.

Mr. Speaker, here is more good news about Harvest Sun Seeds. Not only are they helping make Saskatchewan quality products known, they subcontract their packaging to the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, providing meaningful employment to adults with disabilities, Mr. Speaker. Good for our communities.

I want to congratulate this company and wish them well as they continue to expand their exports throughout the world. Also, I believe we should recognize the assistance of STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.) in providing marketing research and business contracts, and of course the help of our Premier in achieving these contracts throughout the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Tourism Awards of Excellence**

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have already heard about the gala for the Tourism Awards of Excellence and I'd like to tell you about two special award winners of note from the northwest.

The Fred Heal Tourism Award was given to Peter Kingsmill of Hafford who has been involved in tourism for many years. His

focus is on sustainable tourism. He received the Governor General's Award for Conservation in 1992 and the Nature of Saskatchewan Conservation Award in 2001. Among his many activities, he is best remembered for the establishment of Redberry Lake Pelican project in 1989 and as editor of the national Canadian Tourism Commission magazine.

I'm also pleased to report that the Chairman's Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Wayne Fenning of North Battleford. Wayne was instrumental in the establishment of the Heart of Canada's Old Northwest, Battleford Tourism, and West Central Tourism. He has served as chair of all three. He has also served as chair of Tourism Saskatchewan and chaired many of their committees. He is the manager of the Western Development Museum in North Battleford and gave special thanks to his wife, Doris, and the staff of the WDM (Western Development Museum) for supporting his efforts on behalf of tourism in Saskatchewan.

I thank the hon. member for bringing this gala to our attention, and ask all members to join with me in congratulating these two worthy recipients.

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

#### **Addition of New Doctors to Nipawin and North-East Health District**

**Ms. Jones:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with pride that I draw the attention of the House to the community of Nipawin and the North-East Health District.

This year, the Nipawin Health Centre and the Nipawin Medical Group will add five doctors to their complement of physicians.

Mr. Speaker, Nipawin presently has four physicians who will continue to provide assistance until the recruits arrive. This means that Nipawin will not only be retaining its four physicians, but also gaining.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Alina Constantin will start on a permanent basis as of August 1, and is a Saskatchewan graduate, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Constantin is an example of how this government is succeeding in retaining our graduates and continuing to provide all people and communities of our province quality, universal, health care. Thank you.

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

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Commitments Made During 1999 Election Campaign**

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, this is the NDP (New Democratic Party) election platform from the 1999 election. In that document, the NDP made a number of very specific promises, and today we'd like to review how they're doing on these promises.

The NDP promised more jobs; there are now less jobs. The NDP promised more health care workers; now there are less health care workers. The NDP promised shorter waiting lists; now there are longer waiting lists. The NDP promised less

crime; now Regina is the car theft capital of Canada. The NDP promised a balanced budget; and now they have a \$500 million deficit.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why has the NDP broken all of their major promises in the 1999 election?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition well knows since that '99 election we have . . . let's take them. We've talked about health care in this province. Here was the government that went to the people of Saskatchewan, consulted with the people of Saskatchewan, worked with the people of Saskatchewan to develop a health care action plan; deliver to the people of Saskatchewan, taking leadership in this country, and will be debated in this session.

Now we're talking about election commitments. What did that party commit to in the last election? To freeze — to freeze — the spending on health care.

Since that time, Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the people of Saskatchewan in building the strength of the Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker. We have seen the growth in our gross domestic product, Mr. Speaker. We have seen the growth in local and community and community-based industries, Mr. Speaker. We are working. We have not completed our term. We've not completed our package; but I tell you, we're taking steps forward to a good plan, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier represents a government that has cut funding to education; and without help from the federal government, has cut funding to health care.

Mr. Speaker, there are many ways . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. There may be other speakers listening, members.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many different ways to measure the performance of a government. One way is to see: are there more people moving in or moving out? We know the answer is that they're moving out.

The NDP are failing this test. The other test that we can put to them — do they keep their promises or don't they keep their promises? The NDP fails this test as well. Instead of more jobs there are less jobs. Instead of more health care workers there are less health care workers. Instead of shorter waiting lists there are longer waiting lists. Instead of less crime there's more crime. And instead of a balanced budget we now have a \$500 million deficit, thank you to the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP broken all of its major promises? The Premier has not yet answered that question. Why now should the people of Saskatchewan believe anything that he says?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stands in preface of his question, and what does he say to this House? What does he say to this House and to the people of Saskatchewan? That we've reduced, he said, we've reduced funding for education. That's what he said.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the Leader of the Opposition to read the budget documents from last year, where in that year alone we increased the funding to K to 12 education by over 9 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Over 9 per cent. Mr. Speaker, unless I'm mistaken, it's in the neighbourhood of 24 per cent increase to education in just the last few years. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why is that?

It is because this is a government that believes in Saskatchewan young people, believes in education as a tool for the future, and is determined to build this province. Not to be taking the advice of that party, which told us in the last election campaign — what did they say? — freeze the funding to education.

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

(14:00)

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Premier knows that the NDP government has cut over \$300 million to education in the last ten years. That's a fact.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, but let's look at jobs. The NDP made a very specific promise. They said, and I quote for the Premier:

We have a comprehensive plan to create 30,000 new jobs over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, at that time, there were nearly 500,000 jobs in Saskatchewan. Today, there are just 465,000 people working. So that's 35,000 fewer jobs instead of 30,000 additional jobs. We have not a target met. We have a promise broken.

Mr. Speaker, where are the jobs? Where are the 30,000 new jobs that the NDP promised?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I invite the Leader of the Opposition to consult even today's *Leader-Post* — I think it's in *The Leader-Post* — where the description of what's been happening to our farm families, as what's been happening to the agricultural economy in our province should be known to him, Mr. Speaker. It should be known to him.

The question today before the people of Saskatchewan is who is best prepared to deal with the challenges that present us, whether it be the challenges in agriculture, the challenges in the

international economy, the challenges in dealing with the finances of the province. The people of Saskatchewan will be asking who is best prepared to deal with these challenging times, Mr. Speaker. And I tell you, they are looking at the plans of the respective groups in this House. And they're looking at a plan from that group which says cut the taxes, sell the Crowns, and decimate the public services, and somehow that's to create nirvana in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you and the people of Saskatchewan to look at the solid plan within this Speech from the Throne — investment in our economy, investment in infrastructure, investment in education, and good quality health and support for our families.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier thinks that agriculture is not doing well, why doesn't he change his Agriculture minister? Why doesn't he do something about it?

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the NDP campaigned on a very specific promise, a very specific promise to create 30,000 jobs over the next four years.

And it wasn't just agriculture, Mr. Speaker. They promised to create 10,000 jobs in forestry. That hasn't happened either. They promised more jobs in rural Saskatchewan. Rural Saskatchewan is disappointed with their performance. They promised 30,000 jobs overall and there are actually fewer jobs today than there were in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, where are the 30,000 jobs that the NDP promised? Why have they broken this most crucial of promises?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, not until today did I realize that the Minister of Agriculture is now responsible for the drought. Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize the Minister of Agriculture was responsible for the activities of the European Economic Community. This Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, is standing up on the national scene and on the international scene on behalf of Saskatchewan farm families, unlike that group.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Point number two, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about forestry. We'll talk about forestry in this House. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, in the last two to three years we have seen almost \$1 billion — \$1 billion — in new investment in the Saskatchewan forest. That's what happening in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and some others in the province always will come with the doom and the gloom. Mr. Speaker, I refer to the Leader of the Opposition and to every Saskatchewan resident this article which appeared in one of Canada's national newspapers just last week, the

headline of which reads, "Saskatchewan: not the biggest, just the best."

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the Premier . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Member will proceed.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course we don't blame the Agriculture minister for the drought, but we do blame him for weakening crop insurance by taking away spot-loss hail.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — The Premier's words simply don't match reality. The NDP is losing for Saskatchewan, jobs, investment, and our most precious resource — people. Thanks to the NDP, we've lost 30,000 jobs since 1999, not created 30,000 jobs.

It wasn't a target. It wasn't a goal. It was an ironclad promise in their own election platform.

My question to the Premier — and a yes or no answer without ducking the question would be appreciated — will his government fulfil the promise, will he fulfil the promise to create 30,000 jobs before the next election?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, while we're talking about our respective caucuses' ministers and critics, I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition has spoken to his Ag critic about his ag critic's support for the policies of the Liberal federal government in Ottawa? I wonder if they've, I wonder if they've talked that over.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it — that we are challenged by significant difficulty and circumstances in this province, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition on the night of the Throne Speech decided he would be better off to go off to Calgary, consult with some of his friends in Calgary.

Well I read today in today's paper some of those promises — so-called — made by the current government of Alberta, they're now, they're now having to say well, we're just not going to get there. Alberta may delay the business tax cut, Mr. Speaker.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, we are working day and night in this government and with the people of Saskatchewan to meet the commitments made in the 1990 campaign to grow this economy, to make this the province of opportunity in Canada.

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

#### Health Care Issues and Staffing

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, prior to the 1999 election people in this province were critically concerned about the number of health care professionals. And so the NDP promised that they would hire 500 new health care professionals. And

these were going to include nurses and doctors and other specialized professionals.

And so what have we had instead? There's a critical shortage of doctors in many fields. We have almost 1,200 fewer nurses practising in the province now than we had then. We have a critical shortage of technologists, laboratory and radiology; and you know that the exodus of midwives have resulted, with only one left in the entire province.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has studied, and made promises, and studied, and made promises. How in the world can this government stand up to those promises in light of their record?

Mr. Speaker, will the current minister say how his promises to deliver health care professionals are going to be any more believable than the broken promises of the NDP's past?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, it's a real pleasure to get up here this afternoon and say that I came from a meeting this morning — where that member opposite was present as well — at the Saskatchewan association of health care organizations. Those people are excited about our action plan for Saskatchewan.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — That plan includes working with all the people in the health system and in our educational systems to make sure that we have the right professionals for our health care system in this province.

I would like to work with the people who have a positive attitude about our province. I would ask those people to keep quiet if they have nothing good to say.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, our questions and concern are very simple. How in the world is this government going to deliver on its promises to build the action plan for health care in the future when none of their promises of the past have been kept?

Mr. Speaker, it's one thing for this government to make promises idly after doing a study and then having a new committee. In '99 they had a surgical waiting list committee. Now that they had another study and they've announced last week another committee that are going to deal with surgical waiting lists. And they promised that they were going to reduce them by 30 per cent. And what's happened? They've almost doubled in the interval.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't going to be enough to just have a sunny disposition. What you have to do is have a plan that is believable for this government.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, how in the world is this

minister going to address these critical issues when he's lost 1,200 registered and psychiatric nurses who are needed to man the operating rooms and recovery rooms of this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, we have a plan on this side of the House. The Premier and I were very proud to present that plan to the Romanow Commission while my friend opposite had no plan. They didn't present anything about the future of our health care system in Canada. I ask them, put their plans out. We've been listening to all the people of Saskatchewan. We would like to hear what they have to say.

What we are going to do is build on what we have built so far. We're going to work with the people who want to build. We're not going to be distracted by those people who have nothing positive to say about this province. We believe in this province, we believe in our people, and we're going to build this province with our people.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, the one thing that this NDP government has a lot of is plans. They make them every year or so and then they never follow through and deliver on them.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, what I should do is start a file called good words and good intentions because that's what we get from this government is a lot of good words and good intentions.

Mr. Speaker, but where is the concrete evidence of results? This province, Mr. Speaker, needs results. Mr. Speaker, they promised that they were going to implement a system that is going to have appropriate treatment times. And now we hear in the paper where people are being treated on gurneys in the hallways, that the operating rooms are understaffed, that the emergency rooms are understaffed.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't good enough to sit here and keep articulating all these good plans and good intentions. The people of this province want results. When is this government going to give concrete results to the people who deserve it?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I've been in this legislature now almost seven years, the same time as the member opposite, and I would like to thank him finally for acknowledging that we do have a very good plan for health care.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — So I would like to thank him for that.

The results that we have in this province show that we are going in the right direction. We are providing care for our people right across the province, and we are doing this in a very careful, balanced manner.

We know that if we had followed the recommendation that they had in their budget plans in the '99 election, we would be into a freeze and we would have some major, major problems in how we deal with the issues in our province.

What we are going to do is make sure that we work together with the professionals and with all of the people throughout the province to make sure we have the best health care plan that we can for everybody.

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

#### Resources for Law Enforcement

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice over there. In the 1999 provincial election, Mr. Speaker, the NDP promised to hire 200 more RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and municipal police. They said this would help reduce crime and it's a good plan.

But what did they do? What did they do? Since 1999, the NDP have hired only 45 new police officers — 45 new police officers — one-quarter the number that they said they would. Since then, crime rates are going up. Regina's the crime capital of Canada. Who knows where else.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell this House, this House, why he's broken the promise not to hire 200 more police officers for Saskatchewan to keep it a safe, good province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the member asked me this question because it gives me the opportunity to tell him once again and the people of Saskatchewan how much of a commitment this government has put into policing.

In the last four years, Mr. Speaker, a \$14 million increase in policing, the largest ever in this province. We have, Mr. Speaker, the first time in five years, every single spot in the RCMP filled; 140 new police officers on the streets, Mr. Speaker, in this province. And the government has also added 46 . . . as he said, 45 new police officers. I ask the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, to have a little bit of patience, wait for the budget, and he will see how far we've gone in committing this . . . in fulfilling this promise, and we still have two more years left yet.

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

(14:15)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's the people of Saskatchewan that are waiting. Half the mandate is over, one-quarter of the people have been hired. That's not what they expect. They want all of those people promised, they want them hired. It's a question of priorities, Mr. Speaker. \$28 million lost on SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) would have hired a lot of police officers.



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

**Mr. Heppner:** — They went ahead and went into competition with private security firms. That money would have hired a lot of police officers to make this place safer. Instead of investing millions in these sorts of things, the government could have spent that and spent it well keeping their own promise, one they are not keeping at this particular point.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today that they will have enough resources from his cabinet, that he has enough clout to get those resources to meet at least half the commitment that they made in 1999? Will you hire at least another 55 police officers this year?

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

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member: 147 new RCMP officers across this province; 45 new police officers straight from this commitment, Mr. Speaker; a record spending on policing ever in this province, Mr. Speaker. And what did this party opposite during the last election promise for policing and crime control, Mr. Speaker — zero.

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

### Provincial Finances

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's turn to another one of those broken promises. Let's turn to 1999 when the then premier, Roy Romanow and Mr. Lingenfelter and Mrs. MacKinnon indicated that we were going to have balanced budgets and less debt — balanced budgets and less debts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, very recently the Finance minister revealed the third quarter financial report. And I want to turn to that report, Mr. Speaker, because what he says is that as of March 31, 2002, this government will have a deficit, a deficit of \$478 million — 478 million.

On the other side, Mr. Speaker, we talk about debt. The debt of this government was projected to be 11 point . . .

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — . . . wanted to talk about debt — 11.1 in the mid-term. We projected that debt to go to 11.5 billion — that's what the Finance minister said. Now it's been revised to 11.4 billion — \$300 million more, Mr. Speaker. Even at a time when we've just sold \$200 million worth of Cameco shares. Mr. Premier, why have you broken . . .

**The Speaker:** — By and large it's been going pretty well, but every once in a while members slip up. Would you kindly remember to address all your questions through the Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that the opposition member would say he's concerned about deficit and debt because his leader, when he released his so-called plan for the province, said what? He said that this province should do exactly what they're doing in the province of British Columbia.

What are they doing in the province of British Columbia? Less services, Mr. Speaker, more tax, and more debt — this year a \$4.4 billion deficit, Mr. Speaker. That's where British Columbia is going. Where we're going, Mr. Speaker, is in the right direction.

The member wants to talk about deficit and debt. I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, from the Dominion Bond Rating Service which had this to say, Mr. Speaker, quoted in *The Globe and Mail* on November 23 last year. Only the federal government, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and PEI (Prince Edward Island) have managed to reduce its debt, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Good enough for the bond-rating agencies, not good enough for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, this government should know that if you take in less money than you spend it's called a deficit.

I want to quote from that very same Dominion Bond Rating company, and I quote from the February 19, 2002 issue. The quote is this, Mr. Speaker:

The Dominion Bond Rating Service assistant vice-president Geneviève Lavallée said there is no way to categorize Saskatchewan's budgetary situation this year other than a deficit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, how can the minister stand after he said in the Throne Speech, this government has said there will be less debt, there will be no reliance on deficit, when we indeed have a \$478 million deficit that has been confirmed by the Dominion Bond Rating company. How can you answer that, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, as usual the opposition gets up as though they've got some kind of exposé from the Dominion Bond Rating Service. If they ever did their homework, Mr. Speaker, they would know that the Dominion Bond Rating Service, in August of last year, published a statement whereby, Mr. Speaker, they said that on a cash basis we had a deficit for the current year and they said we had deficits in '97-98 and '95-96. That's what they said, Mr. Speaker. On a cash basis we have a deficit — no problem with that, Mr. Speaker.

But the member wants to talk about debt. I want to quote to the member opposite an article from *The StarPhoenix*, dated March 7, where the Provincial Auditor says this, Mr. Speaker. He says:

The New Democrats have reduced the province's accumulated deficit by \$2.7 billion since 1993. Debt as a percentage of the provincial economy has dropped from 49 per cent to 24 per cent.

Debt has dropped, Mr. Speaker. But unless it has the Stockwell Day or Gordon Campbell stamp of approval on it, they won't accept it.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Proclamation of The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2001

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you will give me just a minute, Mr. Speaker, I'll find my pieces of paper. Here we are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Maybe more cars, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to make a statement today regarding the proclamation of The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2001, which all members of this House will be interested in.

Mr. Speaker, keeping our communities safe is a top priority of this government. We're specially committed to protecting children, our most valuable and important resource in our communities. It's a shameful fact, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, that there are people who exploit children and youth through the sex trade. I'm pleased to announce this government is taking steps to deter those who cruise our streets and neighbourhoods for the purposes of buying sexual services from our youth.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to announce that The Highway Traffic Amendment, 2001 will be proclaimed on April 1, 2002. This legislation, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, gives the police the authority to seize and impound vehicles if there's a reasonable belief that the vehicle was used to commit an offence under sections 211, 212, or 213 of the Criminal Code. These sections, Mr. Speaker, relate to procuring sexual services and prostitution.

If any person in the vehicle at the time of seizure is convicted of one of these offences, the vehicle will be automatically forfeited to the Crown, Mr. Speaker. If the owner of the vehicle has been charged with one of these offences, he will get it back only if no one in the car is convicted or if everyone in the vehicle attends an approved program generally known as a johns school.

These programs educate offenders about their impact on prostitutes and their families as well as on the community. Offenders must accept responsibility for their offence before they're allowed into the programs. The offender will be responsible for all program fees, as well as the towing and impound costs associated with the seizure of the vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that this option — the option of attending the johns school and the option of being able to obtain the car back — is not available if the offence relates to a child under the age of 18 or if the offender is a repeat offender. Further, those who enrol in but don't complete the approved johns school program, Mr. Speaker, will also have their driver's licences suspended for one year. And those convicted of prostitution-related offences involving the vehicle will face a licence suspension of one year for the first offence and two years for a subsequent offence.

Mr. Speaker, as you know we've developed this legislation in response to the recommendations of the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation Of Children Through the Sex Trade. One of the problems identified by the special committee is the prevalence of street prostitution in residential areas. Children exposed to this activity on a regular basis in

their communities increases . . . this increases their risk of involvement in the sex trade. As well, Mr. Speaker, children in areas where street prostitution flourishes are at a serious risk of being approached or accosted by individuals seeking sexual services.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will significantly reduce the car traffic associated . . . the vehicular traffic in the stroll areas and improve the quality of life for those living in those areas, as well, Mr. Speaker, as keeping children safe. As I said, Mr. Speaker, keeping communities safe is one of our top priorities and this legislation will give police another tool to protect children, deter offenders, and keep our streets and neighbourhoods safe for everyone. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy as are my colleagues on this side of the House that the government is finally proclaiming The Highway Traffic Amendment Act. It is one of many measures necessary to deter those who are engaging in a violent crime against Saskatchewan children — the crime of sexual abuse and exploitation through the sex trade.

This legislation is a measure that the Saskatchewan Party and I have been pushing the government to implement for two years. The need for it is without question. Without the measures to protect our children and to deter offenders, there will be a continued . . . continued incidents of permanent, physical, emotional, and psychological damages inflicted on our children who are subject to this.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan who have presented their views and ideas on combating the sexual exploitation of children have spoken loud and clear through the provincial committee hearings of their support for the confiscation of vehicles as an important measure to deter offenders who are charged and convicted. This legislation is long overdue, but it is certainly welcome.

What I was hoping for, Mr. Speaker, and I believe is necessary, is a more comprehensive piece of legislation that includes The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, but in addition, we need to include the minimum, mandatory fine of \$25,000 if convicted of this offence against our children.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we need to be implementing measures to protect and assist children and their families into healing and healthier choices for their lives. So there were many other measures . . . recommendations that have been put forward by the people of Saskatchewan, through the committee that went throughout this province that need to be implemented in unison with this particular legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice states that this legislation gives police the authority to seize and impound vehicles if there is a reasonable belief that the vehicle was used to commit an offence under sections 211, 212 and 213 of the Criminal Code.

The Committee to Prevent Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children recommended that the police be given new powers of search and seizure. I did not hear the Minister of Justice speak of new powers to search vehicles. This is necessary if this new

Act is truly to be a successful measure.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly, one other area worthy of attention regarding the new legislation is the question of how the Crown will use proceeds from the sale of vehicles from convicted offenders.

During committee hearings there was a great deal of support from people of the province to target the proceeds from the sale of vehicles to support the healing of the child victim. And I do hope that the government of the day will respond favourably to that request. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

(14:30)

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

**Mr. Hillson:** — By leave to respond, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. I want to congratulate the Minister of Justice and I think, fairly, all members of this House, especially the member for Humboldt and the member for Greystone. I think the people of this province expect that their elected officials will at times put partisan differences aside to work together for the good of this province. And I believe on this issue, that in fact happened and that is a representative democracy at its best.

This is an important measure that I hope and believe will assist in suppression of prostitution, especially child prostitution and I congratulate the government and the Minister of Justice for moving on it. It is important for us to monitor now whether this has a real and definite impact.

And I would like to say that while I'm not in favour of all of the suggestions made by the hon. member for Humboldt, I do believe that the suggestion that impounded cars, the proceeds therefrom, should be used for a shelter and for treatment for the victims is indeed an excellent suggestion and I do hope that the Attorney General will follow up on that.

But I believe that this is a good day for this Assembly and for the elected representatives of this province and I hope that this measure will indeed advance the social environment of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

#### TABLING OF REPORT

**The Speaker:** — Members, before orders of the day, I would like to bring to the members' attention that I am tabling the report of an opinion and recommendations after an inquiry pursuant to section 30 of The Members' Conflict of Interest Act, which has been supplied to me on Friday by G.L. Gerrand, Conflict of Interest Commissioner for the province of Saskatchewan.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### SPECIAL ORDER

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

##### ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply, which was moved by Mr. Prebble, seconded by Mr. Forbes.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure again to enter into this debate and take a few more moments to just respond to the Throne Speech debate.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in the few short moments I had on Friday before adjournment, that in many cases as you look through this Throne Speech and what the NDP government in the past has promised and their actions, on most occasions you would have to say their actions speak louder than words in the realities of what they do and don't do in regards to their promises. And my colleague, the member from Melfort, mentioned that in the area of health care we saw it. The member from Rosthern was talking about their actions and their commitment to policing and the safety in our society.

However I will have to admit, Mr. Speaker, that one area — and we've just seen it this afternoon — that we can agree with them on the government, is coming forward with steps to deal with child prostitution and how we begin to address this factor.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, a recent article by a noted columnist talked about MLAs and their remuneration and the workload and the question was: are we getting what we pay for? And I believe the member for North Battleford just pointed out the fact of the work of the committee in dealing with the issue of prostitution. And I'm pleased to say that the Minister of Justice this morning has finally acted on legislation last year to deal with a number of . . . some of the concerns that were raised and suggestions coming out of the committee that was addressing that prostitution issue.

So on that hand, I think, Mr. Speaker, we would like to say that we acknowledge what is being proposed and we want to compliment the government for moving forward. And we trust that we'll be able to, through the committee's report that we saw last session, move forward in a number of areas that would address the serious problem and address the needs of young people on the streets in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, however, when we look at this Throne Speech there is still a fair bit lacking in the Throne Speech in regards to a game plan that will really build our economy, build our province, and give people a reason to, not only stay in this province, continue to call it home if this is where they're from, they've been born and raised here, educated here, but as well, Mr. Speaker, giving people who have moved out of the province who would like to come back to the province a reason to return to this province.

And this recent Throne Speech is certainly lacking in that area. In fact, I would have to say the government's actions certainly speak louder than words. While they continue to talk about the need to build and grow our province, we have yet to see a serious game plan that would certainly do that.

I want to talk about a game plan. There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that if we're going to build this province we need to create an environment for investment. We need to create an environment where investment opportunities, and whether it's from out of the province, or maybe, Mr. Speaker, within the province. I believe we're known as one of the capitals for the largest levels of savings, when it comes to our retired community, almost anywhere in the world. And this is what it says. Mr. Speaker, there's resources available, if we created the environment that gave people the opportunity to actually take their investment and place it back and allow it to work in their own province.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech talks about economic growth in Saskatchewan continuing to be led by the private sector and private investment. And then it goes on to say:

However, public policy and government initiatives can serve as a catalyst to investment.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that is the part that scares business and the business community away from this province because every time they make an investment, such as the wind generation investment in the Gull Lake area, as soon as it's proven in the private sector that it can work, then all of a sudden we see that our Crown corporation, our Crown utilities, decide that they can do the job better. And rather than letting private investment come into the province and taxation then be put into the hands of . . . the Finance department's hand so that we can meet the needs of health and education, the government decides that it can do a better job, and instead it takes our tax dollars to invest them in the capital that is much . . . the capital investment that is needed, rather than allowing the private sector to do that.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about economic development, let's not just think of the large corporate sector out there that may be looking at investing in this province. Let's look at the individuals of this province. And the reason I say that, I want to bring to the attention of this Assembly today the community of Wolesey, for example, last fall, early last fall, were looking at something that they could bring to their community that would create jobs, especially when Abbott Laboratories pulled out of the community and 40 people found themselves without a job.

And the mayor and the economic development group in the community said, well should we just take this lying down, or should we maybe look at . . . and see if there are other avenues we can explore to create investment in our community, and actually initiate some job development?

And after some searching, they heard that possibly West Central Pelleting at Unity was looking at expanding its plant. And so they approached West Central Pelleting. And, Mr. Speaker, what West Central Pelleting had indicated to them that, well they had reached capacity in their plant, that if they were going to expand the business that was already there, coming their way, they would have to expand their plant.

The unfortunate part was to expand the plant meant they had to go further afield for the feedstocks for the pelleting plant which started to cut into the real dollar value and the profit level at the plant. And so they, West Central said, well sure, we'd be

willing . . . we'd really be happy to come down to your community. We'll make a presentation and we'll see whether there are enough people in that area who believe that we could be a major economic contributor to your community.

And so as I said, Mr. Speaker, early last fall a public meeting was held, and at the time the organizers thought they might have a hundred, a hundred and fifty people show up for this public meeting. When the evening of the meeting arrived, Mr. Speaker, and I had the privilege of attending that meeting, there must have been in excess of 400 individuals had come out to the public meeting.

And as a result of that public meeting, a go-ahead was given for the local committee to . . . (inaudible) . . . to the Securities Commission and get the authority to raise the funds that they needed for the capital investment for this plant to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, what I liked about their proposal is that they put their share offering in increments that even just the average ordinary wage earner could invest in the plant, could have a bit of an ownership.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to tell this Assembly today that as of last Saturday when another public rally was put together, because they were within a few days of meeting the requirements of their . . . the issue from the Securities Commission, when they arrived last Saturday to a house full of people again, Mr. Speaker, the 900-plus thousand dollars they needed for that capital investment, for that local investment had already been raised. In fact, they'd exceeded the 900 million . . . or \$900,000, Mr. Speaker. And so as I understand it, they have gone to the Securities Commission for an extension so that everyone who would like to invest in that plant has the opportunity.

What that says, Mr. Speaker, it tells us that people, if given the opportunity to invest in their community, are more than willing to do it. And we don't need that large 50 or 100,000 or million dollar investment that we tend to always look for. Local people, if given the opportunity, are willing to invest in their communities. Why? Because they believe in their community. Because they want the school to continue to succeed. Because they want to see their hospitals and their doctors stay in the community. Because they want their young people to stay.

And when I say the community, Mr. Speaker, I don't refer just to the town of Wolesey. But as I was talking to one of the individuals who was kind of spearheading this project, the investments made in that project are probably anywhere from 50 to a hundred miles away in that . . . pretty well a hundred mile radius of the community of Wolesey which shows the commitment of the people to that project and the fact that they look at it as a regional project rather than just a community project.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk about another investment opportunity and the pursuit of the economic development group in the community of Moosomin. And they are currently just got underway to try and raise the funds, and I believe they need roughly \$1 million there as well, to build for Purelean Hogs to come to the community and build one of what they are talking of down the road, maybe five or six or seven hog barns in the

area.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we hear about hog barns, automatically we think about the stench, we think about the smell, and, Mr. Speaker, what most people, as soon as they think of that, they really don't want a hog barn in the vicinity. But let me just fill you in and some of your . . . some of the government members are aware of what the Purelean concept of hog production is all about. And what the Purelean group has done, Mr. Speaker; they have addressed two concerns. They have addressed the concerns of the animal rights group. They have also addressed the concerns of the environmentalists.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask . . . members may ask, how? Well, they have done it in two ways. They've taken the concept of raising hogs from that small, confined penning area to a larger confined penning area which can house up to 2,000 hogs with ample room for the hogs to get their exercise, Mr. Speaker.

And then as well, Mr. Speaker, they take the waste and rather than investing and putting thousands of dollars into digging a pit and covering it over so you don't have that offensive odour, they actually take the waste and they put it into a composting mechanism system, Mr. Speaker. And after 21 days, that waste material actually turns into an economic benefit as it is then packaged and sold through private retailers back to housewives, or to greenhouses as a fertilizer to be used in the growing of food and other products, Mr. Speaker.

So what we see; we see an economic spinoff — another economic spinoff. And when you build . . . they'll look at hog barns. Mr. Speaker, it's not just the hog barn, it's not just the composting process and that revenue that flows in from the barn, but as far as the regional area — when they look at hog barns, it's the trucking, it's the feed mill processing that as well creates job opportunities for those areas, for those communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, we can look all across . . . all around this province and we see where megaprojects in the hog barn industry — hog production industry — have added value — economic value, and job opportunities in communities all across the province of Saskatchewan. So I certainly want to wish the economic development community in Moosomin well in their endeavours as they pursue another avenue of economic development for this community.

(14:45)

And why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? I say that because I want to point out to the members of this Assembly and to those who may be listening that we, we need to create avenues whereby local investment and local individuals have an opportunity in the small-business community to build their community versus always relying on the large entrepreneur or corporation.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech unfortunately does not necessarily address all of those avenues. And that's why, that's why the Saskatchewan Party Grow Saskatchewan plan talks about working with small individuals, talks about levelling the taxation field and the corporate and business tax so that individuals and groups and companies can look at investing in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to talk about building the province. A number of years ago, a fair . . . a large investment was put into the uranium industry. And I notice this Throne Speech talks about our natural resources. And it's imperative that we look at the natural resources that are a part of this province, that we look at how we can build on those natural resources, and we can add value to the natural resources so that the economic spinoff and jobs stay in the province.

And yet the other day the member from Greystone was suggesting we should shut down the uranium industry. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if that same member would like to tell the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) and First Nations community that the 60 per cent-plus jobs working in those . . . in the uranium industry should be shut down as well. I don't think so.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that's why the Saskatchewan Party talks about working with the First Nations community of this province, to build on this province. And part of that building is enhancing uranium development.

And, Mr. Speaker, if we were to look at . . . We all remember last spring the state of California was short power. If we would have expanded and built on the resource we had here, we might have been in a position to really enhance the economic ability of this province through power generation as a result of the uranium industry we have here. Unfortunately, with the ideology of the NDP government that basically sits and we're continued to be just hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also talk a little about highway development. And in this Throne Speech — and I will give the government credit here — the government talks about a three-year commitment to \$900 million over three years to expand highway construction maintenance to the area of 700 kilometres of highway over the next three years. In that regard, I will give the government credit for that because we do need a plan to address the atrocious state of the highways of this province. While that plan is a little lower than their commitment investment last year, Mr. Speaker, it still lets the construction community know that this government and that this province is going to put some money into highway construction.

The one thing, Mr. Speaker, I will be watching very carefully is the Minister of Highways. And in the budget speech . . . The Throne Speech talks about working with municipalities. And while we have a new Minister of Highways, maybe he's had the opportunity to already take a look at some of the proposals that have come in from the regional transportation authority. Mr. Speaker, the atrocious state of the No. 47 and No. 48 Highways in my constituency, the southeast transportation authority has come up with some commendable ideas.

And while I may not necessarily agree that municipalities and local governments should be assisting in building provincial highways, the facts are the need for those highways to be built and rebuilt is imperative for tourism and economic development along those highways. And I'm hoping that the Minister of Highways and his department have looked very favourably at the proposals that have been coming in from the regional transportation authorities — certainly the one in my constituency which I should be speaking for.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will be waiting with a bated breath for the debate . . . budget address on Wednesday, March 27.

Mr. Speaker, as well . . . and I should make a comment about my colleagues here but no, I won't. Mr. Speaker, one other thing I would like to talk a little bit about. This Throne Speech talks about rural revitalization. And the Premier talks about a committee that they have been sending around the province to address the depopulation of our rural community.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I spent about 10 days at 40-plus meetings, meeting with people. And one thing we heard from people across this province, if we want to see our rural communities revitalized, people want to know that they're going to have access to quality health care. They want to know that they're going to have schools available so that when people move, and young people move into job opportunities, they will have the places, the buildings where the young people can receive their education. And companies want to know that they're going to have access to acute health care facilities should that be needed as a result of possibly an industrial accident that every once in a while unfortunately happens.

So I want to ask this government, on behalf of the community of Moosomin, where their commitment is to their new hospital. And, Mr. Speaker, here again, the reason I raise that is because rural communities pay . . . put in 35 per cent of the capital construction, the capital cost, into their health facilities. And the community of Moosomin and the region around Moosomin were told that they, yes, they were in desperate need of a new hospital, a new heavy-care facility, but they had to raise 35 per cent of the funds. And I can say, Mr. Speaker, that as of today basically the 35 per cent of those funds are already in place and we're just waiting for the Minister of Health and this Premier to say to the community of Moosomin, it's time to move ahead.

I want to say one other thing about that project in Moosomin, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier joined with the community and joined me at that . . . when we're all aware of that effort to . . . actually to have the longest hockey game and enter it into *The Guinness Book of Records*, back in November of 2001. And the Premier was there to drop the puck for that last period of hockey. And while the Moosomin Moose, the local recreation team, hockey team, when they were planning this big event were thinking to themselves, well maybe . . . I wonder if we could raise 10 or \$20,000 toward our new hospital. It might be commendable if we can do that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I speak, over \$120,000 was raised in the local area. And what is so positive and what people feel so good about in the project, is it's not just Moosomin, Mr. Speaker. There's seven communities — a couple in . . . on the border, in Manitoba, and all the surrounding municipalities. And even the players on the ice represented this large area. It shows a regional commitment to a health care facility that is desperately needed.

And all we are looking for, and what they were looking for from the Premier is the Premier to say, well you've done a commendable job; yes, the money is there. The former Minister of Health indicated the money was there. And, Mr. Speaker, so while that answer hasn't come forward as yet we will be looking forward to hearing what the Minister of Health has, and

what the Minister of Finance has in this budget address next week in regards to that community hospital and the commitment to health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's certainly much more that I can say, much more that I can add in pointing out the faults of this Throne Speech. However my colleagues are telling me they'd like to get in a few words as well. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take my place having brought forward some of the areas that I feel need to be addressed. And I would like to as well, Mr. Speaker, before I sit down, move a motion seconded by the member from Rosetown-Biggar:

That the following words be added after the word, session:

however this Assembly expresses its non-confidence in the provincial government which has failed to put forward a plan to deal with the growing crisis of out-migration from our province and a lack of economic growth caused by the short-sighted policies of the current Premier and cabinet.

I so move.

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

**The Speaker:** — Debate continues concurrently.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, of course it is good to be back into the House and back into another session of the legislature. It's been quite some time. Much has happened and, of course, much is required in Saskatchewan to meet the challenges of the future.

But before I get into a discussion of the Speech from the Throne, which we heard last week, I would like to offer my sincere welcome to the new member of the Legislative Assembly, the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld. It's always exciting when you have the opportunity to first enter an Assembly like this and be able to serve the people of your constituency. And so I wish the hon. member well in this new role.

The hon. member fills big shoes. The seat was formerly held by Janice MacKinnon who was a long-time member of the NDP caucus and certainly a member of the Romanow cabinet for many, many years. She also showed some courage. She was appointed to the cabinet and she saw the government heading in the wrong direction and she asked her colleagues to change that direction. She saw a deficit coming, she saw spending out of control, she saw the fiasco of the Information Services Corporation, and she let her colleagues know; they didn't listen and she did the honourable thing and she removed herself from that government.

So I would challenge the new member to uphold the same standard of commitment to the province of Saskatchewan and to his constituents, the people of Saskatoon Idylwyld.

Mr. Speaker, we need to look at the current state of the province to know what future and what direction we need to strike out on. Mr. Speaker, we've looked at the population numbers recently revealed by the census that occurred in the year 2001 and we've seen that Saskatchewan has seen a substantial loss of

people over that five-year period.

Mr. Speaker, we've got to transport ourselves from the years 1996 to year 2001. And these were basically for Canada, as a whole, very good years. Even in agriculture, there was some good crops and some fairly respectable prices during that period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the census occurred before the drought. Can't blame the drought on those population numbers. That census occurred before the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York. Can't blame September 11, 2001 for the population loss.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, those census numbers show that Saskatchewan lost a substantial amount, several thousand people, from the level that we were at in the year 1996. Mr. Speaker, these are Saskatchewan citizens that no longer reside in our province. They live in other provinces, many of them in Alberta. Some have gone to Manitoba, some have gone to Ontario and further abroad.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there will always be a coming and going of people to and from Saskatchewan. But the measure of success for a government is whether more people are coming to your province than leaving the province. And that is where this NDP government has failed so miserably, because thousands and thousands of people are leaving and they're leaving for the wrong reasons. They're not leaving to make the rest of the world a better place, to raise it up to Saskatchewan standards. They're leaving Saskatchewan because it's not affording them the opportunities that they need to make a life for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, when I looked at those census numbers I was also astounded by the fact that it's not just rural Saskatchewan that is suffering from population loss. Had we have been listening to the NDP and buying every word they gave us, we would have thought that the entire problem was in rural Saskatchewan, just people leaving the smaller communities, leaving the agriculture sector — and in fact, if it wasn't for the vagaries of the weather and the problem of low prices, Saskatchewan would be growing; we'd be booming as a province. Well, Mr. Speaker, it was quite an eye-opener to see that the city of Regina had lost people. In fact, most of our major cities, other than a couple of them, including Saskatoon, had lost population from the year 1996 to the year 2001. Mr. Speaker, this does not cast a good light on our NDP government.

So you look at population — not good. Then you move over to the job creation side of the ledger and again, Mr. Speaker, as we mentioned in question period, the numbers are rather . . . not dismal, but disastrous. We had a government that made a clear-cut promise. And I know the other day, I believe it was the Minister of Economic Development said, well no, it wasn't a promise, it was just a target. So you know, kind of a goal out there that they hope to hit. He almost made it sound like he was at a hockey game, you know, where you shoot the puck and try to hit that little hole — wasn't much chance of ever hitting it, but it was kind of nice to mention it, Mr. Speaker.

(15:00)

But, Mr. Speaker, I looked at the document, read their platform

and it said, we . . . Mr. Speaker, it said, we will. One place it said, we will; another place it said, we'll. Either way, it means that they made an ironclad commitment to create 30,000 jobs over a five-year period. Mr. Speaker, not only have they failed, they've been moving this province in the other direction. This province now has many, many thousands fewer jobs than it had when the 1999 election occurred.

If you use what was promised versus where we are now over a year ago, we're 43,000 . . . or 1999, we're 43,000 jobs behind target. If you move back farther, we're . . . to the high point in job creation, we have even more jobs to make to hit their target of approximately 525,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, a government . . . an NDP government loses credibility when it makes plans that not only can it not reach but has no plan to reach at all.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the Crown boondoggles over the past year and over the past few years. We look at the potato fiasco. And now that the numbers are starting to be finalized, we see that the NDP lost \$28 million over their foolish investment in the potato industry, thinking that they could farm better than the farmers; thinking that they could belong in an industry better than the industry players themselves. And of course their argument was that it will create jobs.

So we looked at the jobs that were created. And guess what, Mr. Speaker. Nine jobs. Nine jobs created with a loss of \$28 million. Plus a few part-time jobs that just sort of come and go.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned, in welcoming the new member to the Assembly, the problem that the Information Services Corporation has experienced. Mr. Speaker, the ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) was supposed to be a state of the art computerization of land titles. A computerized system of course is a wise thing to do; other provinces were far ahead of Saskatchewan. Under the NDP, we had lagged behind.

But the NDP decided it wasn't good enough to spend \$1 million or \$2 million to buy a program off the shelf from Manitoba or Alberta or British Columbia. They had to design their own program; they had to start from scratch. You know, perhaps they can make a rounder wheel than the wheel that was already in place somewhere else. They were going to try to invent the perfect round wheel, Mr. Speaker, and in fact what we got was a lump.

Mr. Speaker, we got a Crown corporation that has gone way over budget; caused the resignation of Janice MacKinnon; has not yet functioned properly. And the Agriculture minister laughs, but he knows it's true. I think the laugh is just an indication that he's caught up short on this one, that this has been a fiasco, and he's trying to decide how he can cover it up.

Mr. Speaker, ISC is not only working, it's not marketable to other jurisdictions. It's been a huge boondoggle.

Not only are the Crowns in trouble with some of the wild adventures that they've tried to pursue, but as a whole there's growing debt in the Crowns. And of course, who holds the mortgage on all these debts? Well when it's a Crown

corporation it's the people of Saskatchewan who are left holding the mortgage on these huge debts because they are not managed well by the NDP.

Speaking of finance, Mr. Speaker, it became so clear in question period today, so clear, that Saskatchewan is experiencing deficit financing again.

Mr. Speaker, Roy Romanow prided himself on balancing the budget. And Roy Romanow and I disagreed on many, many things, but you couldn't argue with the man on the importance of balancing the budget. It's something that the Saskatchewan Party heartily concurs with.

It's important to balance the budget. We need to be fiscally responsible. We need to make sure that our expenses are in line with our revenues. Mr. Speaker, we do that in our households; we do that in our community organizations. Local municipalities are very cautious and careful to balance their budgets.

But lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, we changed premiers in Saskatchewan and as my colleague, the member for Canora-Pelly so wonderfully illustrated in question period today, the Dominion Bond Rating agency last year said that we have, we have a surplus; this year they say we have a huge, huge deficit. Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister could not counteract that. These are the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Now I could spend a lot of time — I want my colleagues also to have an opportunity to speak so I won't go into detail — but the NDP government has failed in health care. We have waiting lists now of more than 30,000 people; we've lost 1,200 nurses from the nursing profession. Mr. Speaker, health care has never been in more . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. It seems that there are several members that want to get in on the act here. I'm wondering if you would allow at this time the Leader of the Opposition to make his remarks.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems like the member from Prince Albert, the Economic Development minister, just can't wait his turn. But we'll be patient and we'll stay here until we have a chance to explain very clearly the shortcomings of his NDP government.

I talked about the failures in health, and it's horrendous. We have conditions, working conditions in our hospitals that are comparable to many Third World situations, with people being treated on gurneys in hallways, with people in pain because they are denied the health care that they need and need in an expedient fashion.

And, Mr. Speaker, we could also look at education. The NDP government and the Minister of Education has said that he expects that there will be 35,000 fewer students in Saskatchewan by the year 2010, the end of this decade. And he accepts that as a fact; he accepts that as being something that can't be changed. He just says we are going to have to manage the decline of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we're not satisfied with seeing Saskatchewan

continue to lose people, including the loss of students, including the loss of schoolteachers, including the loss of a tax base that this province so desperately needs.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — And I'll talk a little later about our plan to turn that around. I'll tell the minister from P.A. (Prince Albert) Northcote our plan if he will just be a little bit patient, if he'll stay seated in his seat. If he'll settle down, keep his emotions under control, I'll get to my plan in a few minutes.

But first of all we have to paint the landscape so that those members over there see how bad a situation they have created. So, Mr. Speaker, we have a government that is prepared to see the loss of 35 students from our . . . 35,000 students from our education system. No fight, no plan to quell it. Just accept it as *fait accompli*.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I could talk about agriculture and I could talk about the Minister of Agriculture's failure when it comes to dealing with our safety net programs — the fact that we now have a weaker crop insurance program promised for the coming year, at a time when producers need a stronger crop insurance program; a crop insurance program that has just deleted spot-loss hail; a crop insurance program that has just removed variable rates.

Mr. Speaker, the Agriculture minister should be ashamed of his performance. Mr. Speaker, if he can't do better than that he should step aside. Perhaps one of his colleagues could do better.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, in question period today the Justice critic for the Saskatchewan Party, the hon. member for Rosthern, pointed out that this government has failed to keep its commitments to provide safe streets for the province and the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has failed to keep its promise of hiring 200 police officers. They're so far behind that it appears — and we heard no commitment from the Minister of Justice that would correct that impression — that they're not going to be able to meet their target of hiring 200 police officers from the time they made the promise in the 1999 election.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture is yipping and yelling at me, the Minister of Economic Development can hardly stay in his seat he's so upset by the truth, and other members are chatting as well over there and making some uncomplimentary remarks. So perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I should let the press do some of the talking for me. Perhaps they'll listen to the press instead.

And I quote from Randy Burton, who wrote in — maybe it's today's *StarPhoenix*, yes, no, Saturday, March the 16, Mr. Speaker. And the headline over his column, Straight Talk, is "Bright future optical illusion — call an election". So this is what Randy Burton has to say. And by the way, he has a very interesting picture of the Premier here in very, very dark sunglasses, very dark sunglasses and apparently he is not seeing things very clearly, Mr. Speaker, but we won't get into that.



Mr. Speaker, let me quote from Randy Burton:

The future in Saskatchewan is so bright we should all be wearing shades, if you can believe the malarkey coming out of Regina.

He goes on, farther down to say:

Of course, there is another . . .

He talks about statistics that the Premier placed in the Speech from the Throne, which he recognizes as being absolutely foolish, and then he goes on to say and I quote:

Of course, there is another side to those statistics. Our economic growth is forecast to lag behind the national average in the coming year. And while we turn out a lot of well-qualified university graduates, most of them plan to use their education somewhere else. A survey conducted last year by the Canada West Foundation showed that fully 70 per cent of this province's university graduates intend to seek careers outside the province.

Nearly half . . .

And I'm still quoting Mr. Speaker:

Nearly half of that 18 to 24 year old age group that the province is so proud of enrolling in university intends to leave Saskatchewan the first chance it gets.

Mr. Speaker, Randy Burton goes on to say:

Saskatchewan (or he says) the . . . government boasts that "Saskatchewan is quickly becoming Canada's province of opportunity," . . .

But he says:

far too many people see it only as a land of memories.

Mr. Speaker, Randy Burton, and I'm . . . and I think Randy Burton has sensed very well what the people of Saskatchewan are saying. He says:

Saskatchewan people are voting with their feet. They have lost confidence in the province's ability to provide them with a future and they don't see any sense of direction coming from the provincial government.

Randy Burton says, and I quote:

Rather than taking advantage of a short-term windfall in oil and gas revenues to reduce debt and cut taxes, Calvert chose to jack up spending by some 7.5 per cent in last year's provincial budget.

Even at that inflated level, he missed his budget targets by \$450 million. No government in this province has miscalculated so wildly since the mid-'80s.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know you'll want to read the entire article. I don't have time, so I'll skip down a few paragraphs. And

again I quote:

Calvert and his cabinet ministers have done everything they can to reduce public expectations of government. They have put out the message that the economy is in such awful shape that lavish settlements with public servants are out of the question and that municipalities can forget big increases in their grants.

At the same time, the government argues the only real problem with the economy is the media and Saskatchewan people themselves have a negative attitude.

Randy Burton closes at the end of his column by saying:

What Saskatchewan needs is an agenda for recovery.

What it needs is an election.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, I thank the members for listening to Randy Burton's comments over the weekend. Perhaps they'll reflect and do much better when it's time to deliver the budget. And I hope the Minister of Finance was listening and will reverse the trend through a better budget than we've been led to believe will occur.

Mr. Speaker, I came to the legislature on Thursday, the day of the Speech from the Throne, looking for a change in direction. Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed when I read the Speech from the Throne. It contains no plan. It contains no apologies. In fact, it just contains more of the same.

People of Saskatchewan, when they read that Speech from the Throne, realize there's no hope coming from this government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at the time . . . during all of this period when the NDP have been bankrupt of ideas and have been running Saskatchewan in the wrong direction, the Saskatchewan Party has been busy talking to Saskatchewan people and developing a plan to turn this province around.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow Saskatchewan by 100,000 people over the next 10 years.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Now I know, Mr. Speaker, because that party over there has governed Saskatchewan for most of the last 67 years, that they just do not believe Saskatchewan can grow beyond a million people. They think Saskatchewan is doomed to stay at a million people or less.

But, Mr. Speaker, the rest of Canada can grow, Manitoba can grow, Alberta can grow, British Columbia can grow, Ontario is growing, the Maritimes are growing. Why is Saskatchewan the only province in Canada that's not growing, along with perhaps Newfoundland? Why are we the only two provinces that seem to be perennially losing people? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is because the government doesn't think we can grow and so they haven't bothered to put a plan together that would allow us to grow.

(15:15)

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has to grow. If we're going to provide health care, if we're going to provide education so that we can care for the Minister of Economic Development in his old age when he needs health care, we're going to have to grow this province.

This is our plan to grow Saskatchewan. First of all, Mr. Speaker, we need lower income taxes in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, a family of four in Saskatchewan — and I hope the Agriculture minister is paying attention — a family of four in Saskatchewan begins to pay provincial income tax when their combined income reaches \$20,000. That same family, if they were to move west across the border into Alberta, would not pay provincial income tax until their income reaches \$33,500 because they have higher basic personal exemptions in Alberta than they have in Saskatchewan.

If it's a single, Mr. Speaker, a single, the basic personal exemption in Saskatchewan is \$8,000 and for that same single person in Alberta it's \$12,000. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a son . . . And I hope the Minister of Finance pays attention, maybe he doesn't care about me but perhaps he'll care about my son.

Mr. Speaker, my son is trying to get an education and he takes a summer job and he goes and he plants trees. He makes approximately \$10,000, \$11,000 of taxable income planting trees. Now because he lives in Saskatchewan this youngster — he's 20 years old — he has to pay provincial income tax and he's barely making enough to pursue an education. And yet if he lived in Alberta he could make \$12,000 before he began to pay provincial income tax. That's the penalty that the NDP government is putting on young people in Saskatchewan. That has to change. The gap is too big. It must be smaller.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP decided that they had to do something for low-income earners. So they decided — surprise, surprise — to increase the minimum wage. Now that's nice to have the luxury to increase the minimum wage but of course that doesn't do anything for someone who is making \$7 an hour or \$7.25 an hour or \$8 an hour.

It does help the government; they get more deductions. Now the government gets more tax revenue if they raise the minimum wage but for the majority of workers it does nothing whatsoever to help them. All it helps is the very bottom, the very level of people that are right on minimum, minimum wage. Now, Mr. Speaker, this government could have increased the basic personal exemption and helped all taxpayers, including the employees, the workers who are making \$7, 7.50 an hour, or \$8 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, that would have been, that would have been too sensible for the NDP. It just doesn't fit their way of doing things in Saskatchewan and as a result our province doesn't grow. Our plan, which would increase the basic personal exemption, would cause Saskatchewan to grow, would cause our population to grow, and would cause our tax base to grow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we also in our plan call for lower taxes on productivity and growth. And this includes helping small business. Now this government doesn't recognize the

importance of productivity and I don't think they even know what the word productivity means, by looking at the actions from this government. We have some of the highest taxes on productivity and growth in the country, and it shows. When it's time to establish a new industry, a new job, a new business in Canada, they are established outside of Saskatchewan rather than inside Saskatchewan because those who invest and grow and establish businesses look at the environment and they see in Saskatchewan an environment that's not competitive.

Mr. Speaker, a Saskatchewan Party government would reduce and eliminate the small-business income tax — a tax which is generating so little revenue that it's in danger of falling below \$50 million simply because this government is unfriendly to small business. We would also reduce the capital tax, which is a big sign to industries throughout Canada that they shouldn't invest in Saskatchewan because they can't afford to have employees in a province with the highest capital tax in western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, part of Saskatchewan Party's plan to grow this province by 100,000 people over the next 10 years is to eliminate government waste. We don't believe in growing the public service when the province is shrinking in size. I haven't heard one NDP member on the other side explain to me why, when the province is losing thousands of people, we needed to increase the public service by over 5 per cent in one year. Mr. Speaker, that does not make any sense. But of course many things that they've done do not make any sense.

Mr. Speaker, we don't need to continually overburden both individuals, businesses, and municipal government with excessive red tape. Smaller, smarter government is one key step to growing Saskatchewan by 100,000 people over the next 10 years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're going to go to a sensitive area, a very touchy area for the NDP — particularly sensitive for the Minister of Labour because her election funding comes from labour. But, Mr. Speaker, we need balanced labour laws in Saskatchewan. We don't need to swing the pendulum to the extreme side of labour or to the extreme side of business. We need the pendulum stuck in the middle, where it's fair to both sides.

Mr. Speaker, we need to grow the workforce in Saskatchewan. We need to grow both the unionized workforce and the non-unionized workforce. But both are shrinking under the NDP government. The NDP government, Mr. Speaker, is no friend of labour. They too are showing their disapproval of this government's policies by leaving the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we need democracy in the workplace, we need freedom of speech in the workplace, and we need a labour relations board that is fair and impartial when dealing with the challenges between management and labour.

Mr. Speaker — and I would address these comments in particular to the minister responsible for the Crown corporations — we need to pull the Crown corporations out of private sector involvement. Mr. Speaker, this government has allowed the Crowns to unfairly compete against the providers of

security systems, the growers of potatoes, the founders of dot-com and IT (information technology) ventures.

Mr. Speaker, this government has no idea of the damage they're causing Saskatchewan by preventing private sector investment — from both inside Saskatchewan and outside Saskatchewan — finding a home here because they feel the only way that they can grow the province is by growing the government including the Crown corporations. Mr. Speaker, we need to grow the private sector, not the public sector, not the Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP do not recognize the strengths that Saskatchewan has. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a rich province with huge potential. Mr. Speaker, if this province was governed right, it would not be behind Manitoba and Alberta and British Columbia in population; well BC (British Columbia), perhaps you could argue, but definitely not behind Alberta and Manitoba. But it's been under successive CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and NDP governments that we have lost ground to Alberta and we have seen Manitoba pass us. And if the census numbers keep on moving in the direction they are, Nova Scotia may eventually pass Saskatchewan in population.

But we have the potential to expand our manufacturing sector. You know, if this government would do something about the capital tax, if they do something about the labour laws, if they would provide a business climate in Saskatchewan where Maple Leaf Foods would invest in a meat-packing plant in Saskatchewan instead of in Brandon, Manitoba, we'd see the growth in our economy, we'd see the jobs created.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to agriculture, nothing makes me angrier than to see the NDP blame all of the Saskatchewan's woes on the agriculture sector. And I don't even hear the Minister of Agriculture defending that sector, which is very, very disappointing to the people in that industry throughout the province. He seems to be looking at glee with all the problems facing agriculture and saying: it's not my fault, you know; I'm not the creator of the drought; not my fault that there's low prices, you know; just too bad about, too bad about agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's productivity on a per acre basis is the lowest in Canada. I don't know if the minister knows that, but he seems to accept it. Mr. Speaker, the average return per acre in Saskatchewan for agriculture production is \$85 an acre — lowest in all of Canada.

We have this huge resource — almost half of all of the arable land in Canada — and we get the lowest production value per acre from that land. That's an indictment on NDP governments that don't recognize the importance of diversification; value-added; food processing; the establishment of an ethanol industry without doing a Sask ethanol project, another Crown corporation to accomplish it.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture has been a mainstay in Saskatchewan and I believe it will be a key component in our economy to grow the province out of the doldrums that it's been in under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is underdeveloped in the area of tourism. Saskatchewan's one of the larger provinces in Canada with some of the cleanest air, some of the cleanest water, some of the most beautiful lakes and forests, some of the most beautiful river valleys, some of the richest history in Canada and this government has not created an environment that tourism can flourish and grow.

Mr. Speaker, this government has no vision of the potential of tourism in Saskatchewan. They're afraid that somebody actually might make a dollar at the expense of tourists. Well I say, God bless the tourism industry if they can make a buck at the expense of tourists. That's exactly what this province needs.

But yes, as my colleague from Estevan points out, tourists can hardly navigate our roads. How are we going to entice them to spend money here when the word out there in the United States and in Eastern Canada and Central Canada and to the west of us is: don't drive into Saskatchewan, you may do damage to your vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, the information technology sector of the economy is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy. The potential to grow that sector of our economy is not hampered by geography, is not hampered by the, by the sparsity of our population; IT is an area where we can move forward.

But again, what does this government do? Well they expand the PST (provincial sales tax) and they put it on to the information technology sector, so it's the only sector in North America that suffers the sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, this government has squelched the information technology sector by having SaskTel compete directly against it whenever it could. The message to the people who are willing to invest dollars and grow businesses in the information technology sector is: don't do it in Saskatchewan, the government is your enemy, they'll bring you down one way or another.

Mr. Speaker, the whole area of natural resources. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to oil and gas, Saskatchewan is the last place that the industry invests and it's the first place they move out of because this government places barriers of red tape, regulation, and high taxes in the way of the industry.

Mr. Speaker, forestry's another area where we have huge potential, as in the mining sector, but this government has failed to recognize the potential that we have.

Mr. Speaker, the time to grow Saskatchewan is now. We can't wait for years and years and years more time before we begin to grow.

Education is another key to growing Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we need our education system to meet the occupational opportunities of the 21st century. And believe me there are many, many opportunities for young people in Saskatchewan and for older citizens of Saskatchewan to be trained in the areas that will provide them not only employment, but good employment, in the future.

Mr. Speaker, there are many skills and many industries that are

having trouble attracting the workers that they need today. Even in my own constituency, I spoke with an industry that needs 15 employees today and they can't find those people because we've not put in place the education that . . . system that would provide the resources for the people that need jobs and are leaving this province to find those jobs.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to education we must do much more to increase the educational standards and the educational program for our Aboriginal young people. Aboriginal young people provide one of the richest resources to build upon and to grow this province upon. And, Mr. Speaker, they, at the current time, have lower levels of education than is the norm; they have higher unemployment rates as a result. And they, in a sense, hold the key to whether Saskatchewan falls on the wrong side of the ledger or the right side of the ledger.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I looked in the Speech from the Throne I did not see a plan that would improve the educational opportunities of our Aboriginal young people and that would provide them with the skilled training they need to properly access the opportunities of the 21st century.

(15:30)

Mr. Speaker, I want to, as a final plan . . . point in our plan, to grow Saskatchewan by 100,000 in 10 years. And by the way, Mr. Speaker, as I look at their faces over there, I see that they don't believe we can do it. They have no confidence or faith in Saskatchewan. All they can do is heckle. All they can do is shout insults. They don't believe that Saskatchewan has the potential to grow and that, of course, without faith in this province will certainly not permit our province to grow the way it should.

The Saskatchewan Party believes that if we're going to grow this province by 100,000 people in 10 years we need to bring the key players of this province together at the same table to hammer out the details of the plan. A Saskatchewan Party government would initiate this process by putting together a social partnership. And we would invite labour, and we would invite business, we would invite the First Nations, we would invite municipalities to sit down at the table with us and agree on a plan to move Saskatchewan forward in the 21st century.

Now in closing I want to talk a little bit about the Saskatchewan Party's Grow Saskatchewan tour, because the NDP have done a fairly good job of splitting the media, that the attendance was low. Somehow the attendance was not as high as it should be.

I want the Minister of Crown Corporations, the member for Meadow Lake, to listen very closely to what I say. Mr. Speaker, when the NDP criticized the Grow Saskatchewan meetings, they were criticizing members of the Rosetown school board, the Elrose school board, the Outlook school board. They are criticizing people from the rural municipalities in the Rosetown-Biggar constituency. They are criticizing people from economic development; the member from the Kyle economic development committee attended our meetings. And they are criticizing the mayors of Kyle and of Biggar and of other communities that attended the Grow Saskatchewan meeting, and Rosetown alone, I'm only talking about one meeting where about 30 people attended the meeting because

they were opinion leaders and decision makers.

Now if the NDP would have held these meetings I know what they would have done. They would have . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . they would have called all of their supporters, all the partisan people in Saskatchewan, and they would have got their crowd of 20 or 30 people out. Mr. Speaker, I could have had a crowd of 100 people in Rosetown if I would have wanted to make it a partisan venture; but I didn't want to make this a partisan venture, I wanted to hear the viewpoints of the people in Saskatchewan that make important decisions and have important responsibilities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the folks on the other side tone down a little bit and listen to this. If they're going to criticize the Grow Saskatchewan meetings, then they are criticizing the member . . . the representative from CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) who attended a Grow Saskatchewan meeting. Mr. Speaker, they are criticizing the representative from the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) that attended our Grow Saskatchewan meeting. Mr. Speaker, they are criticizing the health care workers that attended our Grow Saskatchewan meeting.

Mr. Speaker, they are attacking municipal leaders who attended our Grow Saskatchewan meetings, including, Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Melville, a former NDP candidate; the mayor of Yorkton; the mayor of Saskatoon; and SREDA (Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority). Whoa, kind of quiet over there now, isn't it, Mr. Speaker? The chamber of commerce representatives; the Saskatchewan Real Estate Board — they're really excited about your plan to grow Saskatchewan, I can tell you.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. The Speaker is always willing to help members with the language of the legislature. I remind the member to make remarks through the Chair.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, the members on the other side weren't there to hear, but I'll be happy to tell them what the members of the Saskatchewan Real Estate Board think about their plan to grow Saskatchewan — which is really chasing people out; it's not growing at all. They're pretty excited about the potential of growing Saskatchewan.

Let me also tell you that we met with the anti . . . an anti-poverty association and with FSIN. Now despite some of the comments from senator David Ahenakew, who again was a former NDP candidate, we received a lot of support from FSIN for our Grow Saskatchewan plan because they realize that if Saskatchewan grows, the life of First Nations people of Saskatchewan will be better, it will be stronger. Their quality of living will be better.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has a plan. That's the first advantage we have on the NDP. They have no plan. We have a plan. Now, Mr. Speaker, not only do we have a plan but we took it out to the people of Saskatchewan and said look at it, judge it, give us your comments. And overwhelmingly the response to our plan was positive — positive from some of the people that I mentioned just a minute ago.

Mr. Speaker, our plan is ready. Mr. Speaker, we have a

Saskatchewan Party team here that's ready to implement the plan.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, a team of quality, a team of dedication, a team that loves Saskatchewan. The NDP don't have a clue, less a plan. Grow Saskatchewan by 100,000 people in 10 years — it can be done; you bet it can be done. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Saskatchewan Party will soon have a chance to deliver on our promises, which we will keep.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the amendment to the Speech from the Throne as submitted by my colleague, the member from Moosomin. Thank you very much.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to be able to rise today and speak in support of the Speech from the Throne.

I'd like to congratulate my colleagues, my good friend the member from Saskatoon Greystone for his insightful and sometimes challenging remarks in moving the Speech from the Throne. And I'd also like to congratulate my colleague, the newest member of the Assembly from Saskatoon Idylwyld, for his thoughtful, inspiring, and sometimes very humorous remarks in seconding the Speech from the Throne.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I have to say, Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to be working with a caucus with such competent and dedicated elected members, and with a government with such competent and dedicated civil servants.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments directly on the Throne Speech, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to some of the key people in my life. I would like to thank my wife, Gail, and our children, Alaina and Daniel, for their encouragement, their love, support, and understanding.

As most of my colleagues in this House will well know, our families pay a significant price so that we can make the public commitments we are called to make. And so I am thankful that through all the times of stress, all the times away, my family is there giving me all kinds of support.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my parents, Bruce and Frances Wartman, for their encouragement, for their love and support throughout the years. I want to thank them for the wonderful example they set for me. Their lives have exemplified and continue to exemplify what it means to serve God by loving and serving others. I hope and I pray that I will be able to follow their example throughout my life.

They taught me to work hard and to persevere. They helped me to understand how important it is to get involved and to work for positive change. Above all, Mr. Speaker, they shared their faith with me and helped me develop a faith of my own. Mr.

Speaker, I want to thank them and all my family for their ongoing support and encouragement. I would also like to thank all my friends from around this province and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the constituents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley for the trust that they have placed in me and the support they continue to give.

Regina Qu'Appelle Valley is a wonderful and very mixed constituency. It is a mix of urban and rural, city, small town, village — a mix of residential, commercial, farming, and industrial. Its boundaries run up the northeast side of No. 6 Highway to the south side of the Qu'Appelle valley. They follow that south side of the valley all the way over almost to the Lumsden Beach/Regina Beach intersection. And from there they cut down between Pense and Grand Coulee, including Grand Coulee.

They include most of the Northwest of the city of Regina, including Westhill, McCarthy Boulevard . . . and everything north of 9th Avenue North to McCarthy Boulevard, everything north of the gas line over to the Lewvan, Mr. Speaker, and this includes the town of Lumsden and the village of Grand Coulee.

It continues to be my privilege to serve the people of this wonderfully diverse constituency and so I would like to thank them and I would like to thank my constituency executive for all their hard work and support.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of serving this House as Minister of Highways and Transportation for the past six months. It has been a wonderful experience and I want to thank the Premier for appointing me and I want to thank Deputy Minister Harvey Brooks and all the department officials and staff for their commitment, for their continuing good work and support. I look forward to working with them as our government continues to build and maintain the transportation infrastructure of this province.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all my staff. Donna From, my constituency assistant; Dave Degenstien, my chief of staff; Tyler Lloyd, ministerial assistants; Florence Matthies, senior secretary and all around organizer of my life these days; and Gina Mitchell, secretary and provider of some of the best candy and office decorations in the building. And, Mr. Speaker, just in case she is watching, I would like to convey wishes of many of us here today to Florence Matthies for healing and for a speedy recovery. We look forward to having her back in the office as soon as she is able.

Mr. Speaker, there is one other thing I would like to say before I begin directly speaking on the Speech from the Throne. I would like to offer my congratulations to Scott Bitz, former parishioner and friend, and to his rink from the Regina Caledonian Curling Club on their gallant showing at this year's Brier. And I'd like to specially offer recognition to the Saskatchewan team's lead, Kelly Moskow, who was selected as the first team all-star lead at this year's Brier. I'm proud to say that Kelly is one of the valued employees of the Department of Highways and Transportation of Saskatchewan.

With those preliminary comments, Mr. Speaker, I would now like to comment on the Speech from the Throne . . . Speech to the

Throne. From the Throne. I'll try that again.

Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne sets the tone of our government for the session ahead. It sets out our vision and our commitment to that vision. It sets out a plan of action for Saskatchewan through investment in our families, our economy, our education system, our environment, and our infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition and their buddies under a variety of names out in the community try to say our government has no plan. We've just heard a diatribe about that. They are simply wrong. However, as my mother used to quote, there are "none so blind as those who will not see." And I can only guess that you choose not to see on the other side of the House.

As has been reported on a number of fronts, despite all the odds our economy has been growing. With the work that we have done to reduce personal income tax and small business taxes, with all the progressive initiatives we have taken in education and health, with the work that has been done to build a solid foundation of dependable infrastructure, we have made and are continuing to make this province one of the best, most competitive places in the G-8 to do business. KPMG made that very clear in their recent study. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very clear that it is one of the best places in this world to live.

I will admit, Mr. Speaker, that more needs to be done to stem the tide of population loss. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe we are on the right track and though we experienced a population decline last year — largely due to the drought and the downturn in the farm economy — we will see this turn around.

Our government is providing a stable environment in which business can build and thrive and produce jobs. And if there is one thing that business wants and desires, it is stability so they know how to plan for the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our graduates are finding good jobs here in this province, and it will get even better. Over 75 per cent of college graduates finding good jobs here, over 90 per cent of the graduates of our technical schools finding good jobs here. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will get better.

Some may ask: will an NDP government be able to match or beat the opposition SP's (Saskatchewan Party) promise to increase the population by at least 100,000 over 10 years? First of all, Mr. Speaker, as one of their supporters, I believe from the opposition leader's own constituency said, well there really isn't much substance in their plan. Considering the fact that even their own party members don't believe there is much substance in the Grow Saskatchewan plan, I can't imagine it will have much success anywhere else.

(15:45)

Mr. Speaker, I think that whole plan is not much more than a bag of hot air. Given their open, or was it closed, or sometimes open and sometimes closed, meetings to explain that program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that that Sask Party opposition are trying to sell the people of this province a pig in a poke.

That is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're trying to sell something in

a bag that they claim is a pig. But, Mr. Speaker, given the smell from that particular bag, I think it's more likely they're trying to sell a skunk instead of a pig. And I don't think the people of this province will buy it. They will not buy any tricky sales pitch; they will not buy any hot air and empty words from the opposition SPs.

Cutting taxes, cutting the services, and all of the things that they said they would do, including freezing health, freezing education, in their past . . . in the past election, will do one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It will grow one thing in this province. What will it grow? It will grow the debt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's all that's in that Grow Saskatchewan bag, that growing debt. That's all their plan would do, Mr. Speaker, and I tell you, it stinks to high heaven.

The question remains, can the Calvert government build this province, and increase the population? And the answer is yes, we can, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yes, we can. If anyone can enable Saskatchewan's population to grow, we can. If anyone can enable Saskatchewan's population to increase, and our economy to grow, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a New Democratic Party government can, and will.

The New Democratic Party have done it before, and we will do it again. We will do it by building a solid and sustainable foundation. We will do it by building on that foundation. We have a vision for the future. We have a plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that steadily builds and diversifies the economy year upon year. We don't have to come up with a new plan every year, because we have a solid plan that builds year upon year.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm convinced that our vision, and our plan, will provide jobs in this province, and will provide a very successful future for Saskatchewan young people, for businesses, for workers alike.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan will be a destiny for workers from across this country and around the world as it grows. And when we get beyond the effects of this drought and downturn in agricultural employment, I have no doubt — no doubt — that our population will increase substantially.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — So what is our vision, Mr. Deputy Speaker? In the past generations, we might have called our vision a vision of the new Jerusalem, a biblical image which is still relevant today.

We envision Saskatchewan as a strong, progressive, prosperous, and compassionate community, a province to which people are drawn from all corners of the world — a community where racism and hatred do not show their ugly faces, and a province with an education system that is second to none and accessible to all.

This is a vision of a community where all have access to the best possible highest-quality, publicly funded, affordable health care — a community where people work together for the good of all.

Our vision is of a province where success and initiative are

encouraged and celebrated. It is a vision of a province where people are encouraged and enabled to invest their money, and to develop and use their talents and abilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a clear vision that is well grounded, a courageous vision — a vision that will enable us to meet the immediate needs of our people and to expand our economy and our population so we can meet the needs of the future.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent significant time in this past year meeting with the people of this province, listening to their concerns, their ideas, their hopes, and their dreams. We had a very challenging and very successful bus tour this summer. We heard the concerns of many, many people in this province. And I travelled the province and consulted extensively as I worked on developing a greenprint for ethanol.

We have the action community on the rural economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker — ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) — a group of dedicated citizens who have been working hard to put together recommendations to help us build the rural economy of this province.

We have a workable and sustainable plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are already implementing some of the wonderful ideas that have been recommended. We see this in CommunityNet and in its ongoing development. We see it on a number of fronts. The Speech from the Throne, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talks about our investment in infrastructure as being both . . . being important to both the economy and to the quality of life in Saskatchewan.

And I'm proud that our government has made a long-term commitment to building, repairing, and improving the transportation infrastructure of Saskatchewan. We're moving into the second year of a \$900 million, three-year plan to improve our roads and highways — a plan that is part of a longer term commitment of \$2.5 billion over 10 years.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that the members opposite support that level of financial commitment to our highway system. I note that the member from Cypress Hills is quoted in the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*, March 7, saying the current \$300 million budget can do the job over a longer term. I appreciate that member's support for our highway budget and I look forward to his support for our government's 2002-2003 provincial budget as well.

Mr. Speaker, when this government makes a commitment, when it makes a commitment it does everything within reason to keep that commitment. And our commitment to improve our transportation infrastructure is a prime example of promises made, promises kept. We are fixing the roads in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this past year we completed the busiest, most productive highway construction season in our province's history, thanks to our almost \$312 million budget, the highest ever for the Department of Highways and Transportation. We focused on highway work that provides real benefits to the travelling public. We focused on rebuilding our rural highways that have seen severe pressure from changing haul patterns. We focused on repaving our major provincial highways to accommodate our growing economy. We are working with

innovators to find new, better, and less expensive ways of building and repairing our roads.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we focused on the continuing twinning of the Saskatchewan portion of our national highways — the Trans-Canada Highway and the Yellowhead highway. Mr. Deputy Speaker, last season our government invested more than \$25 million in these major twinning projects and as a result, we were able to open more than 70 kilometres of new four-lane highway.

And we have committed to completing the twinning of the Highway No. 1 West corridor between Gull Lake and the Alberta border in the year 2004, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a good four years ahead of the schedule. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thanks to our multi-year funding commitment we expect to invest more than \$23 million on continued twinning projects on Highway No. 1 and 16 this coming construction year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last season we completed major work on more than 800 kilometres of highway in Saskatchewan. Without the dedicated work of our civil service and the dedicated work of our road-building contractors in this province we would not have been able to accomplish so much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were able to work almost to the end of November in completing some of those roads. Good work by our building contractors and by the department staff.

In this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have about 90 per cent of the traffic running on 7 per cent of the roads. And yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we still make a commitment to trying to maintain much of that whole network in top shape. That work takes pulling together with people from a variety of different communities. And to that end we are working with the rural municipalities on various strategies to manage heavy truck traffic on our thin membrane surface highways.

And we are working with the area transportation planning committees all across this province as they help identify the changing transportation patterns in their local areas and make recommendations for setting the improvement priorities.

In this unique model of co-operation and consultation, I am proud to say that our government is very impressed with the work these committees have done. We have a plan for building, repairing, and maintaining our transportation infrastructure that is second to none. This is a prime example of what can be accomplished when groups have a positive attitude and work together, with sometimes differing views and differing politics, but work together towards a common goal. And this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen in spades in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in 2001 we employed a co-operative model as we worked with various RMs (rural municipality) to manage the heavy truck traffic. And I'm proud to say that we worked with more than 50 different partners on projects that addressed over 500 kilometres of lower volume rural highways. And I'm looking forward to continuing co-operation and success in the coming construction year.

There is much more to say about the good work that is being done and the good work planned in our transportation

infrastructure programs. But I'd like to highlight some of the other positive aspects of the Throne Speech, by spending a few moments on the topic of Saskatchewan as a place to live and work and raise our families.

In the past year we heard little but gloom and doom from the members opposite, and I think they're going to continue that if they have shown any signs so far. They wore their Alberta envy on their sleeves as if it was some strange badge of honour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite should be ashamed of the negative attitudes that they've pushed out in Saskatchewan and their constant griping. Griping about how much better things would be if we were just like Alberta. Maybe given the recent news on tax increases and unrest in Alberta, maybe they will change their tune. I for one truly hope they do.

On the other hand, they may not and that's attested in this rather pathetic little story that I heard the other day. Apparently there was a group hosting one of the open or closed meetings happening out in rural Saskatchewan, and they were trying to figure out what they should get for their Sask Party MLAs who arrived there. One of them went down to the liquor store and he was asking someone what's the Sask Party MLA's favourite wine? Somebody overheard them and said, we should be more like Alberta. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that pathetic little story just illustrates the way the people out there have seen those members opposite — pretty tragic.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, and indeed some of the media and perhaps even StatsCanada, would like people to somehow believe that the population decline in Saskatchewan is some new phenomenon created by the NDP government policies. They seem to forget or to ignore the facts: population decline is not something new in Saskatchewan; it has been cyclical. And certainly population growth in Alberta is not something new; it too has been rather cyclical.

It doesn't take a brilliant researcher to do a bit of digging and find that the alarmist headlines and editorials that are seen in papers lately could have been reprints of articles that were printed somewhere back in the '30s, the '40s, the '50s, or the '60s. And if change in Saskatchewan is anything, it is a constant. However, a change in population now and then is certainly less than a crisis. However, with the past Conservative government we did see dips that were beyond any that we've seen for decades.

(16:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Doug Elliott, the publisher of the *Sask Trends Monitor* said of the new StatsCanada figures quoted in *The Leader-Post*, it's making too much of what is effectively a straight line, about one million population since the 1930s.

So let's not get too wound up about this straight line, and let's continue building this province on a solid foundation, the kind of solid foundation that will draw people in from around the world, that will produce jobs, that will draw businesses here. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is on that foundation that this province will grow and prosper, and provide jobs for people in . . . who come into the province, and will provide a good place, a

continuing good place to raise families.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Not to make light of this admittedly worrisome trend, but I really think that Friday's *National Post* columnist by . . . column by columnist Roy MacGregor kind of put things in perspective.

Mr. MacGregor's article is entitled, "Saskatchewan; not the biggest, just the best". Why did he claim that? It is not the biggest. Why would he claim it's the best?

The article speaks of the recent StatsCanada figures. It mentions how high Saskatchewan rates in all measurable areas of civic participation — specifically, charitable giving, volunteering, and community involvement. The article points out that Saskatchewan residents give just about three times as much to charities as do residents of other provinces; that 45 per cent of Saskatchewan residents do volunteer work; that 60 per cent of Saskatchewan residents participate in community or association activities.

The article goes on. Saskatchewan residents are four times as likely to be involved in a church, twice as likely to be engaged in sport or cultural events, and nearly three times as likely to get involved at the civic, community or school level.

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very important comment on the structure and the culture of Saskatchewan society. A society and the culture no doubt moulded by more than 30 years of social democratic government. This is the kind of society to which people come and visit, and they say what a wonderful place that is. It's the kind of society that welcomes tourists, and helps those tourists feel that this is a place they want to return to.

It's the kind of society that welcomes new people in with their ideas, and their innovations and encourages them to build here and to become a part of a society that is caring and responsible.

Mr. MacGregor's article concludes by pointing out that civic participation is a form of social glue. And that in Saskatchewan so much social glue can only improve the quality of life here. That Saskatchewan people have a deep-rooted sense of the collective good and tend to have a history of thinking of the bigger picture.

Why aren't we like Alberta? Because we are uniquely and wonderfully Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Premier, and I am proud . . . or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am proud of that. Uniquely and wonderfully Saskatchewan.

And that brings me back to the topic at hand. The government's Speech from the Throne — a document that speaks of the dedication of this government to the collective good of the people as we work together to build this province of opportunity. A document that speaks of this government's willingness and ability to listen to and learn from the wonderful people of this province.

Listening and learning through activities such as the Premier's bus tour, and through the action committee on the rural



economy, and through our area transportation planning committees, and through our public review of the health care services system. And we listen and we learn and we implement those ideas that will help to build this province and make it successful.

This is a Speech from the Throne that emphasizes the fact that Saskatchewan is a province of opportunity. Our partnership for prosperity document makes clear that there are tremendous opportunities in diversification and in value-added processing.

Opportunities are here to develop an ethanol industry as part of renewable fuels and overall renewable fuels industry. There are opportunities in diamonds and other minerals. And when we look we find that we are now the second largest producer of minerals and oil and gas in this nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are building this province of opportunity. We are finding tremendous success here. We see that there are opportunities in energy development with environmentally responsible energy alternatives such as wind generation and new conservation initiatives. We see that there are opportunities in forestry and in manufacturing.

Opportunities in research and development. What can we do in this area with the new synchrotron in Saskatoon is beyond most of our imaginations; but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are people with imaginations that encompass those possibilities who will be setting up an institute for that synchrotron. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are people in this province who are working on new and innovative ways to build this province, and they are getting the support of this government to build on those initiatives.

There are opportunities in forestry and manufacturing that will be successful, that will help to grow the economy. There are opportunities in cultural industries and tourism where we have so many wonderful untapped or at least to this point, underdeveloped resources. Tourism, cultural industries, industries that draw people to the province — industries that help them want to stay here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these opportunities in our economy and the quality of our public services, the spirit of our people, and indeed the quality of life in Saskatchewan all combine to ensure that Saskatchewan will remain one of the very best places in the world to live and to set up business.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan is Canada's province of opportunity and as the Speech from the Throne makes clear, our government will continue to encourage and enable the people of Saskatchewan to work together with the interested parties from across Canada and from around the world so that together we will be able to seize those opportunities and build a thriving and prosperous province for all of Saskatchewan's people.

For these reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the vision that I see before this province, for the potential to build this province successfully, I would speak against the amendment. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity to speak in

support of the Speech from the Throne, and would like to advise you that I will be voting in favour of the motion.

**Mr. Harper:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure for me to enter into the debate on the Throne Speech. And at this point in time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to welcome the new member from Saskatoon Idylwyld to our fold. He's certainly going to be contributing a huge amount — there's no question about that.

It's sort of a tradition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Throne Speech is . . . the reply to the Throne Speech is started out by a few comments on the constituency so I would like to take this opportunity to say a few things about the constituency of Regina Northeast. It's certainly a pleasure to represent that constituency and it's made up of the areas in the city of Regina of Uplands, Churchill Downs, and part of the core area. In other words, Mr. Speaker, it's a good cross-section of the community.

And I've had the opportunity in the last number of weeks, particularly last summer and the summer before that, of getting out and door knocking and visiting with many of my constituents. And I really appreciate doing that because they're warm, friendly, and responsive; and at times, yes, stimulate a fair amount of interesting debate at the doorstep. But it's always such an enlightening experience to get out and talk to the real people who live in the real world in my constituency.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituency comprises of a large section of the business community here in Regina. I believe that I have more business places in my constituency than in any other constituency in Regina. And along with that I would dare say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I probably have the most eating places of anywhere in the city of Regina. And many of my colleagues have commented on the fact that they believe that I participate in visiting those eating places quite often.

But it is truly a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to take part in this Throne Speech that was so well delivered by Her Honour.

And first of all, I just want to . . . through you to the Speaker, I want to offer a personal thank you to the Speaker for providing me the opportunity to accompany him and his wife to Inuvik earlier on . . . or late last year, in fact, to be part of the delegation that presented the gift from Saskatchewan to Nunavut as it became a territory. And having the privilege of accompanying us was Linda Spence from the Speaker's office and Margaret Woods from the Clerk's office, along with, of course, myself and the member from Humboldt.

And of course, accompanying us was Jackie Berting, the artist, and her husband and assistant, James Clark, from Cupar, Saskatchewan. And I'm sure that many of the members had the opportunity of seeing the gift. It was a glass wall. That glass wall was on display here in the Legislative Assembly for a number of weeks before it was sent up to Nunavut. And it certainly does us proud to be on display in their Legislative Assembly.

And I also want to comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we did arrive in Nunavut, it was not warm. In fact this was the first part of December and it was quite cold up there. I think it was something like minus 20, 25, 30 below. But the warmth of

our reception certainly made up for the temperature outside and Speaker O'Neil and his staff was just very accommodating. And they welcomed us with open arms, and very hospitable, and they welcomed us with open arms and showed us a great time while we were there.

And Nunavut just becoming a territory on April 1 of 2001 . . . or 2000, I believe it was, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, it's interesting makeup when you compare their legislative process and their Legislative Assembly to that of ours here in Saskatchewan and other provincial legislatures.

Nunavut has 19 MLAs. In this case they were elected in February 1999, just a few short weeks before the creation of the territory on April 1. And this Assembly is one of two such bodies in Canada that works on a non . . . consensus basis. Among the many differences, I guess you could say in the Legislative Assembly, that their members are elected as individuals; their members do not represent political parties.

And it's interesting that after the 19 MLAs are elected, they then select the Speaker as we do. They also select from their midst the Premier and then the cabinet ministers. And the non-cabinet ministers then sit in opposition to the cabinet ministers. And there's a fair amount of debate goes back and forth; and although they don't represent various political parties — they're individuals — they do participate in some very interesting exchanges, and I would say even heated debate.

Something that I personally found quite interesting there was something that is only available in the House of Commons, and I believe in the two territories now — the Northwest Territories and the territory of Nunavut — is, unlike the provincial legislatures, they offer translation services. In Nunavut the two official languages are Nunavut and English.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, to be provided the translation opportunity to experience that because it's something that we're not used to and something we certainly don't have here in Saskatchewan. Although after that experience, Mr. Speaker, I have come to the belief that it may be something we would want to consider establishing in the legislature here in Saskatchewan — that is a translation services. I believe that translation services in this legislature would help the government members understand what the opposition is trying to say.

(16:15)

But, Mr. Speaker, getting on to the Throne Speech, it was an excellent Throne Speech that clearly outlines a vision for the future for this province; clearly outlines a vision of prosperity for Saskatchewan; clearly outlines Saskatchewan will be the province of opportunity.

This came about, Mr. Speaker, as many experiences do; but this summer having had the opportunity of taking part in the Premier's bus tour for some two weeks, I found that very, very interesting. I had the opportunity of visiting a number of communities across Saskatchewan: Watrous, Lanigan, Wynyard, Foam Lake, Canora, Yorkton, Kamsack — and the list goes on.

But in all of these communities, Mr. Speaker, when we met with community leaders we found a desire to grow the province of Saskatchewan. And we've seen examples of that. One that comes to mind is at Lanigan and the Pound-Maker feedlot there, for example. That is a very prosperous, community-driven operation that has added value-added agriculture and has added a great deal to that community and surrounding area.

The same can be said for Lilydale poultry at Wynyard, which is also a very active and very prosperous, and a growing and expanding operation which provides many benefits to the local people as well as the entire province of Saskatchewan.

The strawboard plant at Kamsack is under construction . . . a community group there who have been labouring for a few years now to create an industry, a strawboard industry there, which will simply pick up the straw from farmers and process it into a product that will be available in the commercial marketplace and provide opportunities not only to the farming public there but provide opportunities in jobs and investment returns to the local citizenship.

So there's just a tremendous amount of positive things happening right across our great province. Saskatchewan truly is a province of opportunity. And opportunities abound in many sectors of our economy. Diversification and value-added processing in agriculture; and I think that there is many examples, and I just related some of them.

But there's many more examples right across Saskatchewan where local people are getting involved in their economy, making the investment on the strength and the knowledge and the security that they know that those investments will pay dividends not only to themselves and as individuals, but to their communities and to the rest of Saskatchewan.

Increased development of energy resources and including a green plan. Mr. Speaker, as we know, as the world develops and our economy here in Saskatchewan develops, there is a thirst and a hunger for more energy sources. And those, Mr. Speaker, we're meeting with the expansion of our development and resource energies, but we're doing it in a careful manner, including a green plan to ensure that we have a sustainable environment.

Mr. Speaker, there are . . . Opportunities abound in Saskatchewan. We're seeing that opportunities in the growth of our forest production, in the forest industry; in manufacturing; growth in our cultural industries; growth in tourism and services; and growth in our mining and our base metals, such as diamonds and other mineral deposits.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan is standing on the threshold of opportunity and prosperity. That opportunity and prosperity is only limited by our attitude and our imagination. There are many examples of very positive things happening right across this province, Mr. Speaker.

A commitment to the . . . in times of uncertainty and I'd like . . . The province of Saskatchewan and the economy here is no different than running one's own life or running one's own home budget. You have good times and you have bad times. And any careful manager will recognize that, and in the good

times you put a little away to cushion the bad times that you know will come. And I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that since 1991 this government has done that.

During the past eight years, the people of Saskatchewan have paid down the debt — the provincial debt that we inherited from those people over there or their country cousins or their former namesake. We've paid down that debt. The people of Saskatchewan paid down that debt by \$3.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, tax-supported debt has fallen from 49 per cent to 23 per cent of our gross national product — a commitment that has been made by the people of Saskatchewan that has, that has . . . I'm mind-boggled when I think a lot of people around, not only in Saskatchewan and across Canada but around the world, of how Saskatchewan citizens have rallied to the cause, to address the indebtedness that was plaguing this province. Have we got a ways to go? Yes we have. But we have a firm commitment from this government and the people of Saskatchewan to work to that end.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, to verify what . . . the strides that we have made in addressing the debt. The Provincial Auditor, in a recent public accounts meeting said, and I quote:

The government is doing a good job of cash management.

Clearly indicating, Mr. Speaker, that it is a wise decision that was taken by the members of this government in the past, that in the good years to put some money away to carry us through the bad years. And that's exactly what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, and quite frankly I'm very proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, this government does have a plan of action for Saskatchewan. The government's plan to expand our economy and create new opportunities for our young people is based on four pillars.

Number one, investment in the economy and the environment. Investment in the infrastructure, quality education, and healthy and self-reliant families.

Mr. Speaker, anybody who has built anything knows that the strengths of the building is only as good as its foundation. Mr. Speaker, we have built a good solid foundation in this province and now we are able to place the pillars on a solid foundation that will support a growing economy in a growing province of prosperity and opportunity.

The growth in Saskatchewan will continue to be led by the private sector and private investment. However, public policy and government initiatives can serve as a catalyst to that investment. And there are many, many positive examples of that, Mr. Speaker. Those examples have led the way in the economic development of this province. And recent polls have shown that the businesses in Saskatchewan are very optimistic about the future and many expand . . . many plan to expand and hire more staff.

The leading indicator of the prosperity and the strength of our economy, Mr. Speaker, is that of housing sales in Saskatchewan — in Regina and Saskatoon. Housing sales is at an all-time high.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, has a resource-based economy. Saskatchewan has for many years had the development of those resources in the best interest of Saskatchewan people. Saskatchewan's known oil resources are estimated about 35 billion barrels, much of it in a form of heavy oil.

The government will present a comprehensive energy development and conservation strategy that will build on increasing heavy oil production and expand on our natural gas sector. To meet the needs, as we recognized in the past, the economies — not only in Saskatchewan but around the world — are growing. And with that growth comes a hunger and a desire for the energy to feed those economic growths and part of that will be the heavy oil production from this province, and the natural gas production from this province; creating not only the investment opportunities here but the jobs that go with it.

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

**Mr. Harper:** — Saskatchewan people recognize the importance of climate change and the environment and economic issues. Initiatives will continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our province. And an office, a new office, of energy conservation will be established.

And, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time I want to acknowledge the work done by the member from Saskatoon Greystone on this very issue. He has worked very, very hard on developing those plans and putting forward suggestions. And I know that as a Co-Chair of the Saskatchewan Construction Panel we had . . . the panel had the opportunity of having the member from Saskatoon Greystone at our recent meeting where he made the presentations of his report. And it was very, very well-received by all the members there. And it . . . something that I'm very proud of that this government, along with the member leading the way, has taken an initiative on developing that type of plan to conserve the energy and find ways and means that we can ensure that we have the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the province's cultural community has also played an important role and has . . . contributed to the economic growth. Saskatchewan writers, artists, performers, producers, and technicians give form and voice to the values that define us as a people. Increasingly they attract world-wide audiences and acclaim.

And I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that during this session the government together with Sask Film and Video Development Corporation will open a new \$11.5 million state-of-the-art film and video sound stage here in Regina. That, Mr. Speaker, will not only facilitate and aid the film companies and video companies here in Saskatchewan, but it will attract investment. It will attract firms from outside of Saskatchewan to come here and do their work, bring with them the dollars and cents that is going to be a very major contributor to our economy.

And as the member from . . . that spoke before me, the Minister of Highways has already indicated our strong and solid commitment over three years to the financing and investment in our infrastructure that is so very, very important as we grow the economy. We need to create thoroughfares of commerce so that the communities and the organizations and companies

throughout the province have a mechanism to move their product to market.

Some of that infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, is our highway system. And as the minister has already indicated, the government has a firm commitment of \$900 million over three years to improve our highway system. And this year the Legislative Assembly will be asked to approve some several hundred kilometres of highway reconstruction paving.

That, Mr. Speaker, is very interesting. Because a few . . . many of us realize that over the last few years there's been some dramatic announcements in regards to elevator closures. And with those announcements, Mr. Speaker, comes the need for our farm industry, agricultural industry, to move its farm products further, longer distances, and bigger loads, and that's going to put increased pressure on our highway system.

So I'm pleased to see that the Department of Highways under the minister's guidance is working on a designated road system for heavy-haul roads — for heavy-haul loads rather — so that we can ensure that we maintain a good infrastructure system across this great province of ours.

But infrastructure is a lot more than just a highway system. It is also providing the opportunity to take advantage of the latest technology. The CommunityNet program will expand the high-speed Internet services to a further 460 health, education, community, and government centres across this province, ensuring Saskatchewan residents, organizations, and businesses have access modern Internet services. As well, SaskTel will expand the high-speed Internet to homes and businesses in 191 more communities in the year 2003.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we're giving the opportunity for businesses, residents, institutions right across Saskatchewan to take advantage of the latest technology. And this has got to be one more element of strengthening our economy.

That, Mr. Speaker, is something that we can be assure of would never, ever happen under a Sask Party government. We know that, Mr. Speaker, because they have already said, clearly, that if they were the government, they would sell off the Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday the member from Humboldt, and today the Leader of the Opposition, said that if there was a Sask Party government in Saskatchewan, they would grow Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, after giving it much thought, I agree with the member from Humboldt and I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. I can see things grow in Saskatchewan under a Sask Party government.

Mr. Speaker, under a Sask Party government in Saskatchewan, I can see the unemployment lines grow. Under a Sask Party government, I can see the food bank lines grow. I can see, under a Sask Party government, the debt of this province grow. I can see, under a Sask Party government, hopelessness and despair grow.

(16:30)

Not the things Saskatchewan people want to see grow. Not the

things that this government will grow, Mr. Speaker. I think, Mr. Speaker, that's just one more indicator of why that group over there, the Sask Party members, will never, never be government of this province.

I think it's clear, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan know full well that a coyote might change its coat, but underneath it's still a coyote.

Mr. Speaker, during the past four years, provincial funding for K to 12 education has increased by 24 per cent. This government is proud of having responded to the innovative and dedication of our educators and the long-term needs of our youth.

We live in a changing world. We live in a world that's different today than it was 20 years ago or 30 years ago when competition was something that was next door. But today competition is not only national but it's international. And with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, to meet those challenges of change, we have to give our youth the . . . the youth, our children of today, the tools to meet those changes with.

No longer is grade 12 enough. At one time grade 12 opened the door to many positive opportunities, but today it doesn't. Today our youth need education beyond grade 12. They need the opportunity of university or post-secondary training of some type that will provide them the opportunity to meet those challenges and to continue to grow our economy and to be an active part of our economy to ensure that we have a strong economy to enjoy in the future.

Well over 50,000 Saskatchewan students will participate in classes and training programs this year through the province's universities, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), regional colleges, private vocational schools, as well as on-the-job training programs; and the work of Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission will continue to be the key instruments in meeting our training needs.

Of particular significance is the growing number of First Nations and Métis students who participate in the provincial education and training opportunities. Saskatchewan is a national leader in providing training geared to Aboriginal students, often delivered through Aboriginal and First Nation . . . and northern and First Nations training institutions.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would also like to commend our Minister of Labour for her announcement that the minimum wage will rise to \$6.35 an hour on May 1 and \$6.65 an hour on November 1. I want to compliment the Minister of Labour on that announcement. I think it was wonderful.

And if you look at the combining the minimum wage increases with the government's continuing program of tax reduction, we see the opportunity to benefit the less fortunate in our society, the people on a lower income that will . . . that work in our society. And some 50,000 people are coming off of tax rolls, and these two measures clearly benefit those in our society who are less fortunate. So I want to commend the minister one more time on that, because I think that is a very progressive and positive step forward.

Mr. Speaker, the government's action plan for Saskatchewan recognizes that good health and good housing are fundamentals to the quality of life. Our government is both determined that the opportunities to participate in the economy will be extended to all citizens.

And on that point, Mr. Speaker, I think that we recognize that affordable housing is something that is needed by all citizens in our province and in our country. Affordable housing is essential for all people in our society — the young people, young families, and seniors. And I believe all three levels of government — federal, provincial, and local — have to be aware that we have a growing senior population, a population that needs to have access to affordable housing to meet their needs.

There's a group in my constituency that is working to just such an end on such a project. The group is called the ASH committee. The ASH stands for affordable senior housing. Bernice Fjoser, who is chairperson of that group, tells me that they have already received over a hundred applications and more are coming in almost every day.

And we are experiencing, Mr. Speaker, a population that is growing older and in many cases we're finding individuals who have lived their life in their own home, but simply looking after and maintaining that home is getting to be a bit of a burden to them and they are looking at other opportunities.

And I believe that we as a society, Mr. Speaker, have an obligation to those seniors who have built this province and have built this country. We have an obligation to them to ensure that they have adequate, safe, proper housing for their golden years. And in some cases, living — in some cases alone — in a house that's getting to be just too much of a burden for some people to look after.

So I think that there's a need, Mr. Speaker, for us as a society to look at innovative ways that we can ensure, not only adequate housing for young people, not only adequate housing for young families, but we also have to be aware of the senior population and provide them with an adequate, safe housing in their golden years. After all, Mr. Speaker, it was those folks who really built this country, built this province; they did so through their commitment and dedication and in many cases, sacrifice.

So I think we as a society have an obligation to ensure that when seniors reach their golden years and find living in their own homes and some cases, perhaps, by themselves, their partner has passed on, that looking after that home is too much of a burden and we have to ensure that there is some mechanism so that they can be . . . they can have access to affordable housing that meets their needs in a safe and friendly environment.

Mr. Speaker, the government's highest priority in this action plan for Saskatchewan is the provision and renewal of a sustainable, publicly administrated health care system.

Last December the government released the action plan for Saskatchewan health care, a long-term plan to improve and secure health care for all of Saskatchewan people. And I think this is very important, Mr. Speaker, because if you look at the

options — and the options are fairly limited — we can either have a publicly funded, publicly administrated health care system in this province or we can have the alternative. The alternative quite frankly is private medicine.

And over the last few weeks, I have intentionally talked to a number of constituents with one particular reason, and that is to contact them and ask them what issues that they thought should be brought before this legislature in this sitting. And I'm surprised, Mr. Speaker, that nearly 85 per cent of the people I talked to, the first issue that was most important to them was having the discussion on the preservation of medicare. That's something that Saskatchewan people hold near and dear to their hearts. And it's something that Saskatchewan people believe in.

And I'm proud to say that our government is moving in that direction, Mr. Speaker, in that we have looked at the various possibilities of providing a most efficient health care system. And with that, the government will be introducing legislation to establish 12 new regional health authorities and Canada's first health quality council — an independent advisory board that will be encouraged to look for excellence throughout the health care system and report publicly on the health care quality issues. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Minister of Health and the Premier for taking that initiative because that is very progressive and forward-looking.

And, Mr. Speaker, the government is no doubt committed to a publicly funded, publicly administrated health care system. And we know full well, Mr. Speaker, that the Sask Party opposite would rather Americanize our system. If they were to Americanize our health care system, we know from examples of what has gone on down there what the results would be. The results would be quite simple, Mr. Speaker. We would have health care for the rich and nothing for the rest of us.

With that, Mr. Speaker, upon the request of the constituents of Regina Northeast, I will not be voting for the amendment but I will be voting for the Throne Speech.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — It's always a pleasure for me to rise with the opportunity to talk about my constituency of Arm River. Since my election in '99, I've travelled extensively throughout Arm River to touch base with my many constituents. Mr. Speaker, without exception, these farmers and business people, employees, and families are the most hardworking and honest Saskatchewan residents I know. They tell me how proud they are to live in this great province, despite this government.

Over and over I hear about the value of close communities, of caring people, of courtesy and friendship to all. Family values are treasured here in rural Saskatchewan, as well as deeply traditional work ethic and a healthy respect of authority.

They believe that the provincial government should be truly responsible for the hard-earned tax dollars; to put them to the best use to benefit their families and their neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, we've once again received a Throne Speech that

promised better times ahead for my constituents. This is the third Throne Speech I've heard and it seems to promise this each and every time but I've never . . . I don't think it's delivered on any of them. Less work, less workers, less jobs, less people. A long-range farm plan they've tried to bring out, Mr. Speaker, every time in the Throne Speech. I've heard that three times now and still have not put it together.

The year 2001 with few exceptions was a very difficult year, Mr. Speaker, at least for the biggest industry in my constituency and around the province, and that of course being agriculture. Drought conditions persisted throughout the 2001 growing season, adding more problems to an industry already in trouble when the year began.

Across the province grain farmers and cattle producers alike felt the heavy impact of hot, dry conditions. Crop yields were well below average, while water for cattle and green pastures were in short supply.

Businesses that support agriculture meanwhile were struggling to remain afloat. As a farmer and a rancher myself, I can realize just how difficult the 2001 year was for the industry basically with no help from this government or no long-range plan.

Mr. Speaker, as a responsible member of this Assembly, I firmly believe, then as now, that the present government must come to the assistance of farmers and their related businesses. Indeed as part of the official opposition, we've demanded that the Premier take action during this critical time. Farmers and ranchers need action from this government to address water and rainfall shortages . . . keep them viable, but little has been done to help this vital and the most important industry of Saskatchewan.

Repeatedly we hear that this government is concerned, and yet repeatedly they pass the buck to Ottawa saying it's all up to them to help the farmers. No new initiatives, even modest ones, are being attempted by this provincial government. Or I . . . the only new initiative maybe they brought out to talk about is crop insurance, where they cut out the spot . . . spot loss hail and plus a 7 per cent increase to premiums.

Even when the federal government offered matching funds for more water resources through the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) early in August, they said no. This government only had to put up \$5 million then but they dragged their heels and waited until December to sign when basically then the offer is down to \$3 million. And producers needed to know in October and September when they could have dug them dugouts and them wells, instead of November and December, Mr. Speaker.

We get . . . first we get the Premier and his agriculture first saying one thing, and then saying the reverse. First we had a drought to be concerned with. Then the Agriculture minister had discussions with his federal counterpart; tell Saskatchewan farmers that there really was no problem in 2001. However, when asked to account for the loss of 15,000 jobs in our province, the government immediately blames these jobs on agriculture.

Do you think that if it was an important industry that lost these

5,000 jobs . . . 15,000 jobs, they would be doing some initiatives to keep that in the Throne Speech instead of barely, hardly even mentioning agriculture in there.

(16:45)

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it was revealed earlier this year that Saskatchewan has suffered a net loss as I said of 15,000 jobs over the last two years and yet this government . . . the jobs were lost basically in the farm sector or from the many spinoff service industries in the agriculture industry. Yet this government that touts itself as a listening government, one that cares about jobs, and the people, and the families, but do they give any support in the Throne Speech to agriculture? See, no, they just cut the spud loss sale that we know of and raised the 7 per cent premiums so that farmers are facing additional costs this spring.

You know when it comes to agriculture, I don't believe for a minute this government listens to anybody but their own advisors — advisors who are no more in touch with the real issues out there in rural Saskatchewan than the cabinet ministers who employ them.

Mr. Speaker, here we have a government who cannot get drought recognition correct. Finally admitting that they can't, that they are, as well, not qualified to grow potatoes. They can't get drought recognition right; they can't grow potatoes. This is a positive proof that the government should not engage in the private enterprise out there dealing with the Crowns.

Another issue that just came up was I had a letter from a constituent on SaskTel. They're starting a business out there and he wanted SaskTel to put in five lines. And the price was \$4,200 per line, totalling \$20,000, which was pretty steep for a business; so he thought he would contact me and in return we contacted the office and they did do some adjustment.

The argument was, if he hadn't come to us he would be paying close to \$20,000 for them lines. Now I can see the first line costing \$4,200 but the other four lines that were going in could have been ploughed in at the same time which SaskTel finally acknowledged, yes they can do that. You know if that hadn't been brought here the government . . . or that person would have paid \$20,000.

You wonder why with things like that happening out there in rural Saskatchewan, people are increasingly having trouble with the Crowns and then wanting competition when instances like that come up.

Another one was a meeting in Morse I was at about two weeks ago. A gentleman was talking about there was a small wind farm up there, a private enterprise for SaskPower. They generate some power and they would like to sell some to SaskPower. SaskPower absolutely refuses to buy from them without any good reason of it, you know. With reasons like that it's a wonder why there's people are getting dissatisfied with the Crowns more and more in this province.

Mr. Speaker, all this clearly reminds all of us our responsibility as MLAs in the House to represent our constituencies as fairly as possible. The Premier needs to lead this government on a

path back to this most democratic and fundamental process. They must respect the resources made available to them while making sure that the people of Saskatchewan benefit directly from the government's actions.

Mr. Speaker, I can't stress enough during this present economic downturn that Saskatchewan's viability is at stake. We need to take bold new initiatives to attract business and investment into Saskatchewan without interference from the government, with tax incentives and less red tape. We also need to ensure that the Saskatchewan business sector is served in the best way possible.

This means that a provincial economy must try to keep up with the latest in high technology communications. But first we need to catch up with other provinces, especially in the area of cellular phone service. Presently many areas in my constituency lack reliable cell phone coverage — coverage that the other areas of our province, notably the urban areas, have had for many years now. We must get service. These people need the safety, security, and the business communications that they deserve.

Another one is high-speed Internet . . . (inaudible) . . . out. In Australia, they're willing to do that; the Crown is willing to go there and do that in six months. Here it's going to take probably six years before they're done. Why won't they invest here more in Saskatchewan and the jobs that spin off from it.

Rural businesses must not face an unfair burden when starting up their new ventures here in Saskatchewan. In addition to high taxation, new enterprises such as intensive livestock operations face enormous environmental licensing hurdles. And while all agree that protecting our environment is very important, I don't think we've seen a level playing field between government-endorsed livestock operations and the private-sector livestock operations.

To even this situation, we need to look at a one-window licensing approach to better facilitate new livestock enterprises quickly and efficiently. We need to take down these kinds of barriers to new businesses in Saskatchewan. We do not need a government which continues to form new Crown corporations each time a new idea for growing our province comes around. There simply needs to be a plan to grow our province; and today, this government so far has no plan or no vision.

As a recent census shows us, people are continuing to leave our province in large numbers for opportunity elsewhere. This means that families continue to bid farewell to their sons and daughters that leave Saskatchewan for a chance of viable employment and a brighter future.

It doesn't need to be this way, Mr. Speaker. Families should have the opportunity to have their children living, working, and succeeding in their home province — not eight-hour drive away in another province. We need to bring people back home, attract new businesses and investment into Saskatchewan. And most would agree that Saskatchewan has potential here.

It just has . . . Under this present government it just hasn't grown at all. And this present government has had 10 to 12 years to do that. This isn't like a government on their first term.

This is a government that has 12 years of steadily lost jobs, has not grown this province right from the time they first got in. And if they're kept here any longer, there won't be anybody left here in Saskatchewan.

One of the ways we could begin is by allowing our fellow citizens of Canada the option to invest in land in our province. This would go a long way towards bringing back the equality of our agriculture land base, which has been so severely eroded by the continuing farm income crisis and drought conditions. Indeed, capital investment from across Canada should be encouraged as a way to bring more new industry and businesses into Saskatchewan.

I've had several of my constituents talk with me about their new business ideas. In most cases the stumbling block was always start-up capital. Simply put, lending institutions across Saskatchewan are hesitant to risk capital in an economic environment which has seen soaring levels of out-migration and small-business closures. Coupled with this government's policy of high taxes and Crown competition, we basically have a situation which frustrates individual business people.

The results basically, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, are all too obvious: government revenues are down, especially corporate tax revenues, and we could be in a serious budget deficit situation this year. In short, Mr. Speaker, people and businesses are leaving Saskatchewan, and this government is also in full retreat behind them.

Of course these economic conditions only show the failing policies of this government in the key areas of health and education. We continue to lose doctors, nurses, and specialists to other provinces and the US. They are seeking better wages and working conditions. Those health care professionals who remain are faced with the worsening spectre of record high surgical waiting lists and even longer hours on shift.

To all those people, from the health care providers to the patients they serve, there are increasing levels of stress to which this government seems to have no solution. All we have seen in the way of action by government officials is to once again reorganize health care administration to bigger and, unfortunately, probably even more inefficient administrative system.

This new system has removed the elected board members, with fully appointed officers responsible only to the government that hired them, but not to the Saskatchewan electorate. This is no solution to the ongoing crisis in our health care system or the ongoing crisis out there in rural Saskatchewan.

We must approach these problems with an action plan to renew our health care system, restore confidence, and treat people on all sides with the understanding and compassion they deserve. If Saskatchewan is to remain Canada's model of health care delivery, then we need to work harder at its renewal in today's world.

If we are to see a bright future from the people of Saskatchewan we need to ensure that we lay the groundwork to build new professionals to serve our province. Today we see our college graduates lured by out-of-province financial incentives, which

in most cases are too tempting to ignore. To most students today, tuition fees, book costs, and living expenses are pushing up student loan requirements so students must consider every choice available to them.

In every case, but most importantly, in our health care graduates, we must find more practical ways to encourage Saskatchewan educated graduates to stay and serve Saskatchewan, the province they proudly call home for all of their lives. If there is a way to keep our graduates at home then Saskatchewan's future is assured. Seeing Saskatchewan's new professionals depart for greener pastures is something our province can no longer ignore.

Educational equality in our K to 12 system, both in the cities and rural areas, must be put under the microscope to ensure that rural students have access to all the educational resources afforded to larger centres. Distance education, by means of Internet communication, are closing the gap between what can be offered to rural students economically so more work must be done to ensure that this progress grows with the demands placed upon it.

As we have seen this past winter, high levels of property theft continue to be a problem in Saskatchewan, in particular the rash of car thefts here in Regina an ongoing issue and must be dealt with more firmly than we have seen to date. It is bad enough that this government cannot keep its election promise to provide 200 more police officers to protect Saskatchewan residents. Perhaps they believe that social workers can do the job of police officers, but the reality is that tougher solution is needed if we are to deal with the youth here in Regina.

Basically I think last year there was 3,800 vehicles stolen in Regina; and to deter these crimes we must find a way to make these youths realize that there are consequences to their actions, that they must . . . and basically they need to . . . I think they need more than just a social worker's phone call at 10 o'clock at night to see if they're home.

And of course, this government has already dismissed the successful Ontario model of boot camps, or as they're fondly known, but . . . disciplinary detention centres as they're more called, where the focus is on work, and discipline, and respect, and honour. If we don't somehow teach our kids to respect others, we cannot expect them to become model citizens contributing to the health of our society.

Mr. Speaker, also I want to take a closer look . . . this government should take a closer look at the problem deficit this province will face and the impact it will have on 2002. When we take a close look at what the Premier plans to do to address this problem, we once again see more show than substance.

The only . . . it looks like they may be cutting ministers which is the slate he's got there. It would be a hard job cause I think they are all equally weak so I'm not sure which one I would pick. But if it's clear that if the Premier had not chosen to hire over 500 more civil servants in 2001, then they would not be in as much trouble as they find themselves in in 2002.

What is also clear is that this government's action in the current fiscal mess are purely reactionary knee-jerk responses geared to

deflecting blame away from themselves and their own mismanagement of public resources. You know they blame the federal government for not sending enough money. Well they have utterly failed at growing the provincial economy which results in less dependence on cash from the federal coffers.

D-Day. The blame they cast away from themselves goes even further, Mr. Speaker. They blame the corporations for the 50 per cent drop in corporate revenue. They blame the farm economy, then the drought, and finally they blame the farmers themselves for falling on hard times. And, of course, as usual, they blame us, the official opposition. They also blame the press. Who will they blame next, Mr. Speaker? We have seen that they will go further, we have seen that they will go further to deflect responsibility for their own mismanagement.

Borders do not contain the blame, Mr. Speaker. This government blames the policies, our neighbours to the south. Then they blame also the tragic events of September 11 for their own economic failures back here in Saskatchewan. It is time this government began taking responsibility for the situation here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know if this government really cares about our province's future especially regarding rural communities across Saskatchewan. We need to listen to our residents when they tell us that things need to change quickly, Mr. Speaker. They're telling us how they want things changed, the meetings that we held across this province. These forums worked very well, Mr. Speaker. There was a very great amount, a very important input and ideas that resulted from these meetings.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to conclude my address here today by mentioning some of the suggestions that I have gathered from my constituents as I have travelled extensively around my constituency of Arm River this past winter. Most recently at the recent Grow Saskatchewan economic development meeting that I hosted for elected officials on March 18 . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. It now being past the hour of 5 o'clock, this House will stand recessed until 7 p.m. tonight.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.