



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

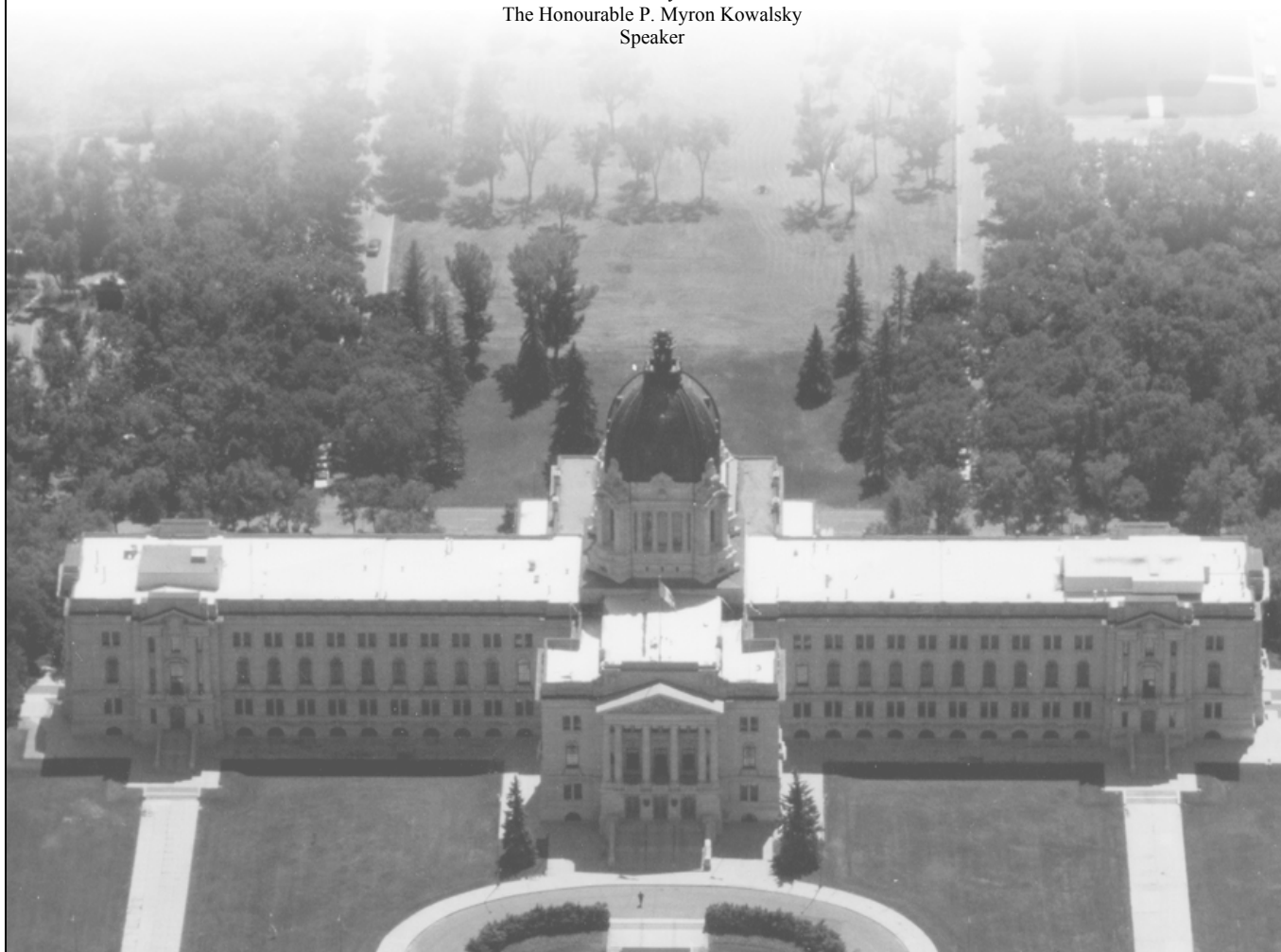
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantefoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of citizens from around the province, I would like to present a petition regarding the expansion of the PST (provincial sales tax) on to restaurants meals. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendations to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed from people from Lipton, Fort Qu'Appelle, Cupar, Dysart, Regina — many, many signatures, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I have a petition to present on behalf of people very concerned about the possible expansion of PST. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by people from Torquay, Estevan, and Bromhead.

I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise on citizens concerned about the potential expansion of the provincial sales tax. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, came from the junction service in Dafoe and has signatures of people from across Saskatchewan. And I am pleased to present on their behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions today with citizens concerned about PST being applied to restaurant meals. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

And, Mr. Speaker, we'd be here quite some time if I read where all these signatures were from, but they're from across the entire province as well as Manitoba and Alberta.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are concerned about the government's lease policy for Crown land. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

And this petition is signed by residents of Minton and Gladmar.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present from the citizens concerned about the expansion of the PST to include restaurant meals. This petition comes from the newest restaurant in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency and contains over 700 names from one restaurant alone.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax and to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Signed by the citizens of northeast Saskatoon, including the neighbourhoods of Erindale, Arbor Creek, Forest Grove, Silver Springs, Sutherland, and University Heights. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise with a petition from citizens that are worried about a tax being placed on their food. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by good folks of my community of Glentworth, Mankota, Woodrow, McCord, Wood Mountain, and Assiniboia.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by many citizens of Saskatchewan. And they're all restaurant owners, and they are concerned with the government's proposal to tax the food. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please don't tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Spiritwood, Melfort, Glenbush, Shell Lake, Mont Nebo, Leask, P.A. (Prince Albert), and a whole raft of signatures.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition dealing with a tax, PST, on food.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to

Grade 12 Education recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Hanley, Kenaston, and Dundurn.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens concerned about increasing PST on food. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

And is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Langham, Asquith, and Wilkie.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of the people of Carrot River Valley who are opposed to the expansion of the tax on restaurant food, Mr. Speaker. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have petitions that are signed by the good folks of Hudson Bay.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens from west central Saskatchewan worried about increases to the provincial sales tax. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to oppose the increase to the provincial sales tax as it will be devastating to the business sector, food industry, and population of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Kindersley, Brock, Eston, and Mantario.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens that are concerned about the water level in the Qu'Appelle lakes. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to do everything in its power to work with the First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water levels of the Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal and end the economic harm that this dispute has caused.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, all come from the community of Fort Qu'Appelle.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the citizens of Saskatoon Southeast, Saskatoon Sutherland, and Saskatoon Eastview who are concerned about the proposed tax on restaurant meals. I read the prayer from that:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to do with the expansion of the PST on restaurant foods. Mr. Speaker, there's got to be between 3 and 4,000 signatures here. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from all over eastern Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition that was collected in the community of Lucky Lake and it is from citizens who are strongly opposed to the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to implement a regressive new 7 per cent tax on restaurant meals. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, the majority of the signatures on this petition of several pages are from Lucky Lake, although there are signatures from Dinsmore, Birsay, Beechy, Kindersley, Eatonina. There are even people here from Saskatoon who want to be represented on this petition. I am pleased to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the potential of the expansion of the PST. The prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the PST to include restaurant meals.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the communities of Waldeck, Orkney, Success, and the great city of Swift Current.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition today concerning the possible expansion of sales tax to restaurant meals. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this document is signed by individuals from the communities of Gull Lake, Tompkins, Herbert, and many other areas such as Frontier and places I haven't even heard of in the province, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

The Speaker: — And I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, to present a petition regarding the potential tax on restaurant foods, reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from the communities of Candiac; Montmartre; Sintaluta; Moose Jaw; Calgary, Alberta; Indian Head, Regina, and many other communities.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received.

A petition concerning funding for the Unity and district seniors' lodge project;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 47, 48, 49, and 63.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 13 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: what are the names of the people drawn to receive big game licences, including mule deer, white-tailed deer, antelope, elk, and moose for the year 2003?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have the similar question, the same question for every year back to 1991.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 13 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: in the year 2000 what was the total cost of office renovations for the Workers' Compensation Board including design, labour, furniture

purchases or rentals, and art purchases or rentals?

(13:45)

And, Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for 2001, 2002, and 2003.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 13 ask the government the following question:

To the SPMC minister: how much money was spent in 2003-2004 budget year for decorative art purchases in government office buildings and Crown corporation buildings?

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 13 ask the government the following question:

To the Justice minister: who is the Chair of the Provincial Mediation Board for tax enforcement as well as the members of the board? Further to this, what are the official board policies when it comes to handling tax enforcement cases in a timely manner?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of the Assembly, it's a pleasure today to introduce Dysart resident, Kathleen Knoblauch, who is joining us. I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome her here to her Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Wascana Lake Celebration

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday afternoon, thousands of people gathered to celebrate the successful excavation of Wascana Lake, also known as the big dig. It was a celebration of the lake's history and promising future and demonstrated true Saskatchewan spirit.

Mr. Speaker, next to our wonderful Legislative Building, Wascana Lake is the signature feature of one of the largest urban parks in North America. It origins trace back to the early 1900s when it began as a reservoir fed by Wascana Creek. Over the years, Wascana Lake has become a major scenic attraction for the city of Regina as well as the entire province. From its

picturesque views to its surrounding pathways, the lake lends itself to many cultural festivities and annual events.

Sunday's celebration allowed people to have the opportunity to walk on the lake bed where they captured the view from about 15 feet down. Many people took home a sample of the excavated earth as a token of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I know the entire province takes great pride in its capital. Working together, our community has preserved and enhanced a unique park setting that will be a lasting legacy for generations to come.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating everyone at Broda and Dominion Construction companies for braving 76 days in one of Saskatchewan's coldest winters, and thank you to all the people involved in the big dig. Congratulations on a job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Visitor's Observations of Question Period

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Coming into this session as a new member, I was of the mind that as elected members we must be respectful of all of our constituents, no matter their concerns or politics. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I was disturbed by the lack of respect demonstrated by members opposite in the Assembly last week.

On Friday, Marilyn Mihalicz came to the legislature to tell us the story of her husband Bob, who has been waiting 16 months for cancer treatment. Marilyn sat in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, to hear how the NDP (New Democratic Party) government would respond to her concerns.

Marilyn came desperate to get some answers as to why the man she has been with for over forty years should have to wait so long. Then while the Health minister responded to her concerns, Mrs. Mihalicz noticed the member from Regina South heckling across the way. The fact that a member of this Assembly would heckle when a serious issue like this is being raised is beyond belief.

Marilyn Mihalicz was even more offended by the fact that the member from Regina South — the one heckling — was her very own MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly). The people of this province who travelled to this Assembly to raise their concerns, sometimes from great distances, deserve more than that. Mr. Speaker, our actions must reflect our words, especially when they impact people. I believe the members opposite owe Marilyn and her husband an apology.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Aboriginal Education and Training Partnership in Saskatoon

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I want to talk today about a new partnership that was recently formed between the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the Saskatoon Public School Division, and the province. This agreement will play a significant role in stimulating Aboriginal employment and participation in Saskatchewan. Together the Saskatoon Tribal Council and the school division will encourage youth to finish high school and pursue education and training.

This partnership also aims to increase the number of Aboriginal employees within the school division. Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing segment of Saskatchewan's population. Our young people are the future of this province, and partnerships such as this provide them with the opportunities to be leaders of tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, it is everyone's responsibility to create a supportive community in which Aboriginal youth can and do flourish.

The Saskatoon Tribal Council has been forming integral partnerships with the Aboriginal community to build stronger relationships. Together, the Saskatoon Public School Division and the Tribal Council are working to ensure that our workforce is representative of the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Saskatoon Tribal Council and the Saskatoon School Division for their efforts to increase opportunities for Saskatchewan's Aboriginal youth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Eatonia and Mantario Lions Clubs' Anniversaries

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to travel to my hometown of Eatonia with my wife, at the celebration of the Eatonia Lions Club 50th anniversary and the Mantario Lions Club 50th . . . or 25th anniversary, rather.

We had a lovely dinner — beef of course — and a wonderful program. The Master of Ceremonies was our local reeve for the two communities involved, Mr. Joe Guidinger, reeve of the RM (rural municipality) of Chesterfield. We had presentations from the president of the Eatonia Lions, Mr. Kent Schurman, and from the Mantario Lions, Mr. Jim Cridland.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, as the Eatonia Lions Club was the sponsor for the Mantario Lions Club, and between the two of them the clubs have built community halls, a swimming pool in Eatonia, and helped out with many functions. We wish to express our appreciation to all the Lions province-wide, and to these two clubs in particular, and wish them many years into the future. And I'd ask all the members to join me in that appreciation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Cumberland Constituents Take Part in the World Summit on the Information Society

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, recently two students from Churchill High School in La Ronge in my constituency of Cumberland were invited to take part in the World Summit on the Information Society. This conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland to discuss the global impact of the information and communications technology revolution.

Delegates included heads of state, leaders from the private industry, governments, and non-government organizations. Mr. Speaker, the two students, Amy Lafontaine and Amy Ross, spoke with delegates in Geneva, from La Ronge as part of a video conference about on-line learning. The students fielded questions about their experience with on-line learning and also showed delegates a video they had shot and edited about their home town of Hall Lake. They also explained to a senator from Thailand what long johns are.

Mr. Speaker, as one of the students said of the video conference, we wanted to show how technology influences small native communities and how it benefits schools.

Mr. Speaker, the students' participation in this conference speaks very well of the province's young people and of our education system that uses all the tools available to ensure the best possible education for our youth. I'm sure all my colleagues will join me in congratulating Amy Ross and Amy Lafontaine for representing themselves, their communities, and their province so well at this world summit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm-River Watrous.

Loreburn-Kenaston Peewees Win Provincial Title

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend saw a very successful 12-and-under hockey team based in the towns of Loreburn and Kenaston score through to victory, winning the Saskatchewan Peewee Provincial Championship.

The team, made up of players from the communities of Loreburn, Elbow, Hawarden, and Kenaston, overwhelmed the team from Fox Valley, winning the two-game playoff total by scores of 15-4 and 11-2.

This powerful team is coached by Hawarden-area farmer and store owner, Murray Friend, who along with Greg Martins and Darrin Norrish led the team to an almost perfect record in the win column this winter. The top three scorers were Dillon Friend, Jason Boyle, and Jesse Oullette, while Riley Erlacher and Jesse Peddle alternated effectively in goal. Coach Friend also added that the five Atom players who came up to join the team did very well helping the team to win.

Once again we see a shining example of rural communities pulling together towards team building. I would ask that all the members of the House join me in congratulating the Loreburn-Kenaston Peewees on their successful season.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Call Centre for Saskatoon

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan had one of the fastest growing economies in Canada in the 1990s.

Last year, Bank of Montreal, CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce), Conference Board of Canada, Scotiabank, and Royal Bank all placed Saskatchewan either first or second in terms of fastest real economic growth in Canada, and we're forecast to be near the top again this year. And yet there are those who continue to perpetuate negative and destructive myths about the province's economy and business climate. Thankfully, business people know the truth.

Mr. Speaker, GS Services, a company based out of Houston, Texas, announced last week, after taking a good, hard look at a variety of Canadian cities, that Saskatoon would be the location of the company's first telecentre outside of the United States. This facility will eventually have 250 to 275 full-time equivalent staff.

Company officials praised the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority for their professionalism in working with the company as it assessed Saskatoon's advantages — advantages such as a large pool of skilled labour, competitive wages and building rents, and a strong telecommunications infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all the good people at the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority for a job well done. And I thank the executives of GS Services for ignoring the negative myths and recognizing Saskatoon and Saskatchewan as a great place to do business.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Surgical Waiting Lists

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Earlier today I introduced members of the Assembly to Kathleen Knoblauch. Kathleen is 60 years old. She and her husband live in Dysart, where Kathleen serves as treasurer for the Dysart community recreation association. She's an active member of the Golden Years Club and her local Anglican Church auxiliary — well as active as she can be anyway, Mr. Speaker, with two painful knees, both of which are in desperate need of surgery, surgery that Kathleen has been waiting for since March 2001.

Mr. Speaker, Kathleen's life and health have been deteriorating for three long years while she waits, like thousands of others, on the longest waiting lists in the Dominion of Canada right here in the province of Saskatchewan. And so the question to the Premier on her behalf is: when is it Kathleen's turn? How much

longer should she have to wait for her surgery?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we're always concerned when patients end up waiting longer than they should, and that's why we've been working hard to develop the first in Canada, a surgical waiting list registry that will actually deal with the issues that the member opposite has raised. And what we are doing is making sure that we track everybody who requires surgery and make sure that they get to the surgery in a reasonable time. That's why we announced the target time frames a week ago, and we're going to continue to do that work and make sure that we have a very good system for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would expect that people like Kathleen will accept the fact that the government is introducing measures to monitor waiting lists. What they want, Mr. Speaker, is for the government to outline a plan to shorten them, to do something about waiting lists in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, after she waited on . . . after Kathleen waited on the list for three years, she contacted the Saskatchewan Party MLA for Last Mountain-Touchwood because, in her own words, enough is enough. Enough pain, enough waiting, and enough excuses. She's waited 31 months. Her knees have deteriorated to the point where last October her doctor told Kathleen that she now needs a total kneecap replacement, and she was placed on a new waiting list. And to make matters worse, she's been told by the Regina health region that she will have to wait at least another 15 months.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain to Kathleen Knoblauch why she must wait over four years for her surgery?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we will deal with the setting up a system that will provide the care. What we know is that in hip replacements, Saskatchewan and Alberta lead the nation in the number of hip replacements that are done for our population. As it relates to knees, we're in the fourth highest category in the . . . or the fourth highest province in the country that does this kind of work.

We would need to continue to work and deal with specific patients. Our target time frame that we announced last week has a goal of having nobody wait longer than 18 months, but it will take us some time to get to that overall goal. It will take resources, it'll take concentration of effort, and it will take reallocation of money in this province to go to those places where the public has identified that they want some more work to be done. And that's the part that we all have to work together with, is to figure out how we reallocate our money.

(14:00)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it would be very difficult for Kathleen and others in her situation to hear that the government's answer to this, especially to those like Kathleen who have now waited 31 months, can expect perhaps, potentially, after this initiative that the minister just confirmed is introduced, they'll wait another 18 months, in addition, in her case, to the 31 months that she has already waited.

Mr. Speaker, we know from Kathleen's case that her doctor has put her on a priority list. He is away on training, on a training program however, and will not return to the operating room until June. By then the Regina Health Region says there will be a backlog of one year before Kathleen's name gets to the top of the list. So Kathleen waits while her health continues to deteriorate and the pain grows worse with each and every passing day.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, why has the NDP allowed the health care system to deteriorate so in the province of Saskatchewan to the point that Kathleen Knoblauch and thousands of people like her are forced to suffer and wait for up to four years — four years — for the surgery she needs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, I'll say once again, that as it relates to hips we're tied for first in the country; as it relates to knees, we're tied for fourth. Our surgeons and our regional health authorities, where the surgeries take place, are working very hard to provide as many of these surgeries as possible.

But what we also have to do is look at how we can provide more service for people like this, and we're going to be taking a very hard look at our whole system and seeing how we can reallocate the resources that we have so that we can provide these kinds of services. But that means that all of us will have to work together as we try to make decisions about how we do that.

So I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize that we have a certain amount of money to work with and that that's the resources that we have. And we will continue to provide the care that we can, but we have to make sure we do it in a long-term sustainable way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, as we ask these questions on Kathleen's behalf, the Premier has been listening; he has been sitting quietly listening I am sure to the case that's been presented. And so, Mr. Speaker, maybe it's time for the Premier to stand up on this particular question. Specifically, specifically, Mr. Speaker, that he should perhaps be willing to stand up and apologize to people like Kathleen for the state of health care in the province of Saskatchewan because it is his government's responsibility to provide that, to provide the health care that we

need in the province.

Maybe he will stand up and apologize. Maybe there will be an admission by members opposite that these are more than isolated cases, that these are more than just incidents, that these are part of a pattern of the failing of our health care system in the birthplace of medicare.

And I'd ask through you, Mr. Speaker, for the Premier to do that for Kathleen's case, to explain to her why she has waited this long and to apologize for the state of health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in this province we provide medical services for our citizens no matter what resources that they have. And we do this on a regular basis. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the services that we're able to provide. I'm frustrated that we don't have the national support that we need to provide these kinds of services, but I don't think that anybody in this province should feel bad about the amount of resources that we do put towards health care. But I know that there will still be people that have challenges.

We have almost 100,000 surgeries in this province a year, Mr. Speaker. We end up with people going and getting the care at doctors all the time, and we have to continue to work at that. But I would ask the members opposite to sharpen up their suggestions. Maybe the unelected leader could get one of his policy conferences going to see if some ideas could come up, but I think all of us have to work to find a solution to this problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Registration Fee Increases by Saskatchewan Government Insurance

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister Responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). The minister this morning announced a hike in vehicle registration fees for most Saskatchewan drivers. The rate hikes will generate apparently about \$4.5 million for the General Revenue Fund. This latest move is yet another tax grab by the NDP government desperate to clean up the budget mess that they've created over the last three years.

Mr. Speaker, recently we've learned that the NDP is going to be taxing wiener roasts. We've learned that they're going to be increasing land titles fees. They're threatening to increase the PST in the upcoming budget, and now the NDP is adding a greater tax on drivers. Is this the NDP government's idea of a Wide Open Future, of having the lowest-cost basket of utilities in Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SGI.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well the member is correct. We made that announcement this morning. The rationale behind it, Mr. Speaker, is first of all it's a simplification of a very, very complex system right now that sees five different classes and seven different fee schedules charged in those five classes, Mr. Speaker.

He is also right that it does raise about \$4.5 million annually for the General Revenue Fund. But, Mr. Speaker, the last increase was in 1993, Mr. Speaker, some 11 years ago. Clearly, back when I was minister of Highways some number of years ago, the costs have increased significantly for improving roads. That's part of the rationale, Mr. Speaker. It's to recover some of the costs for fixing our roads.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, this morning's announcement of registration fee hikes at SGI seemed to take particular aim at farm trucks. Under the new program, farm trucks under five axles will see rate increases ranging from \$21 to \$130. Now the NDP's move to target farm trucks suggests that farm trucks are the ones doing the most damage to our roads.

Now this latest hit to the agriculture sector comes after another rate increase in insurance premiums — crop insurance premiums — lengthy droughts . . . or lengthy periods of drought in the Prairies, not to mention BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) and another broken NDP promise when it comes to reducing the education portion of property taxes.

This is another example of the NDP saying one thing, but by its actions telling a completely different story. Can the minister tell this Assembly today, Mr. Speaker, why the NDP is again targeting our farm families when they can least afford it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister for SGI.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again, the majority of farmers that are affected by this will see modest increases in their registration fee charge.

There will be, again the member is correct, there will be a very limited number of farmers who would have — and this gets complex and that's part of the reason for the rebalancing of rates — who drive what I would describe as semi-trailers and are pulling what are described as pup trailers. There are about 100 farmers in the province who will be affected by that. They will see some significant increases.

It is right . . . He is right, I should say, it is a direct reflection of the heavier vehicles causing some of the damage on some of the thin membrane surface roads. But the majority of farmers by far will see only a modest increase in the registration fee, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the heaviest trucks affecting TMS (thin membrane surface) roads in our province aren't even addressed in this particular change. These are farm vehicles of five axles and less.

During last fall's election campaign, the NDP made a promise: to make Saskatchewan the most affordable place to live in the country. Implicit in that promise was the delivery to Saskatchewan residents of the lowest cost basket of utility rates in the country. Now we already know that the NDP haven't been able to keep that particular promise. And it makes one wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP hadn't lost \$17 million on Coachman Insurance in the province of Ontario last year, if Saskatchewan residents would be forced to cough up this additional four point million dollars . . . \$4.5 million in fees this year.

So, to the minister, Mr. Speaker, how will this latest tax on the province's drivers make Saskatchewan the most affordable place in which to live in all of Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister responsible for the Crown Management Board.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I want to indicate to the member is that registration fees are separate from insurance and are not part of the bundle package.

I also want to indicate to the member that we will soon have tabled in the Assembly many of the annual reports for our various Crowns. And I think the member will be quite delighted by the information that'll come forward in terms of Crown profits on behalf of the citizens of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Increase in Government Fees

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm sure the minister would understand that it's still money out of the pockets of the people of Saskatchewan, whether it's a insurance or a fee increase. And, Mr. Speaker, it seems like the only people in the NDP that come up with a new idea are the ones that dream up new taxes, as my colleague already alluded to, Mr. Speaker — the wiener roast tax.

Saskatchewan people are not impressed with this new NDP tax. I'd like to read an e-mail we received this morning. It says, and I quote:

This is, quite frankly, disgusting.

If I'm going to pay \$30 for a fishing licence, then pay \$50 for an annual park fee . . . then pay camping fees — an additional \$3 so I can light a fire to cook my \$80 fish . . . the very least I would expect is a decent road to get there . . . the fees keep going up, and the roads keep getting worse. Why is that?

Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. Why do the fees keep going up and the roads keep getting worse?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — All right, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. On Friday we announced different fees that would be increased in Environment. And one of them was the campfire fee, which was a very important one.

There are some other fees though we want to talk about because I also had some calls on Saturday. I had a senior person, senior fisher, called me and wanted to know about his fishing licence. And it stays the same. As well our daily camping fees stays the same. As well our three-day entry fee stays the same. So we are balancing the interests.

We have some challenges here to make sure people have the best camping experience they have in this province. We're proud of that, and so we think this is a fee, a fair fee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, it's another fee and an increased, an increased burden on the people of Saskatchewan.

Someone asked the minister on Friday what people will be thinking of this summer as they sit around their \$3 campfire? He said they'll be thinking about the unfairness of the equalization form. That was the minister's answer.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government are totally out of touch with reality. This e-mail, this e-mail, tells us what campers are really thinking. It asks the minister this, and I quote:

When was the last time you got into your nice car and drove out to, oh let's say, Lake Defienbaker . . . you have roughly a 100% chance of getting . . . a rock in your windshield . . .

You are taking one of the few things the working poor can afford to do (barely) and making it accessible to fewer and fewer. Shame on you.

Mr. Speaker, how many more times is the NDP going to nail the working poor with tax increases and rate hikes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it was a bit difficult to follow the question. But, Mr. Speaker, with respect to roads. First of all, I mean it's springtime in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and always we are challenged with our roads in Saskatchewan. As a result of a fairly heavy snowpack this year, Mr. Speaker, and extremely cold weather, there will be break up of the pavement.

Mr. Speaker, we have made a significant commitment with respect to roads in our province — nearly \$900 million in the last three years, Mr. Speaker. We made a commitment in the election platform of 1.2 billion over the next four years. Mr. Speaker, we intend to stick to that, Mr. Speaker, and people will see roads continue to improve.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Workers' Compensation Board's Expenditure
on Renovations**

Mr. Dearborn: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the workman's compensation board. How much money has WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) spent on office renovations in the past two years?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, this is a question that the member presented as a written question and it will . . . we will get the information. I don't have it on me right now but it will be answered through the written questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, it was not submitted by the member of Kindersley but by the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood. Mr. Speaker, according . . . and only today. According to a freedom of information request . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order. Okay, the member for Kindersley.

(14:15)

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, according to a freedom of information request submitted by the Saskatchewan Party, WCB spent nearly \$3.3 million in the past two years on office renovations — \$3.3 million, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Health District is cancelling surgeries to save \$200,000. Meanwhile, John Solomon spent 16 times that much fixing up his office.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister justify allowing John Solomon to spend \$3.3 million on office renovations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We actually went through a number of these questions on renovations at the end of last session. And I can tell the member opposite that there was no renovations done to the chairperson's

office, that the renovations were done to address occupational health and safety ergonomic issues and they were done for the office space for the people that work within the Workers' Compensation Board.

And in case the member opposite isn't aware, Mr. Speaker, Workers' Compensation is funded by employer premiums on behalf of their workers. And I don't think employers would think highly if the Workers' Compensation Board put money into the General Revenue Fund which in turn would go to the health districts. And that's something and a division of funding that the member opposite should be well aware of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Think about it, Mr. Speaker — \$3 million on office renovations and the minister said, well that money came from businesses so I guess it's not my problem. That's a million campfires by NDP logic, Mr. Speaker. That's a million campfires by NDP. That's a lot of smoke, Mr. Speaker.

In the past, this government's given us smoke and mirrors. Now they've taxed the smoke away. There's only mirrors left. And the reflection isn't very pretty, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier's looking at it in the state of this government.

Mr. Speaker, we asked WCB to give us a list of the office renovations that they did. And they said it would take 96 hours to compile that information — 96 hours, Mr. Speaker. That's one person working full-time for two and a half weeks just to give us a list of these office renovations.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when the government is talking about raising taxes, at a time when the government is going to be cutting spending and laying off workers, does the minister think it's reasonable for John Solomon to spend \$3.3 million on office renovations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for Workers' Compensation.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm answering the right question. We talked about renovations, smokers, mirrors, a variety of other things. But I will say to the member opposite that if they have a look at the annual reports of WCB, administration costs have come down over the past number of years.

To the member opposite, these renovations were done to accommodate health and safety issues within a building that the WCB has occupied for a number of years. There was issues for ergonomics and health and safety for the offices in that building. These decisions are not made by one person, they are made by the board and they are done when it is appropriate for the business plan of the WCB.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister please table the report from occupational health and safety ordering WCB to undertake \$3.3 million in office renovations.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for Workers' Comp.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, maybe what I should do is send the member opposite some information on occupational health and safety and ergonomics, and the cost when workers are working at a workstation over a number of years doing repetitive motion. I could get into lengthy answers on carpal tunnel and repetitive motion.

But, Mr. Speaker, conscientious employers address the situations in the workplace that are appropriate for that workplace to accommodate workers so that injuries don't occur, Mr. Speaker, and that is something that WCB has done to improve the workplace at their offices.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, today in Saskatchewan hospital emergency rooms are overcrowded and understaffed. Patients lie on gurneys in hallways or in closets for hours at a time. Working conditions are unsafe for doctors, nurses, and patients alike. And the NDP has no money to address these problems.

But somehow, they manage to come with over \$3 million to address safety concerns in John Solomon's office. Mr. Speaker, I understand WCB spent around \$1 million on furniture alone. What on earth was so unsafe about the furniture? What ergonomically could have been the problem? Were there too many sharp corners for Mr. John Solomon to bump into?

Mr. Speaker, how can the NDP spend millions of dollars on office renovations and millions of . . . \$1 million on office furniture for the WCB when doctors, nurses, and patients in ERs (emergency room) all over Saskatchewan are forced to work in unsafe working conditions every day?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for Workers' Compensation.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this is somewhat frustrating that a member opposite who professes such a huge understanding of business within this province would make something so absurd as a request that the WCB should be funding one of the health districts.

Mr. Speaker, the WCB is a stand-alone organization that operates on premiums paid by businesses in this province and, Mr. Speaker, businesses would not think kindly to the member opposite feeling that their premiums should fund other programs that are funded from the General Revenue Fund for

the people of this province.

The WCB provides rehabilitation and benefits and lost wages to workers that are injured on the jobs. That's what employers pay for and that's what they expect, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 12 — The Purchasing Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation).

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 12, The Purchasing Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for SPMC that Bill No. 12, The Purchasing Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Motion's been carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Bill No. 13 — The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 13, The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 13, The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 15.

The Speaker: — Response for question 15 has been tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Morin, seconded by Mr. Borgerson.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I rose to reply to the Speech from the Throne on Friday, I had indicated in my constituency that the major concerns in Last Mountain-Touchwood centred around agriculture, highways, health, and property taxes, Mr. Speaker. And I won't expound on all those issues because I believe there will be an opportunity later on this session to bring forth the concerns of the constituents on some of these areas.

But what I would like to do at this time is take some time to perhaps explain to you, Mr. Speaker, and other members of the Assembly, the impact that education tax on property is having on many farm families, Mr. Speaker.

Part of my constituency received a very unpleasant surprise when they got their tax notices this past year, in that the education portion of their property tax went up some 23 per cent in one year, Mr. Speaker. About a third of the constituency is covered by a school division that found themselves in the unfortunate position of having to increase their mill rate by some 4.2 mills in one year, and as I said, that translated into a huge tax increase.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just recently I was visiting with one of my constituents who had just . . . well he was doing his income tax and was looking over all the bills and invoices that he had to do as far as entering into his farm records and so on, and he took particular note of his tax bill, Mr. Speaker. And this individual and his family, they have what I would say is an average farm

and perhaps slightly larger than an average farm but nothing excessive. It's nowhere near in the 5- or 8- or 14,000-acre area, nowhere near that. But his tax bill for his farm alone, not including his son's, was over \$6,000, Mr. Speaker. I think if you combine the farm that this family unit would cover, their total education portion of their property tax would probably be in the 8 to \$9,000, Mr. Speaker. Now this is a huge tax burden on many of our farm families and this issue needs to be addressed.

I can recall during the last campaign when the Premier, the Leader of the NDP Party, was asked what they were going to do about property taxes. And the response was that this NDP government had commissioned the Boughen Commission to study the issue and that their plan could accommodate whatever that commission recommended.

Well we have since seen the recommendations, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Boughen recognized the seriousness of the problem and has made some recommendations, both on addressing the property tax side of the issue and also on the revenue side.

Now we certainly can support some of those recommendations. Some of the increases in taxes we find not so agreeable, Mr. Speaker, and we certainly, we are waiting with eager anticipation to hear the Minister of Learning's report, Mr. Speaker. And I would assume, Mr. Speaker, he had his chance to enter into the debate and we are all looking after Easter for his solutions to this issue.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would like members in the Assembly to distinguish between . . . Order.

I would like members to distinguish between, you know, a good-natured heckle and a harangue. And the member that's on the floor should have the . . . (inaudible) . . . And I would ask the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood to continue.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I said, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House and certainly all property owners in this province are eagerly awaiting the Minister of Learning's position and his reply to the Boughen Commission, Mr. Speaker.

And this issue, Mr. Speaker, for anyone that has attended both the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) conventions, would realize that this issue is not going away. It's a serious issue that needs to be addressed, Mr. Speaker. And we will see what type of solution this NDP government comes up with.

Mr. Speaker, probably the most single, the single largest issue in my constituency that constituents are concerned with is the sustainability of our health care system, Mr. Speaker. And as we have all seen in the last few days, private citizens are coming forward and raising their health concerns and today we had another example of that with Ms. Knoblauch from Dysart — happens to be a constituent of mine.

And I can say, Mr. Speaker, that this woman has been very patient in waiting her turn for surgical procedures for her operations, but it's gone on far too long, Mr. Speaker. And so in

early January she felt prompted to pick up the phone and call my office and we've been dealing . . . trying to help her weave her way through the system as such, Mr. Speaker.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, this system is failing her and it's failing many other families in this province. We had the example of the Mihalicz family last Friday, Mr. Speaker, and the MacDuff family and . . . or MacDonald family and the Scott family, Mr. Speaker, and numerous other families throughout the province.

(14:30)

These aren't isolated cases, Mr. Speaker. They are, I would suggest, just merely the tip of the iceberg because every day our offices are receiving calls from other citizens who are having similar problems, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, over the lunch hour I received another call which I will be following up later this day, Mr. Speaker.

And what many citizens and constituents are saying, they are saying is . . . can we continue to operate in the future the way we have operated in the past? Is this health care system sustainable? They bring up the Fyke Commission that we had a couple years ago that was supposed to bring forward many of the solutions to the problems and they . . . and has it happened? Has it improved things? I would have to say no, Mr. Speaker, because we certainly are seeing more and more people having to wait longer and longer for health care procedures, Mr. Speaker.

We're at the stage now, Mr. Speaker, where we have family physicians advising their patients to call their MLAs because they have . . . they're at the end of their rope. They see no other way out and . . . as far as helping their patients, Mr. Speaker. Some of our doctors are continuing to be frustrated and leaving the province and leaving us short of specialists, Mr. Speaker.

And what is the answer from this government, from this Minister of Health? Well there's a couple of answers. One, we have a process and we have coordinators and assessors and so on, and we're working on the problem. And the second answer to the health, health care crisis that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker, is that if only the federal government would give us more money we could fix things, Mr. Speaker.

Well I don't know about whether that's . . . how legitimate that position is, Mr. Speaker. There are many demands on the federal government. And granted, the federal government needs to increase its share of funding for health care. There's no doubt about that, but their resources aren't limitless, Mr. Speaker. And we have people in this province, Mr. Speaker, who are looking at the big picture and are saying maybe we have to have another look at this whole situation.

And I'd like to quote a couple of these individuals who have spoken up recently, Mr. Speaker, about the very serious concerns with our health care system. The first individual I'd like to quote, Mr. Speaker, who was speaking on CKOM radio last week is the former premier of this province, a health . . . the former health commissioner, Roy Romanow. And he goes on to say this, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

My position as commissioner has been, and it remains even more staunchly so today, that money alone won't do the job but money with reform can do the job (Mr. Speaker).

And I think there is a lot of truth in that, Mr. Speaker. We need to identify the problems. We have to first admit that there is a problem, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes I don't think this government is ready to admit that. We heard the Minister of Health say last week that code burgundy in our hospitals is an acceptable situation. And health care professionals have spoken out loudly in saying that that is not an acceptable situation, Mr. Speaker.

So we have to first of all admit that there is a problem and then we have to view the problem, not from our views of the past, Mr. Speaker, but we have to look forward and have some vision. And to that extent, Mr. Speaker, there are some serious issues that we need to deal with, Mr. Speaker, not only in this province but nationally.

And in fact what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is initiate a national debate on the sustainability of our health care system in this country, Mr. Speaker. And for the life of me I cannot understand why this NDP government is afraid of that issue and afraid of initiating that national debate in the province where . . . the home of medicare, Mr. Speaker. The only reason that I can think of, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a serious lack of vision on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. And what we need to do is we need to look around this province and recognize some of our visionary thinkers, Mr. Speaker, and listen to what they're saying.

And one of those visionaries of this province, Mr. Speaker, I consider is President Peter MacKinnon of the University of Saskatchewan. And I attended an occasion, Mr. Speaker, here in Regina last month where President MacKinnon was speaking about the state of the University of Saskatchewan. And I would like to quote what he said at that occasion, Mr. Speaker. And I quote, he says:

The question is: what trade-offs are we prepared to make in the interest(s) of taking on a leadership role in a highly competitive national and international environment?

For instance, it may be an unpopular question but I believe it must be asked: are we willing to continue funding the entire health care system from the public purse *at any cost*, including the cost to our society of neglecting higher education?

And, Mr. Speaker, when we have people of the stature of President MacKinnon asking those questions, I think we should listen because I think this is a very serious question that we need to have that public debate. And the constituents of Last Mountain-Touchwood are asking that question almost on a daily basis. Can we continue? Is our health system sustainable in the future, Mr. Speaker? And I certainly don't have that answer, and we need to have that debate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina South asked what side of the debate I would be on. I would be willing to listen to all options, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think those . . . the people on

that side of the House are willing to listen to all the options. They have their political dogma, Mr. Speaker, and they cling to it because they have nothing else, Mr. Speaker. And they're afraid to take a chance and even listen to other options, Mr. Speaker. And that will be their undoing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other things that I would . . . could contribute to this debate and I would hope that sometime we would have this debate, Mr. Speaker. But time is moving on, and I know other members of this House would like to enter into this debate so I would simply state at this time that I will not be supporting the motion, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources, the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise for this debate on the Speech from the Throne that was delivered by the Lieutenant Governor on March 18.

And I want to start out, Mr. Speaker, as others have, by congratulating you on your election by this House as Speaker, and also thanking you and the other officials of the Chamber who do such a fair and diligent job of running this Chamber, which is so important in turn in terms of governing the province of Saskatchewan.

I also would like to congratulate all of my colleagues in the legislature on both sides of the House for being elected, either re-elected or elected the first time to the legislature. And I especially would like to congratulate all of the members on both sides of the House who have been elected for the very first time.

I certainly think it's an honour and a privilege to serve in an elected capacity in our provincial legislature. And it makes us I think remind ourselves that we are very fortunate to live in a stable and peaceful democracy. And we're very fortunate to live in Canada and in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes when we watch the news, and especially when we look at places like Iraq and Afghanistan in the world and we realize that they don't have the same tradition of parliamentary democracy that we do because of our heritage from the British system.

When we watch the chaos, and indeed death, that occurs in countries where they don't have stable democracies and they don't have peaceful and civil societies, it really puts things in perspective I think, and makes us appreciate all of the good things that we have in Canada.

And I must say that even though I, like others, will complain about some of the bad things or the problems we have in our society, and even sometimes our treatment by our federal government which is very distant from Saskatchewan and sometimes insensitive to Saskatchewan needs, I do have to say that we need to, as we recount any difficulties we have, also count our blessings and put things in perspective.

And often when I've had a particularly difficult situation to deal

with in my political life and people come up to me and they say, well how are you doing? And I'll say I'm just fine thank you. And they don't really believe it sometimes and they say, no really how are you? They want you to say how bad things are. And I look at them, Mr. Speaker, and I say, well you know in this world if you have a roof over your head, and you have enough to eat and nobody's shooting at you, you're actually doing pretty good. And we need to remember that in this country and this province we're doing pretty good.

We have some problems to work on. We have people in our society that don't have their fair share of the economic opportunities and the wealth that we have. So we need to work to make sure everybody has a fair share of the bounty that our country and our province offers, but we also need to count our blessings as Canadians and Saskatchewanians.

I want to also, Mr. Speaker, thank the people of Saskatoon Massey Place for electing me as their representative. I actually have represented three constituencies in Saskatoon since my election in 1991. I was first elected for the constituency of Saskatoon Idylwyld which existed for the last three terms of the legislature but now has been abolished. I then represented the constituency of Saskatoon Mount Royal which existed for two terms but it has now been abolished. And now I represent the new constituency of Saskatoon Massey Place.

I actually have never moved my residence and I've managed to live in the middle of my constituency each time but the constituency boundaries have changed. And I must say that that's given me the opportunity to represent quite a large area in Saskatoon, and I certainly have felt honoured and privileged to meet people in Saskatoon whom I represent in the legislature and try to take their concerns to the legislature.

My constituency is comprised of middle-income people, working people and in the main, Mr. Speaker, people that work very hard in their daily lives. And, I think it's fair to say, mainly family people either with grown children or children that are still growing up. But they look to the future because they're always trying to build a better life for their children and grandchildren. They are future-oriented and hard-working people.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that what I like about the Throne Speech is that it also is future looking which is what my constituents want. They want a government that asks how we can improve things for the next generation and move our province forward. And the very title of the Throne Speech was, "Making Saskatchewan Ready for the Next Generation."

And I think that's very appropriate, Mr. Speaker, because it speaks to what things we can do today to prepare the province for the future, but is also speaks to the next generation. And most people in Saskatchewan, going back many generations, ever since . . . well, our official province was founded 100 years ago, but I might say that we have a long history that goes back many thousands of years because Aboriginal people were here before the Europeans came, and they too, I'm sure it would be fair to say, all people throughout the history of the province have always wanted to look toward the next generation, and that's what this Throne Speech does.

And we can, you know, in the debate in the legislature you will hear about this problem or that problem, and certainly we've got our share of problems. But I think we need not just to be concerned about the political problems and issues of the day and how popular or unpopular a particular measure may be, but we need to ask ourselves what steps we need to take to prepare Saskatchewan for tomorrow and for the next generation.

Someone once said that you plant a tree knowing that it is the next generation that will enjoy the shade of the tree. But that doesn't stop you from planting a tree, Mr. Speaker, and in the same way we have to do things today which we believe in the long run will benefit the next generation and build the province for the future. So that is what this Throne Speech does, it sets out a plan for the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I look at the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and I see that under the title of "Making Saskatchewan Ready for the Next Generation," it speaks of implementing the CareerStart program to prepare youth for career opportunities here in Saskatchewan and connect youth to jobs.

I think most people in the province, Mr. Speaker, would think that that is a very positive place for the Throne Speech to start out. How are we going to create opportunities for young people? It establishes Green Teams. Those are teams of young people that will be doing work to build the economy in a sustainable, green way, Mr. Speaker. And certainly young people are in tune with environmentalism and sustainability. And I think increasingly more and more people in the province are as well.

(14:45)

And it speaks to expanding the youth job recruitment plan to include the broader public service and the private sector, Mr. Speaker. Some of the critics of the Throne Speech have said that the Government of Saskatchewan only wants to involve youth through the government sector. That's not correct, Mr. Speaker. The Throne Speech creates an outline and a plan which speaks to retaining youth for jobs in the private sector, in the Crown sector, and in the government itself.

And the main theme of it, Mr. Speaker, is creating more opportunities for young people. And to me that is something that all members of the legislature should embrace as a very positive concept.

What the Throne Speech also speaks to, Mr. Speaker, is to further enhance green power generated by the wind. And SaskPower actually, as our electrical generator, is doing a variety of things to improve the environmental sustainability of power production.

Not only does SaskPower produce power that is reasonably priced, stably priced for our industrial users — which is an important part of building the economy — but they are increasingly doing things, Mr. Speaker, that are good for the environment. GreenPower using wind power is one example, but there are other examples as well. They are using some steam and excess heat from some of our businesses in the

province to cogenerate power — something we haven't done in the past — so that instead of just wasting energy, sending it out to the environment, SaskPower is finding ways to use that energy to build it into our power grid. And I think that's very positive, Mr. Speaker.

The fact that the Throne Speech speaks to the issue of green power sends a positive signal to the province and especially, I think, young people, Mr. Speaker. Taking it back to the theme of recruiting young people to build their careers in Saskatchewan, young people want to know that as we move forward we're going to build the economy, but we also are going to do it in a green and sustainable way. We're going to protect the environment. And I think that's very important.

The Throne Speech also, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the issue of entrenching the principle of public ownership of the Crown utilities in Saskatchewan. And I want to say a word about that because certainly it was a prominent theme in the election campaign and debated at length in the election campaign. It's been debated over the last number of years in this House.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I believe in a mixed economy — the private sector, the co-operative sector, the public sector — but . . . And all of those are part of the engine of Saskatchewan. You need to have a healthy private sector, you need to have a healthy public sector, and a co-operative sector. And there's nothing wrong, Mr. Speaker, in a mixed economy with having public ownership of things like the telephone company, the insurance company, the power company, the gas company. There's nothing wrong with that at all, Mr. Speaker.

These are enterprises that have made money for the people of Saskatchewan and they've provided services at reasonable cost. And that only makes sense. And the fact of the matter is that the people of the province have a long history of public ownership of those utilities. They value the utilities and it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that they do not want to sell those utilities off at fire-sale prices and be left to the tender mercies of just the private sector.

Most people do not believe that if Bell telephone comes in, that Bell telephone is going to provide them with low-cost telephones and provide the kind of service that our neighbours who work at SaskTel provide us with. They don't accept that notion, Mr. Speaker, and neither do I.

Most people do not accept the notion that if you get rid of Saskatchewan Government Insurance, that you're going to have private insurance companies in and providing us with better insurance at lower rates. They simply don't accept that, Mr. Speaker, and neither do I. So I'm going to support the government's initiative to say that we should enshrine in legislation that these basic utilities are going to be kept in public hands.

One of the, I think, very positive aspects of the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, in addition to talking about opportunities for young people and talking about protecting our environment and talking about keeping our Crown corporations in public hands, the speech also talks about introducing a new housing strategy for low-income families.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that this is very important. We know that in terms of having stable families, raising children who will have successful lives, and indeed the very health of people, Mr. Speaker, that having access to one's own home and owning one's own home or being able to at least rent quality housing at a reasonable rate is crucially important.

And one of the things the government has on its agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne, is to do more about housing for low-income people, and I think that's very positive.

I also want to say that the Throne Speech speaks to introducing compassionate care benefits for people caring for gravely ill family members. And I think that's something that is overdue, Mr. Speaker. We all know of situations where a member of one's family is gravely ill and people need to take time off sometimes to care for that family member. And it may be the last opportunity they have to spend much time with that family member. And I think it's only appropriate that it's on the government's agenda to allow people to take that kind of compassionate care leave.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word about improving the safety and security of our neighbourhoods. That's a priority of government. It's certainly a concern of people in our communities. We heard it a lot on the doorstep in the election.

The Minister of Justice has started actually by recently proclaiming The Pawned Property (Recording) Act, which will require items of property that are brought in to pawnshops to be immediately reported to the police so that the police in very real time can see what has been stolen and what is being introduced into pawnshops. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that while many items in pawnshops are not stolen, many items that are stolen go through the pawnshop system, and it's our hope that this new legislation will help the police in terms of preventing theft and preventing break and enters.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that one of the members opposite, I believe the member for Indian Head-Milestone, says that this is a very boring topic. Most people, Mr. Speaker, do not think it's a boring topic. Most people believe that the government should take action to deal with pawned property, and also they would support what the Minister of Justice is going to do in this House, which is to introduce legislation to increase safety and security of neighbourhoods.

And, Mr. Speaker, I spoke about this last week but I do want to comment on because I think it bears repeating — the fact that the Throne Speech also speaks to the issue of building a stronger Saskatchewan and a stronger Canada by tackling fair equalization, health care, and the fiscal imbalance in co-operation with the Council of the Federation and the national government.

And I would say this, Mr. Speaker, that Confederation is not treating Saskatchewan fairly. That is a simple fact, Mr. Speaker, that is borne out not only by our own analysis in government, but it is borne out by independent analysis by people like Professor Thomas Courchene of the Queen's University.

And I'd like to just say to my friends in the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that they may laugh about the equalization question;

they may laugh when the Government of Saskatchewan rises and says that we should get a fair deal from Ottawa. But I have to tell them that the people I talk to in this province of various political persuasions believe, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan is not getting a fair deal from Ottawa. And this government is standing up to Ottawa and saying we demand a fair deal. We're doing that, Mr. Speaker.

And I must say to the members of the opposition, who sometimes find this topic amusing it seems and sometimes like to just say that, well whatever problems there are, it has nothing to do with equalization, when you're shortchanged, Mr. Speaker, by approximately \$300 million per year in equalization payments from Ottawa, that's a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker. Because day after day we hear the members of the opposition say that they want tax relief for this or they want increased spending over here — never mind that the equation of lower taxes and increased spending doesn't always add up. But I would say to them that it would be much easier for the Government of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the people, to do those sorts of things if we had a fair deal out of equalization.

And I guess to . . . I spoke on this at length last week in the Legislative Assembly, but I would say to the House, Mr. Speaker, and to the public, that all you really have to do to realize that Ottawa is shortchanging Saskatchewan is consider that in the upcoming fiscal year Manitoba will probably get about 1.2 billion — that's with a B — billion dollars in equalization payments from Ottawa, and Saskatchewan may get something like a \$120 million, Mr. Speaker.

And most fair-minded people realize that Saskatchewan and Manitoba are similar provinces with a similar population and a similar economy. And when we see Manitoba getting \$1 billion more every year from Ottawa, we know that something is not right, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's very important that all members of this House from both sides join together on this issue to say to Ottawa that we want a fair deal.

And I want to say to the members opposite that I wrote all of the members of Parliament for Saskatchewan, of all political parties, just on Friday of this week, and faxed them a letter and some information about this issue. And I did get a call this morning from one of the members of Parliament who happened to be a Conservative Member of Parliament, this morning, saying that he felt that they needed to join issue with the New Democrats and together challenge the Liberals on this issue.

And I think that some of the members opposite, who have been critical of the government for advertising about this issue and raising this issue, should think carefully about that, Mr. Speaker. And they might want to consider what their cousins in Ottawa, the Conservatives in Ottawa, are saying about this because the Conservatives in Ottawa, like the New Democrats in Ottawa, are prepared to take the Liberals on, on this issue.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the problem we're having with the Liberals in Ottawa — and I hope the members opposite will agree with this — is that they are doing a very good job representing Ottawa to Saskatchewan. It seems to me the Liberals are doing a good job representing Ottawa to Saskatchewan, but they're not doing a very good job representing Saskatchewan to Ottawa.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, the other parties in the House and maybe even the Liberals from Saskatchewan, if they consider the matter closely, will agree that this is a matter where we have to move forward together on behalf of our province. It's not a partisan issue. It's an issue of standing up for our province, standing up for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's what we need to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — So I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the agenda in the Throne Speech is a very ambitious agenda; it's a forward-looking agenda and it's a future-oriented agenda. It's an agenda that builds, as we are doing, on several fronts.

We've been building in the last few years by reforming our personal income tax system, by reforming the oil and gas system, and we have record drilling activity going on in the province by making mining changes that are seeing increased exploration in the mining sector, including diamond exploration. And last year, Mr. Speaker, mining exploration was up about 25 per cent over the year before. It's building a forestry strategy, Mr. Speaker, that has seen \$1 billion in private sector investment in forestry in Saskatchewan in the last five years and two of the world's largest oriented strand board plants opening up at Hudson Bay and at Meadow Lake.

A lot of positive things happening in the province, Mr. Speaker, that we don't hear about enough from the opposition — positive things happening in oil and gas, in mining, and forestry that mean real jobs for real families and real people, Mr. Speaker. And we want to continue to build on that and also to build the manufacturing and processing sector, which is the sector where we have the lowest tax regime for business in the country in Saskatchewan, for manufacturers and processors, because we're trying to build those sectors, recognizing the importance of exports to the Saskatchewan economy.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, more than 70 per cent of the Saskatchewan economy is dependent upon exports, so we're trying to build on that in the ways that I've described, and this Throne Speech will build on it further. It is certainly a very positive plan for the future and what I think is a very great future for our province, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say that all of the people in this House I think want to build a better province, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we're divided on that issue. We want to build a better Saskatchewan for the next generation. And we're prepared to do things in this generation, in this day, in this session that maybe require us to sometimes take steps that are not universally popular, but we're going to take steps that help build the province for the next generation because we want to be able to look back in the years ahead and say that the decisions that we took today built a strong province for tomorrow.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the direction set out in this Speech from the Throne does that, and so I will rise in my place very proudly and support the direction set out by the Speech from the Throne. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well this is the first opportunity in this sitting that I've had to stand and talk a little bit about some of the things that are important to not just me personally and not just to the constituents of Cypress Hills but to the people of the province as a whole. And I guess I'm a little troubled, Mr. Speaker, by the fact that I have so many topics I'd like to address and so little time in which to do it. But nevertheless I want to get started today, if I might.

I listened at length to the comments of the previous speaker, the member for Massey Place, and he made some points that I want to address specifically because I think what he said does resonate with me, does resonate with the members on this side of the House, and I'm sure will resonate with the people of the province. And that is that even though we may not agree on issues from time to time, ultimately we all in this House have the best interests of this province at heart.

And the disagreements really always seem to take precedence in terms of public understanding of how we operate here. I wish that people would have a better understanding of how important the unity of this House can be from time to time. And as an example of that, Mr. Speaker, I would refer my comments back to the emergency debate we had on the equalization issue last week.

I know it's been characterized in the media by the government Deputy House Leader as having been a vote won by the government, but if I recall, Mr. Speaker, that vote was passed unanimously in this House. There was an amendment that went down to defeat, but the emergency motion was passed unanimously by this House and was sent, as I understand it, to Ottawa with the unified purpose and express desire of this House to tell Ottawa that equalization is an important issue to both parties in this House. And it's important to the people of this province.

I do recall, Mr. Speaker, three years ago when Janice MacKinnon was the Finance minister for the government. At that time she said publicly and privately in conversations that the equalization formula was not good for Saskatchewan, that it had impediments to our success, and that the more we developed some of our oil and gas resources, our other natural resources, the more that formula would be used against us.

So, Mr. Speaker, if there's any dissension in the House over the issue of the equalization formula, it's not based on the fact that it is unfair. It's based on the fact that the government has decided to make that the reason for justifying its growing indebtedness. I think, Mr. Speaker, that that is where the rub on this argument comes. Everybody understands that we want equitable treatment. We want fair treatment. We want to benefit from our own resource development. There's no question about that.

But this equalization formula has been in place for a number of years. It's not a new revelation. It certainly shouldn't be, and if it is to the government, then they haven't been doing their homework. If it's just now become an issue for them, it's too late. It should have been an issue several years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about my constituency and some of the issues that are happening there. I want to tie them to the Throne Speech, but before I get into that particular part of my comments today, I do want to congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker. I've enjoyed the privilege of working with you and under your jurisdiction in this House. It's been a privilege to travel with you in some international opportunities where we've been able to advance issues of common interest again, issues of importance to our cattle producers, particularly as it relates to the border closure arising from the issue of BSE.

But I also want to acknowledge the fact that a member of the House challenged for that position as well. And I'd like to recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains for doing that, because democracy isn't really well served when positions of representation are not competed for by interested parties. And I think that the reality is that the position of Speaker or any other elected Speaker is enhanced by the fact that there is a race. And I don't think that losing a race in a situation like this is any kind of blotch on somebody's record, or it shouldn't be seen as something negative.

I think when people put their name forward that it's important that people understand that they're possibly risking time. They're committing energies and money sometimes to these races. They're certainly minimizing the time with their families that they might otherwise spend, when they get involved in public office. So I would like to congratulate you on winning and the member from Wascana Plains for having contributed to that race.

I'd like to congratulate the new House members. You know, we have five people on this side of the House who came into the legislature for the very first time this year and who at this point have acquitted themselves with remarkable adeptness — very, very eloquent speech makers, very good performances for the maiden speech. And I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit worried about my reputation with that, with that kind of capability coming into the House in just this latest round of elections. If we have another election and elect five or ten more people like that, I'm going to be in big trouble. My ranking will fall a long way to the bottom of the ladder. Having said that, I do want to welcome all the new members on both sides of the House to the legislature.

I'd like to congratulate the government on its re-election. You know that's a difficult thing for me to say, frankly, because in all reality I expected that the official opposition would be the new government by now. But you know, the people in this province ultimately made their decision. And whether we on this side of the House like it or not, we have to respect that decision.

It's our challenge; it's our obligation to respond to the circumstances that we are now found in. And I think that the people of the province have given us an opportunity to be the opposition, but an effective and vibrant and forceful opposition, an opposition that knows its role and does its job and does it effectively. So we're looking forward on this side of the House to doing just what the people have elected us to do.

And I'd like to thank my constituents at this time for the faith

they placed in me in the November 5 election. You know, Mr. Speaker, I came to the political realm untested, untried, and very unfamiliar in terms of how well my constituents knew me back in June of 1999 in a by-election. And I was gratified by the support I had then, but I'm even more humbled and gratified today by the fact that my constituents have seen fit to return me to this place to represent them in increasing numbers, higher plurality, larger turnout.

And that says to me that I have the best office staff in the world. I have two great constituency assistants who make me look good on a daily basis, who answer the inquiries of my constituents in a timely and effective manner, who do everything they can to help me in the job I have representing the people of Cypress Hills.

You know if we hadn't had a blizzard on November 5, if we hadn't had about 20 inches of snow in parts of the constituency already, we'd have had a better turnout than we did attain. And it was a tremendous turnout given the circumstances. We had problems with the polling stations that were set up in the most unconventional ways and in the most inaccessible parts of my constituency, which actually discouraged people from coming to the polls . . . and in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, minimizes the significance of the democratic institution that we represent in this province, when you make it tough for people to get to the polls. I think we need to look at some changes to The Election Act to make sure that kind of thing doesn't happen in the future.

One of the benefits of the most recent electoral map changes were that I picked up two communities — two rather important communities to me personally — as part of the Cypress Hills constituency. The border moved a couple of miles to the east and included the town of Shaunavon for the first time and also picked up the town of Climax which is in the extreme southern part of province.

Now both of these communities are important to me for a variety of different reasons. Shaunavon was the business centre that I worked in as an employee for some farm machinery dealerships over the last number of years. In fact I spent most of the last 20 years working out of the community of Shaunavon.

It was the commercial centre, the hub, for that whole southwest area. It became a very important player in terms of economic development in that area. As you're probably aware, Mr. Speaker, Shaunavon is the home of one of the most exciting ethanol proposals for the entire province. It didn't manage to get funding in the last particular round of federal government granting. But I'm confident they either will get funding from the federal government, or they'll do this project in Shaunavon on their own without any government funding. Either way the southwest part of the province will win. The community of Shaunavon will win.

It's a community of about 1,800 people, and it's seen some hard times recently. There's been a number of young families left over the last half-dozen years or so, and so their population has dwindled, but they have such incredible enthusiasm for their community as it exists now and for its potential and for its future. And I think that was most indicative in the way the Hockey Day in Canada proceedings came off in the town of Shaunavon. That one day of events, that was televised all across

the country and virtually around the world by satellite, put the focus on that community in such a way that I don't think the community will ever look at itself in the same way again.

And I think that other communities around the province, that are sometimes struggling with who they are and what their future is and what their aspirations might be, just need to take a lesson from that particular experience in the town of Shaunavon and realize that that kind of enthusiasm and achievement can be realized in virtually any community in the province, if the people put their heart into it and try to accomplish great things.

The community of Climax, Mr. Speaker, you know it's a butt of a lot of jokes. Most recently, Brent Butt, I think, used it as part of his comedy routine and . . . I am sure you're probably aware of it. But the town of Climax has become famous because of the TV series that Brent has undertaken, where if you participate in collecting points as a result of that particular Corner Gas TV show, you could ultimately end up owning a house and property — and it's a substantial lot — in the town of Climax.

Now I know there's all kinds of people around the province who are going to say, why would I want to do that? But I think that unless you go and look at the house and the property, you really shouldn't say that. It's a house that needs some fixing up, but the lot is beautiful. It's large. It's treed, and more than that, Mr. Speaker, Climax is becoming an important community for an expanding snowbird population. The real, real snowbird, the snowbirds that take their motorhomes and head to Arizona or California or some other warm climate in the wintertime have started coming back to Climax.

Now it's rather unusual, I admit. But there were all kinds of vacant lots there, serviced and ready for development, that were never going to see a new house on it. So some of the people in the community decided to promote the town as a place where the snowbirds could come and park their motorhomes for the summer and use Climax as a base from which to either spend their summer or do their travels in Canada.

Well, as a matter of fact, that little program has been so successful that there are some new houses that have been built in the community and I think that, once again, there's a lesson to be learned here. You know, you don't have to just fold up your tent and sneak off into the night if things aren't going good. If you stand up and you look at your opportunities and your potentialities and you pursue them, there are things that can benefit you as a community if you have the will to do it again.

(15:15)

Mr. Speaker, Climax holds another particular soft spot in my own existence, my own experience, because that's where my grandfather homesteaded. My grandfather came from Ontario and actually went to Alberta, took a homestead out in a little place called Birdsholm, or something like that — it's not on the map any more — but he ultimately came back to Climax because he thought his future and his opportunity was greater there than it would be in the part of southeastern Alberta where he had originally homesteaded.

And so my mother was born and raised in that area. And as a

youngster, I used to spend my summers down there with my grandfather on the farm and I came to love being there. That was the highlight of my yearly existence, to spend the summer on the farm with my grandfather and my uncle.

And in the evenings after a hot day — and days seemed so much hotter when I was a youngster — after a hot day chasing cows or in the field or whatever, we'd go down to the Frenchman River Valley and go swimming in that little muddy creek there that was such an impressive waterway in my time. But now that I've gone back many years later and looked at it, it's not nearly as important or as impressive as I thought it was. And we used to drive into Climax and drink Bob's Pop. Does anyone remember the wonderful flavours of Bob's Pop? I mean the bottle itself was exquisite just for the shape of it.

But that was . . . My times in that community formed much of what I believed about Saskatchewan. And when my brother and I moved back to Saskatchewan about 22 years ago now, to take up farming for ourselves, most of our view — as naive as it was — most of our view about farming was formed by our experiences when we were youngsters on our grandfather's farm at Climax.

And I know that farming isn't anywhere near where it was. It's moved so much further in the intervening years, but . . . technologically. And all those other areas of advancement have made farming a different enterprise. But nevertheless I have to, I have to say that I'm in Saskatchewan today because of my connections to the land and to my grandfather's place in the Climax area many, many years ago. And I owe it that debt of gratitude.

I've probably spoken too long about the issues in my constituency that kind of jumped out at me as a result of this opportunity, but I do want to talk about a couple of other things that are very important too. As we've alluded earlier, the issue of BSE, the issue of BSE on producers in the southwest part of the province — which is cattle country, which is historically known as the home of the cattle industry in this part of the world — the devastation that has brought to my constituents and people in the industry around the province is just heartbreaking, Mr. Speaker.

Now I know that cattle prices have come back a little bit as a result of changing markets. But you know, the uncertainty and the financial concerns that the issue of BSE brought to the producers of the Southwest was terribly traumatic and as difficult to deal with as almost anything as I have ever seen.

And I guess why it has been so important and so significant is that the ranching industry is not just like any other industry. It's comprised of people who have an independence, a joy for what they do, a love of getting up in the morning and seeing the sunrise and working until late at night, and working with cattle. They brook no interference with government if they can get away from it. They pride themselves in being self-sufficient, independent, and capable. And the BSE issue really compelled these people to start asking themselves, how invincible are we as individuals, as an industry?

I guess what was most traumatic was not the financial loss, not the plans that were put on hold, not the expansion issues or the

breeding stock issues, and all those. The real trauma on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, is the uncertainty it creates in the minds of the producers themselves — the impact it has when they start questioning who they are, and whether this industry is worth preserving, whether it is worth fighting for.

Now that has not been the experience of all the producers in my constituency. I don't want to leave you with that impression, Mr. Speaker. But it has been more telling this year than I have ever encountered for any other reason among the cattle industry in my constituency as a result of BSE. I know of individual cases where people have said, I can't take this any more. I am going to sell all of my herd; I'm going to leave; I'm going to sell my land. I'm going to pack up. I'm going to move to the city.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I hear that, even from one producer, I'm really troubled because of the impact that that psychology has — not just on that individual, not just on his family, but on the community in which he lives. And I think the impact on the, sort of the psychological level is even more devastating than just about any other element that would come into play on these kinds of things.

We have the banks now, after several months of being very lenient and understanding, moving to secure their financial position with producers, asking for more security — put land up, put up machinery. They're not willing to take the inventory any more as collateral because nobody knows for sure what the value of that inventory is going to be. So banks are now moving in on these producers and saying, we've got to have more security.

As everybody knows, the grain industry in my constituency is suffering from lower-than-normal commodity prices. And it's not sufficient, frankly, Mr. Speaker, to cover the expense of production. And if something doesn't happen there, doesn't change there, if producers aren't able to diversify significantly, we're going to see tremendous, tremendous hardship in the agriculture sector, not just in my constituency but many others as well.

As you know, we've talked about the crop insurance rates going up again. And now as a result of a press conference today we found out the registration fees for grain trucks are now increasing. You know, that's the last thing the producers needed at this time. It's just one thing after the other and that's sort of the way they feel about it too. They feel like they're the lowest rung on the ladder and that everything that tumbles down from the top lands on them and there's no place for them to go.

CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) had immense failure in the region this year. There were all kinds of shortfalls and problems and people who qualified and people who didn't qualify and you never knew if you were in one group or the other. It was a seriously devastating issue.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech this year was a document that was, well half as long as last year's, and I'm assuming probably will be half as productive as last year's, which was not that great a record.

But I was going to spend a considerable amount of time talking

about health care. I think I'm going to run out of time before I'm able to develop that as much as possible. But I heard the Minister of Health stand in his place and defend the system as it operates. And I don't think I've encountered anybody yet who disagrees with the quality of care we get or the professionalism of the people in the system or the ability of the many overworked practitioners in the system.

The issue always seems to be, Mr. Speaker, accessibility. And getting into the system is becoming a bigger and bigger problem. And I want to throw out some anecdotes. And I know that they'll be discounted by people who are defending the system because an anecdote is just a story of one person's experience. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, you get a whole series of anecdotes and you've got a trend. And as that trend develops, you've got a whole new, a whole new scenario, a whole new reality.

And let me just tell you about a fellow I know, 31, 32 years old, noticed that he was losing his peripheral vision. And so he went to the doctor and the doctor said, you know, there's only two things that could cause this, a brain tumour or a stroke. And at the age of, you know, early 30s it's not likely to be a stroke, but you'd better be safe. So he sent him to a specialist. And the specialist said, the optometrist's diagnosis is probably accurate but we won't know for sure unless you have an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).

Now, Mr. Speaker, think of it. You've got a man in his early 30s, a productive, taxpaying, energetic young man who's been told he has either had a stroke or a brain tumour, and he needs a MRI. Do you know what his doctor said to him? Unfortunately in Saskatchewan you'll probably have to wait 22 months for that MRI.

That was the existing time for wait lists for MRIs. Mr. Speaker, that young man went home, went to his bank, asked for \$1,000, and went to Calgary. In 36 hours he was in and had the MRI done. He could have had it done in 24 hours, but he couldn't physically get there that quick. Mr. Speaker, why wouldn't that young man pay the \$1,000 and go to Calgary if he could have some answer to the problem that was affecting his depleted eyesight, in a matter of 36 hours as opposed to 22 months?

Now that's an anecdote; I understand that. It might only be one case, but as we've found out in this House over the last 10 days, there is one case after the other, after the other, that's coming to the forefront.

Mr. Speaker, making somebody wait 22 months for an MRI for the kind of condition that this young man had is unacceptable in a civilized and progressive society. It's unacceptable.

You know, I'm kind of reminded of the statement that we've all come to take for granted that justice delayed is justice denied. Mr. Speaker, I submit to the House today that health care delayed is health care denied.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — We don't need to hear the justifications of how well the system is working when people like this young man are being put through the kind of rigours he had to go through. His

life was in doubt. We've had people who have died waiting.

Mr. Speaker, I have got four or five other cases I wanted to bring to the attention of the House today, but time has passed me by. And I just can't, I can't do it.

But I want to refer briefly to the case of Bob and Marilyn Mihalicz. Mrs. Mihalicz came to the House on Friday. I've known Mrs. Mihalicz for the last two or three years through a business relationship. A week ago Sunday — I don't think she'd mind me telling this story — a week ago Sunday she phoned my home to talk to me personally to explain her problem. And the reason she screwed up her courage to phone me was that she heard the government . . . she heard the Minister of Health talk about how unusual and how exceptional the circumstances were that caused the death of some of the previous prostate patients and the delays affecting others. And she said, I was sitting in my home listening to that, when I knew from personal experience that that was not true. It was not a rarity. It was not an exception. She phoned me and asked me what possibly could she do. Now I'm not her MLA but she happens to know me. And as you know, we brought this case forward.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the response on the government side to her personal story of tragedy, was the most . . . It was the most disappointing thing I've encountered in this House. Mr. Speaker, these are people with lives. These are individuals with hurts. These are people, these are people who need attention to their tragedies.

Mr. Speaker, if I understand the NDP philosophy and the initiative that was undertaken by Tommy Douglas, it was to address the needs of individual people who were being abused by the system. Mr. Speaker, today I say that the system under this government is abusing people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, the believability of any government on any issue is predicated on what they have done before. Believability means that you have to have proven yourself. You have to have had a track record.

Mr. Speaker, as I sum up here, I want to read something for you. I want to read this quote:

This province introduced medicare and will continue to provide health care that is a model for the rest of Canada.

That came from the 2001 Throne Speech.

One of my government's highest priorities in its action plan for Saskatchewan is the provision and renewal of sustainable, publicly administered health care that is accessible to all.

From the 2002 Throne Speech.

A surgical registry is being implemented to manage waiting lists province-wide.

From the Throne Speech of 2003.

We will do more to reduce waiting times for surgery and diagnostic imaging . . .

From the Throne Speech of 2004.

Mr. Speaker, on what basis can I believe this government will do anything given its track record and its own quotes from throne speeches of 2001, '02, '03, and now '04. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this Throne Speech because I don't believe it's believable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:30)

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana, the minister . . .

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your re-election to the Chair. Your fairness and impartiality have obviously not gone unnoticed by all members of the Legislative Assembly. I also want to join with other members of this Assembly in thanking the member from Wascana Plains for being a candidate and making the election of Speaker a meaningful exercise rather than a coronation for yourself.

I also want to congratulate all members, but especially the 10 new members of the legislature and I want to congratulate one member in particular. And I know one shouldn't do this, but I have to say that I've known the member from Saskatoon Meewasin for a very, very long time. The member from Saskatoon Meewasin is a good friend of mine, along with his wife, Cheryl, and their three children.

The member has been my campaign manager on more than one occasion and in the last general election in Saskatchewan, I had to get along without him. And so I want to acknowledge his friendship and his political skills, his political skills particularly when it comes to tactics and strategies. And I think all members of the legislature will soon find out that this is a member that possesses a fine intellect and brings both thoughtfulness and a kind disposition to this Chamber. So congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'd also like to take this opportunity to send best wishes to the member from Yorkton, and wish him a full and speedy recovery. I can't say enough about how his presence is missed in this Assembly. It's missed in our Cabinet and it's missed in our caucus. And it's become apparent, Mr. Speaker, on both sides of the House, that we truly want this member back in this Assembly in order to enjoy his fine wit and his presence as our Minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — And I know that the member, while he's convalescing at home, has been busy paying attention to the proceedings of this House. I'm not sure how this is going to help him with his recovery. And I also know that he has been busy on several occasions phoning his colleagues to make sure that we're getting it right. And I think, to the member from

Yorkton, we're trying to get it right.

I want to thank the people of Saskatoon Nutana for re-electing me to this Assembly for the fifth time. I want to say to the people of Saskatoon Nutana that . . . And I know the members are gasping over there, but I've been a member of this Assembly for five terms. And I want to say I was pretty young when I was elected. And I can . . . I want to thank the people of Saskatoon Nutana. I think the greatest joy that any member can have is to receive the approval of people who are your neighbours and your friends, and I want to say thank you once again to people living in my neighbourhood.

I'd also like to thank the candidates who ran for their respective political parties in the last general campaign in our constituency: the Green party's Neal Anderson, who is a fine teacher in the Saskatoon public school system, who brought the environment to the political process; the Sask Party's Sandy Ewert, who is a nurse at Royal University Hospital, and I know Sandy and she cares passionately about health care; and to the Liberal Party's Grant Karwacki, who has some significant views on how and what needs to be done for the economy in our province. I want to thank them for participating in the political process and recognize their commitment and contribution that they made as candidates to take on the responsibilities of public life.

I also want to thank my campaign team. My campaign team was a very young campaign team. I think the average age of our campaign team was about 22 years of age. Our campaign manager, who replaced the member from Saskatoon Meewasin, is a young person by the name of Trevor McKenzie-Smith. Mr. Speaker, he is a fine political organizer for a young person, and I want to thank him.

I also want to thank Wade Zawalski, who was involved in our campaign; as well as Megan Williams; Gavin, our E-day organizer; Bev Lapointe, who was involved in making sure that we had voter contact; and Skip Kutz, who's been a veteran of all of my political campaigns, who's a bagman extraordinaire, and once again we got lots of money into our campaign and thank you Skip; and to Dennis Windles, who acted as our official agent. And as I always tell Dennis who's a lawyer, your job is to keep me out of the Crowbar Hotel and he's done it once again successfully, and thank you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I haven't been to the Crowbar Hotel, but I don't want to go either for improper spending during an election.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly want to thank my family, my mom and dad. My mom and dad are getting on in years and they can't do all of the work that they used to do. But my mom is a baker extraordinaire. Not unlike the member for Saskatoon Southeast's mom, who happens to be my constituent, and she has excellent muffins, my mom knows how to cook soup and chili and buns and desserts and she did an extremely good job to keep us fed and watered, and I want to thank her for that. And my dad who helped to drive people to the polls on election day.

Also to my sisters and brothers, some of whom live in the constituency and who are great political organizers in their own right. And for the first time, Mr. Speaker, I had nephews who

got involved in the political process, who helped organize our election day. And I suspect that one of my seven nephews will some day serve in this Assembly as an elected member of the legislature.

And I can also . . . Doing a little bragging, my nephew has just been elected as the new president of the university students' union and I want to congratulate him. I'm told that he is taking his new duties very seriously. And being a student of my father's, I can assure all members of the legislature that if he thinks it's important to be a critic, he will. And if he thinks that we've done a good job, he'll let us know that as well.

So congratulations and thank you to my nephews and all of the people involved in the campaign.

There's a person by the name of Judy Gossen who's our constituency assistant. She runs the office in Saskatoon when I'm not there and when I am there, Mr. Speaker. Not unlike all members of the legislature, our constituency assistants run our offices and they run us. And I want to thank her.

And I also want to make a special mention of my neighbour, Frank Cvek. And while I've been elected to this Assembly for close to 18 years I guess in October, my neighbour Frank Cvek has looked after my house and he has looked after my yard and he has looked after my sidewalk. And if it wasn't for him in terms of assisting me, it would be much more difficult to be an elected member . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well it doesn't look different after 18 years.

Actually I reread my response to the Throne Speech in 1986 and in many respects the view of the world hasn't really changed, Mr. Speaker — a little older, a little wiser but nevertheless still committed to public service, still committed to ensuring that the people of this province have a great place to live, work, and raise a family, and still committed to those people who don't necessarily have a voice in this Assembly, those people who are sick, those people who are unemployed, those people that do not have all of the amenities that some of us take for granted.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly during the few minutes that I have left, I want to talk about our campaign to focus attention on the inequities of the current equalization scheme. Our campaign is designed to make it impossible for the federal government and our own homegrown Finance minister, Ralph Goodale, to ignore the equalization inequities.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked quietly through federal-provincial channels, and up until now it hasn't been all that effective. So I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, we've upped the ante. We want, we want the Minister of Finance to understand that the excellent work that's been done by Professor Courchene has shone a spotlight on this issue, and it's now up to us — and I mean all of us — to keep the federal government's attention focused on this issue.

I think the opposition may not understand the seriousness of the issue. The people of Saskatchewan have not seen fit to entrust them with the responsibility of delivering health care and education and relief for farm families and fixing the roads. Maybe they don't comprehend the value of \$50 million more

each year and maybe they don't understand what \$50 million more or \$200 million more might mean to the delivery of health care in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent \$75,000 on that campaign. We've spent that \$75,000 a few times over the matter . . . the course of that campaign. But I would submit that the loyal opposition should reflect at times on the loyal part of opposition and in loyalty to the people of our province who want to join with the provincial government in speaking with one voice to the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I note that the member from Cypress Hills talked about winning a vote. Mr. Speaker, under the last leader of the Sask Party during a particular campaign, they put the interests of their constituents ahead of partisan politics and joined the provincial government in lobbying the federal government for much-needed farm aid. And their new leader has committed in this session to doing the same thing when the situation demands it. And I think now is a good time. I say to the members opposite who are very fond of the phrase, all talk and no action, that now may be a good time to heed their own advice and back our play with the federal government.

Professor Courchene indicates that so far cost of confiscatory equalization to Saskatchewan is \$300 million; that's what happens when the federal government claws back over 100 per cent of oil and gas revenues. In hockey the phrase 110 per cent has become a bit of a cliché. In the federal Department of Finance it seems to represent a routine accounting practice.

In fairness to our own Ralph Goodale, who has agreed to a payment of \$120 million, we say it's a good start, it's a good down payment. But we need a long-term fix to the problem and we're asking for fair treatment across jurisdictions — the same treatment enjoyed by Nova Scotia and Newfoundland where only 70 per cent of their oil and gas revenues are included when determining equalization.

And we want these changes put in place this year. And we don't want to wait until the scheduled review in 2009. And I would suggest to Mr. Goodale, he may have more than an election fight on his hand here in Saskatchewan before 2009.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to negotiations with the federal government the one thing I know about them is that they need to see a united front on the part of Saskatchewan. And when they see a united front on the part of Saskatchewan, they may respond.

On the day of the budget every premier in this country stood up in front of their media and said, where is the \$2 billion in ongoing funding in the federal budget, they have not put it in the base. And within hours, within hours, Mr. Martin responded by saying there'd be something when the premiers go to meet this summer.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Goodale is watching this Assembly. And Mr. Goodale will know when this Assembly votes for a motion without an amendment that blames the provincial

government for all of its financial difficulties, Mr. Goodale will know when this Assembly means business. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that we need to keep the pressure on Mr. Goodale. He wants to be re-elected and that means we're united in fighting for fair treatment for Saskatchewan people so we too can have the kind of health care that Manitoba has, the kind of per capita spending that Manitoba has on health and education and child care, and everything else, Mr. Speaker. And I am comparing ourselves to Manitoba where they get \$1.2 billion in equalization in comparison to our \$120 million.

(15:45)

And, Mr. Speaker, it's not fair. Ralph Goodale has to get the message it's not fair. And on behalf of the citizens of this province, this Legislative Assembly needs to stand up and say it's not fair; we want you to hear our voices and change it, Mr. Speaker.

I will be supporting the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in this Assembly today and to address some of the issues that the Throne Speech brought forward this past week.

First of all let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I extend my congratulations to you, sir, in your recent election to the leadership in this Chamber as the Speaker of the Assembly. And we look forward to a term of fair debate and also sound and reasonable responses in regards to how members conduct themselves in this Assembly.

I would also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Regina Elphinstone in his speech the other day, just pointed out some of the things that members give up in their personal lives and especially when you're dealing with family and the many demands that are on a member's life. I wanted to extend my condolences as well to the member on the recent loss of a very special person in his life, his brother Neil.

Mr. Speaker, I happen to know Neil. My son and his fiancée attend Westhill Baptist Church where Neil was the youth pastor. And I know that my son and his fiancée and the youth group in that assembly really appreciated and enjoyed Neil and his wife for their commitment to reaching out to the youth in that area and in that assembly. I got to know Neil a little bit, not as much as I'd liked to I know, but certainly extend to the member from Regina Elphinstone our sincere sympathy on the loss of a brother.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to losing a family member — it doesn't matter, a brother, a father, or mother and I've had that experience about 10 years ago, losing my mother suddenly — it hits us very dramatically.

Because we sit in this Assembly, we commit ourselves to working for our constituents. And I can say of the constituents of Moosomin, that they, the constituents in Moosomin, have

certainly been understanding. And on many occasions when I have been reminded of the fact that I missed a dinner or some function of whatever, and to indicate that the reason I missed wasn't because I didn't want to be there but my daughter had a volleyball game, which I hadn't seen her play volleyball very much, or some kind of school program. And I want to thank the constituents of Moosomin because they've been very understanding.

And they've all told me from day one that they wanted me to keep my priorities right and make sure that my family was a priority. And so I think that's what the member from Regina Elphinstone was sharing with us the other day. And so we just extend our sympathies to him and thank him for his kind words — and thoughtful words.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to this Speech from the Throne, this speech talks about reaching out to the youth of the province. And my colleagues have raised the issue on a number of . . . in a number of the debates that have come forward and we've looked back over the past number of years in a number of the speeches from the throne.

And we look back to 2001 and we see the government at that time and their Speech from the Throne said this: we plan for a bright future for our children and ourselves; connecting to young people means connecting to the future; young people are the future of this province.

Then again last year in 2003:

It is a vision . . . where all children will have the opportunity . . . to build successful families and careers here at home.

And then in this year's Throne Speech we see, Mr. Speaker, the government says:

. . . we believe that making our province ready for the next century means working today to make Saskatchewan even more youth-friendly . . .

Well, Mr. Speaker, those are very nice. Those are words that I think a lot of young people would listen to and say, yes, well it's good to see that politicians are paying attention. But the member from Saskatoon Nutana just talked about action.

Well we've had . . . This is the third Throne Speech where the NDP government has talked about youth and reaching out to the youth of this province, and yet their actions speak louder than words.

In fact I read from . . . in today's "Reader's Opinions," Saturday, March 27, Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, "End of intern program another kick at youth." And this comes from a young person in the Saskatoon area:

One day into the session and the NDP already proved its commitment to Saskatchewan youth is merely election campaign rhetoric.

And I guess that's what I'm pointing out, Mr. Speaker, the fact that we have had a number of promises over the past three or

four years through throne speeches, and the young . . . youth of this province are beginning to ask exactly what does this government mean when it talks about reaching out to the youth of our province.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues, and I'm sure colleagues on the other side of the House, can certainly attest to the fact that they have young people reaching out, looking for employment opportunities in this province. And many are finding difficulty finding employment opportunities, and in some cases, whether it has to do with what's available, which just isn't very much, and the fact that a degree might be hindering you from getting that job.

And I've had young people in my office who graduated with degrees and different forms and finding out . . . they've even gone and been willing to take that minimum wage job but were told at the end of the day after the interview, well we'll call you back; and then, well we found somebody who was more qualified, even though the job they were taking was basically an entrance job. The frustration of our young people is speaking very loudly and very clearly as to where this government is going and the direction they are giving to the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this budget and we look at what the budget has actually done — or not budget, Throne Speech, pardon me — what the vision that this government has for the province of Saskatchewan, whether it's youth, whether it's agriculture, whether it's just ordinary citizens in the province of Saskatchewan and dealing with health issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget or Throne Speech is certainly lacking.

And the vision that this Premier and this government is bringing to this session certainly has to be something that we have to ask a lot of questions about because we still haven't been able to see a clear, concise vision as to how we move this province forward.

And I just heard the member from Saskatoon Nutana talk about equalization payments. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are aware of the fact that there was an emergency debate in this Assembly about a week ago, where opposition members stood up and supported this government in the fact that there was . . . there'd be fair equalization payments and that they be addressed fairly across this great nation.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is wrong with the province of Saskatchewan not having to rely on equalization payments to survive?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I read in this Throne Speech where this government, this government talks about the resources that are in this province. We have resources like oil. We have natural gas. We have uranium. Now we have expanded diamond mining and exploration taking place in the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would seem to me, with the resources that are available to the people of this province, if this

government would move out of the way and allow industry and business to begin to invest in the province, we wouldn't have to worry about trying to come out with platitudes for our young people to stay in this province or look at this place to invest or to live or to marry and raise families, because there's so much that we can enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, it's time. Mr. Speaker, it's time we got our heads out of the sand. And it's time we quit relying on equalization payments from Ottawa. And it's time this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, became that have province that it can be if the opportunities were presented.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I talk about opportunities, just about a week ago I had the pleasure of joining with about 300 people in the Wolseley area as Natural Valley Farms announced the purchase of the former Abbott Lab, which was closed down about three years ago resulting in the loss of some 40-plus jobs in the community.

And a group of 50 producers across this province decided that as a result of BSE and as a result of the fact that they are committed to the province because they're livestock producers in the province, and they started asking themselves, now we've been asking the governments to work — both provincially and federally — to work at getting the borders open so that live cattle can again begin to flow back and forth across the borders, across the American-Canadian border. And these producers started asking themselves, now should we be totally relying on governments and border openings or should we start looking at other alternatives which we can add value to our product?

And so this 50 . . . this group of 50 farmers decided to invest some \$70,000 per producer to access about \$12 million so that they could build a slaughtering plant and a processing plant and begin to package their product — their beef that they were raising on their own, on their farms, and beef that they'll be purchasing from neighbours in the area. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, package it into a form that they can put it right on the counter. And so they add the value to their natural product rather than always shipping it out of the province, being hewers of wood and drawers of water, as we've been for years.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this group of producers is taking pride in the fact that they put this idea together, they came forward with this initiative, and it didn't require any government or taxpayer dollars. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I applaud and commend these producers for taking that initiative. I commend the people of the Wolseley and Grenfell areas for the work they have done in encouraging young men and women who have a vision to expand that vision and to build their communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it just goes to show that if governments put in place proper and appropriate regulations and don't get involved in a lot of red tape, that businesses — whether they're small or large — will have the opportunity to establish themselves and to begin to invest in this province so that we can move from that have province to a . . . that have-not province, to a have province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech talks about health care and talks about delivering health care in a better way. It talks

about meeting the needs, as we've seen over the past week, of many individuals across this province of addressing their health care concerns. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just the other day in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, the Premier made the comments, politicians mustn't meddle in surgical schedules. I agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we've had men and women coming to us each and every day over the past week to 10 days and we've got . . . as my colleagues have indicated, more people have been coming and calling our offices on an ongoing basis. They are calling our offices, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because their medical needs are not being met. And I would suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that men and women across this province are going to judge this government on the way it shows compassion and care for the health and the well . . . needs and the well-being of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have some concerns when it comes to health care. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a result of these concerns we look forward to the budget, will be coming out in a couple of days, to see what direction this government is going to go in. Because I see from a headline, the headline reads: "Health care system to be overhauled."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there are so many questions that we need to look at. There are so many holes that we can certainly look at opening within this Throne Speech. And, Mr. Speaker, it would give me the opportunity, in fact my colleagues have found it frustrating to . . . for the limited time to speak in regards to the Throne Speech. But we will look forward to greater debate as we get into this session in holding this government accountable for their actions and how they treat Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I cannot support the Throne Speech or the vision that the government — lack thereof — that the government has presented to the people of Saskatchewan at this time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier, the member for Riversdale.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it has been observed by others in this Throne Speech debate, and I expect in most every Throne Speech debate, that the privilege of rising to speak in this House is a privilege that is rare and that is extended to only a very few of the 1 million people who call Saskatchewan their home. There are only 58 of us who have the privilege to stand in this Chamber and express our free and democratic voice. I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, there is not a bad seat anywhere in this House. And, Mr. Speaker, if I may also say, there is no office in this legislature, no title or responsibility that is any greater privilege than to bear the three initials MLA, Member of the Legislative Assembly. We are each, all of us, here only because our friends, our neighbours, our constituents have given to us this privilege.

(16:00)

In my case, my gratitude goes to the people of the constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale. Mr. Speaker, they've now seen fit to elect me twice. But more than that, Mr. Speaker, they have seen fit to welcome Betty and I and our family into their community. They have become our friends and our neighbours, and now, our constituents. And I want to thank today, again, the voters of Riversdale for their overwhelming support in the November election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And I equally want to thank my campaign team, headed by Brian Nixon — also a young campaign team — for the tremendous work that they did in the campaign.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I today am privileged to represent what I believe is one of Saskatchewan's most diverse, vibrant, and changing constituencies. In just the past three years we have witnessed significant change in the constituency of Riversdale and I look forward to the weeks and the months and the years ahead because change is on the way.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am particularly privileged to occupy this desk in this Legislative Assembly, and bear the responsibility of the Premier's office for one reason. And it is this, Mr. Speaker, because across this great province, the majority of Saskatchewan people in November chose the New Democratic Party to lead this province into its future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in 1999 our party received 38.7 per cent of the popular vote in Saskatchewan. In November 2003, our party earned 44.7 per cent of the popular vote.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And the people of Saskatchewan, therefore, have entrusted to us the role of government and I and my colleagues are all deeply grateful.

Mr. Speaker, in this legislature we are joined by a number of new members, Mr. Speaker, and I have listened to or read the remarks of each of those new members on both sides of the House who have stood in their place for the first time to speak in this Chamber. And Mr. Speaker, in my estimation each of our newest members have appointed themselves extremely well over the course of this debate, and I congratulate each one of them for now taking their place in the historical record of the legislature of Saskatchewan and in the historical record of our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I also today, Mr. Speaker, want to extend thanks to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her gracious reading of our Throne Speech and also for her particularly moving comments that she shared with us at the reception after the Throne Speech, at Government House.

And even more, I'm sure we would want to thank Her Honour for her ongoing contributions to the life of our province, for her reaching out to every region of our province, for her determination to reach out to young people across our province, and for the very pivotal role that she is playing in preparation for our province's centennial. And I'm sure that it is the desire of this legislature that Her Honour's term be extended to the close of the centennial year, and I will continue to make that request to the Prime Minister of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-election to the Speaker's Chair. And I want to congratulate the member from Saskatoon Sutherland for his re-election as our Deputy Speaker, and congratulate the member of Regina Wascana Plains for taking part in the democratic exercise, for offering her talents, skills, and experience to the office of Speaker. And finally, Mr. Speaker, I of course would want again to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his appointment as Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, to recognize and congratulate again the member from Rosetown and his service as leader of the Saskatchewan Party. And if I may say, to the new leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, I wish him many, many years in that office and I will endeavour to do my best to make it so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now just in passing here, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could be so bold as to say a little word of advice to the new Leader of the Opposition, my hon. friend the member from Swift Current. It is, Mr. Speaker, I believe a challenge to lead any political party. It is a challenge to lead any caucus of elected members because political parties and caucuses are groups of women and men who have deeply held convictions, strong opinions. It is never easy to lead a political party or a caucus. But, Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Swift Current has a particularly difficult task.

He has indicated already his desire to bring the Saskatchewan Party into the 21st century. He says, Mr. Speaker, as I see it reported in the press, he says he wants his party to stretch. Mr. Speaker, I don't see a lot of elastic over there thus far. In fact, I don't see much — nor spandex, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, since the days of the election, I don't see much change at all, Mr. Speaker. I do see some of the benches and the seats have changed, but I do not see much substantive change at all. They lost the election. They went down in popular vote. And still, I see no sign of change.

What have we seen in the course of this Throne Speech debate? Still they go on day after day after day criticizing, but not once offering a positive alternative. Nothing.

I mean the member of Cannington, Mr. Speaker, was in the press just recently discussing the matter of health care in the province. And what did he volunteer to the press? Well he said, of course they don't have health policy because they are opposition. It's the same thing we've heard now for years in this House. And, Mr. Speaker, still they go on saying one thing in the legislature and something quite different to their home

communities and their home weeklies.

You know the other day I listened as the member from Thunder Creek, the new Agriculture critic, stood in this legislature and said that this government has done nothing to address the crisis of BSE. That's what he said in the House.

Now not days before, the former critic of Agriculture, the member of Watrous, said in the *Humboldt Journal*, this government has done everything they could. Now it's one thing to say something here and then the party says something else.

We've had a vivid illustration of it just this afternoon, when the member . . . I listened as the member of Last Mountain-Touchwood stood in this House and said he could not support the recommendations of the Boughen Commission, and made quite a speech about it.

Well I have here, Mr. Speaker, a report from the *Fort Qu'Appelle Times*, dated February of this year, where that same member, the member of Last Mountain, says, and I quote:

A recently completed commission on Saskatchewan education tax has not only identified the problem but also came out with solid recommendations.

Now what is it, Mr. Speaker? Either the commission is not good today, but a few weeks ago it was solid recommendations. Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed. Nothing has changed.

I listened, Mr. Speaker, in this House during the course of this debate to the member of Kindersley, now a veteran member of this legislature. When the member from Kindersley stands in this House and boldly asserts that the policies of Tommy Douglas, quote:

. . . have hurt this province more than any (other) single individual in this province's history.

The people of Saskatchewan shake their heads. Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that member could find 10 other citizens who hold that view in the province of . . . Well no, check that; he might find a few more over there. At least he found one; that's the member from Wood River. He found the member from Wood River, who jumped up and seconded the motion in this Throne Speech debate and talked about socialism and Cuba, and whatnot.

Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed. The new Leader of the Opposition says he wants this party to stretch. I don't just see a whole lot of aerobic flexibility in the members opposite. And maybe that is the very reason, maybe that is the very reason — as the member from Moose Jaw North so graphically put it in his contribution to the Throne Speech — maybe that is the reason that nobody else wanted the job of leading the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — So I wish the new leader well. I think he's got a task to make that party stretch, to make that party change. And I should . . . Maybe just another little word of advice; I want him to be careful in that stretching exercise, too,

because I don't think the glue that holds that group together is all that strong, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the Throne Speech. This is, Mr. Speaker, a new legislature. This is a new government. It is a new day. And it is a new agenda.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And we stand today, Mr. Speaker, on the very eve of a new Saskatchewan century. The Throne Speech we debate understands that. While setting the agenda for this session, the Throne Speech looks far beyond this session. It looks far beyond the near horizon of the days and weeks ahead. It looks to our term in government. It looks to the decade before us. It looks to the launch of Saskatchewan's second century.

And, Mr. Speaker, it looks forward with that same spirit of optimism and hope that began Saskatchewan's first century.

Mr. Speaker, why does it do that? Why does it do that? Because, Mr. Speaker, ours is a party and ours is a government that believes in this province, that believes in our people, and believes in the future of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech looks forward with optimism and hope because this is a party and this is a government that believes in economic progress, that builds social progress. And our government, Mr. Speaker, believes that the future for the province of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan is a future that is wide open.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Our future, our future is wide open for all those who will dream big, plan well, and work hard. Our future is wide open and all the negative nabobs over there will not prevent or . . . (inaudible) . . . this government from saying so to the whole world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, we are a party and we are a government that believes that no one — no one of our people, no one of our children or grandchildren, no one of our young people — should be excluded from that economic and social progress. No one should be excluded from our future, particularly the least amongst us.

Still, Mr. Speaker, still, Mr. Speaker, to quote Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much . . . (the test of our progress) is whether we . . . (meet the needs of) those who have little.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And so, Mr. Speaker, having heard the voice of Saskatchewan people in the November election and

having received their report, we set before this province a vision and an ambitious agenda to achieve that vision.

The vision of this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, the vision of this government is, simply put, to make Saskatchewan ready for the next generation. Our vision is to make Saskatchewan ready for that next generation who will shape our next century.

Today, Mr. Speaker, that generation, where are they today? Well they're in the nurseries, and they're in the child care centres across our province. Where is that generation today? They're in the classrooms, and they're in gymnasiums, and they're in the hockey rinks, and they're in the dance studios.

(16:15)

That generation today are enrolled in our colleges, in our regional colleges, our technical schools, our universities. That generation today are at work, beginning their careers. They're at work on the land. They're at work in their professions, and they are at work in their own small businesses. And they are young, and they are Aboriginal, and they are non-Aboriginal. And some of them are third and fourth generation Saskatchewan kids, and some of them are first generation immigrant Saskatchewan kids.

They were here today. They were here, Mr. Speaker, on the day of the Throne Speech. That next generation were here in this Chamber. They were in the school group that were in our galleries, and they sang for us in this Chamber, and they sang for us in the rotunda. They were here. They were seated on the floor. They were seated in the galleries. They were here — the young men and women who are starting their careers, starting their businesses, starting their professions, taking up their trades in our province. They were here. They were in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, *Photo Life* magazine, Canada's pre-eminent photo magazine. In this magazine ... It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that within the course of this magazine you will see a feature article about Courtney Milne, one of Saskatchewan's most significant, significant photographers, recognized internationally, a full feature article on Courtney Milne. You will also find in this Canadian production an article on the Canadian armed forces Snowbirds based in 15 Wing in Moose Jaw, a full feature article.

But what you will see, Mr. Speaker, right here on the cover of this magazine is the grand prize winner in an international photography contest. That winner was in our Chamber the day of the Throne Speech. Inside you will see his work reproduced. His name is Richard McDowell. He is a young man who, with his partner, has opened a photo studio here in Regina — a young Saskatchewan person recognized internationally as best in his field, Mr. Speaker.

To listen to the people across the way, you would think our young people are leaving us. The fact of the matter is our young people are establishing their lives and careers in Saskatchewan. The majority of our graduates are building their lives here. And for those, for those who have felt that they by perception or need must leave the province, Mr. Speaker, it is the vision of this government to turn it around, to make this province more

welcoming to our young people, to make this the place they will build their futures and establish their careers. That is the vision of this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And so, Mr. Speaker, in this Throne Speech we have set out an ambitious agenda, an ambitious agenda to achieve that vision, that vision.

Time does not permit me to speak to all of the points of this ambitious agenda which is described in the Throne Speech. But let me speak, Mr. Speaker, just for a few moments on the core of this Throne Speech, the core of this Throne Speech, the core of our agenda.

It is, Mr. Speaker, to build a green and prosperous economy; that is the core of our agenda. For in that green and prosperous economy will be the opportunities for our young people, for our children and grandchildren. In that green and prosperous economy will be the opportunities for the Aboriginal young people of Saskatchewan. In that green and prosperous economy will be our future, Mr. Speaker. And we have set an ambitious agenda in building that green and prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker.

Part of that agenda will be to develop in Saskatchewan — for the first time since the turn of the first century — a concerted immigration strategy. For the first time in our province's history we now have a Minister Responsible for Immigration, Mr. Speaker.

A century ago people came to Saskatchewan to join the First Nations. They came from every corner of the globe. They came here to a province of promise and hope. And we want to open the doors of this province again to immigrant peoples from across Canada, from across the continent, from across this North America and Central America. We want to open the doors again to the world. And so we are establishing a new program called Open Up Saskatchewan, and the tangible, first actions will take place this year as we increase the numbers in our immigrant nominee program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we want to work with the farming people of Saskatchewan and the rural communities of Saskatchewan, as the Throne Speech describes it, to improve and enhance opportunities in agribusiness.

And the member of Moosomin just talked about the new opportunities now in Wolseley. We want to see those kind of opportunities repeated across the province. But as we all know, the challenge that has faced the rural community and the agricultural community in this province in the last three years has been a combination of drought and unfair trade practices and unfair trade subsidies. And we will not relent on our efforts to solve those issues.

Today the Minister of Agriculture is in the United States of America speaking to issues of trade that affect, that affect the farming families of Saskatchewan.

We're going to open in Prince Albert the new forestry centre this year. Now we all know the history, we all know the history of opposition of the Saskatchewan Party to the new forestry centre in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. We know it well. And we know where that member is today — out of work. Mr. Speaker. There is, as you know, as you well know and as members well know, tremendous potential in the forest resource of Saskatchewan. More than half of our province, Mr. Speaker, is forest, and there is tremendous potential for the peoples of our North in the forestry and developing the forestry and stewardship of the forestry. And the new forest centre in Prince Albert will lead us forward in that direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — We intend that this province should take its rightful place as centre of mining activity in Canada with growth in our uranium industry, with growth in our potash industry, and with optimism and hope for growth in a new Saskatchewan diamond industry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — But the future, Mr. Speaker, of our economy, of this green and prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker, the future may well be centred on Saskatchewan's future with energy, Mr. Speaker — the future with energy. And this government is with new determination seeking to build the energy resource capacity of the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to start with those tremendous energy resources that are buried beneath the ground, the tremendous resources which are buried beneath the ground — whether it's in oil or in gas or in coal. Mr. Speaker, you know we're participating with the industry, with the energy industry now in a further enhancement of the CO₂ sequestration projects in southern Saskatchewan. We're working with industry to enhance the return of our vast heavy oil resources, Mr. Speaker. We are pioneering new concepts of oil shale in and around the Hudson Bay area.

You know, Mr. Speaker, up near Unity, we're drilling for natural gas all around Unity. I find it interesting the member that represents Unity now stood up here and complained about no activity in the oilfield and the gas field right in his own constituency. It's booming, Mr. Speaker. Right in his own constituency, it's booming. We're going to develop with the industry the resources of oil and gas, Mr. Speaker.

Well now the member for Canora complains about the oil companies coming to Saskatchewan to drill. Can you believe it? The member of Canora complains about the energy companies coming to Saskatchewan to drill.

Mr. Speaker, buried beneath the soil, buried beneath the soil near Estevan, Saskatchewan, and around Coronach we have some of this nation's most vast coal resources, vast coal resources. We're going to pursue those coal resources. We're going to develop the coal . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, the member of Canora is coming right out of his seat he's so agitated about energy industry coming to Saskatchewan. This is an amazing thing, Mr. Speaker. This is an amazing thing.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to develop our coal resources. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? It is my view that in the course of this century now just beginning, that the energy resources that are above the ground will become even more dominant in meeting the energy needs of this world, our country, and our province, Mr. Speaker. And we are going to be there taking leadership on energy resources above the ground. You mark my words about that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — We are going, Mr. Speaker, we are going to seize those opportunities. You know three years ago, Mr. Speaker, there was not one electron in Saskatchewan being generated by the wind, not one three years ago. Today, Mr. Speaker, we are taking leadership in Canada and North America in the generation of electricity through wind power.

And, Mr. Speaker, last week . . . We're going to take the opportunity to tell Canadians about it because we're going to establish right down there at Gull Lake, right on the No. 1 Highway, a visitors' centre, so the people travelling through Saskatchewan and people out of Saskatchewan can see the concept of energy created by the wind, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, but it's not just wind. We've taken the leadership, Mr. Speaker, in taking the grain-based fuels from vision to reality; from vision to reality against all the opposition from the member of Canora and everybody else over there about ethanol. Mr. Speaker, we are building an ethanol capacity in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And we're pursuing biomass, Mr. Speaker, and we are, Mr. Speaker, going to be in on the ground floor and . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order please. My patience, members, is being just a little tested. Member for Canora-Pelly, I would ask if you would just lower the volume a little. I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, one final point on a green and prosperous economy. This province is going to be on the ground floor, and we're going to take the leadership on the new hydrogen revolution in energy production. Mark my words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my time draws to a close. I wish I could spend another half an hour just on our green and prosperous economy alone, but my time draws to a close. And so in reflecting on this Throne Speech, I reflected back to words of a former leader in Saskatchewan, words that I have heard delivered in this House before and have always motivated me.

Mr. Speaker, these are words from Chief Poundmaker, who at a time when his people faced some very challenging, some very challenging circumstance, Chief Poundmaker said the following: it would be so much easier not to make this fight, to just fold up our hands and say there is nothing that we can do. I

only grow concerned when I hear people thinking and acting in that way because we all know the story of the man who sat down beside the trail too long. And the trail grew over, and he could never find his way again. We can never forget what has happened, but we cannot go back, nor can we just sit beside the trail.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government and this is a political movement that is never content to go back, never content to just sit beside the trail. And so long as there are people in my constituency living in inadequate housing, we are not content. So long as there are young people who cannot find opportunities in this province, we are not content. So long as there are needs in our health care system to provide publicly funded accessible services to people, we are not content.

We will not go back, Mr. Speaker, but we will not sit beside the trail. Therefore we have placed before this province in this Throne Speech a vision — a vision of making this province ready for our next generation of young pioneers.

We have set before these people of Saskatchewan in campaign and in this legislature an ambitious agenda of change, Mr. Speaker, and we intend to pursue that agenda. We ask for the co-operation of members opposite. We will reach out to bring in the co-operation of the people of Saskatchewan, but we will follow that vision, Mr. Speaker. We are not content just to sit beside the trail.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And so, Mr. Speaker, with deep thanks to the mover and the seconder of this Throne Speech I take my place, indicating that I will be supporting the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, there being no further members rising to speak, I will now put the motion for an address to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

It has been moved by the member for Regina Walsh Acres and seconded by the member for Saskatchewan Rivers:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

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

May it please Your Honour:

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

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion say nay.

Some Hon. Members: — Nay.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Call in the members for a recorded vote.

(16:30)

The division bells rang from 16:30 until 16:35.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the one moved by the member for Regina Walsh Acres, seconded by the member for Saskatchewan Rivers:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

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

May it please Your Honour:

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

Those in favour of the motion, please rise.

Yeas — 27

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Hagel	Van Mulligen	Atkinson
Cline	Sonntag	Crofford
Prebble	Forbes	Belanger
Higgins	Thomson	Nilson
Beatty	Hamilton	Junor
Harper	Iwanchuk	McCall
Quennell	Trew	Yates
Taylor	Morin	Borgerson

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays — 27

Wall	Toth	Elhard
Heppner	D'Autremont	Krawetz
Draude	Hermanson	Bjornerud
Wakefield	Morgan	McMorris
Eagles	Gantefoer	Harpauer
Bakken	Cheveldayoff	Huyghebaert
Allchurch	Brkich	Weekes
Kerpan	Merriman	Chisholm
Dearborn	Hart	Kirsch

The Speaker: — Order, please. The Clerk has announced that there is an equality of votes for and against the motion. Before voting, I feel it appropriate to outline the principles used to guide the Speaker when casting a vote.

In parliamentary assemblies in the Westminster tradition, a central principle underlying the system is the impartiality of the Speaker. Both Erskine May and Beauchesne state the following:

Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition of the successful working of procedure, and many conventions exist which have as their object, not only to ensure the impartiality of the Speaker but also, to ensure that his impartiality is generally recognized. He takes no part in debate in the House. He votes only when the voices are equal, and then only in accordance with rules which preclude an expression of opinion upon the merits of a question.

That is the May 22nd edition, page 90; Beauchesne 6th edition, page 49 . . . paragraph 90.

The principle of the Speaker votes only to break a tie . . . Pardon me. The principle that the Speaker votes only to break a tie is enshrined in both legislation and rules in the Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan. The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act states as follows:

Section 18: Questions arising in the Assembly shall be decided by a majority of votes, other than that of the Speaker or Acting Speaker, but where there is an equality of votes, the Speaker (acts) . . . or Acting Speaker has a vote.

The *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* state the following:

Rule 26(1) The Speaker shall not take part in any debate before the Assembly.

Rule 26(2) In case of . . . equality of votes, the Speaker shall give a casting vote, and any reasons stated by him shall be entered in *The Journal*.

Under these rules, the Speaker is obliged to vote when the voices are equal. How then does the Speaker vote? Marleau and Monpetit, page 268, summarize parliamentary convention in this area as follows:

In theory, the Speaker has the same freedom as any other Member to vote in accordance with his or her conscience; however, the exercise of this responsibility could involve the Speaker in partisan debate, which would adversely affect the confidence of the House in the Speaker's impartiality. Therefore, certain conventions have developed (as guide) as a guide to Speakers, (and Chairmen of Committee of the Whole) in the infrequent exercise of the casting vote. Concisely put, the Speaker would normally vote to maintain the *status quo*.

Canadian and British authorities describe these principles or conventions as follows:

- (1) The Chair should always vote for further discussion;
- (2) Where no further discussion is possible, important decisions should not be taken except by a majority;
- (3) Where amendments to a Bill are involved, the Bill should be left in its existing form.

Generally the Chair votes to maintain the status quo regarding the motion and leaves the matter open for future discussion.

That the Speaker should follow these principles rather than any partisan position was reinforced when this legislature unanimously made the decision to select a Speaker by secret ballot of the elected members instead of appointment by the Premier.

These principles also apply to a vote of confidence. The vote on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne is traditionally viewed as a question of confidence. In our parliamentary system, a question of confidence is a motion which, if defeated, indicates that the government has lost the confidence of the House and is thus unable to continue in office.

In general the principle that applies in this instance is that decisions of the legislature should be taken only by a majority. In a vote such as this one, that is a test of the Assembly's confidence in the government, the decision of non-confidence should be clearly stated by a majority. It would not be appropriate for the vote of the Speaker alone to overturn the status quo as determined in the last election.

I therefore vote in favour of the motion to adopt the address in reply to the Throne Speech. The motion is carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Address be Engrossed and Presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Massey Place:

That the said address be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are of the Executive Council.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Nutana and seconded by the member for Saskatoon Massey Place:

That the said address be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are of the Executive Council.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Ways and Means

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move,

seconded by the member from Saskatoon Massey Place:

That this Assembly, pursuant to rule 103, hereby appoints the Committee of Finance to consider the supply to be granted to Her Majesty and to consider the ways and means of raising the supply.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Nutana and seconded by the member for Saskatoon Massey Place:

That this Assembly, pursuant to rule 103, hereby appoints the Committee of Finance to consider the supply to be granted to Her Majesty and to consider the ways and means of raising the supply.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I would move that this House stand adjourned.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:45.

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Premier

Hon. P. Atkinson
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Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. J. Beatty
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary

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