

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition pertaining to opposition crop insurance 2002 grasshopper spray policy. And the prayer goes like this:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reassess the grasshopper spray penalty assessed to farmers in 2002; and further, the government review the definition of viable farming practices as outlined in present Saskatchewan Crop Insurance policy.

This petition is signed by the people of Paynton and Maidstone from my area. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous and deplorable condition of Highway 58 between Chaplin and Shamrock. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 58 in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

This petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Shamrock and Coderre.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise again on behalf of constituents who are very concerned about the state of the hospital in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. 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 provincial government to commit its share of funding for a new regional hospital in Swift Current.

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

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

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition opposed to possible reductions of services to the Davidson and Craik health centres:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson and Craik

health centres be maintained at its current level of service at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available, as well as lab services, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from the Craik and Davidson area and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from Saskatoon, Lumsden, Davidson, Regina, Kenaston, and North Battleford.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 4, 6, and 8.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Brkich: — I give notice I shall on day no. 9 ask the government the following question:

To the Highways minister: what is the total amount of money spent towards the maintenance of Highway 42 in 2002; further to that, did the department accept any liability for vehicle damage as a result of the condition of Highway 42, 2002; if so, how much money was paid out?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning to you and through you to all members of the Assembly I would like to introduce Vern Hoyt and his son Tyler from the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains, and they are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Tyler is a grade 9 student at Luther College. And, Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago in Estevan he won the junior championship for 10-pin bowling and he will be representing Saskatchewan at the national championships in Kelowna, BC (British Columbia) on April 12 and 13.

Vern is the campaign manager for Dan Thibault, the Sask Party candidate in Regina Wascana Plains who will also be the next MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from that constituency.

So please join me in welcoming Vern and Tyler and also extending our best wishes to Tyler as he competes in the championships in Kelowna. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce to all of my colleagues in the legislature and to yourself as well, Mr. Speaker, a group of young people seated in your gallery.

Yesterday evening I had the privilege as minister responsible

for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) to attend the annual CYAID conference, which is the Canadian Youth Against Impaired Driving conference, held in the Delta Hotel. There were over 600 young people there from across Canada and actually several from outside of Canada in attendance. The energy level was incredible. It paralleled, I think, sometimes what goes on in the House during question period on Fridays, Mr. Speaker. But it was a wonderful event and I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce a small group of those individuals who are in your gallery today.

Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker . . . and as I introduce them I'd just ask them to rise and ask colleagues to welcome them warmly as soon as I'm finished introducing them. Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Karen Wedel from Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories; Lindsay Rouleau from Invermere, BC; Alisha Anderson from Olds, Alberta; Vanessa Huber — Huber, I should say — from Unity, Saskatchewan; Jenna Wanner from Swift Current — she's on Team SGI; Laura Webb from Winnipeg, Manitoba; Leslie Brooks from Red Lake, Ontario; Cristale Marier from Red Lake, Ontario; Alex Creamer from Amherst, Nova Scotia; Alena Lawless from Amherst, Nova Scotia; Andrew Ramsay from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; Mandy Vogan from Bonshaw, Prince Edward Island; Sarah McDonald from . . . she is the Swift Current . . . from Swift Current and an adviser to SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving) Board of Directors; and lastly, and I'd like to specially acknowledge all the good work that she has done, Crystal Fetter who is our SADD president here in Saskatchewan.

Please join me in welcoming all these wonderful young people.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition we want to join with the minister and members of the House in welcoming this group of young people here to the legislature today, and more importantly to thank them for the work that they're doing. Swift Current has been long a proud home to a great chapter of SADD and, you know, the work they do in our community and across Canada is so very important both in terms of awareness and the general issue of driving without impairment.

So on behalf of the opposition, I would like to join with all the members of the Assembly, welcome you here, and thank you for your work.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would really like to introduce Grant Schmidt today but unfortunately he's not here so I can't. So in his stead I would like to introduce Mr. Bill Cooper who's with the Saskatchewan legislative internship program. And he's been working with me the last couple of months, and it's been actually quite a boring time to be involved in politics in the last couple of months.

There's been a resignation of a cabinet minister. There's been nominations. There's been founding conventions. There's been by-elections. There's been cabinet shuffles. There's been swearing-in ceremonies. We've even elected a new federal

leader in the time that he's been an intern.

He's able to attend some citizenship courts in a school that was named for the presiding officer. And he's also been doing a lot of work in research and in writing, and attended numerous community events with myself. And I also hear that he's not a very bad lacrosse player, but there will be more of that next week.

But he's here alone today and I didn't know the names of other interns so I've been holding off on introducing him. But would all members please welcome Bill Cooper to the House today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's rare that I'm able to get on to my feet and introduce guests, period, but it's even more rare when I get to introduce two sets of guests, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to introduce to my colleagues in the legislature and to yourself, a constituent of mine from Meadow Lake who's seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker — Jacquie McFarlane, who has recently moved to our constituency from the Fort McMurray area, Mr. Speaker. And I've warned Jacquie that there's a very, very small chance that if she sticks here through question period that I may be on my feet again, Mr. Speaker.

Please join me in welcoming Jacquie to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 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, March 21 specifically commemorates the 1960 massacre in Sharpeville, South Africa of peaceful demonstrators by the force of an oppressive regime. These people had gathered outside a police station to protest carrying passbooks in order to move around their own country. The police were sent out to stop that protest and the massacre resulted.

Now, Mr. Speaker, though these peaceful demonstrators were shot to death, I believe what they actually died of was fear. Not their own fear. Had they been afraid, they would not have been out protesting in the first place.

No, Mr. Speaker, it was the people of the regime who were afraid — afraid for their wealth, afraid for their position, afraid for their power. They were afraid of having to share their place by the fire of opportunity and advantage.

Mr. Speaker, we have made some progress in the fight against racism in the 43 years since Sharpeville, but I call upon all members here today in this Assembly to renew our commitment

to do what we can to eliminate all forms of racism here in our communities, our province, in Canada, and the world today.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for more than 10 years now the citizens of this province and indeed this nation have rallied together every March 21 to tell the world that there is no room for racism in their schools, their neighbourhoods, and their communities or their workplaces. International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is an opportunity for us to foster respect, equality, and to celebrate diversity, and to lead by example through our words and deeds.

Today we must engage all of our citizenry to transcend the boundaries of race, ethnicity, and religion, and in turn to embrace diversity. As elected officials we have the responsibility to encourage and inspire all Saskatchewan residents to celebrate differences, not to stand apart because of them. We are all too intimately acquainted with the harmful and negative effects that racism has had on our schools, workplaces, and communities and we all understand that at the root of this systemic problem is a lack of understanding.

It is time that we begin to communicate and learn about and appreciate one another. It is time to recognize and honour each other's strengths. We must learn each other's histories and be proud to tell our own in a better effort to understand each other. There is much at stake for all of us, for our children and our grandchildren, and those who come after them. We cannot expect our children to work together tomorrow, however, unless we start to work together today.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expresses our commitment to build from the very backgrounds of our citizens, and accepting and appreciating all of society in which all can live with dignity and respect, and have every opportunity to accomplish their dreams and goals. We must stand united today in declaring racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of society we are and aspire to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Teepee Entrance

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a point of clarification. In comments reported in the media on Tuesday the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy criticized the investment made in the entryway to the new Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) Vice-Chief and Chair of the SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) Board of Governors, Lindsay Cyr, has expressed his regret over the negative statements made by the member towards the SIFC building and the teepee entrance.

He says, and I quote: "I am concerned because the facts were not checked." Vice-Chief Cyr makes it clear that the teepee is a First Nations investment made with First Nations resources, not Government of Saskatchewan dollars.

(10:15)

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy does not seem to understand the true significance of the teepee. The teepee was made possible because of the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans' Association. They have led a very thoroughgoing and well-received campaign to build the commemorative veterans' peace teepee. The teepee will recognize and pay tribute to the veterans who fought in World Wars I and II and in Korea for a better society in Saskatchewan and Canada and indeed in the whole world.

What better place than the leading First Nations-controlled university to commemorate our veterans and their fight for peace and tolerance?

And what better day than today — on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — to take a good, hard look at our own motivations when it comes to making such statements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Congratulations to Outstanding Kindersley Constituents

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to commend the achievements of the members of the men's curling team that brought home gold for Saskatchewan at the Canada Winter Games in Bathurst-Campbellton, New Brunswick.

The team consisted of Mitch and Drew Heidt and Ross Neumeier of Kerrobert and Michael Mamchur of Meadow Lake, along with Ellice Mamchur as the coach.

Team Saskatchewan finished three and one in the round robin, going on to defeat Ontario 7-3 to advance to the gold medal game. Mitch drew to the button to score two in the 10th end to defeat the home province of New Brunswick 9-8.

Further to this, we are very happy about these accomplishments. These are fine young curlers and hopefully perhaps we'll have some Olympians there down the road.

As well today, I'd like to very much recognize the cultural contribution of a neighbour of mine, Mr. Jack Humeny. Mr. Humeny has been pursuing a music career for a number of years, and he's well known in our corner of the province for some time. He's now started to be noticed in wider circles.

Jack had the opportunity recently to perform in Calgary and has been overwhelmingly pleased with the requests for solo engagements that arose from that opportunity and the recent release of his second CD (compact disc) entitled *Smell the Flowers*.

Jack is a cowboy. He helps out at the Glidden community pasture. He derives a lot of his inspiration directly from working with cattle.

And I encourage all members to join me in congratulating Jack on his well-deserved success, and the men's curling team.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Transportation Company

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite have a well-known policy to sell the Saskatchewan Transportation Company at their very first opportunity. Here are some facts that make such a policy so wrong-headed and foolish — another reason why they have no chance in winning the next election.

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

Mr. Yates: — The Saskatchewan Transportation Company serves 275 Saskatchewan communities and through interline partnerships with other carriers reaches almost 400 communities in our province, Mr. Speaker.

STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) has four buses equipped to load wheelchairs, which are available on any route with 24-hour notice to help those who are disabled in those communities.

In July, 2002 STC moved 60,000 agricultural machinery parts throughout rural Saskatchewan.

STC sells almost 600 medical passes a year. Medical passes allow people unlimited travel throughout the month for medical reasons.

STC spends 150,000 each year renting hotel rooms in rural Saskatchewan for drivers' rest periods.

Of a total of \$15.6 million spent by STC in 2000, 14.9 million was spent on goods and services right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite have nothing but slogans that are designed to hide their true agenda, their hidden agenda to sell all the Crowns. We have a plan that's working day in and day out for the people of Saskatchewan to build and improve our Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Party Candidate for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to stand today to acknowledge Darlene Hincks. Darlene was acclaimed last night at a nomination meeting held here in Regina. Darlene will be the next candidate for the Saskatchewan Party in the Regina Qu'Appelle constituency.

Not only will she be the next candidate, but after the next provincial election, she'll be the next MLA for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, do you know why she'll be the next MLA for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley — Mr. Speaker, do you know why she'll be the next member? Because it's the right thing to do.

Darlene has been a city councillor and a prominent citizen of Regina. She's been a city councillor for 18 years. Mr. Speaker, it seems like the last time that we had a member of local government run for election, he garnered 62 per cent or 63 per cent of the vote. I'm sure Darlene will do the same. Darlene has served on many boards and many commissions throughout the city and the province.

Darlene, as well as 46 other nominated candidates for the Saskatchewan Party are looking forward to when the member from Riversdale turns up the courage to call an election so he can run provincially for the seat that he is sitting in right now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we hear over and over again people wanting an election — election so that the member from Rosetown-Elrose will be able to sit in that seat opposite as premier of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Throne Speech

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know most people notice that the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier don't often agree. But today is one of those rare times when we do agree. Mr. Speaker, I thought the Throne Speech was a disaster, and it turns out the Premier thought it was a disaster too.

According to a column in today's paper, the Premier walked into Wednesday's cabinet meeting and had a fit of temper. He started screaming at everyone in sight. I guess, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't very pretty. Now that would have been a whole lot more interesting to see and hear, Mr. Speaker, than the Speech from the Throne that we heard on Tuesday.

Mr. Speaker, now that we know that even the Premier thinks the Speech from the Throne was a disaster, I would ask the Premier, will he join with us in voting against it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — It looks to me like the Leader of the Opposition has had his ear to the door of the Premier's office to try and find out what's inside the Premier's office, Mr. Speaker, and that's the closest that the member from Rosetown will ever get . . . (inaudible) . . . The closest he'll ever get, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, we're extremely . . . Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is about painting the difference between what this administration and this government is about and what that party is about, Mr. Speaker. Because this Throne Speech talks about making an investment in health care into the future; this Throne Speech talks about investing in education in the future, Mr. Speaker. This Throne Speech talks about how we're investing in infrastructure in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and across the way. And this Throne Speech talks about the kinds of direction that we're going to be going in agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, on that side of the House we have yet to hear, Mr. Speaker, on one occasion from that party, not a word about the direction about where that party will go, because, Mr. Speaker, they have a slogan only, Mr. Speaker, and no plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I guess the Deputy Premier still stands by the Speech from the Throne, but apparently he doesn't agree with his Premier any more because at his cabinet meeting he made it known that he wasn't happy with the advice he was receiving. He was concerned about complacency — complacency in both his cabinet and his caucus.

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier at least is finally getting in touch with Saskatchewan. He is realizing that his NDP (New Democratic Party) is doing a terrible job.

Mr. Speaker, we know now that the Premier is upset with the Speech from the Throne, but doesn't the Premier and the Premier's office write the Speech from the Throne?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's office is supposed to set the direction for this government. The Speech from the Throne was a disaster and actually the Premier has no one to blame but himself. Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier blaming his cabinet and his caucus when in fact he should be looking at the mirror for the problem?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, and the leadership on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, doesn't go about blaming anybody, Mr. Speaker. Doesn't go about blaming anybody. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, our Premier takes responsibility for building a strong Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker, investing in a strong Saskatchewan economy. And that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

And the member opposite from the . . . the Leader of the Opposition shouldn't worry about what's happening in our caucus, Mr. Speaker. He should worry about what's happening in his caucus, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, he shouldn't be worrying about what's happening in our caucus where we have a united group of men and women who are busy building a Saskatchewan economy as opposed to over there, Mr. Speaker.

Because over there, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is faced with is the issue of democracy, Mr. Speaker. Because he has a smorgasbord of members who have been elected from a variety of different parties, Mr. Speaker, who are now saying to him privately in his caucus, if they don't respect, if they don't respect the decision of the party organization, Mr. Speaker, many of those people won't be sitting in those benches come the next election because they don't like the decision of Mr. Grant Schmidt coming. And that's where he should be spending his attention, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would just ask members to, when questions and responses are being made, that the members provide an opportunity for both the responses to be heard as well as the questions to be put.

There were times when I was . . . found it difficult to hear and to be able to follow the statements and I would just ask members to tone it down a little bit in order that all members be clearly heard and have the opportunity to be heard. That is the purpose of this place.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well in that happy camp over there, on Wednesday the Premier walked into cabinet meeting and slammed his books on the table. Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I see that the words that I've just spoken have really had an effect here. Let's try again.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier had a temper tantrum, threw his books on the table, he was upset at his ministers.

Well he should be. One of his ministers squandered \$28 million and covered it up for six years but still, Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not boot him out of cabinet. His Health minister has done nothing about waiting lists for years — the Premier should be upset, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's Agriculture minister does nothing to deal with the agriculture crisis in this province — the Premier should be upset. Mr. Speaker, his CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) minister keeps losing millions of dollars on project after project — the Premier should have been mad the other day. Mr. Speaker, it's so bad over there the Premier couldn't even find an NDP member to be his Finance minister — that's how bad it is over there.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier admitted that the Speech from the Throne was a disaster. Isn't that a direct result of his leadership?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the member opposite and I want to read a quote that he had a couple of days ago, when he was on the CTV (Canadian Television Network Limited) station. And he says this, Mr. Speaker, he says:

In regards to democracy, the decisions are made here regarding the grassroots. Decisions are of the grassroots.

Elected members, Mr. Speaker, he's saying, make the decision.

Each constituency makes its own decision through a democratic process (Mr. Speaker).

And that, Mr. Speaker, is an extremely interesting point that the member makes, Mr. Speaker, because in the Melville constituency, Mr. Speaker, the new Melville-Saltcoats constituency, 1,200 people vote, Mr. Speaker, in making a decision about . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Twelve hundred people, Mr. Speaker, show up and make a decision about what should happen in their constituency through a democratic process of which, Mr. Speaker, this member from Rosetown says he supports, Mr. Speaker. And then he finds himself in the middle of a debate with 58 constituencies in the province, of which he shares a part of, Mr. Speaker. And what happens, Mr. Speaker, is he then says well, we're not going to have . . . we're going to overthrow that because, Mr. Speaker, of the investment piece in our party, Mr. Speaker, and that we don't believe in public investment, Mr. Speaker.

(10:30)

Well public investment, Mr. Speaker, is about the member from Wilkie, Mr. Speaker, who is sitting in the House today who says, Mr. Speaker, that he wants public investment today to build a spa in his constituency, Mr. Speaker. And what does the opposition leader say? We're not overthrowing that election, Mr. Speaker. We're not overthrowing that election, but we are going to overthrow the . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I'd like to remind the member, he's not to refer to the presence or absence of members in their seats.

Regina Correctional Centre

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear the Deputy Premier talk about democracy when we have a Premier that hasn't even been elected as Premier by the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety. Last weekend five inmates broke out of the Regina Correctional Centre. Thanks to some excellent work by police, four of the five men that escaped have already been captured. But the jailbreak leaves serious questions about the NDP government's management of the jail.

Mr. Speaker, these five men were able to climb to the roof of an

auditorium, break through a false ceiling, change into some new clothes they had previously stashed in the attic, smash through two more locked trap doors, and then shinnied down the outer prison walls using sheets that had been braided together.

Mr. Speaker, the minister owes this House an explanation. How could this happen? Why was there so little supervision of these five dangerous criminals?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite gives me a lot to work with, but let me answer the question up front here.

From time to time, there are escapes from the jails. We investigate the escapes. We take corrective action and we move on. This is the first set of escapes out of the Regina jail this year. This is . . . Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, isn't this interesting? I think that the member outlines on the opposite side this detailed process of how these five guys managed to escape, probably taking copious notes so that he can pass it on to some of their former caucus colleagues that were also over in that jail.

Isn't it interesting that that party, Mr. Speaker, the first thing that they want to do when there's . . . (inaudible) . . . is not raise it in the legislature; they want to go stage a photo op over there.

What's the first thing they do? They blame the facility. The second thing they do — they blame the unionized officials. Isn't that typical of what that right-wing group of . . . (inaudible) . . . members on the opposite side stand for? That's who they are, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's interesting to hear the minister that says that he had a lot to work with. I must say that that's a lot more than the Premier of the province has, is lots of people to work with on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, one of the prisoners who escaped was not an inmate of the Regina Correctional Centre. He was a federal prisoner who was actually incarcerated at the penitentiary in Prince Albert. The police describe Curtis Hartford as a dangerous criminal. On Wednesday Hartford shared his opinion on the NDP's management of the Regina prison with the judge that sentenced him to an additional two years for the jailbreak. Hartford said, and I quote:

The guards were slipping . . . They weren't doing their job(s).

Mr. Speaker, even the prisoners at the Regina Correctional Institute think the NDP isn't doing its job. What steps is the minister taking to ensure that prisoners at the jail will be adequately supervised from now on?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it very interesting that the member opposite says that the reason that this has happened is because the officials at the jail were not doing their job.

Isn't it interesting that the first thing that that member then suggests is that they should go over, stage a little photo op, do a little tour. It's the first time I have ever heard a bunch of old Tories try to get into the jail.

This government, it takes public safety and public security very seriously. The number of escapes in this province are down over the past year — down. And I think that that's important that the members of the opposition recognize that.

It's also would be helpful if the members of the opposition would state what their policy is. Are they supporting the changes in the jail? Are they going to privatize that jail? Are they going to privatize the workers in that jail? Where are they at and when are they going to put forward a coherent policy . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the member . . . the minister would like to know our policy, it's very simple. Call an election and you'll find out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, there was an appalling lack of supervision of prisoners at the Regina jail last weekend. It's fairly obvious. Even the prisoners are criticizing the NDP management of the prison system. The result was that the police had to go out and clean up the mess by recapturing these escaped criminals.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister advise the people of Saskatchewan what is the policy at the Regina Correctional Centre with regard to the use of televisions and video games by guards and supervisory staff while they are working?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, we have the member opposite stand up and at the height of arrogance say that the first thing that they . . . they will not come clean in terms of telling people what their policy is on corrections. They have not gone to meet with the Métis and First Nations Justice Reform Commission. They do not have a policy on corrections that goes beyond a simplistic idea of boot camps.

I suspect that the members opposite don't share the opinion of the First Nations Justice Reform Commission or the Ombudsman in terms of facility replacement. Nor do they share the view of this department and this government that in due course we are going to have to replace that facility.

I'm sure that their policy is that a boot camp is too good, that the dungeon is too good, that what they want to have is a punitive system of punishment just as was outlined by the member for Rosthern when he was the critic in this portfolio.

It is arrogant to say in this legislature to the voters and the people we're accountable to, we're not telling you; we're not telling you what our policies are until the election, and we aren't going to listen to them and you aren't . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. The Minister of Public Safety is reminded to keep all of his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well what a rant. Now I'd like an answer to the question, Mr. Speaker. What is the policy at the Regina Correctional Centre with regard to the use of televisions and video games by guards and supervisory staff while they are working? Please answer the question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, what exactly is the member alleging? What exactly is the member alleging? I think it is . . . This is a very interesting question period because the Leader of the Opposition stands up and says, oh it's all about what's in the Throne Speech; it's all about the communication around it.

Let's understand what the hidden agenda of that party is. Let's understand what that member is saying today. He is not prepared to follow through with us allowing the investigators to come in and take a look at what happened in terms of this. That member is accusing . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is a pretty shocking set of allegations that are being made by the member opposite, that he is alleging — and he's not saying this but he is alleging — that the correctional centre guards are more interested in watching TV and playing video games.

That is exactly what that member is saying. That is an affront to what is happening in the facilities. That is absolutely wrong, and I am sorry that I am constrained by parliamentary language in this institution. But that member should stop attacking the unions, stop attacking the employees, and try and come up with some constructive proposals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister again is: was he aware that this practice was taking place by the guards and supervisory staff of the jail?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, the member keeps asking this question because he is clearly alleging, clearly alleging that the guards were watching television or playing video games.

The Speaker: — Order. The question has been asked. I wait and I want to be able to hear an answer, a response. Order.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The allegations that are being made by the member opposite I hope have some fact behind them. And if

he does have some kind of an allegation that he wants to make, he should bring them forward today.

Because what he is saying is that he is making a major slur against a group of professionals that work in our correctional system, saying they are more interested in watching afternoon television, more interested in playing video games, than they are in maintaining the public safety. That is not correct. That is another attack by that right-wing group on a group of unionized workers who do good public service in this province. It's shocking, it's wrong, and it is an affront.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is very serious. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party . . .

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has obtained a memo dated Monday, March 17 and distributed to employees at the Regina Correctional Centre. This memo advises staff to remove all televisions and video game players from the jail. Will the minister advise the House if he is aware of this memo, and is the minister also aware that on Monday employees of the Regina Correctional Centre were removing televisions and video games and other entertainment devices from the jail?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well I'm very pleased that the member has said that, because this now does show exactly how out of touch they are. On Monday we put the jail on a lockdown. Yes, televisions were being removed. Yes, video games were being removed — from the cells, from the inmates. The first thing that the members opposite do is not accuse us of dealing with public safety, they don't accuse us of getting to the root of this with the prisoners, they accuse the unionized workers of watching TV and playing video games.

Isn't that typical? Half-baked, half-proved, wholly wrong in terms of the approach. Shocking, Mr. Speaker, and I think that the member does a discredit not only to the public servants of the province, he should rise today and he should apologize to those workers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will enlighten the minister somewhat if he's not aware of this memorandum. I will give him some excerpts from it:

With a few exceptions, staff are not to watch television, except night shift. This also applies to what are commonly referred to as Game Boys or PlayStations as well as personal laptop computers, DVD players, and VCRs. The word television below includes all of these types of devices. Any supervisor who knowingly allows employees to watch television or similar devices when that employee should be watching the inmates will be subject to the disciplinary process.

Mr. Speaker, this leads me to the conclusion that this is actually being done in the prison. Will the minister explain if that is the

procedure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:45)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Let me explain to this. And I think that we are going to have to, once the lockdown is done, make sure that that member gets a chance to go through the facility to understand first-hand what goes on. This deals with common areas. There are common areas within the jails where there are televisions, where there are laptop computers. The staff are going to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well does the member really believe that we don't have staff in the common areas? Does he think that these are inmate-only areas?

This is absolute nonsense. It is a shameful attack; it is a shameful attempt to denigrate the public service of this province and it shows a complete lack of understanding. It's half based on half-truths. It's based on half the information and it is wholly wrong.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I continue with the memorandum:

Any staff who brings a television or similar device into the centre without approval is to be ordered to remove the device from the centre before being allowed to work.

That is, control room staff are not to knowingly allow any person to enter a cellblock carrying a television or similar device, assuming it is visible, unless that person is authorized to do so.

In all cases the ADD must be notified.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of this memo? Is the minister aware that this practice is going on in the facility? Is the minister at least suggesting or considering that this could be a cause for the inmate prison break?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, when we put a facility on lockdown, the rules change. When we put a facility on lockdown because of an escape, the rules get a lot tougher. That's simply the way it works. That means . . . Well the members . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The members are alleging that the employees . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The members are alleging that the inmates were watching TV and playing on Game Boys. This isn't the case. We're going to let the investigator go through; we're going to find out what happened in the terms of this particular escape. But these kind of blanket allegations are just completely inappropriate.

When we put a facility on lockdown, when we put a facility on lockdown we end up tightening up a number of different rules, operational, in terms of our overall procedure, in terms of how we deal with the conduct. It is a heightened state of vigilance. That's the way it works. And this means that that is going to provide us with a better public safety within those facilities.

The member is making an unfounded allegation. He is jumping to a conclusion. He is accusing employees of having made bad decisions, having neglected their duties, and having, as a result, endangered public safety. If the investigators bear that out, there will be appropriate . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Would the members come to order please. Order. Order. Order, please. Order. Orders of the day. Order, please. Order, please.

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. Goulet, seconded by Ms. Hamilton and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Hermanson.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues, for that welcome. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand up and enter the Throne Speech debate.

My first pleasure is to acknowledge and recognize the terrific job that the member for Cumberland did in his response to the Speech from the Throne. I've shared time with the hon. member for Cumberland for some years in this Assembly and he always amazes in this gentle manner of teaching and helping us to have a better understanding of our great Saskatchewan and what it's all about.

The other person of course is the seconder, the hon. member for Regina Wascana Plains, who did her usual great job in sharing our vision about what Saskatchewan can be and about the future, the wide open future of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my first words outside of that are words of gratitude to the constituents of Regina Coronation Park. My constituents . . .

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are of course very generous in their view of the north end of Regina. They're very generous in their view of our great city, the capital city of Regina, and they're very generous and giving with respect to the province of Saskatchewan. We form an integral part of Saskatchewan.

It's a constituency of hard-working, dedicated people, lots of families — I don't mean to exclude individuals who by their circumstances might be single or not in a family situation, but it's predominantly a family situation — with a good mixture of seniors that bring their wisdom and their grace and their understanding of where we've come from, and I'm always impressed by seniors with their dedication to the future. They always looking to the future. In fact probably the group that looks forward the most is that of seniors.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to again thank my constituents, Regina Coronation Park, for their generosity right around the province, but particularly as it relates to me. They're very generous with me.

Mr. Speaker, the focus of today's debate is the Throne Speech. And the Throne Speech to me is about good governance, it's about the future, it's about our wide open future of Saskatchewan. But there are a few issues that are very special that I wish to particularly address. It's no surprise this is probably — possibly might be a better way of putting it — possibly the last Throne Speech we'll have before the voters of Saskatchewan have an opportunity to have their say in a general election. I can't call it. The Premier calls the election, but no great surprise that what I'm saying might very well be so.

For me there's some areas that make this speech very important. And I want to talk about areas where there's clear distinctions, clear choices, because that's what a democracy is all about, is choosing us or the opposition — government or opposition. And voters will choose. It's not necessarily about right or wrong. For me it's about them having clear choices and they will make the right choice. I have always had good faith in that; the voters can and will choose.

For me, Mr. Speaker, the issues that the Throne Speech deal with that I wish to, are Crown corporations where there's a very, very, very clear difference. We understand the importance of Saskatchewan's Crown Corporations in Saskatchewan's history and we understand, more fundamentally we understand the importance and the terrific job and the future of Crown corporations in Saskatchewan and beyond. And, Mr. Speaker, I submit that that's an area where there's a huge difference, us versus the opposition — the opposition that seem to have a policy that says Crown Corporations, we'll privatize them all. It's just a question of when for them. It's not a question of if they'll privatize them; it's a question of when.

One of the other areas I wish to address today is that of fairness for working people, Mr. Speaker, and there's a good smattering of that in the Throne Speech. And I'm very pleased to be supportive particularly of the changes to the workers' compensation legislation that my seatmate's going to be introducing this session — the Hon. Minister of Labour will be — and I am most delighted to see that piece of legislation coming forward this year.

The other area, Mr. Speaker, that I want to talk about is simply democracy, and it's an important area. We've got a situation where right now there's some uncertainty in the province if I can describe it that way. We had a former member for Melville visiting us yesterday and there seems to be some doubt about whether or not he will have a nomination for the opposition,

whether he'll be running against us. And it's interesting that a party that claims — that's less than a half a dozen years old — claims to be from the grassroots, clearly is not. So I'll have some more words on that later on.

Those are the three major areas that I wish to address in the Throne Speech debate, Mr. Speaker. And the first one I highlighted was that of Crown corporations. And I want to just talk a little bit about some of the individual Crown corporations.

We've got, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower that was probably Tommy Douglas's — by his own words — his crowning achievement. The glitter of lights like diamonds in the night was the way Tommy described it — the rural electrification that was brought about hugely because of SaskPower, the same rural electrification, Mr. Speaker, that I submit continues to this day. We're very, very proud of being able to provide electrical services to rural and northern Saskatchewan in places that frankly a private corporation would not do.

And I want to point out that SaskPower has residential rates of less than 8 cents a kilowatt hour. Compare this with a March 18 *Leader-Post* article, ATCO customers in Alberta, that ATCO electricity customers, this is a quote:

... in northern Alberta are about to be hit with a power price hike of more than 70 per cent, say provincial opposition parties (in Alberta).

Mr. Speaker, a 70 per cent hike in power. Our SaskPower rates are in the middle of a five-year freeze, Mr. Speaker, on rates. They're in a five-year freeze. We pay less than 8 cents a kilowatt hour. A 70 per cent increase in ATCO rates is going to put them well above what we're paying.

And this is in a privatized power industry in Alberta — Alberta, that great, great province to the west of us. And I say great province. It is a great province, but it's Alberta. And we're Saskatchewan, and we can do things here. We do have to have some confidence in our own ability. And, Mr. Speaker, I submit that members on this side of the legislature — that is government members — have confidence that we in fact can deliver electricity, that we can in fact deliver power throughout the province.

And we're very proud, Mr. Speaker, of the SaskPower men and women that generate the electricity, that maintain the lines and that maintain that service right into our homes.

(11:00)

And from a Regina perspective particularly, I want to say how pleased I am that SaskPower has its head office in our great city and those head office jobs are very, very welcome. They're needed.

And my question would be what happens in a privatized SaskPower to particularly the head office jobs, but what happens to the jobs in SaskPower in terms of both generation and the delivery system, that is the people that maintain and build the lines? What happens there? And historically, you look at other jurisdictions where you have a private power utility, it's not a happy situation.

We're proud of the jobs, proud of the reliability of power and we want to see power continue to be reliable well into the future.

The Throne Speech, incidentally, also talks a bit about wind power. I'm very pleased with the steps that we have taken in wind power in the past. And I'm very much, very much looking forward to some exciting news on the wind power front into the future and it's just nothing but good things can come from that.

Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy, that delivers our natural gas to our residences and our businesses, far and wide throughout Saskatchewan, a Crown corporation — a Crown corporation that has had historically the lowest or the second lowest energy rates in all of North America — does a terrific job.

They have fewer employees per line of service. They have a . . . than any other gas utility in North America. The people that work for SaskEnergy, day after day, are just amazingly well trained. They're well equipped, by and large, and just doing a fabulous job of delivering us as safe a form of energy as they can in the best possible manner and reliability that frankly has been second to none. And I expect that to continue also as SaskEnergy continues as a Crown corporation into the future.

Our version, a Crown corporation into the future. Their version, sell it off.

Mr. Speaker, SGI is a Crown corporation that has a long and proud history in Saskatchewan, started in no small measure because the private insurance companies wouldn't insure farmers. Wouldn't insure them, thought it was too great a risk because of the lack of fire halls nearby or lack of response . . . ability to respond. SGI developed Farm Pack and Tenant Pack, and many other, in their day, leading insurance policies. SGI has done a phenomenal job on the general side to the point that . . . I don't have the exact numbers but my understanding is they have about half of the general insurance business in Saskatchewan. It's just phenomenal what they've been able to do.

That's of course begging the question of what SGI does on the auto side, where Saskatchewan has enjoyed just consistently overall the lowest automobile insurance premium rates in all of North America — I suspect in all of the world, but I will stick with North America because I absolutely know that.

We also, Mr. Speaker, have been able to pioneer coverage that is second to none. We've offered choices for individuals. They can have guaranteed coverage or they can have tort. We're able to do all of this in the confines of the lowest automobile insurance premium rates for individuals, for people, in all of North America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — And, Mr. Speaker, the head office jobs are welcome also in our great city of Regina. The key here is they're welcome in Saskatchewan, but as a Regina member I say they're particularly welcome here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, SaskTel is often described as the jewel of our Crown corporations. SaskTel, the great little telco that doesn't

know that it shouldn't be able to or that it can't, so it just continues to go on and it does. It has innovative products, innovative services. It has . . . it's listed as one of the top 50 companies in Canada to work for, Mr. Speaker. That's our very SaskTel: SaskTel that has provided individual line service throughout Saskatchewan, digital service throughout Saskatchewan, the first province to be totally digital — the first province — and that over a province that has vast geography.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to share that two nights ago I was talking with a gentleman who retired from SaskTel. And he retired at a time when they were going from what they in the industry call 4LS, four-line service in rural Saskatchewan. They've got it down to only four. And they were going to 2LS and they had plans to go to 1LS, individual line service; which is essentially where they're at now.

This gentleman was talking to his counterpart from Ontario, from the private telephone company, Bell. And they got talking about the move that SaskTel was doing to move towards 2LS and then individual line service, and then digital service in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And the counterpart in Ontario said, why would you even do that? We wouldn't dream of doing that at Bell; we wouldn't dream of doing that. Why not? No return. No cash return, that's why not.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we couldn't be prouder of our telephone company, of SaskTel. We couldn't be prouder of the service that we're able to provide throughout Saskatchewan and now in northern Saskatchewan as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — We know that SaskTel is the telco that can and will. We know that SaskTel is going to continue as a Crown corporation, is going to continue to do well through this year and well into the future because we're determined that this great jewel, this Crown corporation, can and will. Members opposite say, privatize SaskTel and do it quickly. That's what they say. We say SaskTel can grow and expand as a Crown corporation. They say privatize. Mr. Speaker, these are some of the very clear differences between us and them.

There are many other Crowns that I could talk about, Mr. Speaker. I want to restrict myself to those major ones, although frankly I readily admit that one that we're very proud of also on this side . . . In fact earlier today we had a private member's statement on Sask Transportation Company, a great little transportation company that provides freight and individual personal service throughout Saskatchewan, many parts of rural Saskatchewan, that frankly would not enjoy bus service if it weren't for Saskatchewan Transportation Company. There's over 300 dedicated employees that work there and they're some of the finest people in all of the land, Mr. Speaker. STC is just a great little telco and it's one that clearly, members opposite have said, we'll privatize it just as quickly as they can.

We have staked out our ground with respect to Saskatchewan Transportation Company. Our ground is we are prepared to subsidize it to the tune of, the last I saw, about \$4 million a year. I'm seeing some nods so I'm going to say about \$4 million a year. And that is our subsidy to guarantee that we

have service throughout rural Saskatchewan, both mail and parts for machinery, that sort of thing — freight is what I was really scratching to find the right word for — freight service, and people. And we're very proud of STC.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to fairness for working people — that's the other part I had — I wanted to say how pleased I am that the Minister of Labour is going to be introducing legislation acknowledging for firefighters that there are some hazards that lead to occupational diseases and there's going to be recognition of those occupational diseases in The Workers' Compensation Act this year. I feel like at one point in . . . earlier in my career I started that process so I'm very, very pleased that the current Minister of Labour is able to see it come to its logical fruition and conclusion. And I'm very pleased with the job that she is doing there.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the democracy, I want to say that it's interesting to hear from members opposite about democracy. This from a party that its first resolution was to do away with the Human Rights Commission — this on International Human Rights Day. It's nice to look back to who they are and where they're from. The first, first party resolution, do away with the Human Rights Commission.

Then their latest effort into . . . or not latest but their latest effort into democracy was at their last annual convention where they had a five-minute, one-person debate on policy. Five minutes, one person, and it was all over. And that debate was about what? Kyoto.

And on the international scene, Kyoto, it's an important thing and it's something that we have to deal with locally. That's why we're doing wind power. That's why we're doing energy conservation. That's why the member for Saskatoon University . . . is it University Sutherland? Pardon me? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Saskatoon Greystone has been leading the charge on alternate energy and on energy conservation and, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to doing that well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, there's clearly much more I'd like to say but in the interest of allowing all members an opportunity to enter this very important debate — this debate that shows the differences for me, us versus the opposition; this debate that clearly, clearly will outline what choices voters can and will make — Mr. Speaker, in the interest of having as many members as possible join the debate I will thank you for your attention and I'll take my place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be . . . I'm pleased to be able to enter into the debate from the Throne Speech for this particular year.

Throne speeches are traditionally an opportunity and an occasion to present visions and statements and people around the province look forward to these particular days. There's two in particular that people look forward to.

One of course is the Throne Speech where the government has an opportunity to lay out their plan, to show the vision, the direction, and to give people the hope and direction that they'll

be following in the next year and hopefully following that.

The other of course is the budget speech that comes down, will be coming down, later this week. That too is an occasion when it gives people of the province an opportunity to see where the government wants to go in a financial direction and of course it has the economic overtones of budgets presented at any time.

Those two functions are very important I think in the presentation to the people of the province.

I guess what we saw here in this Throne Speech was I think an opportunity that was lost. Here was an opportunity that the government had to show the vision statement that they want to put forward in this coming year, in this coming session, and the vision that should lead on into the future. And it's that direction that the people of this province need more than anything at this stage because of several circumstances: the economy is lagging; we have out-migration; all those things that we've talked about.

And it would appear that this opportunity to present the Throne Speech to address those issues, it just didn't materialize. And unfortunately, that outline leading to a plan is, was not there. And like I said, it's an opportunity lost.

(11:15)

People have to believe, people have to believe in where they want the government to go. And the people want to be able to contribute to believing . . . contributing to that plan, but they also want to hear it enunciated so they can make their own plans accordingly.

And when I listened to the Throne Speech and have read through it subsequent, what I heard were the slogans that this government has been using all the time about the future is wide open. But at the same time we see that there is red tape blocking investment opportunities in this province. And we see that confidence is being lost in outside investors looking back at Saskatchewan who see the opportunities that we see here too, but they're not prepared to take on the risk involved.

So we hear the slogans but they're pretty empty. But I also heard, and what I read in the Throne Speech was a summary, basically a summary of existing programs that this government has in place and intends to continue in place. That's not exactly stimulating direction that encourages people to move in a direction that needs to be addressed in the opportunity of the centennial year that's coming up.

This opportunity is here right now. We have an opportunity to start looking at something exceptional, something besides the ordinary, in the centennial years of the cities of Regina, Moose Jaw, my city of Lloydminster — also recognizing the contributions in Prince Albert. This is an opportunity to start that direction, and it's an opportunity to be able to continue it to the year 2005 when it's the provincial, the provincial centennial.

But I didn't hear that in this Throne Speech, and I was disappointed that . . . I'm not sure where this government wants to go in this coming year and in the years following.

They talk about expanding the economy of Saskatchewan — should be and the claim is expanding. And when I look through the Throne Speech, what they talked about in fact was growing the government. There's the . . . the government growth is in a direction with government investment, and also continuing to put government dollars in competition to the private industry that we desperately need here and the investment that we so desperately need in this province. Nothing to do with trying to build confidence in investors; nothing that I could see in terms of expanding the economy.

When we talk about agriculture, we believe on this side of the House that agriculture in fact does have a future. It has a very significant future in this province and it's not something that we put band-aids on to try to get by until the next rain comes or until the federal government contributes another significant amount of money, even though that we refuse to get involved in the plans in developing those particular federal programs in conjunction with the provinces.

But I do believe that agriculture does have a future. It won't be the same as the future of agriculture as we know it now or have seen it in the past, but it certainly does . . . But what is that future? This was an opportunity to give us a bit of a view of the direction that agriculture should be going and what the programs that were needed to start this new direction in agriculture.

They talked in the Throne Speech about, of course, the ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) and the ACRE committee and how they're going to follow it. That's an existing program. So where is the direction from here? They talked about value-added. They talked about the processing of agriculture commodities and intensive livestock operations, but they talked about the existing programs that's already in place. Is that in fact the future?

What about the crop insurance, 52 per cent increase in the rates that the producers are going to have to pay? Is that the direction that this government wants agriculture to go? It works out to probably three times the rate over the last three years. It's increased that much. Is that the direction? The vision, is that the vision? Just more of the same? We're going to continue on with more of the same? It's not very inspiring.

It's like that when a person goes to a doctor and says to the doctor that he's not feeling right; there's something wrong — what can be done, can you help me? And the doctor says, well I'm not sure what's wrong with you but, whatever it is, you're going to continue to do it. I can't correct you, but you're going to continue to feel the same. It's not a very reassuring statement given through this Throne Speech.

So I guess what I saw also in that Throne Speech were not the statements that we needed to . . . that I thought we should be hearing, but the statements like well, we're poised to do something; we'll continue to do something; we support this; we support that.

When we talked about energy in the Throne Speech, what I read was that the government has spearheaded, and that — with the change of royalty rates — and that spearheaded the increase in exploration. And I have to admit that that in fact was a

significant assist to the industry. Particularly in my area, that is certainly welcome. But I'm not sure you can take full credit for that. I suspect that \$37 a barrel has something to do with spurring the exploration and development in all areas.

The thing that has to be looked at is the competitiveness of our economy, competitiveness of our regulations. We have to be competitive with other jurisdictions. We're not in an isolated island here. We have to make sure that we can do the things and present the programs in such a way that people will have interest in coming, see an opportunity and have the confidence to come here. That is something that I didn't see there.

And again, in forestry — they talked about forestry. And again, what's the plan there? What's new? What was presented? Where are we going to go? Is there going to be an opportunity, again, to present a vision and a direction to build the confidence of investors? Or are we going to have to again use public funds to try to stimulate an economy where the fundamentals, I believe, should be changed?

The vision and the direction and the signals from this are so critical not only for private investment, but why would other people come? Why would they come and invest? Why would they come and stay? Why would local businesses try to expand if in fact they're not aware of where the . . . what the plan is or where we may want to go with it?

In health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very little was addressed in the Throne Speech that give you an indication of where the future vision might be. I've referred to a situation earlier — referring to health care now — when Premier Doer of Manitoba was presenting to the Romanow Commission on health. Premier Doer structured his remarks in the direction of, the health care provision in Manitoba is an economic advantage for Manitoba. I haven't seen that direction here or those kinds of incentives here or the kind of . . . that statement leading to confidence from this particular government, and certainly not in this Throne Speech.

There are adequate examples of how lagging economies can be turned around and incentives put in place so that — and the fundamentals change — so that lagging economies can turn that corner and start moving ahead. It's not . . . We're not breaking new ground here. It's things that have been done in other jurisdictions.

And I'm referring to things like out-migration of population which we've been experiencing for literally decades. We have just not grown. And the most serious part of that out-migration of course is the younger, trained people that Saskatchewan is famous for and in fact should take full credit for the training and education. But they're not staying here. That out-migration is a big problem.

The non-competitive taxation policies are another indicator of other jurisdictions that have lagging economies. And that aspect has been turned around so that the taxation policies become competitive, which then again starts attracting the interest of people and companies and starts building that confidence to come here to Saskatchewan or remain in Saskatchewan.

These other lagging economies have similar characteristics as

we have here — restrictive and red-tape controls that actually block investment or, at the very least, discourage it. I can give you several examples because I get a lot of calls from people that do want to come to Saskatchewan and have actually run into administrative red tape to the point where they have thrown up their hands.

An example — probably the most recent example — would be two people from my constituency that actually wanted to invest in the tourism area of our economy. They were more than happy to invest upwards of 2 and \$3 million of their own money plus leverage money from their financiers to buy into a site in northern Saskatchewan that has the potential equal to nowhere else in Canada.

They were absolutely blocked from getting the final approvals and they, instead of pursuing it doggedly, they chose to buy into an outfitting and a northern tourist area in northern Manitoba. And actually who can . . . (inaudible) . . . them, but what a pity that is.

We have another case recently where somebody wants to purchase a lodge in northern Saskatchewan and in this particular case, they were willing to pay all the necessary fees. But after two or three months of bureaucratic delays, they were finally assessed another 10 per cent penalty for part of the sales on some of the back taxes. And they're struggling now with whether they want to continue to pursue this endeavour, where they would be employing anywhere from 50 to 75 people immediately, just because of a red tape or a regulation that actually discouraged, if not blocked.

So these economies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all have something in common and they start out by determining where they want to go, and they enunciate it clearly and it's a defined plan or a defined statement. So we start with a plan and the plan is developed by the people that are involved in the economy. It's not imposed on the people of the economy but it's developed by the people themselves, developed by the sectors, and people buy into that plan.

It's kind of like what would they like to see the province look like. What would they like to see that jurisdiction look like if, in fact, things could be corrected and changed around? That's the plan. Where do we want to be when we grow up, so to speak? And if you have that plan, then you know exactly where you're going.

If you're going to drive a bus, you've got to know where the bus is going. You've got to be able to make sure that the people agree that you want to go in that same place. And so the plan in this case becomes paramount and then you can start looking at the future and how you achieve that particular plan. So the first item is the plan.

The second item that you need is a partnership. You need partnerships within that economy and those partnerships become very critical in trying to achieve it because the people have a belief in that plan. And now they will try to partner up with different parts of the economy to create the synergies needed to achieve it.

And the whole idea is to try to work together instead of making

roadblocks and trying . . . working apart. It's to the plan, the plan is the important part. The partnerships is important to achieve that plan. It's not a . . . The partnerships are not, they're not trying to make sure that one sector is dominant over another. They're not trying to say that the government is the more important controlling factor here. The partnerships are . . . they have to get their heads together to, like I said, develop the synergy that . . . so they can start achieving that plan.

(11:30)

So the first was the plan, the second is the partnership, and the third step is then you proceed. You proceed by putting these fundamentals in place, you put the vision in place, and things start coming together. And you start developing a belief that we can do it, not a belief that, gee, we can't and . . . or we need help. The belief that we can do it. And a growth vision of the Canadian average of 1 per cent a year surely isn't much, that's not too much to expect of a particular plan and I'm just so sure that we will be able to do much more than that.

So we have the plan, the partnership, and then we proceed to make sure what we want to achieve can be achieved and start to change the attitude of people that I could see from my hometown. On one side of the border there is a can-do attitude. The other side of the border seems to wait for something to happen because they just seem to be not as self-assured. And I think we need to change that attitude because that is critical in developing the confidence needed to both stay, expand, or attract people.

The plan, the partnership, then you proceed, and finally you prosper. This is the result that we all want for this province and we're all prepared to work at it. But I think if it's done right we certainly will be able to prosper in this province. The models are everywhere. Lagging economies, similar to the ones that I've already described, are in fact changing their direction and following the plan, the partnership; they're proceeding now directly to prospering.

And I'm thinking of examples right here in Canada — Nova Scotia has made the turnaround and are starting to make it a desirable place to live. People have a changed attitude in that particular province as an example.

In the European Union we see of course the Irish model is used extensively with similar, exactly similar circumstance to what I described earlier — the out-migration, the investment, the high government involvement in the economy, trained people leaving, and so on.

Holland is another example of an economy that has cycled through prosperous times and less prosperous, but they've begun to put the fundamentals in place because of the plan that they have put in place and the partnerships to achieve that plan.

You know you can look in the United States. From the research that I've done, Massachusetts is an example, and Michigan and Georgia are examples of states that were almost written off for such things as the — by names — as the rust belt and economies that are no longer effective.

That has turned around because there was a plan established by

the people and that people are the ones that will make it work. So we've got to have . . . you've got to put trust and faith in the people and not pretend the government is going to be able to do that for you. We've got to develop the self-worth.

A hundred years ago, that's how this province was built. People that had faith and trust and energy and the commitment to do it and not wait for it to get done, and I think that's what we're doing here now. We've got to try to put pride in accomplishment, get pride in accomplishment, and not envy. It's the accomplishment that we should be celebrating.

So this Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was in fact an opportunity, but as it turned out it was an opportunity lost. And this is at a time when this opportunity and the vision and direction is so badly needed in this province. And it's just not there and I say it's a shame and it's a disappointment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot support the motion. I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to enter into this debate today about the Throne Speech. If I might start my remarks by saying that I think as all of us in this Assembly witness the events that are unfolding in the world, that certainly my thoughts are with those people who are praying for peace, who are praying for a quick end to the bombing in Iraq and who are obviously praying for a better future for the Iraqi people.

We have the luxury, the privilege in this country of living free and democratic lives and it is, I think, as we enter into this discussion on our Throne Speech and indeed as we enter this legislative session, it's important that we all remember our responsibilities as members, as citizens, to help make sure that the democratic institutions remain strong.

I am pleased, as we take a look at the Throne Speech, to speak in favour of the issues contained within it. I couldn't agree more with the title of it, "A Vision. A Plan. A Future Wide Open," because I think that that encapsulates not only the overall view for Saskatchewan but certainly what this government is promoting.

Today I want to talk a little bit about some of those issues contained in that, and I want to contrast that with what members opposite are talking about, and their leader are talking about, because I think there is a growing divide and a very real choice that will be put to Saskatchewan people in the very near future.

We as New Democrats, social democrats, have a vision of a Saskatchewan that is inclusive. We have a vision of a Saskatchewan in which everyone is able to rise and take advantage of opportunity regardless of economic circumstance, regardless of race, regardless of cultural background. That is a core part of who we are and what we believe. It's part of what makes Saskatchewan such a great place to live, such a great province. And it's that kind of leadership that this party and its predecessors have provided for 50 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This morning the Leader of the Opposition was critical of the Throne Speech in terms of the words that were contained in it. I thought it was interesting that he was critical simply of it being a . . . in terms of its communications initiative. I think it's important that we look beyond what the words say, that we take a look at what the initiatives are, that we understand what the basis of those initiatives are, and that we are clear in understanding what the agenda is on this side of the House and on the opposition side.

I want to speak first of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the expanding economy. Saskatchewan's economy is strong. It is growing, it is vibrant, it is diversified. And in the last year the initiatives taken by this government, by its former minister of Industry and Resources, by the Minister of Crown Investments, by the members of the investment council, have helped move this province's economy forward. That's why today we have seen 10 consecutive months of job growth. That is why we have seen a 68 per cent growth in terms of the oil and gas drilling in this province. That is why we continue to see Saskatchewan have the single largest per capita number of small businesses. That's why we see retail sales up 7 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the plan the Government of Saskatchewan has, the plan the NDP has, is working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Our plan is not focused on simply one geographic area of the province. It's not about growing the cities at the expense of rural Saskatchewan. It's not about growing the west side versus the east. It's not about growing the South versus the North, as the member for Saskatchewan Rivers talked about yesterday.

This is about growing the province in sector after sector after sector of the six key areas we identified. Despite the problems that we have had with the trade subsidy, despite the problems that we have had on agriculture, we are continuing to see growth. I am proud, Mr. Deputy . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Harper): — Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I am very proud of the fact that we see today more than 475,000 people working in this province — 10 consecutive months of growth, 6 months of record growth. That is something we should all celebrate, that we should all be proud about. It is time for the naysayers on the opposition in the Saskatchewan Party to stop putting down the businesses that are growing our economy in our cities, in our towns, and in rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The Saskatchewan Party says that they have a plan. Well we know that they've got a slogan. As we take a look at what they say their plan is, as I was listening to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, he talked about his economic development vision in two areas. One was in terms of tax, the second was in terms of Crown investments. I want to talk about that today because this is a very important wedge issue. This is an important difference between where the opposition Saskatchewan Party is and where our NDP

government is.

We have today . . . We are in the fourth year of a significant set of income tax reductions in this province — \$400 million worth of income tax reductions. Today personal income tax rates in this province are at their lowest rate since 1976. They are at their lowest rate since 1976. And that is as a result of the work of the current Minister of Industry and Resources, the former minister of Finance, who led and spearheaded that tax reform package. That was a balanced approach. Today it means the majority of Saskatchewan people pay less, pay 11 per cent tax. Eleven per cent, the lowest rate since 1976.

The changes that came into effect on January 1 of this year will mean that Saskatchewan people earning less than \$100,000 will pay no more than 13 per cent income tax on that. That is a tremendous change from the complicated, punitive tax measures that were in place under the Sask Party's predecessor government, the Tory government that was in place — that the member from Swift Current was pleased to work for, that the member for Estevan was pleased to work for, that the member for Moosomin was pleased to serve in — a government that introduced a high-income surtax to be punitive to high-income earners; a flat tax that was punitive to all Saskatchewan people.

These were measures that were simply not in keeping with what Saskatchewan people wanted. The members opposite are now hopping on the tax reduction bandwagon. We've reduced income taxes to the lowest rates since 1976 and I think that that is a very important piece that we should recognize and the members opposite should speak about.

The members opposite say, oh well. The Leader of the Opposition says he's going to create and make Saskatchewan a small-business, tax-free zone. Well this is a very interesting, interesting issue that the member raises. He says of course he'll do it over four years; well maybe he'll get it done; they'll try and do it early in their term, but they'll see.

Since 1992 we have been reducing business taxes in this province. Since we've balanced the budget, we have been reducing the small-business taxes in this province. We have been reducing the corporate capital tax. That's been a commitment that we've made and that is why we are seeing growth. That's why we're seeing growth, you know, in the gas sector; that's why we're seeing growth in Saskatchewan small business. And there is more that we can do. I don't doubt that there is more that we can do and there is more that this NDP government is going to do when we're re-elected.

But people of Saskatchewan I think are deeply suspicious of an opposition party who says, trust us. Well as they take a look back at the former assistant to John Gerich, at the former assistant to Grant Devine, and a former bench mate of Grant Devine, at all the old Tories across the way, I think they ultimately start to say, well wait a second, we've kind of heard this before. We have heard this before. Well even the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday — he says they're going to say, I've heard it before, that this is going to be one of those measures where they're going to reduce taxes but increase services.

Well yes we heard that before. You know what? You're going

to hear it again next Friday when the Minister of Finance stands and says, we're still paying — still paying — for that set of policy decisions that were made in the 1980s. We are still seeing the interest on our debt being the fourth largest expenditure that we have to pay. Imagine what we could do for the business sector, imagine what we could do for taxpayers, imagine what we could do in our communities to build safer communities, to build stronger communities — if only we didn't have to pay for the mistakes of that government that was supported by current members of that opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:45)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, they say it's not just the taxes. Having the lowest income tax rate since '76 isn't good enough. It's not just the fact we've reduced business taxes since 1992. That's not good enough. They say that the real problem here, the real problem is . . . who? Saskatchewan people. They say the problem here is the labour. They say it's the workers. That's what they're saying.

And one of the first things that they're going to do is that they are going to rip apart the labour legislation in this province, that they are going to peel back the protection that workers have fought for. Why? Because it fits with their ideological vision. Why? Because they won't blame their past mistakes for difficulties that we have in terms of growing more, doing more. Instead they're going to pass it off on the working people. Shameful. Ridiculous. But that's what they say — they are going to tear apart the labour legislation.

And you know what? They're not just going to do it sometime. They're going to do it right away. The first thing they're going to do is dismantle the successes of the working people.

We talked about the Crown corporations. The Leader of the Opposition went on to talk about the Crown investments. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have, we are strong supporters of a mixed economy. We believe in private sector investment. We believe in private sector business growth. We believe in the co-operative sector. And we believe that where the Saskatchewan people can come together through their government to pool their resources and invest it, that we should do that — that the Crowns have an opportunity to do more than just provide electricity and telephone; that we have an opportunity to make some real investments in the economy.

Now I know the Leader of the Opposition doesn't agree with that. I know that he doesn't agree with that, and that's why he fired Grant Schmidt as a candidate. But what I find very peculiar is why . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Members will all get their opportunities for this . . . to make their remarks. At this moment, at this moment I ask the minister responsible for Corrections and Public Safety to continue.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much. I want to pick up on this question of Crowns and the economy because the Leader of the Opposition says he doesn't believe in it. There should be no role for those Crown corporations in terms of

investing in the economy. That's why he fired Grant Schmidt as a candidate in Melville.

Now unfortunately it's not a very consistent approach because there's, sitting right across from me, the brand new member for Battleford-Cut Knife. But what does the member for Battleford-Cut Knife believe? He believes that not only should the Crowns be investing in the economy and in business, they should be investing in his business.

Now I think that's a refreshingly honest approach that he's taken. At least he's come up front in saying, put that money into the economy. And in fact, I've got a great idea that you could put it into — he says — put it into his business up in his home community to help them grow. Put it into Wilkie, he says. Well that's a very refreshing approach. It's probably good he didn't tell the Leader of the Opposition those were his views after the nomination or they'd have to have fired him and found another candidate.

What are some of the other folks around there saying? Well they've got a lot of different views. I listened to the member for Cypress Hills talk about the investments in ethanol. And he said, as did the member for Assiniboia . . . sorry, for Wood River. The members were saying, well we aren't opposed to investment in the economy and we aren't opposed to investment in industry. We just think the government should be the absolute last group to invest.

So it's not a case of picking good investments. It's a question of once all the other opportunities are exhausted, once everybody else is exhausted, if you've got a dog of an idea, bring it to the Saskatchewan Party. That's what they're saying. Don't bother us with the winners; just show them the losers, is what they're saying. Well that's their approach.

Invest in a business for the member for Battleford-Cut Knife, invest in the ethanol plants if they're in the riding of Wood River or Cypress Hills — as long as it's the absolute last place and we can't find answers anywhere else. Don't worry about the benefits back to Saskatchewan people. Don't worry about the sound business plans, they say. Just make that investment directly. That's what they believe in.

And that is a very inconsistent approach that's being taken by the Leader of the Opposition to say on the one hand in the House yesterday that the Crowns shouldn't be involved in economic development, but to have surrounding him in his caucus a bunch of people that say, well you can do it in my riding. Yes make that public investment in my district. Pretty interesting approach as they get ready to head into an election, in terms of the Crowns.

I think that we are going to see as we head into this a good solid debate about the Crown corporations. It goes beyond, though, the question of just investment in the economy. I think there's a real question here about government participation in other sectors.

I listened to the member for Thunder Creek. I read an article from him some time ago, just after his nomination, talking about what they were going to do with the Crown corporations if they're elected. Well I tell you, a lot of people are pretty

concerned about it. It was somewhat reassuring, I guess, that he said that they would continue to support SaskTel and SaskPower and SaskEnergy after doing a core services review, whatever that is. After they shed off all the profitable pieces and left it with whatever it needed for a direct subsidy, that they would move forward with that.

But then the member for . . . then the member for Thunder Creek went one step further and the member for Thunder Creek said that every other one of those Crown corporations would be privatized. Every one of the other Crown corporations would be privatized. Now that's a very interesting message.

The member for Swift Current used to work for the minister responsible for the Liquor Board. I'd be very interested to hear what that Sask Party plan is for privatizing the Liquor Board. Is the plan to immediately — early in the term, late in the term, on day one — fire the 1,600 people that are working in well-paying, unionized jobs in the liquor stores, to fire them, give the market over to their business friends, and then allow them to get hired back at minimum wage? Is that what the plan is?

What's the plan in terms of some of the other corporations, in areas where we have Crown investments that protect public interests? What about STC? How quickly is STC going to get sold off? Do you really think Greyhound's going to continue the same kind of network that STC has? And how do they justify that in some parts of rural Saskatchewan? I'd be very interested to hear what members actually have to say about that.

What are they going to do about the Gaming Corporation that is there to provide us with a security of government control over a sensitive area? Are they going to shut it down, as some of the members advocate? Are they going to give it away, as I've been hearing up in the . . . coming out of the by-elections? What exactly is the position? And I think that this is something where the Saskatchewan Party is going to have to say more than, just trust us, because they seem to have somewhere between no plan and a whole bunch of small plans, they seem to have a bunch of secret plans.

The Leader of the Opposition yesterday, when we were asking him about his position on treaty land entitlement, said oh, I said what I had to say to SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities). I told SARM, is what he was telling the Premier and I. Well that's fine, but is that the same thing that he's telling the FSIN? And if he's got . . . if he's told SARM something about his policy on the treaty land entitlement, why won't he share it with all of us here in the legislature? Why not tell the people of Saskatchewan what the plan is?

I worry that in fact what the opposition leader is developing is a number of different plans — one that you tell the Indian people and one that you tell the farmers; that you've got one that you tell the city folk and one that you tell people in the country. That, Mr. Speaker, is what I worry that the opposition is developing, is a number of different secret plans.

What is their plan in terms of privatization? Our plan for Crown ownership and involvement is pretty clear. We believe that where we can assist, where we can provide control, where it's important either for the economy or social development, that we

are going to be involved. And that is a key part of what we believe in. It's not dogmatic. It's not ideologically hidebound. It is one that is pragmatic. Where we can divest, where we can take advantage of market opportunity, where the private sector can do it better, we allow that to happen. And that's what we've done.

But the members opposite, let's understand, as we take a look at what our vision is of an inclusive Saskatchewan versus theirs, which segments off, that hives off, that divides Saskatchewan between rich and poor, Métis and First Nations people and others, between the farmers and the city folk, that is a policy of division. That is a divide and conquer policy that the members opposite pursued all the way through the '80s.

I thought it was refreshing yesterday for the member for Sask Rivers to stand up and talk about how his view of investments were that SaskTel should make good international investments like the one in the Chunnel and not make bad international investments. I thought that was ingenious. Inconsistent with the approach taken by his leader — I'm sure his leader will deal with him in the nomination process. But nevertheless it was refreshing to at least hear that.

Mr. Speaker, our approach is clear, our vision is clear, our plan is clear, and it is the same plan that we'll tell SARM, that we're going to tell the FSIN, that we tell people in the cities, that we tell people in the country, that we tell people in Wood River, that we tell people in northern Saskatchewan. That is our plan. It is out front. It is open. It is honest. It is accountable — unlike the hidden, secret, duplicitous agenda being advanced by the members opposite.

This Throne Speech should be supported. We should support the ideas in it. Stop haggling about the words and get on with allowing us to continue to see this province's economy and society grow. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today on behalf of the constituents of Humboldt to reply to the Throne Speech. But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome to the Assembly the two new members, the member from Battleford-Cut Knife as well as the member from Saskatoon Fairview, and wish them well in their efforts to represent their people well.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech that came down this year from the government was best, I guess, described by the Premier himself. The Premier was very, very upset with his own Throne Speech. Now just exactly how that could come to pass I'm not sure, but we see a Premier who goes on a rant with his own cabinet about how pathetic the Throne Speech was. You know, you have to really wonder how in control the Premier is of his own government and of what happens within this government, including the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, what is known is that the Premier entered his cabinet room, slammed his paperwork down on the massive oak cabinet table — and this is a quote from the paper — and used both language and volume that caught everyone's attention. Earlier on today members opposite were kind of wondering, in

some of the conversation that was going across the floor, how in fact the opposition came to know about that incident. Well I think that the members opposite are going to have to be questioning themselves. I think there happens to be a . . . somebody over there that's obviously so unhappy that they leaked that information to the media themselves. It's really quite interesting, Mr. Speaker.

Today a good example of the incompetence of the government was clearly demonstrated when the minister for Corrections was answering in question period — or trying to answer somewhat — questions put by the opposition regarding the safety at our correctional institutes in this province.

It was very clear to members on this side of the House that that minister was totally irresponsible in his duties as a minister because he did not even know and could not equate to us the policy that was put forward by his government, if in fact there was any policy.

It's clear also, Mr. Speaker, that there are people in the correctional institutes that are responsible for what happens there, the staff asking for assistance and help. If this isn't a clear cry from staff members for assistance and help and direction, I don't know what is. In the meantime we have the safety of the citizens of our province certainly in jeopardy with this kind of activity going on.

Mr. Speaker, what I do want to mention, when we look at whether or not there was vision in this Throne Speech, I want to certainly say that the Throne Speech as it was put forward indicated that there was vision. The government is telling us they have a plan, they have a vision, and they have a future wide opened.

Well, Mr. Speaker, their vision is certainly not clear. There's nothing tangible in the Throne Speech that would indicate to us what kind of forward-looking initiatives they have. We hear the Throne Speech. Eighty per cent of the Throne Speech was about the past; maybe 20 per cent talked about a few little initiatives that they were going to move towards in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite any member of the cabinet, any member of the NDP, to take a look over at the Humboldt constituency if they want to know what it is to be forward looking, to have vision, to be innovative, to understand the work ethic, to understand what it is for people to work together and move together — and to understand what private enterprise business can do in fact to grow a province.

Mr. Speaker, we have always been — in the Humboldt constituency, that area of the province — one of the most aggressive areas of the province as far as private enterprise moving on ahead. We have the . . . I would say we are the hub of the largest farm manufacturing, machinery manufacturing rather, in the province.

These kind of industries started from private enterprise. These industries started without government assistance. In fact they abhorred government assistance and they grew in a very commonsensical fashion because of family involvement and certainly good planning and good business sense.

(12:00)

This is what the province needs more of now, Mr. Speaker. We have had enough government interference in business. We have had enough of this NDP government taking hard-earned taxpayers' dollars and blowing it, basically, on ventures outside of Saskatchewan — risky ventures. No sense, no sense at all in what they have done. Risky ventures outside of Saskatchewan that have lost us millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars. Bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is government has no business in business.

And just in reply to the member from Regina South and his comments here just a few minutes ago. Mr. Speaker, the minister from Regina South is constantly talking about what they are about as opposed to what we are about.

Well what we are about is believing in the people of this province to have the best business sense; to know what to do to grow this province. And we believe in giving them the freedom to go ahead and do that without undue government interference. That's what we believe in.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit today about the necessity, as the Saskatchewan Party sees it, of recognizing that First Nations and Métis people in this province must be and are necessarily going to be a part of the growing economy. Because Saskatchewan's success over the next decade, it does hinge on the success of our rapidly growing First Nations and Métis population.

First Nations people and businesses must be full partners in the growth and governance of Saskatchewan with equal opportunities, equal rights, and responsibilities. A Saskatchewan Party government will build a partnership with First Nations based on recognition that treaty rights must be respected and honoured by the federal government within the context of the economic, social, and political climate of the 21st century.

A Saskatchewan Party government will build a partnership with First Nation and Métis people with support for the principle of responsible Aboriginal self-government, where self-government is defined as community or local government that is democratic and fully accountable.

The Saskatchewan Party government — that will be soon — will build a partnership with First Nations based on First Nations as full partners, investors, and owners in the economic development of Saskatchewan, and support for First Nations private sector partnerships in major projects, including value-added expansion of our rich uranium resources; participation in infrastructure development including the financing and construction of local infrastructure — highways, pipelines, and electrical transmission assets — and, Mr. Speaker, new opportunities for value-added growth of our forestry, agriculture, and tourism industries.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Métis population — particularly the Métis population in northern Saskatchewan — have spoken with us about their hopes and desires for so many years that they might be able to own their own housing units in the northern administration district of Saskatchewan. And, Mr.

Speaker, we are meeting with them on an ongoing basis to change what they desire to happen. And that change would be rather than forever and a day having to look at simply renting their housing units, they will be able to purchase them.

Many of the Métis in the North have jobs at the mines in forestry and so on. And they certainly feel that they have the capability of contributing fully to owning their own homes. And so that's one of the things that they feel will give them a sense of pride, a sense of ownership, a sense of self-direction. And, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the fundamental beliefs of the Saskatchewan Party also.

Mr. Speaker, I have pretty well constantly looked at the editions of the *Seeds of Success* — if you don't mind me using this in the Assembly. And within this magazine is such a statement of celebration of what First Nations and Métis people are doing throughout Saskatchewan. This magazine informs all of us — if we're not already informed — of the many, many, many achievements of entrepreneurs in the Aboriginal world.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll just take a moment to point out some of the successes because I really feel that it's important that we acknowledge, we look at these successes, and that the world around us knows just the kind of great opportunities that are out there for Aboriginal people, that they are seriously taking on.

One of the people in this magazine that has a career in 4 Directions is Michelle Fraser and there's a great article on her achievements. Another one of the entrepreneurs in this magazine, Mr. Speaker, is Eva Lizotte. Eva is a designer living in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan — a clothing designer. And she has sold her clothing designs and clothing all over the world.

These kind of people are very, very inspirational to their own people as well as everyone in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just mention while I'm on my feet, the great desire of First Nations people to go to their own people, and their intent to be mentors to those people. There's a great deal of that happening right now and I just take my hat off to the many First Nations people, some of them living off-reserve, that periodically go back on-reserve to encourage the young people in the schools.

Mr. Speaker, our goal, the Saskatchewan Party goal is to grow Saskatchewan by 100,000 people. We know that the expanding numbers of Aboriginal people will, in fact, be a part of that growth. We want to see a vibrant province. We have a plan, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that all people in this province, Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people alike, have opportunities for success, that can move forward, and that can certainly make Saskatchewan a place of equitable prosperity when looked anywhere in this country. We will under a Saskatchewan Party government be, in fact, the greatest in the country.

So I thank you, Mr. Speaker. And what I would like to say is that I cannot support the Speech from the Throne basically because the Premier does not support the Speech from the Throne himself. And further to that, Mr. Speaker, we recognized during the time that the Speech from the Throne came down that there was certainly no vision for this province in the contents of that speech.

The people of this province are looking for leadership. They're looking for direction to grow the province; for prosperity, to ensure that our children that are here can stay here and those that have left the province can come back here and enjoy opportunities to build their family here and certainly to build their communities.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I will not support the Speech from the Throne, but I will support the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, the member . . . the member . . . As always, once again, the NDP members across are intending to have just a little bit of fun with this. But they do that constantly. They do that constantly and that's all right. There's a little bit of . . . there's a little bit of, I guess joking, that is quite fine in the Assembly and this is certainly done with goodwill so I take no offence to that.

So I would support the amendment put forth by the member from Rosetown-Biggar. So I will take my seat with that, Mr. Speaker, and invite the next reply from the Throne Speech.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today in proud and in loud support of the Speech from the Throne. I think the Speech from the Throne talks about a plan, it talks about a vision, and it talks about our future wide open. And that future wide open, Mr. Speaker, involves all of Saskatchewan and that includes northern Saskatchewan, and First Nations people of Saskatchewan, and the Métis people of Saskatchewan as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in proud support of the Speech from the Throne primarily for one reason, Mr. Speaker. It certainly involves the Athabasca constituency. It involves the Cumberland constituency of the North and makes it a very strong part of our economy. We include people of the North. And yesterday as I listened to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, who's going to be an ex-member very quickly, Mr. Speaker, as I listened to some of the comments that he made, Mr. Speaker, I stood in this Assembly and I was very, very concerned of some of the comments he was making.

So today I say to the people of northern Saskatchewan — yes, we are a proud people; yes, we're a very determined people; and yes, we have to take our rightful place in Saskatchewan's economy, but we're not going to be able to do that with that Sask Party Tory government in charge, Mr. Speaker. People of northern Saskatchewan know this, Mr. Speaker, and I'll give you evidence, Mr. Speaker, of what this government has done and what this Throne Speech talks about when we talk about expansion of our economy, we talk about protecting medicare, we talk about opening doors, we talk about environmental protection, we talk about secure families and vibrant communities, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask my colleagues to join me in a chorus here as we go down the list here for some of the things that we have done. And I want to coach them a bit, Mr. Speaker, primarily because some of the work that the member from Cumberland has done in his early years as a first minister of Aboriginal ancestry in this Assembly, and I want to thank that member from the bottom of my heart for doing all the work that he's done from the North.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me start. Where there was a need for a new school in Pinehouse, Mr. Speaker, there is a new school in Pinehouse. Where the people of Turnor Lake needed a brand new road, Mr. Speaker. Where the people of La Loche needed a new hospital, Mr. Speaker. Where the people of Green Lake needed financial support for their sawmill. Where the people of La Loche needed housing for their families. Where the people of the small communities like Bear Creek and Stony Rapids needed water and sewer. Where the people of Black Lake needed a hospital, Mr. Speaker. Where the people throughout the North wanted control of some of their land and the resources and decision making to land use planning. To have control, Mr. Speaker. Where they wanted support for commercial fishing. Where they wanted support for trapping, for wild rice, for outfitting and for ecotourism.

Mr. Speaker, the list is very long. And as you go down the specifics of some of the list, Mr. Speaker, there is no question there has been good progress made by this government, and this Throne Speech talks about that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point out, yesterday the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, he was talking about friends he has up there, and I quote from *Hansard*. It says, quote:

I got to make a lot of friends up there. A lot of friends in northwestern Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are very influential, community leaders in northern Saskatchewan. Community leaders, business leaders, who are very concerned.

Mr. Speaker, we can't find Saskatchewan Party friends in northern Saskatchewan. And the reason why we can't find them, Mr. Speaker, is that PC Party, that Conservative Party never had the North's heart and mind and soul ever, ever part of their vision or their plan, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, that everything that we've talked about in Northern Affairs hinges on what they would do, what they would do if they were in power, Mr. Speaker. I say today to the people of northern Saskatchewan, you can say goodbye to the remote housing program. They will not support housing in northern Saskatchewan. This party built 50 new houses in La Loche alone, Mr. Speaker.

They will be selling off the Highways equipment. You can kiss Highways workers' jobs goodbye, Mr. Speaker, if that party comes in.

The massive water and sewer projects in northern Saskatchewan to bring water and sewer to Bear Creek and to Stony Rapids and 40 other communities, you can kiss that goodbye if that party's in power, Mr. Speaker.

Five to six million acres of forest, Mr. Speaker, have been withdrawn or in the process of being withdrawn from the large forestry companies to give to the communities. And right across the forest fringe of northern Saskatchewan, Aboriginal people are in charge of forestry, Mr. Speaker. You can kiss that goodbye if those guys are in power, Mr. Speaker.

What have we done? Cumberland House needed a new bridge. Cumberland House has a new bridge, Mr. Speaker. We've had

many roads fixed in the North that needed fixing. They got fixed, Mr. Speaker. La Ronge needed a hospital, Mr. Speaker. La Ronge got a hospital, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the North have been asking for support for their social programs, Mr. Speaker. This is what the party has done that's in power today, Mr. Speaker. This government has provided to the North for support when you talk about secure families and healthy communities. We have put together Kids First. We have put together School^{PLUS}. We have put together "building independence." We talk about Sask Income Plan, community-based organizations getting support, child-care programs, respite programs, special funding for schools with disabled children; and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(12:15)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And what do they say? What do they say, Mr. Speaker? If we get in power, if we get in power we're going to take \$50 million out of the social assistance budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, shame on them. Shame on them because that's a program that they're going to hurt the most, the disabled and the disadvantaged throughout Saskatchewan. And northern Saskatchewan is saying no, to the Sask Party or the Sask-a-Tory party or the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party or the Reform Party or the Alliance Party, whatever they're called. We are saying in northern Saskatchewan, no way José.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I've sat in this Assembly for now going on to seven or eight years and of those seven or eight years I've been Minister of Northern Affairs for a couple of years now, and the previous minister had been there for a couple of years. And I say to the minister that served before me, how many questions have we got in his last two years of service? Big fat zero — zero questions from members opposite. And how many questions did I get, Mr. Speaker, in the last two years I served? One question, Mr. Speaker. One question of Northern Affairs. That is a thousand day question, Mr. Speaker — four years or 48 months.

And I say to the people of the North, do not listen to that opposition because the only question they asked here, Mr. Speaker, was why are we sending people to Fort McMurray to work? That was the only question they asked, Mr. Speaker. That was the only question. Are they going to pay income tax over there? Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer is you pay income tax where you live and if the people of La Loche want to work, let them go to work. That was the only question they had, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, some of the friends that they talk about they have I would say today are self-serving friends that don't like the vision that we have and the plan that we have for northern Saskatchewan. We are funding New North to make sure New North is able to be strong and to be strengthened to be able to present a solid lobby on behalf of people of the North. We are working with the northwest

communities to expand forestry, to make sure they're part of forestry, Mr. Speaker. We are funding CREDOs (community regional economic development organization) to make sure that CREDOs are very active, Mr. Speaker.

SaskTel has high-speed Internet, CommunityNet, all these opportunities, Mr. Speaker, are being afforded right throughout the North because of this government's policy and this government's belief that the North is part of our province, unlike those guys across the way, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the trying things that we have to do in the North is to try and create jobs. We know, across the way, that this is about the economy, this is about jobs, trying to get young people trained to get them into forestry, to get them into tourism, to get them into outfitting, to get them into commercial fishing — the list goes on and on.

And we believe, Mr. Speaker, we believe that CIC and some of the investment opportunities that we have taken in the North, whether it's the Green Lake mill or whether it's the joint partnership in the OSB (oriented strand board) plywood or whether it's working with Weyerhaeuser or whether it's working with Kitsaki and the Zelinsky Brothers on forestry, we believe we've got to be there to be able to support them and to be able to invest in northern Saskatchewan.

And what does that party believe, Mr. Speaker? What does that party believe? Well I take a quote yesterday, a quote from the member from Saskatchewan Rivers who acts all concerned about the North and who cries crocodile tears when it comes to the North, Mr. Speaker. He has never cared about the North and he never will. And the few friends that he's . . . have up there, I believe and I say today that they have a private interest. They have a private agenda, and that private agenda is to be self-serving and to look after themselves and not the rest of the community. And the North does not want that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And what does that member say, Mr. Speaker, about the potential benefits of forestry expansion and the fact that on this side of the House we believe we should support them by doing inventory work, by investing, by training, by working with the communities? Well this is what he says, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Tory Party, they say, quote:

If they want to build a sawmill they'll take that risk. If it fails, then at least they've tried. (Then) That's what they've been promised. If they build an outfitting camp and if it doesn't work, if it fails, at least they tried.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that's the attitude that we should take when it comes to northern Saskatchewan people — if they fail, at least they tried.

If that member would have taken two minutes to know — he talks about outfitting here and forestry — on outfitting, when his cousin Grant Devine was in power, he gave away all the outfitting opportunities to people that did not include northern

Saskatchewan. So how could he get into outfitting with all these fine operating areas gone? His Open For Business slogan that they had in the early . . . in the mid-'80s has cost northern Saskatchewan great opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

And secondly, on forestry they have always promoted big companies coming here. On this side of the House we believe, we believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have to work with the communities. And in northern Saskatchewan, in northern Saskatchewan, the communities have to be positioned, the Aboriginal groups have to be positioned to become part owners in the decision making and the management of forestry, and to get the benefits of forestry, Mr. Speaker.

Private contractors can indeed harvest, they can log, they can even do some planting. But they can't own forestry rights if the people of the North want the communities and the people who are being charged of those rights to make sure that they're being done in a sustainable fashion and that they have their input, and that they can benefit from forestry, and that they can also attract investment from the government to help them develop those forestry opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And I say to the people of the North, we've signed a \$20 million agreement with the federal government, that's one aspect of our Northern Development Accord, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to make sure that people throughout the North know exactly what we're doing to make sure that the environment is taken care of, that the forestry training is there, that we build up our roads, that we have a quality of life due to some of the challenges that we have to meet — to the social services aspect, to housing, to health care, and the list goes on. We are working on the quality of life issues now as part of our first phase.

And the second phase, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure that we have job training and opportunity, and that we provision the northerners to be part of the North and to be part of the northern economy.

People of the North have always said we don't mind sharing, but let us share. And they're also saying we want to make sure the economy is great, but we don't want to be just cheerleading that economy, Mr. Speaker, we want to be part of that economy.

So I sit here today and I listen to some of the statements by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, and I say to him the election is coming, the election is coming and I doubt very much I'm going to see him here next term, Mr. Speaker, because what he has said last night is the furthest thing in the truth, and very clearly he has indicated that northern Saskatchewan has never been, and will never be, part of their thought, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — But, Mr. Speaker, we're in this Assembly for a fight, Mr. Speaker. We are going to fight, Mr. Speaker. That's bound and determined as we are on this side, we're going to fight that attitude. And there's no question about it, northern Saskatchewan's going to say thank goodness that

we have a good government that involves us, that respects us, that talks about us, and not one that simply cries crocodile tears every now and then because it's politically opportunistic to do.

Mr. Speaker, Hermanson talks about, in this article, Mr. Speaker, and I'll quote, and I'll quote from an article, Mr. Speaker, of April 9, 2002. And the quote is from the northern . . . or northlands paper, it says, quote:

The Sask Party reps were also questioned about whether the Department of Northern Affairs would still exist if they formed government, and about how their views on trimming the civil service are going (to go) over with government employees.

The . . . (answer) likely not . . .

Mr. Speaker, likely not.

So I tell the people of the North this, if you believe that that party across the way is going to help fix some of the roads to Patuanak or to Dillon, likely not. If you believe that party is going to help us continue building up water and sewer, likely not. If you believe that party across the way is going to start doing something about the training opportunities that many of our young people want, likely not. Mr. Speaker, if you believe that party across the way is going to do something to help with the remote housing program, likely not.

Mr. Speaker, our Throne Speech talks about what we're going to do. Our history talks about what we have done, and we are not done yet, Mr. Speaker. We have some great opportunities; we're going to continue building on those opportunities.

Now we stood, across the way, Mr. Speaker, we go to many communities and I'll take forestry for example. I said to northern Saskatchewan people that we are having some challenges in forestry — it's because we're developing a capacity to look at forestry. And yes, there are some problems. But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to do inventories; we're going to do investment; we're going to do training; we're going to do proper research and make sure we do this thing right.

So we see great opportunity right across the North, Mr. Speaker, and that stuff takes time. And I tell the people of the North, we are going to be patient, you have to be patient. We'll eventually get to the goal of having some great opportunity in forestry. And above all the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, is to have control of some of the resources.

So whether it's commercial fishing, whether it's ecotourism, whether it's outfitting, whether it's trapping, whether it's forestry, whether it's tourism, northern Saskatchewan has said we want to be part of it. And on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are delivering, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — On that side of the House, will they deliver? Likely not. And that member stands up in this Assembly and cries about some of the jobs that we're creating and some of the opportunities that are being met and he says well, you're sending people to Fort McMurray to go work over

there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to get people work. The people of La Loche have been working on that road for a number of years. And the first thing that that member gets up and asks this Assembly — out of four years, one question for Northern Affairs — why are you sending people to work in Fort McMurray?

But, Mr. Speaker, we've been saying all along it's about jobs. On one hand we're talking about trying to create jobs for Aboriginal people and they say, oh no, you shouldn't have these special programs for Aboriginal people. Well then we say, okay. Oh no, no, we're going to cut \$50 million from social services. Okay you don't want us to help them with social assistance; you don't want us to help them train; you don't want us to help them get jobs through special efforts. Well what do you want to do? Make up your mind.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not taking their advice. We're not taking any of their direction because all they have is pure 10 cent slogans, Mr. Speaker. No plan, no approach, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And I say shame on them. The people of Saskatchewan and especially the people of northern Saskatchewan know you can put as many names in front of these folks as you want. We know that they are the PCs and the Conservatives that gave away our forestry. We know that that they're the PCs and the Conservatives that gave away our outfitting opportunity. They're the PCs and Conservatives that tried to do away with our commercial fishing industry, with our trapping, with the ecotourism strategy we had. We know that they are the PCs and the Tories that tried to do away with northern Saskatchewan hiring policies at the mines that dropped from 50 per cent down to 15 per cent. And thank goodness for the former minister of Northern Affairs and this government, of bringing back those numbers up, Mr. Speaker, when this government took over power in 1991.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there is no question there is great progress happening in northern Saskatchewan. Great progress. But there's more that's going to be done.

As we've maintained, Mr. Speaker, it was hard to continue moving forward on many fronts when we started looking at some of the challenges we had, and that is to make sure that we had proper housing, safe roads, decent strategies, certainly looking at some of the water and sewer projects that were necessary, and training. We needed to go through the work of rebuilding the North to make sure our next target of job creation is not being hindered by other problems that we've had over the years in northern Saskatchewan.

And that's why I say to the people in the North today, that who are you going to trust? Who are you going to trust when in the mid-'80s, Mr. Speaker, when that party under the PC banner — and they know they're PCs; they know they're PCs — when they were in power, Mr. Speaker, they had no respect, no

vision, no plan for the North. And, Mr. Speaker, change your name all you want, change your name all you want, but the people of the North will not be fooled, and the people of Saskatchewan will not be fooled, Mr. Speaker.

And I say this, Mr. Speaker, we are looking forward to the next election because on this side of the House we know what we stand for. On that side of the House — a bunch of question marks, a bunch of confusion, a bunch of inexperienced people that just simply don't have the vision that includes all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And I say this in my final comment, Mr. Speaker, come next election, I'm looking forward to it, and we will rock you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, if I could just have that member's attention, next time that there's a Speech from the Throne, would you please deliver it? Because at least there was something entertaining when you were speaking, as opposed to everybody falling asleep when the Lieutenant Governor delivered that Speech from the Throne.

She was forced to read the speech, and I think if you looked around the galleries you saw that there was about a quarter of the amount of people that used to come to the Speech from the Throne because that's what they've expected from this government over the last four years, is absolutely nothing new in a Throne Speech.

It's quite interesting to see the floor, how it was . . . whether it was filled up in the galleries. And there was very few people here because people have lost faith in this government. They can't get their own people out; it was really quite a disgrace.

I remember the first Speech from the Throne I was at. There was people filling all the galleries, filling the floor, and there were people downstairs. And it was nowhere close to that this year, Mr. Speaker, because people know that there is no vision with this government. And I guess maybe perhaps they had seen a bit of the Speech from the Throne prior and that's why they didn't show up, because really there was nothing in the Speech from the Throne for people to be excited about, for people to be showing up for.

(12:30)

So that's why I would say I'd ask the member from Athabasca, the next time there's a Speech from the Throne, have some input — at least you're a little bit colourful. Are you factual? No. But are you colourful? Yes, you are. And it kept everybody awake.

And I think that's one of the problems that we had with the Speech from the Throne, and I think you'll see that there are 26 members, including the Liberal on the far side, that will be voting against the Speech from the Throne and be voting for the amendment. But I think there should probably be one person on that side of the House that would be voting for this . . . voting against this very Speech from the Throne. He did it when he

went in to cabinet on Wednesday, and he should stand in his place and vote against it because it was truly a disgrace.

For a province with the potential that this province has, to deliver a vision speech like that vision was, is truly disgraceful. And I think you heard the Premier . . . a lack of vision that was shown in that Speech from the Throne and definitely the Premier expressed it.

As our leader had mentioned a couple of days ago when he replied to the Speech from the Throne — and it's really a fitting line for this NDP government — you never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. That was an opportunity. Going into the next election within a few months, I would hope, if they can screw up the courage, if they could screw up the courage, it would have been an excellent time to lay out a true vision for what they see this province being in the next four years, eight years, or ten years.

But instead I would say three-quarters of this speech was looking back on past programs, some that were failed. It was really quite interesting that she didn't mention the venture into SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company). They looked at so many other programs of the past, they sure could have mentioned that one. And I think that could have used up 30 minutes of the 55 minutes of the Speech from the Throne.

But they failed to take the opportunity that the Speech from the Throne is truly set out to do. It's to set a future for the province, to look into that crystal ball and see where your province is going to be in the next four years, eight years, or ten years, and it wasn't done, Mr. Speaker. It was really quite a speech that looked at the past. And that's about all it did look at, was the past, and very little into the future, Mr. Speaker.

The one piece that the Speech from the Throne talked about was our future is wide open. They talked about that a couple of times. And I want to talk a little bit about my impression on The Future is Wide Open campaign. I had the opportunity of attending the kickoff at the Regina Centre of the Arts in, I believe it was in August or some time in the summertime, where they kicked off this campaign and there was lots of glitz and lots of hype. And you know when I responded to that, I thought that is one thing that the province needs is better promotion outside of our borders to let people know what we have to offer in this province.

But it was interesting as the whole campaign was rolled out and the majority, the first majority amount of money that was spent was spent right here in Saskatchewan. I believe the first three-quarters of the budget was spent right here in Saskatchewan, which really goes against the whole point of explaining to the rest of Canada what we have to offer in Saskatchewan.

But then it was interesting as the Premier went on his tour to different provinces . . . And I was quite interested in following the one tour to Calgary, I believe it was, or Edmonton — Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. And unfortunately for the government, they happened to have a camera there and they panned the audience and showed how many people out of a city of how many — a million people in Edmonton — how many

people from the chamber of commerce came out to see our Premier, the member from Riversdale I should say, the member from Riversdale speak to the chamber of commerce in Edmonton. It was a disgrace. I would say there was maybe 16 to 20 people there and when I looked across the audience, I noticed a number of people that were the entourage with the Premier.

So when you hear them talking about The Future is Wide Open in the Speech from the Throne, I would agree that the future's wide open. And people in this province believe that the future's wide open because they believe that there's an election within the next six to eight months. And that's what they believe why the future's wide open in this province. They can definitely see a change in government and that is what they're looking at this campaign as stating: our future's wide open because we're within a year of the next provincial election.

It was interesting when the Premier . . . And I talked to a number of people in Calgary and Alberta after, a number of friends, as I think every one of us in this House on this side and especially on that side as well have family, friends, relatives that are living in Alberta. So if you want to talk to any of the people there about what they heard about the future's wide open and what they thought of the campaign — they thought there's nothing wrong with promoting the province and we'd love to come back to the province, but what has changed? Has anything changed in this province?

These people have left Saskatchewan for a reason. They've left Saskatchewan because they weren't happy with the job opportunities, the tax structure and, frankly in some cases, the government that's in place. And they left the province and they're living in Alberta. Then you've got the Premier going out there saying, come on back. And they're saying, what have you changed? Has anything changed? Are there a whole lot more job opportunities in the province than when we left? And frankly the answer is no.

You know the government stated in the 1999 election campaign — and it was a lofty goal — they're going to create 33,000 new jobs. And you ask the government how they're doing compared to the 1990 level of where they're at now. People in other provinces have looked at that and said, is the opportunity in the province, is the future wide open in the province? And frankly many of them are saying no, it isn't. Will it be? Well they sure hope it will be.

There are people over and over again that I talk to that are looking forward to moving back to this province. They love the province but they just didn't find the opportunity was here, the tax structure was here, so they've moved to what you'd call greener pastures. And hopefully if the government, if the NDP government decides to call an election within the next six months or eight months or even a month, which it could do, there will be a change in government. And so many of those people will be coming back into Saskatchewan because they'll see some hope and some prosperity. They'll see some optimism of what this province can be. They'll see some change in regulation and labour legislation, see a lot of change that will attract people back into Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, every year in through the wintertime, and I speak

of this every time I reply to the Speech from the Throne, but I have a number of communities in my constituency that of course I can't have an office in each one so through the winter I rent space in pretty much every town throughout my constituency. I rent space in the senior centre, the community hall, and I do a mail-out in the area and have anybody to come in and have a coffee and talk about the issues that they're facing within their rural communities, on the farm, wherever, come in and discuss, I guess the way things are in Saskatchewan, the way things are in politics.

And it was really interesting over the last three years. Pretty much every time I went out, you'd come up with specific issues. You know, property tax was a big issue, the education portion on property tax was a big issue and they'd say, well it hasn't been addressed. It was addressed for two years and then that funding was taken away. It was kind of a bandage on a bad cut and the bandage has been taken off and now the property tax, the education portion is still there.

They talk about health care and they talk about their highways. That had been the conversation over the last three years. But it was really interesting this year, Mr. Speaker, that the conversation changed. When I went to the various communities and invited people in, the one question that was asked over and over and over again is, when is the next election? I don't think . . . I'd be very interested to get an honest answer from people on that side if they don't get that question continually when they're out. I know members on our side continually are asked, when is the next election?

And people don't ask when the next election is if they're satisfied with what's going on. People don't ask when the next election is if they're happy with the performance of the government. Now the member from Regina South says he doesn't get asked because I think they're afraid to say, you know, when is the next election because you're going to be gone. You know, so maybe that's just the true politeness of Saskatchewan people, that they wouldn't be asking the member from Regina South when the next election is because then they would know when his retirement date would be, retirement date from politics.

But, Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming question that we see throughout the province is, when is the next election? And I think it was pretty typical in the Battleford-Cut Knife by-election that just happened a week ago when people in that constituency voted 65 to 66 per cent to re-elect the Sask Party candidate. But the percentage went way up.

And look at the turnout in that area. It was a . . . You know, compared to the Saskatoon Fairview turnout which, you know, is really sad to see that low of a turnout in any electoral process. Thank heavens in Battleford-Cut Knife they felt that there has to be a change in government. They were glad to re-elect another Sask Party candidate.

But it shows the sentiment throughout rural Saskatchewan, especially in many, many small towns, that they are looking for a change in government because they believe their future is wide open but not under an NDP government. They believe their future is wide open after the next election when the Saskatchewan Party forms the government.

Mr. Speaker, we've been talking for the last year and a half, two years, about the plan that we have put out. And it's interesting when I hear members on that side speak about the Sask Party and the fact that we don't have any plan. We've laid out a lot of our plan for the future. They just choose not to read it and that is too bad. They like to fearmonger. They like to continually talk about oh, the Sask Party's going to do this and the Sask Party's going to do that. They have no documentation. It's pure fearmongering and that's what they do very, very well. And it spreads throughout the province and, fortunately, most people realize it not to be factual.

But you know, any time they get into a bind, any time they get into a bind, their defence is oh, but the Sask Party will do this and the Sask Party will do that. Well the Sask Party is not going to do 90 per cent of what the NDP says we're going to do. They mislead the public over and over and over again.

Now it's not necessarily misleading the public like the SPUDCO issue which they misled the public for six years. This has only been going on for the last two or three years that they're misleading. With SPUDCO, they misled for six years.

So is it above this government to mislead the public on facts? Not a bit. And I think the public has to realize when you hear members like the last member that spoke from Athabasca talking about the Saskatchewan Party's going to privatize this and they're going to chop that, and we're going to do this, is absolutely misleading. Identical to what happened with SPUDCO in this province over the last six years, Mr. Speaker.

We in the Saskatchewan Party have a, as they would say, the king of slogans over there and they're blaming that on us. We are going to grow this province by 100,000 people in the next 10 years, Mr. Speaker, and we have a plan set out to do that. Now they choose not to read past the slogan — they choose not to read past the slogan — but there is a plan to grow the population by 100,000 people. And it is very, very evident — very evident.

And as we go through the debate on the Throne Speech and the budget, each critic area is going to be talking about what will be happening in their critic area. Our leader yesterday, or the day before, in his reply to the Speech from the Throne, laid out a number of initiatives that we have talked about for the last three years but this NDP government chose not to listen. He talked about lowering the small-business tax to zero in our mandate. He talked about personal exemptions. He talked about a number of things that are prohibitive to growth in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Now unfortunately they choose not to follow that or listen to it or read it, so what we'll do is we'll enunciate it through our replies to the Speech from the Throne over the next week or two weeks on what needs to be done in this province for growth. Because I don't think there could be anybody on either side of this House that should argue the key to the success of this province is growth. Without growth we are going to be left behind — further behind than we already have been in this province.

It's interesting — we talked about the 100,000 people in 10 years, and they'll say well, it's a slogan and it can't be done or

whatever — it was interesting to get the member from Regina Wascana Plains on the record and saying, it's just can't be done; it's statistically unachievable. Is that what government believes is the potential for this province, that we can't be average with the rest of Canada? Is that what you believe? Is that what you believe?

And the member from Saskatoon says well we're . . . but opposition is holding them up. Well I guess if exposing SPUDCO is holding them up from growing the province, I guess if having them to reverse their decision on long-term health care fees last session is holding them up, I guess if giving them some good suggestions on labour legislation is holding them up, we're guilty — guilty as charged. We're holding up the growth of this province, Mr. Speaker.

I think what we need is this government to turn up the courage, call an election so that a plan can be put forward for growth in this province.

(12:45)

A hundred thousand people over 10 years. And the members on the government side are saying, it can't be done. It can't be done and it's just a slogan. Mr. Speaker, it has to be done. There is absolutely no option. With a Saskatchewan Party government it will be done because it has to be done. The success of this province is reliant on the growth of our province, Mr. Speaker.

We've talked about a number of initiatives . . . and the member from Greystone is hollering, is asking across the way, what is our plan? Did you listen to our leader's speech the other day when he talked about getting rid of some of the taxes on growth? Have you tried that? You know, you've tried it in one sector. You've tried it in one sector. Listen to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Just a little reminder to the exuberant member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to give one example, through you to the members opposite, why a tax on growth is prohibitive. Give the example of the film tax credit which we pass every year in this province. And how has it done? How has it done in the film industry?

Well let's extrapolate that over many industries in this province. Let's extrapolate on the capital tax, the capital tax because it's one of the most prohibitive taxes for growth in the province and we're one of the highest ones in Canada. Try that one. And then you say, well, there's no plan. Have you tried those two initiatives? Try them.

They've finally worked on . . . Through the Chair to the members opposite, they've finally got the issue on the film tax credit, but there are so many more. I mean it's like, yes, that works, but how come we don't try it through the rest of the economy? There are so many others. And they talk about the oil and gas and different things. Let's try it overall, universally. Let's try, instead of cherry-picking and picking winners and losers — what this government is absolutely famous for — let's try it over the whole economy and see growth in this province.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest deterrents to

growth in this province has been the fact of the NDP government. People across the nation, through the Americas, through the States, across Europe, look at Saskatchewan as an unfriendly place to invest large capital. They truly do. Because what happens is so often they get into a business and what comes along is a Crown corporation will say, Jeez, that looks like something pretty good to get into, they seem to be doing okay, well let's start competing or taking over. And that happens over and over again, Mr. Speaker. SecurTek and a number of different issues have said to this government that they cannot compete against their very tax dollar.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. All members will have an opportunity, I'm sure, to make their excellent speeches. Right now, I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's funny how you hit a nerve when you start talking about government competing against business throughout the province. And that is the very reason why business is not investing within this province, Mr. Speaker. And they all get revved up and they're defending the whole fact that government is supposed to be in the business of doing business.

We truly believe that if a government got out of the business of being in business and set up a structure and a climate for business to invest in this province, then you'll see true growth. You'll see true growth in this province because you'll attract business that doesn't have to compete against its own tax dollar.

The Saskatchewan Party has a plan for that. They keep saying, what's your plan, what's your plan? And then we tell the plan and, oh no, you can't do it. We've been investing, they're saying, we've been . . . the government has been investing in business and that is why we are doing so well in Saskatchewan, that's why the growth has been so huge in the province over the last 10 years, 15 years, or 30 years. And it doesn't matter which stripe of government it is — it has been the NDP, and it has been the Conservatives, and it's been the NDP, and it's been the Liberals. And how have we done so far, Mr. Speaker? How has the province grown so far? Well it hasn't, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government cannot come to grips with the fact that their investment, government investment — taxpayers' investment — drives private industry investment out of this province. It has for years; it will continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, if government investment was such a great idea, why doesn't the Alberta government own oil . . . all the oil industry? They don't. They allow private business to come in. They set up the climate, the tax structure that asks private business to come in.

It's interesting, the member hollers across — from Moose Jaw North — and he's saying, how does rural telephones work in Alberta? You mean they can't communicate in rural Alberta? You mean there are no telephones in rural Alberta? You know, it's a red herring for these people to keep saying that if it wasn't for SaskTel or SaskPower, if we couldn't have had a SaskTel in Alberta, then they would have had rural telephone service. It's absolutely ridiculous, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to think that there is no rural telephone service in Alberta is absolutely ludicrous, ludicrous, Mr. Speaker. And to think that you'd have to have a Crown corporation to provide that is even more ludicrous. Private industry can handle stuff like that. And they do handle that type of industry all over the world, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know they are hollering the glories of SaskTel. I have a number of areas in my constituency when they put the phone up to their ear and try and get cell service, they're not doing very well with that either. SaskTel Mobility with their digital, which is a great idea, has cut the range so greatly.

I've got people . . . You know one of the best commercials that I've seen on TV is when the guy runs with his phone and puts it up to the barbed wire fence. And I mean that's what's happening in rural Saskatchewan right now trying to get service — because there is no service.

And you can have the member from Moose Jaw North espouse the virtues of how well phone service is in rural Saskatchewan, but I'd ask him to come out to, hey, let's say Francis, 30 minutes out of the capital city of Regina, and make a phone call. I'd ask you to come and do that and see what type of cellphone service you have.

You don't . . . I mean all of the members, through you, Mr. Speaker, to come out to rural Saskatchewan. Don't just go up and down No. 11 Highway and don't just go up and down No. 1 Highway. Come out on 33 Highway and stop at the junction of 33 and 35 and see what type of cell service those members would have, Mr. Speaker, because there is none. There is none, Mr. Speaker.

So the whole attitude towards business in this province has been lacking for decades. And when we talk about growing the population by 100,000 people over the next 10 years, we talk about attracting business which this government and governments prior to have never done because they've always put taxpayers' dollars in to compete against the very dollar that those people are bringing in and will then have to pay tax to and give the, give the government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we're getting close to the time of adjournment. I have many more things that I want to talk about when we come back on Monday. And I'll get into our whole labour legislation and why business . . . and why small business and large business is not attracted to Saskatchewan because some of our labour legislation that we have in place. And I'll be very glad to start Monday morning, Monday afternoon, with our whole labour platform of what we're talking about as far as labour legislation which will help grow the province over the next 10 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:55.

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