

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today regarding the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately implement all 34 recommendations of the final report as submitted by the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Regina Beach, Mistatim, Christopher Lake, Choiceland, Spalding, and nearly everyone in Englefeld, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the condition of Highway 339. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 339 in order to facilitate economic initiatives.

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

This petition is signed by individuals from the community of Avonlea.

I so present.

Mr. Bjonnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present. 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 communities the signators are from, Mr. Speaker, are Yorkton and Regina.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of those Saskatchewan citizens that are concerned about the SGI deductible policy. And the prayer reads as follows:

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 the result of an attempted car theft.

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

And this is signed by folks at Allan, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition today 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 the area.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people . . . I would say every person in the town of Vibank.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of people in my hometown 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, this petition is signed by residents of the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions are hereby received:

A petition concerning repair to Highway 339;

A petition concerning repairs to Highway No. 35;

A petition concerning SGI's guidelines for deductible on vehicles; and finally

A petition concerning a resolution to the Lake of the Prairies situation.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the minister for Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management: which Saskatchewan communities are currently under a precautionary boil water order, and/or boil water advisory; in each instance what is the reason for the advisory or order?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have a number of other questions. I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management: in the current fiscal year, which Saskatchewan municipal drinking water supplies have failed to meet the provincial standards; and what are the compliance rates of all municipalities required to provide water samples for testing?

I also give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management: how many times in the past year did any municipality report discharges of raw sewage into any water body to Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, as required by provincial regulation; and what were the dates of these reported discharges?

And finally the last question, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what are the names of the 10 communities ahead of Perdue for funding under the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation: how many square feet does SPMC lease at 1084 Central Avenue in Prince Albert on behalf of Saskatchewan Economic and Co-operative Development; and further to that, what does SPMC pay for this lease on a square foot basis?

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation: will the minister please provide an updated status report of SaskTel's investment and equity position in *tappedinto.com*; how many staff are currently employed by *tappedinto.com* outside of the province as well as in Saskatchewan?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation: will the minister please provide the detailed breakdown of the \$157 million that SaskTel investments have returned since 1992, including a breakdown of all SaskTel investments made since 1992 and their cumulative profit or loss?

And I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation: will the minister please provide an updated status report of the number of employees, contract or otherwise, and where these staff are currently located for the US-based company Retx.com?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I should like to draw to your attention and that of the members a distinguished visitor to our Assembly. He's seated in your gallery. He was first elected to the House of Commons in 1979 and elected successively until his retirement in 1997. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you and the members to please welcome Simon de Jong.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, the board of directors of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association. Firstly, seated on the floor of the Assembly, we have George Belchamber, vice-president. George is from Nipawin and he's joined by his wife, Wendy. Also on the floor of the chamber, Mr. Speaker, we have Debra Budan; and Debra is joined by her husband, Fred, who is a director as well.

In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of other directors: Emily Grimes, Ron Raynard, Ron Tulik, Bill Ziegler; and we have Chris Brewer, the chief executive officer of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, and the office manager, Jeannie Brewer.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association represents a \$90 million a year industry in this province and that industry is represented by a membership around the entire province. And some of that membership is here, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to introduce them as well.

We have Amy Bulgis of the lower Fishing Lake cottage owners, representing a snowmobile club in that area; and we have Stan Bulgis — and I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly — Esker Bear, and is the Co-Chairperson. We have Bill Radke representing the Candle Lake Sno-Drifters and is the president of the Sno-Drifters, and is also representing the Whelan Bay Snow Hawks Club. We have Elmer Mauthe representing the Candle Lake Sno-Drifters and the Prince Albert Snowrunners.

Len McDonald, representing the Prairie Prowlers of Regina, and he is the secretary of that club, Mr. Speaker. Mark Watson,

representing the Last Mountain Lake Drifters Club. Wendy Belchamber, representing the Twin Lakes Trailblazers. Ingrid Conway, representing the Mistatim Snopackers, and is the secretary of that club and also representing Prairie Women on Snow, Mr. Speaker.

Ray Conway, the president of the Mistatim Snowmobile Club. Cliff Grimes, representing the Whiteswan Snow Hawks, the zone representative for the snowmobile association. Emily Grimes, as I indicated, representing the Forest Fringe Trail Association. Bill Ziegler, representing the Saskatoon Snowmobile Club and the Big River Snowmobile Club.

Fred Budan, previously introduced, representing the Forest Fringe Trail and representing 14 member clubs in that area. Deb Budan, representing the Lakeland Snowmobile Club. Gerald Gaulton, representing the Prairie & Pine Club in Norquay. Ray Johnston, the zone 3 rep, representing Moose Mountain. Bart Tanahill, representing the Calling Lakes Cruisers out of Lipton.

Cory Matkowski, Calling Lakes Cruisers, Fort Qu'Appelle. Larry Beaulieu, Calling Lakes Cruisers, Fort Qu'Appelle. Ron Tulik, Calling Lakes. Ervin Hahn, Melville. Ron Raynard, Moose Mountain Snowmobile Club; Lloyd and Brent Glass, representing the Regina Prairie Prowlers; and Nolan Thompson of Yamaha Motor Canada Ltd.; and Steve Rootman of Rootman Agencies.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming the representatives of these snowmobile clubs from across the province here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government members, I too would like to join the member from Carrot River Valley in welcoming the Snowmobile Association and the members from the different clubs around the province.

Snowmobiling as we all know is a very well-participated-in sport across Saskatchewan. And I want to recognize the members who are here today and give them all a warm welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, Mr. Mervin Tweed, the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Turtle Mountain in Manitoba, who is seated behind the bar. Accompanying Mr. Tweed today is Shannon Martin who is a researcher with his staff.

They're here visiting Saskatchewan to see how things are done in our Assembly, and if there's anything that they can learn. And I'm sure that there is very much that they can learn from the opposition, Mr. Speaker. And we're very pleased to have him here today. I'd ask everyone to welcome him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's

my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly a group of 18 young students — grade 3 students — from École Monsieur de Laval here in Regina, Mr. Speaker. They are accompanied by their instructors France Bedard and Celine Derosiers and Soeur Claudette Lemyre.

Mr. Speaker, although École Monsieur de Laval is in the constituency of my colleague the hon. member for Regina South, he's unable to meet with them a little later and he's asked me to meet on their behalf. And I've considered to do so as long he gave me his credit card so that I could entertain them well and so . . . anyway.

Monsieur le Président, au nom de tous les députés ici, il me fait plaisir de souhaiter ces jeunes élèves de l'École Monsieur de Laval.

(Translation: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members here, it gives me pleasure to welcome these young students from École Monsieur de Laval.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I too would like to take this opportunity as my colleague, the member from Carrot River Valley, did to welcome the members of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association to the Legislative Assembly today.

As a dealer myself, a snowmobile dealer in the province of Saskatchewan, and from the town of Spiritwood for 20 years, and also my wife who is the secretary of the Spiritwood Snowmobile Club and president Blair Heibert, who is the president, we know what it's like to be a snowmobile club in the province of Saskatchewan. We know what it's like to put up with all the problems that we have, including no snow, which we've experienced this year.

And I just want to send a special thank you to Chris Brewer and his staff for all the work that they have done over the years to make sure that snowmobiling is a thriving business in the province of Saskatchewan. So all members welcome here. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature some special guests who are here because it's World Poetry Day. And we're very pleased to have in your gallery Mr. Glen Sorestad, who is the Poet Laureate of Saskatchewan — welcome Glen. And also with him are Louise Halfe, who is a well-known Saskatchewan poet; and Dave Margoshes, who is a well-known poet as well.

Dave Margoshes is head of the Saskatchewan branch of the League of Canadian Poets and they organized the event this morning to celebrate World Poetry Day. So we're very happy they're here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would

just wish to join my colleague from Carrot River Valley in welcoming the snowmobilers here, and most specifically the two people from my constituency of Christopher Lake, Fred and Deborah Budan. Mr. Speaker, it's not often that from our area of the world, God's country up in the parkland, that we get the opportunity to have people come down and spend some time with us in the legislature and we certainly want to appreciate it and provide an extra welcome. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that all members . . . so everybody please join me again in welcoming Fred and Deborah Budan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to introduce in the west gallery this afternoon an individual by the name of Conrad Hnatiuk, who we know very well. Con is from my part of the world. He's from the thriving metropolis of Insinger, Saskatchewan and he and I go back a lot of years where we played ball together. And I've got to tell you that he spent a lot of time in left field, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say that his career has served us well in this government over the years. He's deputy minister of Social Services, used to be the deputy minister of Health, and also used to hit . . . now that the member from Invermay reminds me, he also used to hit the odd home run off the pitcher from Invermay, which is the member from Invermay . . . the member from Canora.

And today, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hnatiuk is working for SAIC (Science Applications International Canada), a private corporation in Saskatchewan, doing some work on the SHIN (Saskatchewan Health Information Network) file, and I'd like all members of the Assembly to welcome Mr. Hnatiuk . . .

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome to this Assembly one of the members of the snowmobiling clubs, a man that I've known since I was probably about six or seven years old. And I was pleasantly surprised to see him sitting up here.

A man who has done a lot to contribute to the development of Candle Lake, the enjoyment of Candle Lake, for those of us who were tourists went up there in our early years, and that is Bill Radke, who is up in your gallery.

We spent hours fishing, playing cards, and recently he's developed a golf — I guess it's been quite a while now — he's developed a golf course up there and does a lot to help promote the community.

So I'd like you to join me in welcoming Bill here to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I am very, very pleased to introduce some special guests from the international community. We have up on the east gallery there, Mr. Speaker, a special group of people from Mexico. They are from Chiapas. They have been accomplished by of course our world-class institution of Saskatchewan Federated Indian College. Leonard Hardlotte and Leonzo is with them.

Over here we have a person who works in the field of justice. You know, we started our Cree court program in the province and they are doing a similar sort of approach over there — Armando Montoyo Camaras.

We have also the head of the . . . we also have at the head of the university there, the autonomous university of Chiapas, we have Rafael Burgos. And we also have Dora Guadalupe Castillo Hernandez.

I haven't got the names from the rest, Mr. Speaker, but I also ask them to stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, to give them an official welcome in this House is very important in English. To give them an official welcome in Cree is also extremely important for me, so I would say in welcoming: Ta wow to our guests.

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

Louise Halfe is here. She is also an excellent Cree speaker, Mr. Speaker, and Louise Halfe writes about poetry, about the challenges, you know, in such a creative fashion. I'd like to recognize Louise Halfe, as well, who is here on the fight to eliminate racism on this very important day . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome all the international guests in our galleries today. And I'd just like to extend to them our best wishes, and we hope that they enjoy their stay in Saskatchewan. And it is a little cold out there, but spring arrived yesterday and it is going to warm up. So welcome, I hope you enjoy your stay. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In recognition of the effort of the member for Saskatoon Southeast, I want to get up and welcome, along with my colleague from Cumberland, our very special international guests. And as a result of the inspiration we received in her attempt at Cree, I'm going to try the attempt at Spanish.

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

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, today commemorates the 1960 massacre in Sharpeville, South Africa. Forty-two years ago, peaceful demonstrators were mercilessly slaughtered by the security forces of an oppressive apartheid regime. In 1966, the United Nations declared March 21 to be the International Day for the Elimination of Racism and called upon all nations

to join together to achieve that goal.

Mr. Speaker, although we have made some progress, racism survives. Witness the massacre in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing during the recent Balkan conflict, and the conflicts in many parts of the world. As our society has evolved to a higher standard, we become more aware of the evils of the exclusion, isolation, and aggression based on racial criteria. Mr. Speaker, racism is forged in the smiths of ignorance and fear. Through our society's continued effort and education, we have built a province that is more tolerant. Instead of recoiling, we embrace and celebrate the cultural diversity of this province.

Saskatchewan history is a shining example of how our diversity has enriched this province, a diversity celebrated in our motto, "From many peoples, strength."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, March 21, is International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

In a society that often takes its freedom and democracy for granted, Mr. Speaker, we must remember that the foundation for both are built upon respect and responsibility. The respect, Mr. Speaker, is for each other. We are all unique and amazing individuals. We all have much to contribute to society. We must not let our own personal fears, ignorance, and hatred colour the way we treat one another.

The responsibility, Mr. Speaker, is to ourselves. It is up to each of us to take the responsibility for the kind of people or kind of person we are now, and more importantly, the kind of person we want to be.

As individuals we each must take the necessary changes that will help us become a better person, one who is free from fear and prejudice. No one can do this for us.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, our world has seen racism spill over from one generation to the next. It has cut across our ages, our cultures, our religions, and our nationalities. It has destroyed lives and decimated populations. It must stop.

As one who has personally suffered from racial discrimination, I can tell you that the pain inflicted is deep and the wounds are slow to heal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly today to join with me in recognition of March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

World Poetry Day

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the 19th century English poet, Shelley, one of the godfathers of the NDP (New Democratic Party), once said that poets are the, quote, "unacknowledged legislators of the world."

Today, in conjunction with the Day for the Elimination of Racism, I am happy to announce to the Assembly that it's also World Poetry Day. A day perhaps when we can correct the oversight mentioned by Shelley.

The League of Canadian Poets has organized this day across Canada. Dave Margoshes, who was here earlier, has organized this for Saskatchewan. There are readings on Parliament Hill and in every provincial and territorial legislature, as there was this morning in the Cumberland Gallery.

The Saskatchewan poets who read this morning were first, our Poet Laureate Glen Sorestad, who wrote of Saskatchewan, quote: "In the beginning there was always the wind/ wind and the sound/ . . . later you learn the language." Also, Brenda Niskala was there; Ven Begamudre; Louise Halfe; and the winner of the youth poetry contest, Taylor Leedahl.

Mr. Speaker, we need to read these and other poets more, and argue about religion and politics less. If we did so, we would notice a new clarity in our voices, an uplifting in our spirits, and a deeper understanding of the harmony of all human beings on this day to eliminate racial discrimination, and on every day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statement Regarding Equality of Women

Ms. Julé: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this Assembly the NDP member from Regina Centre made a derogatory statement: that the Saskatchewan Party's attitude towards women is that they should be kept barefoot and in the kitchen.

Well as a member of the Saskatchewan Party caucus, I would like to inform the hon. member that nothing could be further from the truth. In the 1999 election the Saskatchewan Party had 13 female candidates; the NDP had 14 — a marginal difference.

The suggested tokenism that the member from Regina Centre referred to simply does not exist among the ranks of the Saskatchewan Party. The women of our caucus share the decision making with our male colleagues and have equal and valued input on all issues. The Saskatchewan Party has female staff members who have equal input and shoulder responsibility alongside their male colleagues. We have thousands of strong female supporters. And I am offended by the comments by the member from Regina Centre and I'm sure the thousands of women who have been involved in the Saskatchewan Party from the beginning would be offended as well.

I would like to point out to the member from Regina Centre that these kind of erroneous comments do nothing to engage or further women's interests and participation in politics, regardless of what party they belong to. In fact, it is a shame to hear another female politician try to discourage other women from entering the political arena with such inappropriate and inaccurate comments.

The Saskatchewan Party supports the involvement of women in every aspect of society, especially the political process. Mr. Speaker, I ask that that member from Regina Centre do the right thing and apologize for these derogatory comments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Harper Wins Leadership of Alliance Party

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, this is quite a day for days: anti-racial discrimination Day, World Poetry Day, Johann Sebastian Bach's birthday, and the end of Day. Or rather, Mr. Speaker, in tune with the other themes: poetic justice day.

Day is done, Harper is in, and on behalf of the NDP (New Democratic Party) caucus, I wish to congratulate the new leader of the Alliance Party. Or to correct myself once again, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the day of the Alliance Party. Mr. Harper won a decisive victory on the first ballot, receiving 55 per cent of the votes cast. Mr. Day — the previous leader du jour — garnered 37 per cent. The same leader, Mr. Speaker, who ousted the former leader and founder of his party, Mr. Manning.

The former leader of the current leader of the Sask Party. And I believe this makes three leaders in two years, Mr. Speaker, which is a remarkable accomplishment for any political party. We look forward to Mr. Harper's replacement when his one-year term is up. There is one consolation for Stockwell Day though: thanks no doubt to the efforts of the members opposite, he did win the support of Alliance voters in one province — ours.

Mr. Speaker, rather than composing a poem on this day as a eulogy for the ousted leader, perhaps we should simply sing the lovely old gospel hymn, "Day is Dying in the West."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Nipawin Journal Survivor Contest

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend my congratulations to Mavis Shapansky of Carrot River on winning *The Nipawin Journal Survivor* contest. The *Survivor* contest required readers of *The Nipawin Journal* to vote off two castaways each week with the sole survivor receiving \$300 for the charity of their choice. The castaways were also asked two questions each week.

When asked if she thought she could compete on the real TV game version, Mavis was certain she would be willing and would give it her best shot.

Rick Colburn, RM (rural municipality) administrator, and also a castaway was quite sure he would go for the paid vacation, fantastic location, and scenic beaches until that was brought to the attention of his wife. And then it was decided that their answer was he would not go.

When asked what luxury items would she bring to a deserted island, Mavis thought she would bring a Swiss Army knife, fishnet, and a sleeping bag.

Fred Bradshaw, another castaway, really put some thought into this one, Mr. Speaker. He thought, being a male, he would require a TV remote and a TV. It wouldn't matter there was no signal; he would just flip back and forth through the channels

anyway. The last item would be a deck of cards to play solitaire. The idea being that all you would have to do is start playing and someone would show up and start trying to tell him how to play, the island would no longer be deserted, and he would be saved.

With logic such as this, we are certainly happy that Mavis agreed to participate. The Pasqua Regional Park swimming pool benefited from Mavis' participation and contest prize . . .

The Speaker: — I'm sorry. Member's time is up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Possible Effects of Budget on Prescription Drug Plan

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has received information about the upcoming budget. It is our understanding the NDP government is making changes to the prescription drug plan, including raising the drug plan deductible.

Mr. Speaker, is the government raising the prescription drug plan deductible in next week's budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I know that many people are interested in what the budget will say next week. Our Minister of Finance will be providing all of that information next week, and I would ask the member to wait until that time to get the information that is available.

What I would also say is that we are working with the resources that we have to provide the best health care and the best programs that we can for all the people of Saskatchewan and we will continue to do that in an appropriate, balanced way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I take that as a yes.

Mr. Speaker, it appears the NDP is prepared to pay for its fiscal mismanagement on the backs of the sick and the elderly. Many people are already struggling to pay high drug costs and now it appears the NDP is only going to make things worse.

Is the NDP going to raise the drug plan deductible and what other changes are they making to reduce the prescription drug plan coverage?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, I find this curious, Mr. Speaker, because usually what we hear from the opposition is why don't you do what they're doing in the province of Alberta. And we haven't heard that this week. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Medicare premiums up 30 per cent. If they want to talk about charging people for health care, Mr. Speaker, all they have to do

is look at their darling cousins in Alberta.

And if they want to look further, they can look at their cousins in BC (British Columbia). They're always saying, do what they do in BC. What are they doing there, Mr. Speaker? Medicare premiums up 50 per cent. That's what they're doing.

What else is Alberta doing? They're making changes to their drug coverage and Blue Cross and we'll see what they're doing there. Education property taxes up \$45 million, Mr. Speaker. Vehicle registration fees up more than 20 per cent. And there's 64 — 64 increases to fees and charges in Alberta. For a change, Mr. Speaker, at least we don't have to listen to them gripe and complain about Alberta.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I asked a very simple question about the intentions of this government to change the drug plan in Saskatchewan. Instead the Minister of Finance goes into a tirade about the situation in Alberta.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is extremely simple. Are the . . . is the NDP government prepared to raise the prescription drug plan deductible and to make other changes to the Saskatchewan drug plan that is going to fall on the backs of the sick and the elderly in this province? Yes or no.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the opposition and the people of the province will find out what is in the budget on the 27th when the budget is delivered. That's when they'll find out, Mr. Speaker. But I want to say to the members opposite that the jig is up in terms of what they've been saying to the people of Saskatchewan about the way things should be done, Mr. Speaker, because we have the Leader of the Opposition telling everybody that this government should do exactly what they're doing in British Columbia, Mr. Speaker.

We've had all of them saying for years we should be doing exactly what they're doing in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. What are their cousins doing in British Columbia? Raising taxes and cutting services and running up debt, Mr. Speaker. What are their cousins in Alberta doing, Mr. Speaker? They're raising taxes and cutting services. Isn't it strange, Mr. Speaker, that it's all right for their cousins in BC to raise revenues; it's all right for their cousins in Alberta to raise revenues; but God forbid if revenues were ever raised by the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Snowmobile Trails in Saskatchewan

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development. The Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association has been lobbying the provincial government for \$300,000 a year to help their clubs with the costs of grooming and maintaining almost 10,000 kilometres of trails throughout the province.

These clubs have been doing the work themselves at the cost of

about \$800,000. The costs have been offset somewhat by the revenues from the trail permit program. But the association was told that your government had no money. Then in December the association learned that the NDP spent \$380,000 to purchase just three trail groomers for three provincial parks for . . . in about 300 kilometres of trail.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why the NDP would spend that much money to purchase trail groomers to maintain a small portion of the trails in the province when, for less money, the snowmobile clubs could do the whole province with their own equipment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. A little history with respect to the relationship between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Snowmobile Association. They have indeed made a request for \$386,000 a year for five years — almost \$2 million — in the past.

We have supported the efforts of the Snowmobile Association through SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). In '97 they provided 100,000. In '98 they provided 176,000. There is money that comes through Saskatchewan Lotteries — 32,000 every year — and through the REDAs (regional economic development authority) to local associations. The REDA of Eden by the . . . created some . . . provided something in the neighbourhood of 16,000 — an aggregate of 32,300.

Mr. Speaker, in 1999 the association asked for legislation to allow for mandatory permitting to allow the funds available to groom the trails. We enacted that legislation. It's true, Mr. Speaker, we denied funding this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this government still decided to spend \$380,000 on just three groomers that are going to work on three parks.

Mr. Speaker, snowmobiling in Saskatchewan is a \$90 million a year industry. It involves tourism, recreation, the hospitality industry, and the retail industry. But because of this government's lack of support, snowmobile clubs in the province have decided they can't maintain their trails any more. And they're advertising all their equipment for sale. A total of \$1.3 million worth of equipment is now being advertised for sale in *The Edmonton Sun*.

In a letter to the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association dated January 10, the Minister of Economic Development said, and I quote:

In times of fiscal restraint the funding of education, health care, and highways is a higher priority than supporting an admittedly popular recreational activity like snowmobiling.

Okay, but on February 4, the NDP contributed \$300,000 to the Trans Canada Trail network. Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain this double standard? On one hand he's saying that there is no money for recreational facilities and yet less than a

month later he's got the same amount of money for another recreational facility. Why the double standard?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying there is no double standard. We've been very supportive with respect to funding for the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association in an effort to make permitting mandatory to allow for the trails to be funded by those who use it or else user pay. Members opposite might recognize that concept.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we're very much on parallel with other jurisdictions in terms of support; Manitoba is an example. And I want to say that the three machines that were replaced were an average of 26 years old. We have a responsibility to maintain the park trails for snowmobilers, for cross-country skiers and we'll do that.

What I also want to say, but the member opposite refuses to indicate, is that SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), the department, has wanted, and will, enter into discussions and has been entering into discussions with respect to utilization of those machines on the other trails outside of the park.

So I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have been working in co-operation with the association. They asked for \$2 million of funding; we didn't feel that it was in the list of our priorities the appropriate expenditure in this year and we denied the request.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously doesn't get it. The private clubs already had the groomers. You could have rented them . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order for a minute. I'll just ask the member to proceed with her question and direct all her remarks through the Chair.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the minister could have contracted through the private clubs for this work.

Mr. Speaker, winter recreation like snowmobiling is an important industry in our province. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are raised every year by snowmobile enthusiasts like Snowarama and the ride for breast cancer.

Communities right across the province know that there is a benefit from having a trail close to their own community. But now these economic benefits will be lost if the whole snowmobile trail network in Saskatchewan is lost because this government made yet another illogical decision. Mr. Speaker, the sale of all the grooming equipment will decimate the snowmobiling industry in Saskatchewan.

Will the minister explain why the NDP has chosen to let this industry die instead of supporting the private snowmobile clubs in their efforts to maintain every trail in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that across this province there are a number of different sports and different sporting venues; and I recognize the enthusiasm that snowmobilers have for their sport across this province and we attempt to support that. We also attempt to support minor sports. We attempt to support Special Olympics. We attempt to support First Nations Olympics, Winter/Summer Games.

Mr. Speaker, we get many requests for funding every year. The sad part of our circumstance is that we don't have the funding to be able to match all of the requests and sometimes difficult decisions have to be made.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, these folks here who come to this House every day parading opportunities for more expenditures are doing little to help us manage the fiscal situation and circumstance in this province.

And I tell you, I'll give you an example, Mr. Speaker. They have promised over \$3 billion from every corner of this province to every person they could lay their fingers on. They hope to be government, Mr. Speaker, without understanding that you've got to have the revenue to be able to commit the expenditures, otherwise you deficit . . .

The Speaker: — Time's up.

Funding for Water Quality Improvements

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I asked this question of the Minister of Environment yesterday and did not get an answer. Hopefully we'll get some better results today.

Last May the Environment department handed out a fact sheet listing the Saskatchewan communities with drinking water-related concerns. At that time the fact sheet said there were 37 municipalities in the province that lacked minimum treatment. There were also 82 municipalities whose water monitoring results showed an excess of various water quality concentrations or were deemed at low risk.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell this House today how many communities lack minimum water treatment facilities and how many municipalities are deemed low risk or have excess water quality objective concentrations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, that list is available. We have made that list available time and time again.

And I point out as I pointed out yesterday, there is incredible challenges with our water systems in the province of Saskatchewan and that we've said it in this Assembly, we've said it out in the media, we've said it all throughout the land that we have water challenge in the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have made incredible progress over the past number of years to meet these challenges, Mr. Speaker. And there are going to be other challenges as we go down this path.

There is no question this is a tremendous challenge.

But what we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is we want to stand here as the Government of Saskatchewan and ask all the local town councils, ask the federal government, ask the First Nations government to stand with us and together we'll find a solution to meet not only the challenges of the 40 or 50 communities now but to meet the challenge in the many years ahead that we all have to work together, Mr. Speaker.

This government recognizes . . . (inaudible) . . . and that opposition recognizes and stop voting against any budget that we have that's going to improve the system, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well perhaps we'll try again tomorrow because I don't think we did get an answer to the question.

Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Yesterday the minister told this Assembly that if there are specific communities that are having water infrastructure problems, they should just call and the issue would be resolved.

Well the village of Perdue did contact the minister and they also contacted the Premier. They did get a review of their infrastructure application by the minister and his officials, but they were turned down because Sask Water says there are 10 other communities whose water problems are worse than those in Perdue. Well the Perdue water treatment system has now collapsed completely. So it's alarming to think that 10 other communities are in worse shape.

Will the minister tell this House the names of the 10 other communities who are also not receiving any help from the NDP to address their water problems?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to clarify once more for the members opposite and for the people of Saskatchewan. This government is committed — and it's a high priority — for good quality drinking water and improving our water systems. We had made a commitment to fund all the communities that were under a boil-water advisory under the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program. We did that. In 2001-2002, Mr. Speaker, funding was approved for 42 water supply projects and 15 waste water projects under that program.

You know something, Mr. Speaker? With the partnership between the federal government, the provincial government, and the municipalities, who need to consider partnerships, we were able to pump \$30 million into these kind of projects. And we continue to do that under the current Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that answer was no clearer than the water in Perdue. The Minister of Municipal Affairs told the media yesterday that the village of Perdue is to

blame for their failing infrastructure. That was after he blamed the federal government, and I think at one point, was even attempting to blame inanimate objects. He said, and I quote:

Why do infrastructures deteriorate? Because they are neglected.

That is . . . it's unbelievable. Mr. Speaker, why do municipal infrastructures deteriorate? Because the NDP would rather spend \$80 million on infrastructure in Australia, because the NDP would rather risk 20 million of taxpayers' dollars on an Internet company in Georgia, because the NDP has cut revenue-sharing grants to municipalities.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Would the members please stop yelling across the room. Would the member proceed to his question, please.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, it's failed because they have put all of these issues ahead of their own selfish interests.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to the people of Perdue, and other Saskatchewan communities, how they are the ones to blame for their water supply difficulties.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. And I guess the opposition still doesn't understand that you invest money to make money to pay for these kinds of projects in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just explain. There are a number . . . there are a number of Saskatchewan communities, and let me name some of them, Mr. Speaker. Rosetown, Wawota, Imperial, who have successfully addressed their water quality and infrastructures challenges, Mr. Speaker; Indian Head, several communities like Gravelbourg, Kinistino, Pierceland. Communities — 43 communities in all — have worked with Sask Water, and in some cases have worked in partnership with one another.

Mr. Speaker, you know, they recognized that partnership, mergers, and you know, coalition can work . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Grants from provincial or federal governments can be part of the solution, Mr. Speaker, but it takes co-operation and partnership to address all these issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation for Northerners

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP has done an excellent job of chasing people and jobs out of Saskatchewan. Under the NDP, Saskatchewan has posted the worst job creation record in Canada. Over the past three years, Saskatchewan has suffered its worst population loss since World War II.

And just when we thought the NDP couldn't do much worse, they came up with a new scheme. Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago,

the NDP government signed an agreement to create jobs for Saskatchewan people in Alberta. It's called Northern Neighbors — A Partnership for Jobs. Mr. Speaker, the agreement paves the way for northerners to move to Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for Northern Affairs explain why the NDP government is signing agreements that result in even more people moving to Alberta?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Northern Affairs, I want to point out to the entire Assembly and to the millions of people gathered today that it has been 133 weeks, Mr. Speaker, it has been 34 months or well over 1,000 days since that opposition asked a question about northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And I will point out, Mr. Speaker, one question in three years does not make a provincial party, Mr. Speaker.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if that member would have researched this project, Mr. Speaker, he would have known that Revenue Canada says that you do not pay income tax in the place where you work but rather where you live.

And if we are going to create jobs in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, what's . . . that member complains about steady, Mr. Speaker. Then I'm going to tell him today that those jobs will create a great future for the people of the North. And maybe we can wait another 1,000 days before we get another question from that opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, it's been more than 1,000 days since we got an answer from that side of the House on any questions that we've asked.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, the plan the NDP have come up with that assists people from northern Saskatchewan to move to Fort McMurray, Alberta, to work in the Alberta oil patch, here's how it'll work, according to the NDP's agreement. First, the Saskatchewan government pays for training. Then once the eligible northerners are trained, the agreement assists them in moving to Alberta to go to work.

If the minister doesn't believe me, maybe he should have read the agreement that he signed. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'll table a copy of this agreement just in the case the minister has lost his.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta doesn't need our help. That province is already getting more than its fair share of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government in Saskatchewan negotiating agreements that result in Saskatchewan people moving to Alberta to work?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, once again to answer that 1,000-day question, I'm going to point out to that member that on this side of the House we believe in northern Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — We are going to continue, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to work with the northern Saskatchewan people. And that's why they will never, ever win any of those northern seats, because they never care about the North, Mr. Speaker. And the only time that they get up, Mr. Speaker, to complain about the North, Mr. Speaker, is when we're in this job of trying to find jobs for northerners, Mr. Speaker.

We have no problem with Albertans coming to Saskatchewan to work in the oil patch. Why can't we send Saskatchewan people to work in the oil patch over there, Mr. Speaker?

And second, Mr. Speaker, his Leader of the Opposition says, we want to cut \$50 million in Social Services benefits. Well we on this side want to train our northern people. We want to employ our northern people so we can cut those \$50 million in those costs in a good, compassionate, sound way, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Compensation for Employees of Community Agencies

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not just the nurses who are threatening to go on strike. Right across this province we have community-based organizations operating group homes, women's shelters, mental health centres, sheltered workshops, recycling centres. Oftentimes they are paid half what public sector workers doing the same jobs are given.

Now there's a real possibility of job action by these workers. Those who have family members in a group home are being notified that they may have to come and pick up their relatives and take them home.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier promised last year there would be parity. The government has long promised parity for public service workers and for community agency employees. Why is the government . . . what is the government going to do to avert a strike? What is the government going to do if there is a strike? When will community-based employees get the same wages that they have been promised for many years and the government continues to pay these community-based employees half what the public service is given for the same work?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, and I know that he will be interested in waiting till budget day to hear what the government will be doing in response to this issue and a whole host of other issues that affect the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to the Department of Social Services and other departments in this government, the

community-based organization workers do an important job in delivering important services to the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the community-based organizations in many cases have challenges in the recruitment and retention of workers. We've been talking with those community-based organizations, Mr. Speaker, and we will be doing the absolute best that we possibly can, and I think they'll understand that very clearly when it comes to budget day.

(14:30)

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think it only goes to say that when it . . . when we look at commitment to support of community-based organizations to deliver important services to Saskatchewan people, there is a very, very clear difference between the commitment on this side and the commitment on that side, which is led by a leader, Mr. Speaker, who has said if he had his way, he would take \$50 million out of the Department of Social Services. Heaven forbid that Saskatchewan should ever go in that direction, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Ethanol Production Proposals

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you.

The Speaker: — Order, order. We'll just pause for a minute here. Once again I recognize the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ethanol is a subject that many people in Saskatchewan are excited about today. Indeed many communities and individuals right across the province already understand the benefits of an expanded ethanol industry here in Saskatchewan. And they want to see this industry grow. Mr. Speaker, so do we.

That's why I'm very pleased to tell you today, our government has announced a plan that will create an investment climate required for the private sector . . . for the private sector to build a vibrant ethanol industry in the province. Our plan is the greenprint for ethanol production, which will result in extensive consultations with business, industry, and the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear, the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan will be built upon the strengths of sound business plans and direct private sector investment.

To that end our government will, first, later today, introduce legislation in this Assembly that will provide the legal framework for us to establish a mandate to sell ethanol-blended gasoline in Saskatchewan. Once this legislation is passed, Saskatchewan will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to establish a renewable fuels mandate — something we should all be very proud of.

Second, Mr. Speaker, as of April 1 of this year, we will effectively eliminate the 15-cent-a-litre gas tax on ethanol.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This measure will provide direct support to help bring the price of ethanol-blended gasoline in line with that of regular unleaded.

Third, we will work with the federal and provincial governments across Canada to remove the barriers for ethanol exports and we will call on the federal government to follow Saskatchewan's lead.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — We will call on them to follow our lead and to introduce a national mandate that will level the playing field for wholesalers and retailers across Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Finally, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work . . . we will continue to work with communities, proponents, and investors to establish ethanol plants here in this province. And that will include establishing a single access point for proponents to begin the process of securing the necessary environmental and operating permits to bring these plants into production.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, in short, this policy addresses what people have told us as we've consulted them over the past several months. It helps secure a market, it helps provide money to secure the price, and it provides for a management model that's based on private sector investment and sound business practices.

What this policy does not do, Mr. Speaker, is it does not pick winners and losers, nor does it dictate the size and locations of these facilities. I believe that this policy will provide a foundation for a good mix of plants of various sizes across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you very much to my colleague, the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley for the work that he has done in helping to develop this policy and the leadership of the Premier of this province in making sure this has come to be. Our greenprint for ethanol production will support the private sector's efforts to create jobs, it will capitalize on opportunities, and it will grow an ethanol industry in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of this Assembly to set aside their partisan biases and support this government's strategy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, it's certainly my pleasure to respond to the ministerial statement here this afternoon. And we would to congratulate the minister for following the greenprint for developing the industry the official opposition presented in April . . . in September of last year. This announcement today pretty much mirrors exactly what the official opposition leader said in September 27, 2001.

And we hope we can count on the minister's word that when he says he wants this industry to be developed with private capital by private developers here in Saskatchewan and not try and pick the winners and losers. Because if there's anything the NDP are good at, it's picking losers in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Now if we can just convince this government, Mr. Speaker, to take a couple more steps forward in terms of this development to do something in the budget with a capital tax, we'll see the development fully realize its potential right here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And the next step is we fully expect, Mr. Speaker, that this government will do all it can to lobby the federal government to put in a national standard for ethanol so that we can develop the industry fully to its potential, again right here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And we thank the minister once again, Mr. Speaker, for allowing farmers the opportunity to market their grain outside of the Canadian Wheat Board . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — . . . and allow them more marketing choices — something the official opposition has been saying for a long time in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, this announcement this afternoon just goes to show you when the government opposite takes the advice of the Saskatchewan Party we finally see positive developments here in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — In anticipation . . . (inaudible) . . . Pardon me.

Member for North Battleford. Why . . . my question is why is the member from North Battleford on his feet?

Mr. Hillson: — As the hon. member for Kindersley has already pointed out . . .

The Speaker: — Does the member have leave to make a response to the statement?

Leave not granted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1 – The Ethanol Fuel Act

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 1, The Ethanol Fuel Act, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be

read a second time at the next sitting.

The Speaker: — Order please. Order, order.

Bill No. 10 – The Tax Enforcement Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 10, The Tax Enforcement Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 11 – The Urban Municipal Administrators Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 11, the Urban Municipal Administrators Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After my introductory comments of yesterday, I'd like to get into the main part of my speech today.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the province of opportunity. We are going to face many challenges in the future with regards to the drought, with regards to oil and natural gas prices, softwood lumber dispute, a whole host of issues there, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government is poised to live within our means and to take advantage of the unique position that Saskatchewan has with our resources. Saskatchewan is able to look forward to the future with confidence knowing the wealth of human and natural resources that we possess.

And, Mr. Speaker, to that end I will be opposing the opposition's motion and supporting the motion put forward by the member for Greystone seconded by the member for Idylwyld. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to stand today and give my report as to the Throne Speech that was given here a couple of days ago. But before I go into that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a special welcome to all members of the Legislative Assembly, to be

back here today, and to join in with the legislature of the . . . 24th legislature, I should say.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you. As the member from Saskatoon Sutherland said yesterday, this is one year for you. Congratulations.

I also would like to take this time to congratulate another member to the legislature, and that being the newly elected member from Saskatoon Idylwyld. Congratulations and welcome to the Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it just seems like today is the day that I get to stand most of the day. It seems like I'm always on my feet today, speaking. I want to first of all say, as representation of the constituency of Shellbrook-Spiritwood, a constituency in the north central area, there's a few people I would like to thank.

And first and foremost, and that is my wife, Sheila, and my family, for all the support they have given me in my quest to be an MLA, and the three years that I've experienced being an MLA in the Legislative Assembly.

I also would like to take this time and opportunity to thank all the good citizens of the constituency themselves, who have given me their time and support for the job I'm trying to do for them.

I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, that as an MLA I always have, and always will, take my job very serious. And there are days, Mr. Speaker, as many of the people here are probably recognizing with me, there are days when you say to yourself, just what the heck did I get into this job for.

I know, Mr. Speaker, after the rowdy reception today, you're probably saying that yourself.

But I know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. It's a glim light, but it is there. And that light is and will be brighter as time goes when this government, opposition government, on this side, becomes seated on that side, and we become the new government of Saskatchewan.

I have always led to believe and follow on the morals of my dad. And my dad's morals are, there is a difference between yes and no. And there is a huge difference between right and wrong.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be here to represent the concerns and a voice to the people and the constituents of Shellbrook-Spiritwood.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, all members in this House today —on this side especially — are glad to be back. After all, Mr. Speaker, it's almost nine months since we were last here. And the people are saying, isn't it time for you to go back to work, isn't holidays over? That's why the opposition government kept saying for a fall session. We repeated last fall that the government sit. It's the only way as we can show accountability to our citizens and our ratepayers.

I have always maintained there should be, number one, an election every four years and that there should be a spring and a fall session. Most provinces in the province of . . . the country of Canada have this. Why are we so different?

When we talk about a fall session, we are dealing with issues like health, economy, and the agricultural problem that occurred to Saskatchewan over the drought last year. The ongoing problem of job loss and out-migration was another concern. Health care and government response to the Fyke report was a serious concern last fall. Agriculture and drought situations facing many families was serious, as was the need to lower SaskEnergy rates before the winter. The urgent need to protect people from implementing more of the recommendations in the all-party committee on child sex trade was also another issue.

But did this government decide to sit in the fall to discuss these issues? No, they did not. That's why the people in my constituency and all over Saskatchewan feel we're only doing part of a job. There should be a fall session and there should be a spring session.

The role, Mr. Speaker, of good opposition party is to hold the government accountable, but also to propose constructive alternatives. The opposition party does this on a regular basis, as we did today in the announcement of the ethanol. And we look forward to the opportunity to present more of these alternatives in this legislature as days go on.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency in north central Saskatchewan starts at the southern tip of Duck Lake and goes north past the centre of Big River, almost to Green Lake. It continues to the west past Fairholme about probably 10 miles to the road going south to Edam. And it goes east, Mr. Speaker, almost to the town . . . or the city, pardon me, of Prince Albert.

My constituency contains various towns, villages, hamlets, resort villages and seven Native reserves. Some of the bigger centres in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, is my hometown of Spiritwood, a little larger town known as Shellbrook, and the lumber capital of Saskatchewan known as Big River.

Now for comments on the Throne Speech that was delivered here a few days ago. Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed in the Throne Speech that was presented to us by the Premier. It had no vision. It had no plan for growth in Saskatchewan.

The NDP called the Throne Speech province of opportunity. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a lot of opportunity. What it needs is a new government to show the people that opportunity. That government is sitting on this side, soon to be on that side. Mr. Speaker, we have so many advantages here in Saskatchewan. We have hard-working, well-educated people. We have an abundance of natural resources.

Saskatchewan should be booming, but it's not, Mr. Speaker. We need to give people more reasons to stay instead of more reasons to leave. Today's NDP Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, did nothing to address this problem. Pardon me, not today's Throne Speech, last week's Throne Speech. And even today, it did less.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, a few days ago our party, the

opposition party, came out with an economic plan to grow Saskatchewan. Our leader says, and I quote — it's fine print:

A growing population means a stronger economy, more jobs and a larger tax base to support essential services like health and education. Most importantly it means we are creating the type of opportunities that will keep our provinces here and bring home our families who have left Saskatchewan.

I was fortunate, Mr. Speaker, to have two of the Grow Saskatchewan meetings in my constituency. One in Debden, where there wasn't just four; there wasn't just 20; there was almost 30 people at that meeting.

I also had another meeting, Mr. Speaker, in Medstead. And at that meeting, Mr. Speaker, there was over 30. It was well represented, Mr. Speaker, and there was a lot of good ideas came out of there. Some of the more appropriate ideas that came out was: when is there going to be an election? When are we going to get rid of this NDP government?

I noticed in the last speaker remarks yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland and he referred to us as, two years ago the Sask-a-Tories. He referred to us last year as the Saskatchewan Alliance. Well one member from my meeting in Medstead said, you know something, here's something for the NDP. The letters NDP stand for no darn plans.

The Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, plans to grow Saskatchewan by 100,000 people over the next 10 years. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a bold goal that we are going to try to do — a bold goal. But as a businessman, or I was before I became an MLA, I was a businessman in the town of Spiritwood, snowmobile dealer, and every year the wife and I and my family drew up a plan of how we're going to grow our business.

It's common in the business practice. Maybe the NDP should do the same. We did. The Saskatchewan Party did. That's why we're going to grow the province by 10,000 people in 10 . . . 100,000 people in 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, and members opposite, how are we going to do it? Well this is how we're going to do it.

Number one, we're going to target tax reduction for Saskatchewan families, raising the personal and family tax exemptions, allowing families to keep more of the money they earn before they start paying tax. This will help people just completing their education, getting their first job, or raising their children.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, is helping business grow and create jobs for young people; making Saskatchewan a small-business tax-free zone, with . . . help small business grow, creating jobs and opportunities for all people. The Saskatchewan Party government will cut the corporate tax in half to encourage new business development and new investment.

The third point, Mr. Speaker, building on Saskatchewan's natural strengths. The Saskatchewan Party government will focus economic expansion on our areas of natural advantage,

such as value-added manufacturing and processing, intensive livestock, the eco and tourism industry, technological and natural resource industries for forestry, mining, and energy.

The number four point, Mr. Speaker, providing more efficient government; something the NDP should take note of. The Saskatchewan Party government will deliver smarter and smaller government by making sure that every part of government is operating in the most effective, productive way possible.

And number five, Mr. Speaker, stopping the expansion of the Crown Corporations that compete with the private sector business. Today our Crown Corporations are competing against existing tax . . . Saskatchewan businesses and are investing hundreds of millions of your tax dollars outside the province. We would stop the expansion of our Crowns in areas that are not directly related to the provision of the core services of power, natural gas, telecommunications, and insurance.

And speaking, Mr. Speaker, of Crowns, I think the people of Saskatchewan would like to know . . . Mr. Speaker, you, as a taxpayer, and I'm quoting from the Regina *Leader-Post*, Mr. Speaker. You, as a Saskatchewan taxpayer now own shares in Moose Jaw Temple Gardens and Spa, Saskatoon Centennial Foods, Yorkton's Premium Brands, Regina's Minds-Eye Pictures, Meadow Lake Tolko Industries oriented strand board plant, Rama and omega Big Sky pork operations, and in Regina, FarmGro organic milling and marketing operations.

And the above is actually just a small section of the in-province Crown Investment Corporation's taxpayers. That doesn't include the home security business, or investment in digital cable television that is now, or will be soon, be competing with the private sector companies or co-operatives attempting to provide the same service.

Add to the expensive portfolio of non-Saskatchewan-based investments. There's an Ag Dealer . . . a farm equipment magazine called Ag Dealer. There's also a rent-a-television service for hospitals throughout Canada, called Hospitality Network Canada Ltd., a cable television service in Newfoundland, environmental monitoring equipment service companies, and insurance companies in Prince Edward Island called Coachman Insurance.

An Hon. Member: — Are you reading them all?

Mr. Allchurch: — Well I've got quite a few to read. And the Insurance Company of Prince Edward Island.

The bulk of the money the NDP government has made in the investment portfolio have come from two sources, Mr. Speaker. The first is a 131 billion sale of a British cable company called LCL, and the other is through its Cameco share sales, including the most recent 111.5 billion profit made from the sale of those remaining shares.

Mr. Speaker, that is just a few of the investments that our NDP government is using our taxpaying dollars to invest outside the province. They have money for investment outside of the province. What about the people in Saskatchewan? What about the taxpayers that pay this province to keep going? What about

them?

Our NDP government is putting people and citizens outside the province first, and Saskatchewan citizens second.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, for every other success story the government loves to boast about, there are at least as many clunkers like the 16 million loss at NST (NST Network Services of Chicago), SaskTel US (United States) cable investment, the \$8.1 million loss in Channel Lake Petroleum, and the most recent \$28 million loss in the potato industry, Mr. Speaker. More common sense needs to be directed to these investments. These dollars should be staying within the province of Saskatchewan, not going outside.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned before about the Saskatchewan Party had a plan to grow Saskatchewan. The NDP has none. It has no plan for the economy, it has no plan for health, and it has definitely no plan for agriculture.

I'd like to bring you up to staff on a point about the NDP broken promises and there's a list of them, but I know with the time allotted by me I can only go over a few.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP said we'll help create 30,000 new jobs. The NDP record, Mr. Speaker, 12,000 jobs lost over the past two years. The NDP promised we'll keep the balanced budget. The NDP record, 478 million deficit in the 2001-2002 budget. The NDP promised surgical waiting lists will be cut in at least 30 per cent. The NDP promise . . . the NDP record, surgical waiting lists have increased over 50 per cent. Saskatchewan has the longest waiting lists in Canada.

The NDP promised less crime. Well the NDP record, Regina is the car theft capital of North America, not just Saskatchewan but North America. The NDP promised, Mr. Speaker, to hire 200 more police officers. The NDP record, 45 more officers hired but police officers have told us these hirings have been more than . . . will more than offset their retirements.

And the NDP promised we will have 500 new health care providers. And the NDP record, Mr. Speaker, 1,192 fewer nurses than in 1999 and this according to SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses). That's the NDP record — dismal.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is at a pivotal point in our provincial . . . in the province's history. The future of our province is at stake. Last year Saskatchewan lost almost 15,000 jobs — the worst annual job loss record since the Great Depression.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1999 Saskatchewan lost more than 22,000 people who left to seek job and opportunities in other provinces. Since 1997 the government has hired 1,100 new servants. But yet last year they hired 570 and now this year they got to claw them back because of the deficit.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan had an \$840 million surplus. That's the highest surplus as recorded for decades. And what do we have now in a short period of time? A deficit of more than \$480 million. Where did all that

money go, Mr. Speaker?

We are losing jobs; we are losing people; we are losing investment. The NDP is growing the government instead, Mr. Speaker, of growing the economy. Something is wrong. Something has to change.

I would now like to focus, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on agriculture, and agriculture within my constituency. My constituency is made up of half the constituency is agricultural, the northern half being forest-related area. And in the South, in the agricultural area where we have had no snow, it poses a huge problem for the cattle people — the cattle industry in itself. There is no snow for runoff; the cattle operation is going to be in trouble.

And yet the government is doing nothing. The government has no safety net program, something that we have asked for for the three years we've been here, and still the Minister of Agriculture says we're going to wait and see. We're going to study it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the farmers of today can't wait for the NDP government to wait and see. They need some assistance now — this year — in light of the no snow.

Some of the good news about my constituency, Mr. Speaker, is the hog and the cattle operations that exist. I would like to say a thank you to some of the cattle feedlots in my area: the Rask feedlot from Shellbrook, Parkside area; the Diesen feedlot from Shell Lake; and the 5,000 head of cattle operation in the Canwood area.

Mr. Speaker, these are only three feedlots in my area that are up and running. Yes, they're small but they will in turn go to big ones. But you know something, Mr. Speaker? The nice thing about these feedlots is that they're privately owned feedlots. They don't have any money from the government. It's all private.

Another one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the hog operations in this province. I would like to take my hat off to Harold and Marjorie Fast from my hometown of Spiritwood who started a hog operation here some 10 years ago. They saw that a hog operation in that area would be beneficial to the town of Spiritwood because it would create jobs, and it has. Last year the Fast family amalgamated with the Seidle farm and the Casson family, and together they built two more barns. And this year they're expanding their operation to produce some more barns.

And what Mr. Harold Fast says is, you know what's good about this program? You know what's good about this operation is? It's all private money. There is no help from the government. No money from the government. That's how Saskatchewan grows. That's how rural Saskatchewan grows, all with the community spirit.

I'd now like to talk about the northern part of my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is with the lumber companies. Now as you know and I've mentioned before, Big River, which is the capital of our forestry industry in Saskatchewan, it has the largest mill in Saskatchewan, and it is a Weyerhaeuser mill —

and hats off to Weyerhaeuser.

That mill produces a number of jobs that keeps Big River alive. But as you know, Mr. Speaker, for some time now the embargo between Canada and the United States in the softwood lumber industry has dampened their future. But more importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has dampened the many operations in the forestry industry that are the smaller people. They don't go to work any more because their jobs are not there. It's affected the small operations worse than anybody else.

Two of the larger companies, Mistik and Weyerhaeuser, still are allowed to keep their doors open. But soon, if this softwood embargo agreement doesn't end, it will hurt them to a point where they will have to close. I'm not saying it's the government across the way's fault. All I'm saying is that we need their co-operation to work with the federal minister, Pierre Pettigrew, to get this problem resolved and get it resolved soon.

I would now like to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, go into health care. And just the other day, I received a letter from a lady from my constituency and she has some concerns about our health care and I would like to read that letter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it starts out:

Dear Sir or Madame,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Laura Herzog who is an Alzheimer's victim. Until two years ago her family was caring for Laura in her home. She now requires a very high level of care and has been admitted into Mont St. Joseph Nursing Home in Prince Albert. The staff at Mont St. Joseph have . . . (worked) their very best . . . (to provide) the care she requires but they are working under some very difficult circumstances. Residents who are suffering from . . . (those types of disease) are presently being housed in the same ward. Some of these residents display very aggressive and violent types of behaviour and the staff have great difficulty (caring) . . . to control them. The other residents, including Laura, are, of course, exposed to the violent behaviour. Since she is unable to communicate effectively, Laura is unable to express her fears and her anxieties. By observing her behaviour, however, it is clear that this . . . (has) causing her some extreme fear and stress. Laura cannot even feel safe in her own room because (of) these violent residents, who all happen to be men at this time. (Men) will enter her room, lay on her bed and go through her (privately owned) possessions. Since Laura has a fear of men . . . the fact that this violent and aggressive behaviour is coming from . . . men makes her . . . more afraid and (more) anxious. Our family members have seen examples of this behaviour and fear for the(ir) safety of the residents as well as . . . the employees. These men strike out, (they) kick, they push people around as well as actually doing extensive damage to the ward.

Some of these violent citizens have been admitted to the (medical) . . . Health Centre in hopes of (ridding the) . . . behaviour (problem) . . . The Centre will not accept these residents on a long-term basis so they are returned to the Home. The staff at Mont St. Joseph are not properly trained to look after this type of resident. When the resident returns so do the problems.

We have observed Laura hiding in her bathroom with the door open just . . . enough to peek out, watching these men ransack her room. I'm sure you can understand how horrible this would (feel to) . . . anyone, even more so for someone who is confused and lost because of her (illness) . . .

I am hoping (Mr. Deputy Speaker) that (someone) something can be done to separate the residents so the violent ones would not be with the general population. I would suggest a ward that is reserved (specifically) for (those type of) . . . residents with a well-trained and sufficient staff (component) . . . who will be (able to deal) . . . with this type of behaviour (problems).

(And) In closing, I would like to (recommend that) . . . the Mont . . . Joseph staff . . . the care and concern they show for the residents. I am sure, that given the proper direction and funding, they would co-operate in making whatever changes are necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of all the residents. Please consider this letter as a request for help in whatever direction would alleviate these problems.

P.S.: . . . While I do realize the expense associated with health care, I certainly hope something can be done to ease the situation at Mont St. Joseph . . . thank you for your time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that letter is very concerning. And this you find in all centres, the same type of problems. I can understand where this person is coming from. Surely to God that in the upcoming discussions regarding the health care that we have in our province, problems like this can and will be addressed.

In finishing up, Mr. Speaker, I read in *Hansard* some of the comments made by the member from Athabasca. And in those comments, it is stated that we are doing good for the country . . . or for the province I should say. One of the things we've done good in last year's budget was we created The Métis Act, the recognition of the Métis veterans.

(15:15)

And that is true. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it showed recognition of:

. . . the flag, the cart, and of course the historical communities of Cumberland House, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Green Lake, and (also Duck Lake and Macdowall).

I want to say to the member from Athabasca: when he says the members on this side went against it, they went against what we wanted on this side as a hoist. Mr. Speaker, the hoist that was asked upon by the member from Humboldt and myself was so that the members on that side — and specifically the minister — would take into account that when The Métis Act was brought in, that there was a handful of people that recognized The Métis Act.

Now as you know, there was 45,000 potentially Métis people in the province of Saskatchewan. Yet in the last election of The Métis Act, there was only roughly 4,000 that were allowed to vote. Well 4,000 versus 45,000 is quite a different. The reason

we brought in for a hoist was that . . . so that the members opposite could get all the people to get together and come out with one plan for a Métis Act.

And I say again, and I'll say last year, it wasn't that we don't agree with The Métis Act. What we don't agree with is what was in The Métis Act. The members on this side knew that, and that's why we voted the way we did.

It also goes on by the member from Athabasca to say:

. . . that (The) Métis Act is a good Act . . . It has a lot of challenges ahead of it . . .

Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of challenges ahead regarding this Métis Act. I have a list of letters from Métis people that say, the first and foremost thing that should have been done — and it should have been done when the hoist was brought in — was that . . . to look at the Métis people and come up with a proper election Act. That was not done. And the letters that I have in my office today state that that's what should have been done.

So when the member from Athabasca states that we objected to The Métis Act, that is totally wrong. We wanted the hoist so that the people, the Métis people, could get all the things that should be done in an Act before it was brought into power.

Mr. Speaker, there are other members on my side that would like to speak, and therefore I will end with that.

Therefore, I say, I will be supporting the amendment but I will not be supporting the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today and my honour indeed to stand up and speak in support of the Speech from the Throne — this speech that recognizes Saskatchewan as a province of opportunity. And indeed what a province of opportunity it is, Mr. Speaker.

We've got close to 1 million people that are dedicated to making this province go forward, to making it work better. There is a number primarily centred on the opposition benches that seem to be masters of doom and seem to be determined that this is a . . . sort of the last place in the world in which one would want to live.

But that's not who I represent, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to tell you about the constituency of Regina Coronation Park which is, if you're coming in from the north of Regina you . . . on pavement, you are bound to come through the constituency of Regina Coronation Park because No. 6 and No. 11 Highways turn into Albert Street. And on the right hand of Albert Street is Regina Coronation Park all the way down to the CN (Canadian National) rail track, the Towers Mall, and then if we follow . . . the south border follows the CN line west all the way to McIntosh Street and then up McIntosh Street to the north.

All of that — I'll describe it as a rectangular chunk of Regina — is the constituency of Regina Coronation Park. Primarily residential, but a good smattering of malls, mall activity and

stores to service the residents. And we've got some very good schools, both public and separate high school and public and separate schools, not surprisingly, to serve the people of that wonderful constituency.

The people, Mr. Speaker, are . . . we have a range from some very — I'll describe it as fairly upper-end housing to we have some what I would describe as lower-end housing. But the vast majority of the housing stock and apartment buildings in Regina Coronation Park would be firmly middle-class to upper-middle-class housing.

And we've got people that work day after day raising their families, trying to make our province a better place for them to live and for their children to live, and in some instances for our grandchildren to live. We have a nursing home — William Booth nursing home — is the largest nursing home in the constituency and they just do a tremendous job with people that are residents there.

Mr. Speaker, it's a nice constituency and it's been my honour to represent that area for some time now and I just want to thank my constituents for their continued support. It means a great deal to me as I go about my duties in the Legislative chamber and on the government side of this legislature.

I want to take a moment to do something I do way too seldom. And that is to acknowledge the support and love of my family. It means far more than I ever could say. And that support enables me to step forward every day and do the very, very best that I can for the people of Saskatchewan and for my constituents.

I want to thank my wife, Lorna; my sons and daughter; and of course my parents, John and Jean for their support. And all the rest of the family too.

Mr. Speaker, this province of opportunity — Saskatchewan is indeed a province of opportunity. Seven months ago, seven short months ago, the Premier gathered us together and said: let's get in the bus; let's tour Saskatchewan and let's engage the people; let's engage the people of Saskatchewan; let's glean the very best ideas they have; let's work with them; let's renew partnerships; let us, let us get more in tune than we have been for many, many years with the people of Saskatchewan.

And the Premier was on that bus every kilometre that it travelled, every day, day in, day out. And I'm delighted to say that we all had an opportunity and it was a tremendously good experience to meet people, to engage them, to hear their thoughts, to hear their ideas, and to have them push us in some ways; and then to come back and see that, some of those, many of those ideas reflected in this Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, it's democracy at its best. It's what governance is all about. And governance . . . The people of Saskatchewan have known this for a great many years; we don't often take the time to think what governance is all about. But governing is really about gathering together — all of us — and doing together what we can't do alone. It's co-operating and it means things like creating SaskTel so that we could have telephone service throughout rural Saskatchewan, including the farm I grew up on, so that we could have that telephone service in

remote geographical areas.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of our governance that we've done in Saskatchewan there's a few things that we have to be very, very proud of, and I wanted to talk a little about Crown corporations today because that's an area that clearly defines us on the government side from members opposite on the opposition side.

Some of the accomplishments we have as a result of our Crown corporations is we've got more kilometres of power line per capita than anywhere in the world. We've got more lines, more kilometres of telephone lines per capita than anywhere else in the world. Of course, we've got more kilometres of highways and roads than any other jurisdiction in the world.

Mr. Speaker, these are things that Saskatchewan people have done working together. We've got . . . in Saskatchewan, we have insurance that's now accepted. Farmers can purchase for their farms, their buildings, machinery and livestock, and so on. But it wasn't always so.

Before SGI was created, the private insurance companies would not sell insurance to farmers. The argument that they used was too high a risk — no fire department and it just didn't make sense. Well, SGI led the way, Mr. Speaker — this is now a matter of our proud history — SGI led the way with the farm pak, and then later on they developed the Tenant Pak policies, package policies, and many other consumer-friendly innovations.

Mr. Speaker, the Crowns have done a good job over the years, and I want to come back to the Crowns in a few minutes. The Crowns have done a good job historically. I want to bring it up to something a little closer to today's reality in a few minutes.

But the Speech from the Throne, there's a few things in it that I particularly want to highlight. I want to commend my colleagues who have spoken to this important debate because every one of them I've listened carefully to and I've enjoyed their speeches. I think they've done a very good job of representing their constituencies and of pointing out the good things that there are, the government's plan, what it is that we have in this great province of opportunity — Saskatchewan. And I think my colleagues have done a good job, each in their own way, of highlighting the positive things.

One of the things in this Speech from the Throne that particularly is attractive to me, Mr. Speaker, is when we announced that we're going to have a young person on every Crown corporation board. It's leadership for tomorrow, today. That's what it's really all about — developing our future leadership by engaging them in a very, very real way today. And I know that there's a great many young people throughout this province that will have a tremendous contribution to make . . . to making our province a better place and to making our Crown corporations work better. So that's one of the things that particularly attracted me in the Throne Speech.

The other area I want to talk about that I'm very proud of, Mr. Speaker, is that of health and the innovations that are taking place in that. We have a wait-list initiative underway. We've got an advice or a hotline, 24 hours, in the works. And we've got improvements in service delivery throughout the piece. Mr.

Speaker, I am very, very pleased with the direction that we're moving in health care. I think it just bodes . . . It will result in good things for all of us.

Want to talk briefly about a couple areas of my responsibility, that being Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation. And I want to just use this opportunity to share that this great Crown corporation, Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, is responsible for some efficiencies, Mr. Speaker, that . . . For instance, there's been 40 surplus properties that have been sold since 1997, returning \$2.6 million to the Saskatchewan treasury every year. And this is something I'm very proud of and didn't know until after I became Minister Responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation).

Every year we save taxpayers close to \$3 million in our Central Vehicle Agency purchasing and operations through fleet discount purchases and that sort of thing. Just almost an aside, I have a letter, a report from the city of Regina that shows that in their most recent light truck acquisition they purchased 20 light trucks, most of them half-tons. They used Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation to purchase these pickups and they paid a fee to SPMC for handling the transaction.

(15:30)

After they paid the fee to SPMC the savings to the city were over \$580 per vehicle, Mr. Speaker, times 20 vehicles — this is pretty significant. We've got ourselves well in excess of over \$11,000 worth of savings to taxpayers of the city of Regina. I'm very proud that SPMC is able to partner with the municipal government and realize some of those savings. SPMC is responsible for saving \$800,000 through our distribution centre that provides all sorts of services, furniture and supplies, office supplies, throughout government. And it's a significant savings each year.

Files — this should come as no surprise to any of us — files seem to multiply. One of my colleagues, the member for Regina Centre, says, "I can believe that," and I'm sure you can. Files multiply like dust bunnies under beds and one of the things that SPMC has done is they've got a system of off-site storage, and it is resulting in \$1.2 million savings by taking files out of high rent districts and moving it into the warehouse area.

I toured that particular warehouse just, I think it was, last week — if it wasn't last week it was the week before — but it was a very impressive sight to see the rows and rows and rows of files and to be informed how quickly those files can be recovered on request, Mr. Speaker. So it's not a case of they're just sort of dumped willy-nilly into a warehouse — it's very, very meticulously filed and we're very proud of the turnaround time for when those largely unused files are needed . . . we can access them very, very quickly. But a savings of \$1.2 million annually in space for files is a very important contribution that SPMC makes.

Mr. Speaker, there's other things that SPMC does, but I want to share a couple of things that are very important to Regina and this area, that we're particularly proud of having been a part of.

SPMC is bringing an additional almost 300 employees into the

downtown core of Regina by bringing an additional 70,000 square feet of government office space into play in downtown Regina, and in departments moving in there. It's a very important contribution we make to strengthening the downtown of this capital city, of making downtown, keeping downtown a vibrant, happening place.

One of the other things that it's involved in right now is the construction of the sound stage. SPMC is the property manager of that development, and we're very, very proud and pleased with what's happening there. And what a tremendous opportunity that is for employment. I'm especially pleased for the employment that relates directly to Regina people, but Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity that exceeds Regina people. It . . . there's just good news all the way around from the sound stage.

But I want to say one piece of good news that the Premier, when he was on his Team Canada tour just last month, signed a . . . was it 35 or 45 million?

An Hon. Member: — 45.

Hon. Mr. Trew: — . . . \$45 million dollar deal with a German film company, and they're going to do their film work right here on a TV series. They're going to do the work right here in Regina at our sound stage. That is a very significant contract to have been signed, and especially when you recognize that the construction isn't even complete yet on the sound stage.

The other thing that SPMC has partnered with, and did a very similar service, Mr. Speaker, was with the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation and the construction of the new entertainment centre that's attached to Casino Regina. And we're very, very proud of that.

I might as well slip into now talking a little bit about the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation, which most people will recognize as Casino Regina and soon, Casino Moose Jaw.

In the . . . and more about Moose Jaw in a minute. I'll ask the member from Moose Jaw Palliser . . . or Moose Jaw North . . . to just hold on.

Mr. Speaker, Gaming Corp. in the last six years has contributed over \$100 million. It's returned that in income to social and public purposes. Over \$100 million is not an insignificant amount of money.

As importantly, it employs over 650 people right here in Regina. Six hundred and fifty people have got good jobs. They're very, very proud of the jobs that they have, and I might add they do a very good job over at Casino Regina. I'm very, very pleased to be associated with the good people that are working there, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to point out that at Casino Regina we've got over 52 per cent of the employment, of the employees are Aboriginal. And we're . . . I mean it's by policy but it's also worked out just tremendously well. And it was my honour to attend the Aboriginal Government Employees' Network annual awards evening in Saskatoon this winter and I accepted on behalf of Casino Regina the employer of the year award. And it was

indeed a great honour to receive that.

Mr. Speaker, Gaming Corp. has been recognized by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission on that very issue of employment equity and we intend to continue that into Moose Jaw as we open that. I think it's slated for sometime in September.

Casino Moose Jaw is an area, Mr. Speaker, that we're very, very proud to be a part of that because what, what our involvement there has allowed is for the Moose Jaw Temple Gardens Mineral Spa to increase its size. They're adding rooms just across the street from their current location. They're building more rooms. They're building a parkade and that's all part of the hotel/parkade and what will be Casino Moose Jaw when it opens. But it's an exciting prospect that indeed makes Moose Jaw even more of a tourist destination.

And I want to just for the record say that my wife and I enjoyed an evening — actually, it was Valentine's evening — we enjoyed it in Moose Jaw at the spa. Very nice place to go. And they run just a . . . they run a quality operation there — just first class. And we enjoyed the pool, we enjoyed some of the people we met in the pool, and anyway, Moose Jaw, I highly recommend a trip to Moose Jaw.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Why not? Why not put in a quick little plug? We also did the tour of the tunnels the next morning and really enjoyed that, too. My congratulations to the good folks of Moose Jaw. It was a cultural experience and a learning experience and it was fun — all wrapped up into one — so we quite enjoyed our time there.

Mr. Speaker, Gaming Corp also . . . this is one of the things that is hugely not recognized because it's done on a volunteer basis. The employees at Gaming Corp, at Casino Moose Jaw, volunteer their time and their efforts and they select, the staff themselves select community organizations and worthwhile causes for which they then organize all of the employees that will donate their abilities and their times and they go to work for these organizations.

There's over 70 community organizations and non-profits throughout Regina that they have volunteered I don't know how many, how many hours — very, very significant — and they're very . . . we're very proud of the job that the people that work at the casino do. And I'm very pleased to have been able to help those employees as I went out in my own right and helped them support some of those 70 partners that we have throughout the province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've talked a little bit about a couple of my areas. I want to talk a little bit now about . . . back to Crown corporations.

I want to start I guess by recognizing the three speeches here that the Leader of the Opposition has made on Crown corporations. Rather than quote from all three, which essentially say the same . . . May 24, 2001 and November 26, 2001 at the Saskatchewan Party leader's dinner. Just for the record so people can look these up, but the themes are the same with

respect to Crown corporations.

So at least I give the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition members credit — you're consistent. You say you want to do away with all but the core Crown corporations. You're at least consistent on that and it's wonderful. I welcome that because it clearly delineates the difference between us on the government side and members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

What is said, and I quote:

Step Three . . .

This is from the October 2 address to the North Saskatoon Business Association.

Step Three: (is about) Keeping Our Crown Corporations Focused on Core Services.

They've defined the core services as SaskPower, SaskTel, SaskEnergy, and SGI — the big four.

And they've said that all other Crowns . . . Well here's what the quote says:

So, the third step for a . . . (Sask) Party government . . . is to immediately stop the expansion of crown corporations in areas that are not directly related to the provision . . .

To the provision . . .

of the core services of power, natural gas, telecommunications and insurance.

Further, we will phase out all government-owned businesses or business activities that are not directly related to the provision of these core services.

And the members say, sold.

So the point is that's what you believe; that's not what we . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I would ask the hon. member or remind the hon. member that . . . direct all comments to the Chair and through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's what they believe. And what we believe is something completely different. We believe in Crown corporations, we believe . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear

Hon. Mr. Trew: — . . . we believe that by working together there is much we can do.

I talked about two Crown corporations — Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and some of the great things that they're able to do because they're a Crown corporation, not . . . and controlled by the government. I talked about Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation and some of the things that it's able to do and the benefits that we're able to derive from that.

Mr. Speaker, what we have . . . I want to ask the opposition. When they say they want to do away with all other Crown corporations, do they even know that what they're saying is they want to do away with Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, which is a Crown corporation? Do they know that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan fund 35 per cent of the premiums of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance? And they're saying, do away with it?

You tell me . . . Let me rephrase that because I don't want to engage you, Mr. Speaker, in the debate in a personal way.

I don't know how it is that they could tell us that they should do away with Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, the Crown corporation that pays one-third of the premium for farmers.

(15:45)

Please to tell me what private corporation is going to pick up one-third of the premiums for crop insurance for farmers. The silence is deafening, Mr. Speaker, the silence is deafening. How does this work? What do they believe? They say, do away with it. Well I'm forced to come to the conclusion that what the opposition, that is based primarily in rural Saskatchewan, what they're saying is they don't believe that farmers deserve some support. They don't believe in crop insurance, Mr. Speaker. I say that's a shame.

We believe in the Crop Insurance Corporation, the Crown corporation that's served a useful role in Saskatchewan for many, many years. They don't believe in it. They have said, their own leader has said repeatedly, out the door with Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, that Crown corporation. Out the door, they say — no more Crown corporation.

Mr. Speaker, there is a good list of Crown corporations that have been put together to provide safe, reliable service to all parts of Saskatchewan and we have done so with amongst the lowest rates in all of Canada. That's the number one job of our Crown corporations and they do it well.

We have utility rates, Mr. Speaker, that are amongst the lowest in all of Canada. We . . . we have SaskTel, which is the first fully digitized teleco in Canada, all of the digital throughout . . . digital switching stations throughout the entire province. First teleco in all of Canada to do that.

The reason that I stopped and smiled, Mr. Speaker, is the heckle I heard about we're behind everyone else. SaskTel has been a leader and an innovator for many, many years. There is none so blind, Mr. Speaker, as those who will not see.

SaskTel partnered and helped to pioneer many, many things, including now — and they continue to do so — including now they have high-speed Internet, which is available . . . that allows you to use your telephone to talk to individuals and, and, and to have the high-speed Internet operate simultaneously, Mr. Speaker: both at the same time, both at the same time.

That's an innovation that SaskTel pioneered and we were the first teleco to introduce that to my knowledge anywhere in the

world, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very, very proud that SaskTel is able to continue to do things like that. And they do so, as I mentioned, with very low rates.

Our Crowns employ over 9,000 people and support literally thousands of Saskatchewan businesses, Mr. Speaker. It's a proud record — 9,000 people employed in Saskatchewan by our Crown corporations. That's a wonderful part . . . In fact, the Crowns represent about 15 per cent of our gross domestic product, and I'm quite pleased to continue to support that, Mr. Speaker.

Looking for some of the rates, let me just to go to SGI because that's the first rate that I've come across. And the vehicle comparison that I want to use, Mr. Speaker, is for a 2001 Ford Taurus SE four-door sedan; and this comparison shows Saskatchewan — SGI — the insurance rate is \$1,183. Amazingly, Calgary, the land of milk and honey to the opposition is \$2,335; Toronto, \$2,437; St. John's, Newfoundland, \$2,592. Mr. Speaker, compare that to our insurance premium of \$1,183.

I really appreciate, now we've got some acknowledgement that boy, are we ever good . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, yes. The member for Wood River says, you just keep believing it, and my name. And let me tell you, I will continue to believe it. My parents, my grandparents helped build the Crown corporations in this province. They helped build this for the benefit of us all, a benefit that we continue.

We've got over 9,000 people working in the Crown corporations, earning good, earning good pay — earning good pay. And do you know what? I'm really proud of that.

We've got highways workers that build and maintain highways. They do it day in, day out. They keep our roads clean. I'm proud of them. We've got a civil service that is second to none here in Saskatchewan. And for the member of Wood River's benefit, I'm proud of it, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of it — they may not be — I'm proud of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, not to put too a fine point on it but I want to talk a little bit about Crown corporations and about the need to invest.

We've got a new study or . . . well, I should quote from the paper here. It says a new study was conducted by the university study group at the University of Saskatchewan and the office of resource planning at the University of Regina. The article studies the economic impact of the two research parks that we have in Saskatchewan and it uses a wide range of data.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that I've talked about this is that the study showed that the tenants of Innovation Place in Saskatoon spent 248 million in Saskatchewan during 2001. That does not . . . that figure doesn't include the tenants' sales. Tenants at Regina's new research park added \$141 million in economic activity. Together the two parks have 140 tenants and employ almost 2,800 people and have a combined square footage of 120,000 square metres.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of this SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) investment is clearly big. What it's about is about government working to make our province better, government working to do research, government working to create jobs, government working to make our province a better place.

I compare that, Mr. Speaker, with the opposition, the Leader of the Opposition who has suggested that, weather permitting, they might balance the budget; weather permitting, they might bring a few more people into Saskatchewan. But weather permitting. That's their plan — weather permitting.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we have in this Throne Speech is a solid plan that acknowledges some of the difficulties we're having today in terms of drought, in terms of low commodity prices worldwide. Some of the challenges that we face on that agricultural scene include the American subsidies to their grain farmers, the European Economic Community's subsidies to their grain farmers, and the federal government, on the other hand, the federal Government of Canada refusing to step up to the plate and subsidize in a more meaningful way the farmers of Canada and, more specifically, of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we need a level playing field and our farmers would do quite well.

Mr. Speaker, I'm . . . before I take my place, I do want to touch on a couple of areas. One is where there's a very significant difference. I want to acknowledge the work that the Minister of Labour has done on the minimum wage file. I think it is very, very commendable, and I congratulate you on getting the minimum wage increase that you've so recently announced and look forward to that implementation taking place.

But I contrast the minimum wage increase that my seatmate was able to announce with what the member for Humboldt said and is in *Hansard* in June 26, year 2000. And I quote. The member for Humboldt said, Mr. Speaker:

Mr. Minister, I've been informed by Kirsch Construction of Middle Lake that they have approximately 15 to 18 men on their payroll. They have 20 to 30 men waiting to work. These people are willing to work for less than minimum wage as long as they work. If it were not for labour legislation put in by your government, we could have a construction firm such as that complete that road.

So says the member for Humboldt in this very Assembly. And I can only conclude it wasn't an idle thought. I can only conclude it wasn't an idle thought.

Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day when you've got that level of understanding of what it takes to keep a household going, what it takes to keep food on the table, what it takes to keep your utilities paid, your taxes paid — what it takes simply to keep body and soul together. And it takes, quite frankly, more than minimum wage, Mr. Speaker. It takes more than minimum wage, and yet we've got members opposite saying, oh we've got people lined up that would work for less than minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, it just never seems to end.

Mr. Speaker, I want to — just before I finish — I want to talk a

little bit about tax cuts and sort of the mantra of the opposition. They say they're all about slashing taxes and the economy will go . . . will grow.

These disasters of doom across the way are saying things like, we'll lower the taxes and it'll encourage new business to come to Saskatchewan. Well you know, in the '80s there was a guy named Grant Devine who said, we're going to slash the taxes and we're open for business; Saskatchewan is open for business.

And you know what? After about seven or eight years, that slogan was no longer open for business, Mr. Speaker. It was hoping for business. Hoping, with an H in the front. Hoping for business. People were leaving Saskatchewan in record numbers. Nine and a half long years of that policy that members opposite would have supported. Some of them indeed sat in that government. Some of them worked in those offices of government members then, Mr. Speaker.

They said in the '80s, slash taxes and we're open for business. Well if that worked, it most certainly should have worked in the '80s. There is much more to economic development than simply slashing taxes. There is much, much more to it.

But, Mr. Speaker, what distresses me is not . . . What distresses me, Mr. Speaker, is not that any of us would want lower taxes. Of course we want lower taxes. And indeed this Minister of Finance has lowered taxes in each of the last five budgets. Each of the last five budgets, he's lowered taxes, and he's presented balanced budgets. More about the budget speech next week, this being the Speech from the Throne. I'm pointing out that lower taxes alone is not all that works.

Members opposite are saying that the Crown corporations are in the way. Well, Mr. Speaker, in the '80s Grant Devine said, elect us and we'll do away with lots of those Crown corporations; they're in the way — we'll get those Crown corporations out of your way and, by gosh, Saskatchewan is going to just blossom. He painted a wonderful picture and it sounded good. It sounded good.

Election night. I remember it well in April of 1982. Election night. I'm watching on TV. I'm shocked. I remember it well, Mr. Speaker. And I can remember saying to my cousin who was with me that moment, saying, you know, if they can keep a quarter of their promises and deliver anything close to a balanced budget, I'm going to be a Conservative next time.

He looked at me. And I said: don't worry; I don't think I'm changing. Don't worry. There's not much danger of that. This is one hare-brained scheme. And it sure was, Mr. Speaker. It didn't work then and it won't work now. It didn't work then and it won't work now.

(16:00)

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Grant Devine at that time said, if I repeat something often enough, people will believe it; if I say it often enough, people will believe it; if I say an untruth often enough, even though it's an untruth, people will come to believe it; all I have to do is repeat it over and over. That's what they said then.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what I see out of this crew — this opposition now — is more of the same. If they say that untruth often enough, if they repeat it often enough, people will believe it.

Well simply slashing taxes didn't work in the '80s; it won't work now. Simply doing away with Crown corporations will, will . . . That's what it'll do — it simply does away with Crown corporations and we'd see head offices leaving Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, it would be a disaster. I want no part of yielding government to that . . . those masters of doom and gloom; I want no part of yielding the government there.

I want us to recognize the plan we have; I want to recognize Saskatchewan as a province of opportunity. I will be very, very proud to continue in this province; to continue working as hard as I can on behalf of the people not only of Regina Coronation Park, but the people all across this great province. Mr. Speaker, I am very, very proud to support this, this Speech from the Throne. I will be voting in favour.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make a few words about the Throne Speech, but before I do that I'd like to welcome back my friend and colleague from Battleford-Cut Knife who's had some tough times in the last year. And I with great pleasure welcome him back into the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — And I would also like to welcome the new member from Saskatoon-Idylwyld into the legislature as well.

Mr. Speaker, the government Throne Speech has no plan, no vision, and the government seems to have no ability to change.

As we have seen, this government under its new Premier has really turned away from the former premier, Mr. Romanow's, governance and policies. And this government has really taken a hard turn to the left, I believe the word is. It's fiscally irresponsible, the direction this government is going in, and I believe Mr. Romanow would be . . . is very upset with the direction of this NDP government under its new Premier.

As we have seen now the government is running deficits even though they go to great lengths to hide the fact that they are running a deficit. They are now running a \$478 million deficit but they try to hide it under the Fiscal Stabilization Fund which is really a false bookkeeping procedure. I believe there's only three provinces in Canada that has that bookkeeping procedure. We have met with the various banks in Canada, we have talked to the auditor, and they all agree that the Fiscal Stabilization Fund does not exist.

When they look at the budget they just discount the Fiscal Stabilization totally and do not take it into account. And the credit rating companies, Dominion, and the Saskatchewan auditor, and the banks of Canada do not believe that Saskatchewan is running a balanced budget. It is running a deficit budget this year and ran one last year.

It's interesting to note, they say that they borrow from this fund.

The fund has no money in it but what they've done is when they did run a surplus back when Mr. Romanow was premier they took the money and quite rightly put it and paid down debt, and I give Mr. Romanow and his cabinet in those days credit for doing that. But this new government under the present day Premier, what they do is take and they borrow money from a bank and claim to have taken it from a Fiscal Stabilization Fund that doesn't exist.

So over the past two years the debt of Saskatchewan has gone up but they have never ran a deficit. Well it's impossible to increase the debt of the province without running a deficit. So there's just another example of the trickery in bookkeeping that this present government has and we'll see in the present budget if they continue with this lax form of bookkeeping and trying to basically hide a deficit from the people of Saskatchewan.

The province is definitely going in the wrong direction and one of the reasons this province is going in the wrong direction fiscally is because of the spending habits of this province. There's a number of examples where the government has wasted millions of dollars. It spent \$80 million to develop an automated land titles system where they could have bought one for 1 to \$2 million that . . . from another province or company and without wasting \$80 million of hard-earned taxpayer money.

And as we all know, the government lost \$28 million investing in the potato business and all they created was nine full-time jobs — \$28 million loss. And the Minister of CIC has the nerve to say that's a success story. How can the minister say that's a success story? I don't know — \$28 million loss but that's supposed to be good news for Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, no small business in this province can operate like that. Businesses have to make their loans. They have loans to the bank and they can't afford to take on losses like that. But of course this government just goes to the taxpayer and asks for more money and keep wasting the money and throwing the money out the . . . out, basically, out the window to meet its commitments.

And the recent statistics that came out concerning the population loss in Saskatchewan — again the government seems to be living in some kind of a dream world. The Hon. Minister of Economic Development actually said the recent census statistics were good news — again good news. Less people in Saskatchewan would be good news from this government. All he had to say was be more wealth for the ones left behind. Well another ridiculous statement by a government that's totally out of touch with reality and totally out of touch with the taxpayers of this province.

And the real sad thing about making comments like that is that it chases taxpayers away. It chases businesses away. It chases investment away. And that's all the things that we should be attracting to this province right now. A shrinking tax base means it's going to be harder and harder to fund health care and education and the very important job that the government should be doing on a day-to-day basis.

This government mentions companies that they have invested in. They created 500 jobs. Well the government promised to

create 30,000 new jobs and all they can say is that they have created 500 jobs, government jobs. And it's certainly not the way to go in this province.

Around the world in every free and open democratic nation or every nation that has a market economy — which all the western world does — private, small businesses are the key to job creation, the key to wealth creation, which is so fundamental to an economy. And this government seems to always take the attitude that people that take any initiative on their own to create jobs, to create wealth, to create investment is a bad thing. This government wants to stick to government owning businesses. And when they invest in these businesses they are competing with private sector, they are competing with small businesses, and it drives away that job creation and that investment, and again the spiralling effect of loss of jobs, loss of investment in this province.

Governments by nature are inefficient. Government-owned businesses are even more inefficient. We need to get this government and any government out of the business of doing business and get them back to the core responsibilities and let business do business in the province. Allow the business to create jobs and create wealth in this province so they can be taxed. Yes, we will tax the businesses. Successful companies pay taxes. The government uses those tax dollars to fund health care and education.

In the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we say, there's no really plan to change; they want to continue on this path. There's no vision, no ability to change. They're locked in their state, and they really, over the last 10 years, have really added to the crisis in health care. They've had no plans for the future.

But one thing that government always does . . . and they state that the Saskatchewan Party, the official opposition of Saskatchewan, has no plan. Well let me tell you the Saskatchewan Party, the official opposition, has a plan for this province. A game plan for growth it's called.

What we want to do is increase the population of this province by 100,000 people over the next 10 years. That's a goal that we would strive to . . . and I will tell the member right now how we would increase the population of this province by 100,000 people over the next 10 years.

And the first item in this plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is concerning personal taxes. We think the best way to lower personal taxes is in increasing personal family exemptions to be competitive with other provinces. Right now, Saskatchewan . . . a Saskatchewan family, a couple with two children begins to pay provincial income tax once their combined income reaches \$20,000.

That same family in Alberta pays no income tax until the combined income reaches \$33,500. And it's very important that we close this gap. We don't have to meet . . . we don't have to be exactly the same as Alberta. We don't have to beat them, but we have to be close. We have to be close. And right now the difference between \$33,500 and \$20,000 is a huge amount and it's not going to attract businesses and create jobs in this province.

The second item in the Saskatchewan Party plan for growth is reducing tax on growth and productivity . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I am having difficulty hearing the member while he gives his speech, so I'd ask all hon. members to bring the noise level down a little bit so that I can hear the hon. member.

Mr. Weekes: — . . . Deputy Speaker. It's funny. When the Saskatchewan plan comes out with their economic plan for growth the province, the government does not want to listen to it. They just accuse us of not having one. But here it is. If the member would just like to listen, listen very quietly, I will tell you about our plan to increase this population by 100,000 people over the next 10 years.

The second point on our economic plan. We would reduce taxes on growth and productivity by eliminating the small-business tax and cutting the corporate capital tax in half — in half, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Small business is the largest creator of jobs in Canada, as I pointed out before, but Saskatchewan's small-business tax is a major barrier to growth.

And small businesses also need private sector capital investment to grow. Not government sector, not government ownership, private sector capital to grow. And by making Saskatchewan a small-business tax-free zone and reducing the tax on capital investment, we take a giant step in creating an economic climate for growth and job creation. Private sector, not government ownership, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the third item in our plan for growth is to deliver smaller and smarter government. Smaller and smarter government gets rid of the current regulatory gridlock blocking business growth and new job creation in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People expect their government to keep the taxes as low as possible and make the most effective use of every tax dollar spent.

No, we're not going to send it to Chile and we're not going to waste it in Georgia and we're not going to waste it in Australia. We're going to keep those tax dollars in this province for the good of the people of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Party would review every activity of government to ensure that every tax dollar is being spent as effectively as possible with the broad goal of growing Saskatchewan — a novel thought the government hasn't thought of. Grow Saskatchewan, not Georgia, not Australia, not Chile — Saskatchewan.

This comprehensive review will examine every activity of government based on the following questions. Does it serve a compelling public interest? Is it affordable within the fiscal environment of the province? Is it being delivered or offered in the most efficient way? Is it accountable to the taxpayer? Accountability is something the government doesn't understand. And most importantly, does it contribute to growing Saskatchewan by 100,000 people in 10 years?

(16:15)

No part of government will be left out of this exercise and will result in a smarter, more efficient smaller government. A government that serves the best interest of the taxpayer in a way

that is fully accountable to the taxpayer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the taxpayer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — The fourth plank in our Grow Saskatchewan plan is to provide quality educational opportunities to young people in the new economy. Saskatchewan is losing thousands of young people every year to other provinces because they don't see an opportunity for a successful future here in Saskatchewan. And the latest statistics show that, very obviously, that we're losing people out of this province. We're losing our youth and the most productive people out of this province.

A key component in a challenge of growing Saskatchewan is to provide world-class educational opportunities for our young people that are relevant to the new knowledge economy. But we must also take steps to encourage graduating students to stay in Saskatchewan with competitive tax rates — something I talked about before — new job creation which the private sector must do, and tax incentives for graduating students who stay in Saskatchewan.

Number five in our plan is balanced and fair labour laws. Saskatchewan needs fair and level playing field when it comes to labour laws. Competitive, balanced, and fair labour legislation is fundamental to attracting new capital and business investment in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Our game plan for growth includes implementation of legislation to make workplace democratic in the process of certification and decertification of unions — democratic, nothing hidden. It's all out, right there. Everyone has the right to vote, favour or against, of certifying and decertifying a union without fear, without any reprisals — secret ballot. Secret ballot, Mr. Speaker, just like an election. It would be a secret ballot and only the person voting would know how they voted.

Also, Mr. Speaker, a full review of workers' compensation boards, organization, governance, policies, and fee structure, and elimination of union preference tendering in all of government and Crown corporation construction contracts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we understand the government was going to implement the Dorsey report and as we have seen, the minister has reneged on that promise. The workers of this province — the people who've been injured in this province — were counting on those changes to set up an independent review board so that their concerns would be heard and this government is turning their back on those people once again and not implementing the Dorsey report.

Mr. Speaker, the sixth point in our economic growth plan is stop expansion of Crown corporations to compete with existing Saskatchewan businesses. Fundamental, Mr. Speaker, to grow Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — We would stop immediately the expansion of Crown corporations in areas that are not directly related to the provisions of the core service of power, natural gas, telecommunications and insurance.

It is worth noting here that our plan is not bound to continue government ownership or the sale of Crown corporations. What we are committed to is to ensure Saskatchewan taxpayers receive the best possible service and the best value for the investment they've made in our Crown corporations.

Make it very clear to the government, we have no intentions of selling any Crown corporations. What we want to do is get them out of the way so they're not competing with private investment, not sell them. Make them efficient. Make them accountable to the taxpayer.

Right now, there's no accountability. When we asked the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) about the Crowns, he doesn't have any answers. He's not responsible, he says. No accountability.

We're going to make the Crowns accountable to the taxpayers of this province, get them out of the way of small business and private investment so that businesses can grow jobs in this province and create wealth for the government of the day and the government takes those taxes to pay for health care and education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — A novel thought, Mr. Speaker.

The seventh point is key economic expansion to areas of natural advantage. We will focus economic expansion in areas where we already hold the natural advantage: value-added manufacturing processing, particularly food processing; intensive agriculture; tourism; technology; our natural resource industries, particularly forest, mining and energy; and the rapidly growing young Aboriginal population.

Number nine in our plank to Grow Saskatchewan is building a strong social partnership for growth. And I think that's very important. We need to build this strong social partnership between business, labour, government and the First Nations to focus on growing Saskatchewan — growing Saskatchewan for all of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — And not send them to Alberta?

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now talk a bit about justice and security in this province. Sometime ago, the government made a commitment to hire 200 new police officers. But unfortunately, to date, they've only hired 45 new police officers, and I understand they've a net loss actually from retirements from the police force. And meanwhile, Regina is the car theft capital of North America. Again, another broken promise by this government and another area where the people of Saskatchewan are very concerned about.

As I have mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, the government had

announced that they were going to implement the Dorsey report. We've waited almost a year. There's been no legislative changes concerning the Dorsey recommendations, and we are again waiting, waiting for some changes. The people of Saskatchewan are waiting for these changes.

When it was announced by the former minister of Labour, he suggested that they needed legislative changes to create an independent appeal . . . avenue of appeal for claimants who disagree with decisions of the board. And again, Mr. Speaker, nothing is being done there and we wonder why. Possibly the reason is because there's been three Labour ministers in the last three years. But still that's not the problem of the people of Saskatchewan — that's the government's problem.

They can't quite figure out who is going to do what, and I understand there's going to be many changes coming right away again. So who knows? Maybe that will be another reason not to do anything. We can't find a minister of Labour any more so we'll just forget about it.

In the last Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, the government . . . And I'll quote from the last Throne Speech. They talk about establishing:

. . . a labour-business roundtable providing a forum for complete and open dialogue between employees and employers. The intent is to reach consensus on a wide variety of labour issues to the benefit of all Saskatchewan workplaces.

I'd like to quote from a newspaper article, February 8, *StarPhoenix*, "Labour, management at impasse," and this is quoting from a labour leader:

Nearly a year after it was launched, the province's quest to bridge the gap between labour and management through a round-table process has stalled, and one prominent union official suggests the idea should be shelved.

Well that's what the union movement thinks about the government's round table. It's another broken promise by this government, and unfortunately again, that's at the expense of the taxpayers of this province, at the expense of the people of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to make a few comments about investment and the economy, and particularly agriculture, Mr. Speaker. This government . . . (inaudible) . . . since it tore up the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) back in 1995 to develop an adequate farm safety net. They talk about rural revitalization, and to date it's been a total disaster, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the government accuses the Saskatchewan Party of not having a plan. And I'd just like to lay out the Saskatchewan Party's agriculture plan. We believe the government's role in the industry should be to develop policies and strategies that will foster profitable and sustainable agriculture.

Now the federal government and its provincial counterparts need to stabilize the agriculture sector in the short term. Stabilize agriculture in the short term is very important. Then they need to remove barriers to trade and capital investment and

encourage the development of new agriculture industries.

A long-term and sustainable agriculture safety net that family farms can rely on is a . . . should be a top priority for this government, and the farm community of this province desperately needs something they can rely on. One reliable program that producers can count on in times of extraordinary challenges would make a world of difference to the industry. Recent programs have been nothing but a bureaucratic nightmare for producers. And you can talk to any producer out there and they would agree with this comment.

Once a strong program is in place, the government's vision for the future of agriculture should include measures to help the industry attract investment capital, develop new agriculture ventures and markets, encourage value-added intensive agriculture operations.

The agriculture industry, Mr. Speaker, has been negatively affected by a lack of vision, both at the federal and the provincial level. Family farms have seen too many studies, too many reports by this government. They've seen too many meetings and heard too many excuses. It's high time this government and the federal government present a vision for agriculture and a plan to stabilize Canada's agriculture sector.

But what have we seen from the Saskatchewan government? What we've seen, the Agriculture minister of Saskatchewan going hat in hand to the federal government wanting cash. Every few months we hear the minister has been to Ottawa, the federal government say no, there's no cash for you. And back comes the Minister of Agriculture—no money for agriculture.

A couple months later, back he goes to Ottawa, asks for money. The federal government — same thing — no money for agriculture.

Well I suggest that if the provincial government developed a plan and a common sense plan that would take into account the agriculture sector, go to the federal government and go to the other provinces in this country and negotiate an adequate long-term safety net . . . They have to go there with a plan in place.

And the federal government is working on a plan, but the provincial government seems to be silent on any plan for agriculture. All they do — go to Ottawa and ask for money, and the federal government naturally tells them, don't come back for any more money; we have no more money. But always, always what is needed is a long-term plan in place and this government does not have a long-term plan that they are willing to present to the federal government to negotiate with the federal government and the provinces.

So what has the provincial government done to date? One of the primary safety net programs, Saskatchewan crop insurance, has been trimmed. Spot loss hail coverage and the variable price option has been chopped, and farmer premiums are rising. That's the provincial government's response to the serious crisis in agriculture.

The government has added a forage insurance program for grazing but this should not be at the expense of the grain

industry. It would have been a few dollars to leave in place the spot loss and add the forage component of the crop insurance.

So, Mr. Speaker, we see that the government has gone to Ottawa, come back with nothing, and the response to the Saskatchewan farmers — we're going to increase your premiums on the crop insurance, eliminate some of the options in crop insurance. In other words, penalizing the Saskatchewan farmer and not offering them any help for the future in a very dry period and maybe one of the driest periods in history, at least since the dirty thirties, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to turn my attention to some constituency concerns. And again I will outline the needs and the desires of the people in Redberry Lake constituency and see really the non-response or negative response this government gives to people in Redberry Lake and to the Saskatchewan people in . . . as a whole.

There is a group in Redberry Lake constituency and it's called the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve. And really there's a great opportunity for Saskatchewan to capitalize on unique national and international recognition.

The United Nations recognized biosphere reserve and rural heritage sites in other provinces of Canada but in Saskatchewan there is only one and it's called the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve, which was designated by the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, in January of 2000.

And I'd like to give a bit of an explanation of what this biosphere is and is not. The biosphere is not a park, although Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve includes a regional park. It is not a town, although Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve includes the town of Hafford. The reserve is not a RM (rural municipality), although Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve includes parts of three rural municipalities. And the reserve is not a wildlife sanctuary, although Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve includes a federal migratory bird sanctuary as well as a provincial wildlife refuge and a representative areas network site.

What the world biosphere is, is a centre of excellence with sustainable economic development. Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve is managed by a committee, a community committee comprised of elected officials from the participating municipal governments and community boards operating as the Redberry Regional Economic Development Authority Incorporated .

The biosphere is an internationally recognized centre for excellence and a resource for conservation, research, and education. The reserve provides an opportunity for high quality research into the impacts of global, regional, and local environmental change and human activity. This work is coordinated by a technical committee.

The biosphere reserve is a highly honoured status. Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve is part of the worldwide network on UNESCO of some 375 locations, 10 of which are in Canada. Redberry is one of the three designations for Canada in the decade leading up to 2000, joining high-profile Clayoquot Sound in BC. There are also biosphere reserves in Quebec,

Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta.

Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve is the only one in Canada resulting from local grassroots effort, a matter of great significance to UNESCO. Saskatchewan's Minister of Environment and Resource Management signed the UNESCO nomination for Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve in 1999.

Now why Saskatchewan should financially support the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve's research, education, and public information facility. UNESCO designations are a matter of pride for the other provinces where they are . . . where they exist, and they are supported accordingly. Unfortunately, this one in Saskatchewan is not supported by its provincial government.

UNESCO decides what will be designated based upon input from the jurisdictions. If, as is suspected, there are some officials within the government's departments and agencies who would have favoured other areas as a UNESCO site, then they have either failed to do the groundwork necessary to obtain the status or UNESCO has rejected the proposals because they have failed to meet the very strict criteria.

The government and the people of Saskatchewan benefit in a large measure from the existence in the province of the UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve to enhance profile for tourism to the province, and the tax revenues derived therefrom, enhance opportunities for high profile and credible environmental research and the provision of an internationally connected educational resource for sustainable development. Proximity to Saskatoon, its university and research facilities and its tourism businesses, further enhance the opportunities available to that city in particular.

In order for Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve to provide the services to the province and its partners in research, education, and tourism it is important that one facility that serves all those particular goals is able to open and be available to the agencies, schools, and the public.

Commitment by the provincial government towards the facility will enable the province to have input into the character and substance of research activities carried out there and to lever additional federal funds to assist with its agenda. Providing funding assistance and core annual funding to the operation of this facility does not set a precedent except possibly for other, as-yet-undesignated UNESCO sites within the province.

However the province maintains control over future designations and therefore over funding commitments in the future. This designation is not present within any other municipal groupings nor does it involve any other municipal, regional, provincial, or national park built facility.

I'd just like to . . . I'm quoting from information sent to me by the biosphere committee, so if you'd just bear with me a bit I'd like to read some of the accomplishments to date of the citizens of Redberry Lake, and Blaine Lake, and Hafford, Saskatchewan. Since 1989 the local society that has taken the lead in tourism and conservation development for the Redberry Lake communities has been the Redberry Pelican Project. It has undertaken a number of community and tourism development

activities. Some are locally based and some directly benefiting the entire province.

In addition it has developed and maintained the first-class resource centre at Redberry Lake which has been used by large numbers of agencies, educational groups, and researchers in conservation and tourism, as well as countless visits to the province.

And some of the examples of the accomplishments by this group: they have developed a major catalogue library of monographs on ecotourism development, acclaimed by some researchers as the best in Canada; developed Internet camera systems to promote ecotourism in Saskatchewan and Western Canada; it has consulted pro bono as recently as the winter of 2001 on setting up camera systems for the waterfowl project in North Battleford; initiated and followed through on the development of an ecotourism accreditation system for Saskatchewan, the first of its kind in Canada as far back as 1992 and still heralded as an example of the best practices in the industry; obtained international important bird area designation for the lake and its watershed; also twice awarded the Tourism for Tomorrow highly commended award, 1992 and 1999, by British Airways in recognition of the society's contribution to tourism best practices, and raising the stature of tourism to the province's natural areas. And the founder of the society was awarded the Conservation Award by the Governor General of Canada, 1992, for the same reasons

Obtained world biosphere reserve status for the community as defined by the boundaries of the watershed of Redberry Lake in January 2000. The Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve was dedicated by the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan in November 2000.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the biosphere reserve and the committee and the citizens of Hafford and Blaine Lake and Redberry Lake area are wanting funding. And they would like to hire a biosphere reserve coordinator.

Now they would hire this coordinator to assist to conserve biological diversity; promote research and monitoring; and assist the community committee and a variety of scientific, culture, education, development agencies to develop the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve as a model of sustainable development in the service of the community and the people of Saskatchewan and Canada. The coordinator would also facilitate co-operation and exchanges at regional and international levels.

Some of the other duties would be to maintain the Redberry Lake Interpretive Centre for the use of school groups, the general public, the partner agencies under the direction of the community committee; also conduct and coordinate the development and delivery of interpretive programming to school groups and the general public under the direction of the community committee; assist at meetings of the community committee and its five standing subcommittees as follows: culture, research, and education; economic development; health and social well-being; ecosystem research and conservation; and agriculture. Assist research partners through coordinating logistical support; assist in the preparation of partnership proposals; maintain accurate records including visitor statistics

and partners . . . project records; and other activities under the direction of the community committee.

The bit of history to this, of course, is there's a whole issue around the Hafford Hospital which is in this area. And one of the plans for sustainability in the area was to create a fully functional hospital with adequate medical staff — doctors, nurses, technicians — and explore options to enhance recreational opportunities to meet the needs of all people living in Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve.

Now as we have found out, unfortunately, the government has not come through for the people of Redberry Lake, Hafford, and Blaine Lake areas. I attended a public meeting in that area last Thursday in the community hall and unfortunately they got bad news from the board.

The hospital in Hafford has acute care beds, emergency equipment, health centre, and attached special care home, but lacks one important aspect — and that's a doctor. Now it's pretty hard to run a hospital when you don't have a doctor. And unfortunately, the health board has not done its part. Their hands are tied, they say. They can't put a full-time doctor in Hafford. And this is one of the fundamental areas of the biosphere and the community.

The government's action plan has really failed the people of Hafford and Redberry Lake because it promises publicly funded accessible health care and in Hafford they do not have accessible health care in any way. And it's very unfortunate because that was one of the planks that they were going to develop and encourage investment and part of the infrastructure that an area needs in order to develop their communities.

It's interesting that this is totally . . . This community effort is totally from the people and by the people and they only need a little bit of help from the provincial government to get this interpretive centre going and to help them on their way to really developing tourism and economic development in that area.

It's a nice fit. They're not far from Saskatoon. We have a light source in Saskatoon, the synchrotron, and it would be a nice fit to develop possibly tours out to the internationally recognized biosphere, potential of incorporating the Native people into a tourism aspect up there. I know Europeans, especially people from Germany, love our traditions, our Native traditions that we have in this province. And it could come together as a package to really develop this whole area, to help all the citizens of this area, including the Native people and the citizens of Redberry Lake and Hafford and Blaine Lake.

And I'm just going to quote from an article in *The Riverbend Review*, and four members of the interpretive centre . . . from the committee concerning the interpretive centre met with Premier Lorne Calvert to discuss the centre and its needs. And it is with great optimism and dedication the committee believes that the centre will reopen.

And unfortunately, their hopes have been dashed. There's no funding. There's no hope of funding. But the Premier seemed to have left them with the impression that something was going to be done, and it's very unfortunate that he left them with that impression. They definitely need some help, not very much

help. And we will continue working for the people of Redberry Lake on this venture. And hopefully the government will see fit to help these people out in that area and get this development going, which will be a great benefit to that area and the province as a whole.

The other item I'd like to bring up is really the — it's quite scary, actually — is the problems in Perdue. And as, as we have been outlining in the last couple of days, the residents of Perdue has applied for the federal-provincial infrastructure program for three years now and they've been turned down three years in a row.

And it's very unfortunate because just after . . . just the other day, one of the wells in the village collapsed and before, even before the well collapsed, the water quality was very poor and they've been . . . they knew that they had to make some changes and start improving their infrastructure. But like I said three years in a row they've been turned down by the federal-provincial infrastructure program.

And now they're at a point where basically they're without . . . they've never had a boil-water advisory, and it seems that they . . . their water has to get to such a, such a situation that the people . . . the health of the residents of Perdue has to be a danger before the government considers them for these programs.

And I'd just like to quote from a letter from the government's own Saskatchewan Environmental Resource Management, a letter to the mayor and council, "Water treatment plant problems," and it's from the environment officer at SERM. And the letter goes on to say:

In my November 30, 2000 letter to you, I recommended that the boards hire a water treatment plant consultant to audit the plant, suggest ways to improve the potability of the treated water supply, and apply and find the resources to correct the problems identified.

It is my understanding the village has followed through on my recommendations, but to date has not acquired sufficient funding to fix the problems. As a result the situation has now reached a critical level.

And this is from the government's own environment officer. And the letter goes on to say:

By way of this letter, I strongly urge the council to use every means possible to acquire the necessary funding to correct your water quality problems. Failure to correct these problems immediately could result in serious safety issues for your citizens and libel issues for the council.

(16:45)

Mr. Speaker, I find this totally unacceptable. The government has to do something for the people of Perdue. They need to help them out. Unfortunately it's just not the people of Perdue that has this problem. There are many, many other communities in this province that are in similar state, but they are only going to look after the ones it seems . . . where the systems have totally collapsed and the health and welfare of the citizens are at risk.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from the mayor of the village of Perdue. She says it will cost 900,000 to repair the wells and waterlines and naturally she says, we don't have the money to fix it. She estimates that over half the village's population buys water now. And it's interesting to note that the government of Saskatchewan has money to spend in Georgia and they have money to spend in Australia, but they don't have the money to improve the infrastructure in Saskatchewan, in villages like Perdue, Saskatchewan, which is just basic safety and health for the citizens of this province.

And according to Sask Water, 9 out of 10 rural communities with populations of less than 1,000 are in need of improvements to their water systems and more than 120 towns and villages have deficient water treatment systems. It's a very, very unfortunate situation to be in. I believe this government has to take a look at its priorities and look after the needs and desires of these people in the small towns and communities of Saskatchewan, in particular the village of Perdue.

In the Throne Speech there's a title that says, listening and learning. Well the bus tour went through rural Saskatchewan, stopping for 10 or 15 minutes in every community. I don't know how much listening they did because they barely talked to anybody while they were in the community. They stopped and had a few photo ops and so obviously they've never talked to anybody in the community. They certainly didn't learn anything, and it's very obvious by the policies of this government that they have not learnt anything, Mr. Speaker.

It seems to be a pattern developing with this government. As we see, they talk about attitude and they always throw across the House that you got to have a better attitude. So basically don't worry, be happy. Well unfortunately the people of this province can't take that attitude when they don't have safe water, they don't have proper health care, and maybe don't worry, be happy is fine for the government on that side, but certainly not good enough for the people of the . . . of Saskatchewan.

The Minister of CIC said that \$28 million loss in potato business is . . . says fine, it's success, don't worry, be happy. That's just taxpayer money, right?

And it's incredible to hear comments by the Economic minister when referring to the population of Saskatchewan going down that that's okay, don't worry, be happy, there'll be more for the rest of us. More taxes for the rest of us. More debt for the rest of us. What we need is to encourage people to come to this province, not chase them away and then just slough it off, don't worry, be happy about it.

How about the people of Hafford? The Premier went on a fundraising tour and was in Hafford in the last year. He put on a nice speech. What happens after the Premier leaves? The Hafford Hospital closes. I guess don't worry, be happy would apply there too. The Premier's happy, but the citizens of Hafford unfortunately have some . . . some worries concerning that.

The same issue is with The Redberry Lake Biosphere. Again the Premier said some nice words, people left there happy. Premier says don't worry, be happy. To date nothing has happened. Again it seems to be a pattern continuing and they

say they've got a good attitude. Well, maybe they've got a good attitude, but unfortunately the people of this province have other thoughts concerning the government's attitude towards them.

Same thing in Perdue. When the bus tour went through Perdue and they stopped, basically again, we'll look at it, don't worry, be happy, things will work out. Well now . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that's right, I don't think they were in the town of . . . the village of Perdue long enough to get a drink of water. They were only there for a few minutes and had a photo op and left and so again the people of Perdue, they're worrying, they don't have adequate water, they have concerns. So, don't worry, be happy is not good enough for the people of Perdue as well.

Same thing in agriculture. What about the safety net? Where is the safety net the province of Saskatchewan been hoping for for the last number of years? Again, basically don't worry, be happy, it'll come. Maybe. Maybe not, but the government's happy, that's all that's really matters.

So in closing Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to, to say that this Throne Speech has been . . . has been a bit of a disaster for the people of Saskatchewan. It does not have a . . . this government has no vision and no plan for the people of Saskatchewan. And Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the motion and I will be supporting the amendment to the motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's a real pleasure this afternoon to get up and talk about the things that we are going to do for this province into the future.

I'm up here speaking today in favour of this Throne Speech and against the amendment proposed by the opposition because I have great faith in what we can do for this province when we work together with all the people that are here.

When we talk about a province of opportunity, when we talk about a place where we all want to live, what we know is that we need to work together. And the goal of this particular Throne Speech, even more so than all of the ones that we've built on to come to this one, is to continue to go and listen to people, find out what they want, work together with them to build what we need to do in the future.

And we have many signals of that . . . of those things that we are doing already. And they're everything from what was announced today around the ethanol plan which is a visionary plan for the future of this province, to the action plan on health which we introduced in December, and to the building of various institutions and places that are a big part of this province.

And what I want to do this afternoon in a few short minutes that I have here is to say a little bit about this particular part of Saskatchewan, which happens to be Regina Lakeview. And I don't get a chance to say this very often, but I welcome all of you to my constituency where you spend much of your life. Because this, this is a very good place; it's built around this particular legislature; and this particular institution is a key factor in what happens in our community.

But we're also part of Wascana Centre and we have many of the issues that relate to the arts, to music, and many of these other things.

And when we look at the kinds of policies that we have continued to bring in this province for over 50 years, we know why we have a World Poetry Day today, where our Saskatchewan poets are leading the country in the kinds of work that they do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — And I think that when Dave Margoshes who was here earlier, who is one of my constituents, said this morning at the special celebration that you, Mr. Speaker, helped him organize, that he got absolute co-operation from the people within your staff and within the legislative staff, he was being very, very clear in understanding that we have a place for artists, we have a place for poets, we have a place for musicians, we have a place for writers in our plan for what we want for Saskatchewan.

And so what we are trying to do in my constituency, but I think in all constituencies, is to recognize that those people which have a positive vision, which have a view which looks forward, are the people that are going to build the province.

There are many people who want to point out a lot of the negative things that they can see. We know that it wouldn't matter where they would live, they would still have that kind of a negative attitude. But we're going to work with the ones that want to build and move forward.

One of the interesting parts of . . . new parts of the Regina Lakeview constituency is the sound stage. And many people look at that new structure that is being built in the old teachers' college, the old arts, kind of, place, as a rejuvenation of a place that has served us for many, many, many years.

And if you think of all of the people who obtained their education, and their arts education for their teaching careers and for many other things, that have come out of that building, to now have it rejuvenated as a place which can put into life the ideas and concerns that people have, I think that we can recognize that this is a 21st century use of something that we have done for a long time.

Our legislation that we have developed around the film industry works at making sure that our Saskatchewan ideas have a place on the world stage. And this is another piece of that.

And I know that we're getting close to the end of the day, and so I'm going to finish off what I want to say today and then adjourn the debate with a poem. And this is a poem that is really a fall poem; it's a September, maybe an August poem. But it's about how we, on this side of the House, operate our lives and how we make our plans. And it's about balance and it's about listening to other people and it's about working with them.

This poem is by Glen Sorestad, our Poet Laureate. It's called "Frost Warning."

Last night we argued
over whether to cover the garden —
protect the delicate tomatoes,
the fragile cucumber vines,
whether the bruising of tender plants
caused by discarded sheets and clothes
was worth the effort, knowing
early frost was a slim risk.

But you are a practical woman,
not given to gambles,
and I am the poker player.

We compromised as usual:
you went out and covered the plants

It didn't freeze and this morning
we are both happy, both winners.
I guess that's how it's always been.

Well that's how we do things in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — we work together; we understand our particular characteristics; and we end up going forward in partnership to build the kind of province that we want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the debate for this afternoon.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.