

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Atkinson:— Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon Nutana. I rise pursuant to rule 11, to present a petition to the Assembly from several thousand residents of Saskatchewan. These petitions are urging that the provincial governments not impose an arbitrary limit on the number of visits to chiropractors that will be covered by medicine.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, I rise under rule 11 to present a petition signed by well over 200 people, mostly from the Willow Bunch, Carlyle, Assiniboia, Estevan, Gravelbourg, Coronach, and Scout Lake, whereby these petitioners indicate their strong opposition in the changes made in the Saskatchewan drug plan and the Saskatchewan dental plan. These petitioners seek the re-implementation of both of these plans as they existed prior to the government's decision to diminish them.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to the Assembly, His Excellency Mahmoud Kassem, the Egyptian Ambassador to Canada. He is sitting in the Speaker's gallery in the front row. He has been visiting our province for the last couple of days and has discussed various subjects, including how we might better co-operate in the field of agriculture and in the field of trade. I think it's important to note that Egyptians, and that country has been a moderate force in the Middle East and a stabilizing force in the Middle East as a country, and has had good relations with our country.

I would like to welcome His Excellency to our Assembly. Perhaps he could stand, and I trust that your stay will be very good.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague, the member from Regina Center, I would like to introduce 25 Regina Plains Community College, English as a second language students who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are accompanied by their teachers, Jim Rader and Elsa Turek.

I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming them and extending them our best wishes for a good and informative visit here this afternoon.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Assembly, two visitors from Scotland who are seated in your gallery, sir. They are my brother,

Sean, and his wife, Margaret, who haven't been in the province since 1980.

Given that we don't see each other very often, I would hope that our hard-nosed disciplinarian whip is going to demonstrate some degree of flexibility in the next couple of weeks. And I know that all members will welcome you here and wish you an enjoyable stay for the next three weeks. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SGI Employee Wage Freeze

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Government Insurance, and it has to do with the salary increase given to the out-of-scope management people three weeks after the March 5 decision by your government and pronouncement by your government that there would be a two-year freeze on all public sector employees.

The minister has failed to answer a number of important questions about this decision last week in the House, so I ask again: when was this management salary increase approved, and can you provide this House and the public with written proof that the decision was formally made prior to March 5?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the increase was approved by the board at a prior meeting to March 5; it was in January. The anticipated raise was budgeted for in our 1987 budget.

As I said to the member last week on a number of accessions, Saskatchewan Government Insurance will participate in the two-year wage freeze. The in-scope employees will commence their two-year wage freeze. The in-scope employees will commence their two-year wage freeze September 30, 1987, and the management will commence thereafter . . .

Mr. Trew: — Madam Minister . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Is that a supplementary? Order. Order. Is that a supplementary?

Mr. Trew: — Madam Minister, do you not understand that your credibility and indeed your government's is what is at stake here. You give us these grand statements that it was approved prior, but with a great deal of reluctance, I might add; you have not come clean with this House yet, and the press and the public are not going to let you hide the truth. You've made the claim that this salary increase for SGI's management staff was approved prior to the March 5 announcement of the two-year freeze, and if you want that claim to be believed by us and by the general public, who frankly do not believe that, if you want that claim to be believed, show this House: when was this salary increase for SGI management approved, and by whom, and table the documents here.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the member from Regina Rosemont, or whatever, North, I guess it is, the wage increase was approved by the board of directors of Saskatchewan Government Insurance in January. The performance evaluation on the senior employees, the management level, was completed, and the increase was kicked in, in April.

I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that it is proper to table board meeting documents, no different than it would be improper to table cabinet documents.

Mr. Trew: — Supplementary. Madam Minister, what have you to hide? If it was indeed approved at the January 29 board meeting for Saskatchewan Government Insurance, show us the minutes. That's all we ask. Show the people of Saskatchewan and show us when it was approved. And I don't think you can, but do it. You broke your own two-year wage freeze just three weeks after the thing was announced. Now come clean; give us the proof. You and your government are the ones that are being questioned here. It's your reputation, everything to do with what the government says. Come clean and table the document here.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I will not table a board meeting document, but I can assure the member that the merit increase based on performance was approved at the January board meeting of Saskatchewan Government Insurance. The performance evaluation was done on the management series, and merit increases were paid accordingly.

I will not table, Mr. Speaker, a board document. I can tell the member -- I will reiterate what I said Thursday, what I said Friday, that SGI will be participating fully in the two-year wage freeze as announced by the Minister of Finance on March 5.

Mr. Mitchell: — Supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. I have difficulty with her last answer. Because if these salary increases were approved at a board meeting in January, how is it that they were not implemented until April?

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Obviously, Mr. Speaker, none of the members opposite listen when they ask questions. I indicated to the member from Regina North that the performance evaluation was done after the end of the fiscal year, which is December 31, and then pay was paid accordingly.

Mr. Mitchell: — Now I'm really confused. I've listened as carefully as I can to the minister, and I'd like her to elaborate upon the procedure by which these increases are implemented. I understand that there is an end to the fiscal year, which I assume from her answer is at the end of December. Then there's a management appraisal. Then there's some kind of formulation of management recommendations. Then there is board approval, which she's indicated occurred in January, and then is there any other approval after that? And how is it, in the context of

all that, that there was no increase actually paid until April, as my colleague says, some three weeks after the wage freeze had been imposed?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, the board of directors approved a wage pool. The senior management of SGI, including the president, does the evaluation performance of individual employees at the management level, and they disperse that pool of money. The board of directors doesn't do it ourselves. We rely on the good judgment of the senior managers and the president, who work with these people on a daily basis.

Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, now I think we're getting somewhere, minister. Can I ask you when that pool that you've described as having been approved in January was actually apportioned by senior management? When was a decision made by SGI to actually go ahead and pay these wage increases?

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the decision to reward the good performance of the management level was made in January, and the funds were dispersed thereafter. The decision was made in January, based on the performance of the corporation in the prior year

And I might add that the member who is questioning me now was quoted in the *Star-Phoenix* as saying he thought that SGI was doing a great job, and this is our way of rewarding some very diligent work that has been done over the past five years to bring SGI into a profitable fiscal situation.

Mr. Mitchell: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see that the minister is reading my press releases, or my quotes.

I would like, though, for her to answer my question. My question was: given that the board of directors had approved a pool of money for senior management in January, when was the decision announced as to how that pool would be apportioned among the management people at SGI?

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — I believe, Mr. Speaker, that after the January board meeting the senior people knew that performance pay would be coming at some point in time. I don't know as to the date that the senior manager would have informed his own branch. I could find out if you wish.

Mr. Mitchell: — Indeed I do so wish, and will the minister also table the documents by which the senior managers, or the president of SGI, announced this increase to the out-of-scope personnel.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I think I'll get the information that the member requests. But as far as tabling internal documents of a corporation, no, I won't do that.

Mr. Romanow: — I have a question for the minister in

charge of SGI. Can the minister confirm that the cabinet, your cabinet, has been asked as of the last two weeks or so to consider carefully this question of the large increases of the out-of-scope workers at SGI with a view to effecting a rollback.

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — I won't confirm or deny what is discussed in cabinet, Mr. Speaker, nor should I. And I think the member knows full well that's highly irregular.

Battleford Provincial Park Golf Cart Rentals

Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Parks, Recreation and Culture, and it concerns The Battlefords Provincial Park golf course. Earlier this year there were tenders released to supply rental golf carts for The Battlefords Provincial Park as well as, I understand, some other golf courses throughout the province that come under your department. I understand that the contract for the rental carts is now being awarded, and I'd appreciate if the minister could tell us who the contract is being awarded to and if it's in the name of a company or corporation. If, in fact, you could tell us who principals are of that company or corporation.

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Battlefords who would do me the honor of asking me a question. I sat here all fall and got none, and sat here three weeks and got none. And final . . . I was beginning to think these guys didn't like me any more, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Mr. Speaker, some things never change, the member for Quill Lakes is still the village idiot.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A contract was awarded after being duly and properly tendered for the operation of golf carts in The Battlefords Provincial Park. I believe the name of the company that won the contract was Upshot, or something of that name, and yes, I can certainly provide the details, and I would also be happy to provide the documents for your perusal.

Mr. Anguish: — Supplementary. I would guess that the minister is telling me he doesn't know who the principals are of Upshot Industries, which is a company registered with the corporations branch of Consumer and Commercial Affairs. I would inform the minister that at least one of the principals is a former member of this legislature in the name of Myles Morin. And I understand that the minister is saying that he couldn't hear because of some of the noise on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to reinforce that at least one of the principals of Upshot is one Myles Morin, who is formerly a member of this legislature, and he has a partnership on the golf carts, as I understand it, with one Regan Hamilton, also a prominent business man in the city of North Battleford.

And what I'm asking the minister in the supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is whether or not you can assure us that the contract was the lowest bid put in for awarding rental carts to The Battlefords Provincial Park golf course?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure all members of the Legislative Assembly the tendering was done absolutely fairly and above-board and the final award of the tender was to by far the best bid. And yes, one of the principals -- I don't know all of their names, but I certainly remember one name -- was a Myles Morin, a former member of the Legislative Assembly. His bid was easily the best bid, Mr. Speaker.

Is the member over there in the opposition saying to me that, because he had at one time served in this Assembly, he has no right to bid on any type of government tender at all. I hardly think that was the intent of the question, but I will be more than pleased to table the document after question period for your perusal.

Mr. Anguish: — Well, supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that you will give me the document. In that document I would hope that you would list who the other bidders were on the tender, and what the price of their bids were. The thing that I find a little amazing, Mr. Minister, is the whole question of fairness. The only fairness in the province of Saskatchewan for any tendering processes that we've seen on this side of the House are friends of the Conservative government in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. I would ask the member to please get to his question please. This is a supplementary, and you know as well as all members know that long preambles are not permitted.

Mr. Anguish: — My supplementary, Mr. Speaker, deals still with the provincial park golf course. I not only understand that Mr. Hamilton is one of the people that have bid with Mr. Morin; also, Mrs. Hamilton is working in the pro shop, a job that would normally be taken by a summer student to gain some income to go back to school in the fall. But is it not true that Mrs. Hamilton has been placed in there so they can watch very closely the tendering process, the operations, so that they can bid on the development proposed and be successful to take over the entire development operation of The Battlefords park provincial golf course?

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of the employment pattern of any Mrs. Hamilton. I wasn't aware she's in the pro shop. I'll certainly look into it. I can tell you with absolute certainty that the innuendo which you just cast out here and the aspersions you've cast are totally false and without foundation.

Let me get back to the first part of your question. The tenders that came in: Upshot Enterprises Ltd. Offered 27.5 per cent of total gross revenue to be remitted to the department, plus a guaranteed minimum payment of \$10,000; Valley West Sales Ltd. Offered 25 per cent of total gross revenue with a guaranteed minimum payment. Upshot Enterprises Ltd., Myles Morin, Regan Hamilton, best bid, awarded the tender.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: — My question to you, Mr. Minister, is whether or not these principals had prior knowledge in the tendering process and whether or not . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. Order, please! Order. Order, please.

Mr. Anguish: — My question is whether or not Upshot had prior knowledge of other tenders that came in, other bids that came in on the tender, after there was already bids involved in the process. That's my question Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Mr. Speaker, Upshot -- I've no prior knowledge; we had no inside track; we had no assistance. The bids came in, as I understand, at the same time, were opened at the same time. It was a superior bid. It's obviously a better bid. It's the one that was awarded.

Once again, should we look at the name and say, this is a former member of the Assembly, therefore he is disqualified from bidding on anything to do with government? I hardly think so, Mr. Speaker.

Variable Grain Rate Benefits

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to direct a question, in the absence of the Premier, to the Acting Minister of Agriculture. And, Mr. Minister, you will realize that when CN applied to the Canadian Transport Commission for a right to introduce variable rates, it offered \$1.50 a ton to discount to the grain companies, as a discount.

However, it has been reported, Mr. Acting Minister, that Cargill grain company is not prepared to pass on, in the event that variable rates are in fact introduced, they are not prepared to pass it along to the hard-pressed farmers, but rather Cargill has announced that, out of that \$1.50, Cargill will keep \$1.25, and are prepared to pass on 25 cents to the farmers.

What I'm asking you, Mr. Minister, is this: are you aware of this fact? And I ask you, what are you prepared to do in order to see that any variable rate benefits be entirely passed on to the farmers?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the details relative to Cargill. I will take notice of that. But it seems to me that . . . Quite frankly, I have a fair amount of faith in the judgment of the farmers out there, and if what you say is true, the . . . It seems to me that what the . . .

Mr. Koskie: — I want to ask the minister: has the government . . . He took a notice of the . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, order. Order, order. Would the member just put supplement.

Mr. Koskie: — I ask the minister -- and I know that you don't have many facts at the tip of your fingers, because that's why you're no longer the minister of Agriculture-- but I'll ask you, Mr. Acting Minister, has the government

joined the New Democratic Party caucus? Has it joined with the wheat pool? Has it joined with other organizations in order to seek an appeal of the Canadian transport decision? Have you, in fact, joined with these organizations? And if not, I'm asking you here: what effort are you prepared to do to seek the Mulroney government, the cabinet of Brian Mulroney, to reverse, in fact, the CTC (Canadian Transport Commission) decision to introduce variable rates?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, one sentence answer on this. Our government was represented and made our position clear at the variable rate hearings, and the only question the farmers of Saskatchewan are asking is, where was the NDP party at those hearings? They did not make a presentation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Koskie: — Well first of all, your facts are inaccurate. KA presentation was made by the caucus of the New Democratic Party.

But I want a further supplement, Mr. Minister, do you recall in '82 your election slogan? "Keep the Crow, let Blakeney go." Do you recall that? Well I want to say, Mr. Minister, or Acting Minister, the Crow has gone; the variable rates are about to be introduced.

And since you betrayed the farmers in the past, I ask you: are you standing here ready here ready to betray the farmers again, or will you, in fact, stand up, seek a repeal of the decision of the CTC to introduce variable rates? Or at the very least, at least see that any benefit as a result of the variable rates will be passed on directly to the hard-pressed farmers of western Canada.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, the farmers of Saskatchewan and western Canada are smart enough to make those judgments if they are of the view that one company isn't being as fair as the other. Certainly I believe they will make those judgments.

As relates to the issue — the Crow, The Transportation Act, all those things, Mr. Speaker — we can sit here and continue to debate past history, if you like, or we can continue to march forward and deal with the things that the farmers of Saskatchewan view as important -- not that that one is not, Mr. Speaker. But there is some history we cannot rewrite there.

It seems to me that the important issues facing Saskatchewan farmers today are things like the Reagan statement yesterday, and all what it embodies in terms of the global trade wars, the subsidy wars, the protectionists, the bizarre global, international, agricultural policies that are hurting our farmers, Mr. Speaker, much more than whether Cargill is going to pass on \$1.50 or 25 cents a ton to Saskatchewan farmers. These global aberrations, Mr. Speaker, have driven the price down to, not 25 cents a ton, not \$1.50 a ton, but, Mr. Speaker, down to \$2 a bushel. And our farmers cannot survive in that kind of environment. I applaud the initiatives of our Premier in raising this nationally, and now internationally, and

we're going to see some action on that front.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Final supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Before the orders of the day, I'm prepare to table, before the orders of the day, the submission from our caucus which the member said didn't exist. I'll table that before the orders of the day. So that the facts are, in fact . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order, order. Does the member have a supplementary?

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Minister, I would ask you this: would you be prepared to table before this legislature today representations that you have made to the federal cabinet to reverse the decision of the CTC for the implementation of the variable rates? Will you be prepared to table the information or anything . . . representation that you made to the federal government?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The submissions that we've made . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please; order, please. We are having some difficulty hearing the answer.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The submissions we've made to government agencies, committee hearings, senate standing, whomever, are there for the public record, and you can get them just as any other citizen in this province or this country in fact can get them, Mr. Speaker.

Our position has always been clear as it relates to the variable rate question. We have no trouble, we have no trouble going to bat for our farmers and saying we want lower rates, we want reduced rates. The only caveat we've ever attached to it is we want reduced rates at every point, not just at some points.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Canada Pension Plan Disability Payments

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, you'll be aware that under the Canada Pension Plan the federal government pays a disability pension to nearly 5,000 Saskatchewan residents who have severe, long-term disabilities which prevent them from participating in the work force.

You'll also be aware, Mr. Minister, that on January 1 of this year the federal government increased these disability pensions by \$152 per month. However, and I underline this, Mr. Minister, anyone who is receiving that Canada Pension Plan disability pension and is at the same time among the poorest of our society -- is receiving social assistance in the province of Saskatchewan -- had that \$152 increase deducted dollar for dollar from their social assistance checks.

My question, Mr. Minister, is: can you explain why you decided to take this increase from these people -- the poorest of the poor in Saskatchewan -- who are receiving

a Canada Pension Plan disability pension?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Of course, Mr. Speaker, we would like everyone to have a little extra money; however, this is a question of fairness. I was recently at a meeting of federal ministers with provincial ministers, and all of the provincial governments are unanimous that it wouldn't be fair to the people receiving assistance to not have this counted as income.

As you know, our system is based on need. You calculate the total need, you calculate the shortfall, and the province, with Canada and the CAP (Canadian Assistance Plan), that makes up the difference. So it's a question of fairness as to which income should not be considered income with respect to social assistance. As a matter of fairness, all of the provinces are following the procedure we are following and saying that this is not a special kind of income. It is income like other income.

As far as I recall, it is not deducted dollar for dollar, but there is a percentage of income that you can earn and this is considered to be earned income or outside income.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Koskie: — Before the orders of the day, I would like to table before this House a submission to the Canadian Transport Commission in the matter of the request for variable rates pursuant to section 45(1)(b) of the Western Grain Transportation Act proposed by CN rail, Northern Sales, Cargill grain, Pioneer Grain, United Grain Growers, Alberta terminals and Stow Seed Processors. This was submitted to the . . . (inaudible) . . . and submitted by Mr. Eric Upshall, MLA, agricultural spokesman for the New Democratic Party caucus March of 1987.

We are prepared to file our submissions. I challenge the minister to file his submissions.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Also, before Orders of the Day, I wish to file the Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1986.

Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order.

I'm prepared to stand here for a long time if hon. members want to keep talking from their seats. They full well know that when the Speaker is on his feet, there shouldn't be this debate back and forth.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 6 -- Protection of Saskatchewan Senior Citizens through Housing and Heritage Programs

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government believes that

senior citizens are very important people. We believe that those who have spent a life time building a better Saskatchewan deserve to live out their retirement years with dignity.

Since 1982, Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government has brought forward innovative programs, not only for the senior citizens but indeed for all citizens of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a motion today recognizing the number of programs this government has implemented for seniors and others. In particular, Mr. Speaker, I wish to move the following motion:

That this Legislature commend the Government of Saskatchewan for providing protection for Saskatchewan's senior citizens through the creation of a home repair program, enriched housing projects and the senior citizens' heritage program.

This motion, Mr. Speaker, will be seconded by the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster.

It is a reality, Mr. Speaker, that . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Solomon: — A point of personal privilege, Mr. Speaker. I can't hear the member at all. I haven't heard a word he said, and I'd like to ask the Speaker if you could ask the member to either speak up or for the government members to be quiet so I could hear what he has to say -- I'm sure it's quite important.

Mr. Speaker: — The point of privilege has been noted and I suppose all members realize what the member's trying to say, but it is not a point of privilege.

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, the reality of many seniors . . . The reality is that many speakers reach their retirement years and find they're on a fixed income. Inflation eats away at that fixed income. So it was in the past years very difficult for seniors to have repairs made to their homes -- such things as storm windows; the house may have needed a new front step; the old doors may needed to have been replaced.

The Progressive Conservative government recognized this. The Progressive Conservative government had the leadership and vision to bring the home improvement program for senior citizens. These were needs, Mr. Speaker, that were ignored year after year by the members opposite while they were in government.

But as I stated, this government recognized the need for a program that provided immediate relief from the shameful neglect shown by the previous NDP government. I repeat that -- the shameful neglect by the former NDP government. Did you hear that?

Seniors, and indeed all Saskatchewan home-makers, are eligible for the \$1,500 matching government grant for the Saskatchewan home improvement program. Home

improvements and renovations continue to be affordable to senior home-makers — or home owners, pardon me — with the help of the Progressive Conservative government, Mr. Speaker.

I give you clear examples that this program under Progressive Conservative government sincerely believes in programs that will effectively help seniors.

The motion that I have presented to this House asks the legislature to commend the Government of Saskatchewan for protecting Saskatchewan senior citizens.

As an individual MLA I cannot think of programs more beneficial for seniors than those introduced by the present Progressive Conservative government. Saskatchewan has been a leader in Canada in programs to help and protect seniors. Mr. Speaker, our Progressive Conservative government established a senior citizen bureau to ensure that programs are geared to the needs of seniors. Those services are now being provided through human resources to the same excellent degree as when the bureau was first established.

Through Sask Housing this government created the task force on senior citizen housing. Another major Progressive Conservative government initiative is the senior citizens' heritage program. It is designed to protect seniors by offering a property tax rebate to seniors who have earned less than \$30,000 per year. The program offers \$700 for senior couples, \$500 for singles, and 200 for each senior in public housing. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is an example of the government that cares about seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the enriched housing for seniors is a housing form that encourages and promotes an independent life-style for our senior citizens. For the information of this Assembly I should like to point out that rent is only 25 per cent of a senior citizen's income in enriched housing. Separate living quarters are combined with common areas. Depending on the housing unit plan, volunteer services and programs provide activities for seniors.

Built largely through our Progressive Conservative government, these housing units have provided better retirements for more than 6,000 senior citizens in Saskatchewan. Land the members opposite maybe note that figure -- 6,000. And under their program there wasn't any.

Mr. Speaker, it is a well known fact that the senior population I Saskatchewan is increasing each year. Indeed, in comparison to the rest of Canada, the seniors population in Saskatchewan is higher than in most provinces. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that as we plan for the next decade, the 1990s, we must, as a government, recognize the ever-increasing number of senior citizens, people who have made their lifetime contribution to building our province.

We as government wish to show that we recognize that seniors have indeed helped to build Saskatchewan, and at the same time allow them to look forward to their retirement years with a degree of optimism. That means government must bring forward the best possible

program for seniors.

In the motion I have presented to this legislature, I make reference to: enriched housing programs for seniors, providing encouragement and protection for those seniors who wish to live an independent life-style at a fair and reasonable cost; and the senior citizens' heritage program initiative by this government that offers property tax rebates to all qualifying senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, all of these programs deal with housing. And when you take into account the many other social and economic programs for seniors, programs started by this Progressive Conservative government, I am sure the members of this legislature will agree that the Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative government is a leader in Canada in progressive and caring programs for senior citizens.

That is why I'm pleased to move the motion which states:

That this legislature commend the Government of Saskatchewan for providing Saskatchewan senior citizens, through the creation of a home repair program, enriched housing projects and the senior citizens' heritage program.

And I would ask all members of the House to support this motion. I thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Britton: — I've missed something, Mr. Speaker. Moved and seconded by the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster. Moved by myself and seconded by the member from Cut Knife.

Mr. Hopfner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me today. I had not had the opportunity to speak in the House for quite some time, and it gives me great pleasure to, after listening to my new colleague speaking. Now I feel it's my turn to once again take the podium.

It gives me pleasure to be able to speak on behalf of my constituents of Cut Knife-Lloydminster. Mr. Speaker, it has been sad that a nation of wisdom is one that honors the elderly, knowing that respect for the elderly is a hallmark of civilization.

It's also been said that the true test of any government is to take a look at how it treats the elderly. Does that government offer protection for the elderly? Does that government have the high degree of respect for the elderly? Let us compare the record of the NDP years and this Progressive Conservative government when it comes to caring for the senior citizens of this province.

(1445)

I would suggest to this legislature that there is a very clear difference in our respective approach to senior citizens. The NDP approach was to treat the elderly as nameless, faceless, collective group of people.

Mr. Speaker, for 10 long years the seniors of this province were treated as a second class citizen under the NDP administration. They were denied even the slightest increase in their seniors' allowances. They were subjected to extra billing on health care. They were told that nursing homes were not a priority with the NDP. The NDP had put a moratorium on nursing home construction.

Simply stated, for 10 long, drawn-out years under the NDP, the seniors of this province were sent a message. And that is, it was a stigma to grow old. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the NDP told our senior citizens it was a stigma to grow old. Did that show respect for the elderly? Did the NDP record respect the needs of our seniors? Did the NDP offer the seniors protection? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is a resounding no!

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government has a real and genuine concern for the senior citizens. We care about seniors as individuals. And we believe in the dignity of the individual. Seniors, to the Progressive Conservative government, are not a group of people in their retirement years. Rather, Mr. Speaker, we believe each and every citizen is an individual who has spent a lifetime making a personal contribution to Saskatchewan.

Some of those seniors were original pioneers of this province. Many of the seniors in Saskatchewan are patriotic citizens who fought for our nation, Mr. Speaker, in two world wars. Many senior citizens built family farms, taught school, worked in factories and shops -- all along the attitude of building the Saskatchewan we know. And we believe that in their golden years they all must be treated with respect and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House asks this legislature to commend the Government of Saskatchewan for providing protection for Saskatchewan senior citizens. I would respectfully suggest that since 1982 protection for seniors has been a priority with this government. Protecting them from extra billing on health care by removing extra billing was an initiative; protecting seniors from inflation by increasing their pensions was another step; protecting senior citizens from inflation and taxes by introducing the senior citizens' heritage program was another step -- just a few steps to mention

Yes, Mr. Speaker, protection of seniors has been part of the high degree of respect we, on this side of the House, on the government side of the House, have for senior citizens. The motion before this House recognizes that, Mr. Speaker.

Since 1982 the Progressive Conservative government has built quality nursing homes throughout this province. And I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to this Assembly, that it has indeed, as for my own riding, been personally gratifying to have the moratorium lifted that the NDP had put on back in 1976.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — That moratorium lifted so as that I could

replace the nursing homes in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, and build and construct a brand-new facility in Cut Knife, Saskatchewan. From my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly thank this government on behalf of all the people living there. We recognize the needs of the aging population. Investing public money in these nursing homes is a way of paying the respect to seniors. It shows that we as a government do care.

In the past we cared enough to help senior home owners through an innovative program that was known as the senior citizen home repair program. And, Mr. Speaker, that was a past program. And I just wanted to indicate to you, through that program, some of the highlights of that particular program. But in order to do so, I'm going to read from a news release that was made June 18, 1987, where my minister, the Hon. Jack Klein, had made the . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would like to draw to the attention of the member that we don't normally refer to other members by their name.

Mr. Hopfner: — All right. The good minister, the minister in charge of Sask housing. But the minister goes on to say:

The Minister responsible for Sask Housing Corporation today announced that the applications will no longer be accepted under the senior citizens' home repair program.

The program which offered grants to seniors for home repairs had been in its second five-year cycle. More than 75 per cent of the eligible home owners had taken advantage of the program — more than 75 per cent. Now I think that is just fantastic.

The minister also noted that 1986 changes to the federal rehabilitation programs, coupled with the announcement of the Saskatchewan home program, provided new opportunities for assistance. He was pleased that the vast majority of seniors have benefited from this program. There have been few applications of recent, and that is basically what his statement was. And seniors will continue to have options for help with renovation projects through other forms of federal and provincial assistance. The minister had said senior citizen home owners will continue to benefit from the Saskatchewan home program.

In addition, the federal-sponsored residential rehabilitation assistance program administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provides grants of up to \$5,000 to low-income seniors for home renovations.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, that with 75 per cent of the seniors, or over 75 per cent of the seniors have taken advantage of this program. And just to give you some idea of numbers . . . and if you take up to the date '84-86, 26,187 households had taken advantage of that senior home repair program. Seventy thousand, eight hundred forty households have taken advantage of that senior home repair program during the life of the program, so there is quite a numerous amount of homes. In 1987 approximately 75,353 households exist in Saskatchewan that are owned

by seniors. So there are the numbers. There's a few thousand that could have possibly, yet have maybe at one time or another taken advantage of the program, and that's if they would have at all.

It gave seniors the opportunity to keep up their dignity and pride of ownership in their homes, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan home repair program, with matching grants of \$1,500, continues the spirit of the original seniors' home repair program. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this government has gone the full measure in caring for and practicing the needs and concerns of senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out that it was this government that since 1982 has taken the leadership in providing programs for seniors. The previous administration was more concerned about potash and uranium mines than in the genuine needs of senior citizens. The record of the Progressive Conservative government in protecting seniors is clear and speaks for itself. This government significantly increased the pensions of the seniors. This government expanded the health care coverage and services for senior citizens. This government established a senior bureau as an agency of government.

Time and time again this government has put forward policies and programs to benefit the senior population, the senior population throughout this province. I would dare say, Mr. Speaker, that compared to other provincial governments, the Progressive Conservative Government of Saskatchewan has a very good record in programs for senior citizens.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — Mr. Speaker, all over North America, all over North America there is a growing segment of the general population known as senior citizens. Here in this province of Saskatchewan the part of our population past the age of 65 is higher than at any other time in the history of this province. This government has shown leadership and vision in taking constructive measures to meet the needs of seniors.

I cannot help but think of the indifferent attitude of the NDP opposition during their administration. How one earth could they ever have decided to put a freeze on nursing home construction? How could they ever have put a moratorium on nursing home construction? Yet the fact is, they did put a freeze on nursing home construction. Obviously, obviously they gave a greater priority to the family of crown corporations than they did to the senior -- our real families.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Hopfner: — When the Progressive Conservative government came into office in 1982, we began to correct the set-backs suffered by the seniors in the years prior to 1982. There have been record levels of nursing home construction since 1982. And that has sent a clear message to seniors -- that this government does care about them.

Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House recognizes the decent, the fair, the caring, and the compassionate record . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would ask some members to please restrain themselves from entering into the debate from their seats. Unfortunately, there are a few who kind of have a running commentary all the way through, and it makes it difficult for others to hear what's going on.

Mr. Hopfner: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it gets fairly awkward, I would imagine, for members of the NDP opposition to have to sit here and listen to the real record, but this is the factual record.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — I'd also like to indicate to them, although we did bring Gainers and all those beautiful industries to the province, that we still carried on with the construction of nursing homes and hospitals and schools, etc., which they never did.

As I was saying, though, Mr. Speaker, and I want to repeat it for the record — that, Mr. Speaker, the motion before this House recognizes the decent, the fair, the caring, and the compassionate record of this Progressive Conservative government in standing up for our seniors.

Since 1982, seniors have learned that this government treats them as first class citizens. Ultimately that respect in high regard for seniors is what makes us a great province. Seniors can look to their older years with confidence, faith, and optimism because of this government.

They recognize our commitment to seniors. That is why this motion before us must be passed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the motion before the House recognizes what this Progressive Conservative government has done since 1982 to benefit all the seniors of Saskatchewan. It is a record of positive achievement for all seniors of Saskatchewan, a record we are proud of, and as such, I believe the Assembly should support this motion, as I will. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased to be involved with this debate considering what has been said by the member from Wilkie and the member from Cut Knife -Lloydminster. Having listened to what they've said, one would think we've died and gone to heaven with all the wonderful things they've done for seniors.

Of course as we all know, the record of this government -- the real record of this government as they have indicated -- is not that we're all in heaven, but the record is that they will in effect be killing people and sending them to heaven because of what they've been doing with our programs for seniors.

I've looked at the motion that the member from Wilkie has put forward, and I can't agree with most of it. At the end of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move an amendment of the motion. If you'd like to hear the

amendment now, I can perhaps inform you so you know exactly what I'm talking about. But I'll do it later.

I'm quite surprised at the comments that were put forward by the members opposite on this motion. The information that they have provided to the House and to the public of this province is characteristic of information that has been provided in the past by the Minister of Finance and by other members of the government side, and that is, misinformation, misleading information, total inaccuracies in terms of what they are doing and saying.

Certainly, it reminds me of . . . the comments they've made with respect to seniors programs where they are talking about what a wonderful job they are doing in protecting seniors and allowing seniors to live a better life in this province reminds me of the very old phrase: putting this group of people in charge of seniors programs is like putting a weasel in charge of the hen-house. I think seniors know this, and they're going to be sending a very clear message in the next campaign, Mr. Speaker.

They talked about the wonderful record that they have in health care. I'd like to just review some of their wonderful moves in health care with respect to senior citizens, and housing as well. They talked about leadership, and they talked about what a terrific record they had with respect to providing protection for senior citizens.

The record will show, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the protection that they would have provided in this last budget is protection seniors would rather do without. They have provided, for example, massive health care cuts which will impact greatly on seniors. There's a 10,000-person waiting list in Saskatoon for hospitals . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, I would ask the member from Regina North to keep his comments on the motion, and it's to do with . . . Order. Order. It's to do with senior housing and the senior citizens' heritage program.

An Hon. Member: — Does that work both ways?

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the member to keep his comments on the motion before the Assembly.

Mr. Solomon: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all due respect, I am making the opposition response to comments that were made by the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster and the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster and the member from Wilkie. And I'd like to have some agreement that I can continue to respond to what they have said. If I cannot do that, I believe it is an infringement upon my right to speak in this House. So with your . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Certainly the member has a right to speak on the motion as I see the motion here before me, and I will allow the member to speak on that motion.

Mr. Solomon: — Okay, Mr. Speaker. The members from Cut Knife-Lloydminster and Wilkie talked about the terrific programs that they've implemented for seniors as it applies to housing. And I'd just like to inform the members present this afternoon that . . . and share some information about their wonderful housing program that they've put forward.

For example, the minister in charge of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation -- that's housing, not health care -- announced just on June 18 of this year that the senior citizens' home repair program will be no more. It's been canceled; it's been terminated.

And of course, this offered grants to seniors for home repairs over the last number of years. The program was set up in the mid-'70s. The member opposite, in their remarks with respect to the resolution, talked about what a wonderful program this was, and what a wonderful program that is. They were talking in the present tense. They didn't even know the program has been cut.

And I'd like to remind members as well that the program was first instituted, not in 1982 or '83 -- the program was instituted in the mid-'70s, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by an NDP government for the benefit of seniors in this province.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — The Premier has issued statements. And I have a copy of a statement issued with respect to the senior citizens' heritage program. And I'll quote him. He goes on to say:

The people of this province are proud of the enormous contribution that senior citizens have made over the years.

And he goes on to say that:

The senior citizens' heritage program is based on a determination to protect and maintain our heritage and quality of life in Saskatchewan.

Words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I maintain, that are dripping with hypocrisy, that are gushing with hypocrisy, because he says in this little article that he's announcing the \$40 million -- which, by the way, was \$38 million — Saskatchewan senior citizens' heritage program. And this of course was announced prior to the announcement of the election campaign last year. It was a one-year effort.

I'm informed that senior citizens are not able to submit applications for this program at the present, in the current fiscal year. And my information tells me as well, this government obviously has set this up as an election ploy for seniors, and has again terminated the program because of their crassness and their double standards.

Good programs for election year. When the year's over, election's over, they withdraw and retract their position. And I think that that is a terrible situation that seniors and others in this province will clearly base their judgment on in the next election campaign.

Another wonderful program that the government should be proud of is that they terminated the senior citizens' school tax rebate. This was a rebate that provided seniors money that they paid on their property towards school taxes. It was an annual thing, no strings attached; as long as they owned the property and paid the taxes, it was rebated. This wonderful government has cut that off, and

costing seniors to the tune of 4 or \$500 a year or more.

The government has had a wonderful track record in terms of seniors. They have increased costs to special care homes — a total of \$73 per month. Here's an example, Mr. Speaker. They talk about their respect for seniors on one hand, and on the other hand they knife the seniors in the back with \$73 a month increases on special care rates. And I think that this is . . .

And I have some information that I'd like to read into record, Mr. Speaker, on the special care rate increases in particular. And I quote a *Leader-Post* article, April 7, '87:

Special-care home residents will be charged an extra \$73 a month to live in one of the province's 147 non-profit nursing homes, the province's director of continuing care said Monday.

Senior citizens groups around this province are absolutely appalled at what this government has done. One of them has indicated that senior citizens groups are unhappy with the news. And that is an understatement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I quote:

The increase will take a "significant bite" out of a seniors' incomes . . .

And this is from a person by the name of F. E. Ewald, who's the executive director of the Senior Citizens' Service. It goes on to say that:

It's a double blow for seniors, who are seeing costs for institutional care rise while budgets for groups that help the elderly stay at home are being cut . . .

And:

The government should make some services a priority instead of making across-the-board cutbacks that hurt everyone . . .

And again a double standard. They increase costs for seniors, yet they provide a \$300 million a year tax break for oil companies. What a wonderful government to have. The senior citizens — my advice to them is they should all incorporate as oil companies. Maybe they'd get some decent programs from these members opposite instead of the garbage they've been getting from them over the past number of years.

They talked about improving services for seniors. The member from Wilkie talked about the neglect of the NDP government. And they talked about how Saskatchewan has been a leader in seniors' programs. Well I think what he's done is he's mixed up his words. He should have said that . . . And I agree that Saskatchewan has been a leader in senior citizens' programs, and that was under the NDP government; it ceased to be the fact in 1982 when this government came to power.

And it should have read — the member from Wilkie, and I'd like to correct his remarks — it should have read that there's been a severe neglect of the Conservative government with respect to senior citizens' programs.

And I'd like to also correct the member from Wilkie, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He commented about how the Saskatchewan home repair grant has been such a wonderful program, and everybody's participating in it. Of course it is a fairly good program, except he's not aware the program has been terminated, and that he's either misinforming this legislature, or he's been misled by the people who have written his remarks for this speech.

They talk about great services for seniors. Well, the NDP government introduced SAIL (Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living). What the government has done is frozen and cut back on SAIL. We introduced the prescription drug program. What this government is doing is they've totally annihilated the prescription drug plan, thereby passing on 50 to \$60 million a year extra costs on our seniors. And I think that that is disgusting.

They talked about wonderful health care programs for seniors, like the chiropractic program which we introduced as a government, and they are now cutting back and restricting visitations to chiropractors by seniors.

They talked about the senior citizens' home repair grant. We introduced it as a government; the New Democratic Party introduced that program which benefited seniors. They have eliminated the program.

They talked about the wonderful job they're doing with nursing homes. They've bumped up the prices almost out of reach for most of them, most of the seniors that participate, and in fact we have now in Saskatoon a 10,000 person waiting list for hospitals, and we have . . . for some seniors what that means is an 18-month wait to get in for surgery.

(1515)

Eighteen months when you're 65 or 68 or 70 years of age is a fairly significant time frame in your life. And what this government has done, they've said this is a terrific program for seniors. Well, I think that's garbage, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the member for Cut Knife-Lloydminster talked about, and I quote him:

The true test of a society is how we treat our seniors.

Well, what a lark. Isn't this incredible! I'd like to remind the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster that the true test of a society is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much, like oil companies. The true test of a society is whether we as a government, we as a society, and we as a province, can provide enough to those who have little.

I think he's got all of his advice and notes written by somebody who's been drinking or something. I don't know what his problem is, but there are some very serious errors in what these people are saying. They're trying to mislead the people of this province with respect to their

record on senior citizens' programs and housing programs, and I maintain that that has got to stop. And I would ask the Deputy Speaker and Speaker to certainly jump in any time and correct the record as they're going off on tangents.

The member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster talks about "protecting our seniors has been our priority." "Protecting our seniors has been our priority as a government." Can you believe that statement? With that kind of protection, the seniors would be better left to the ups and downs of the market-place, rather than have these clowns in charge of programs that affect their lives. Eighteen months to get into surgery wait, the cut-backs in all the health programs -- unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

And they talk about leadership; leadership and senior citizens' programs. Well I'll tell you, if what they have illustrated with their performance with respect to seniors is leadership, then this province is in more severe difficulties and dire straits than anyone can imagine, because the leadership they provided in most programs has been abominable and incompetent and mismanaged -- to be polite at best, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And what they're going in seniors is a clear indication of the continuing bungling of the government.

I have another newspaper article here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the *Leader-Post* — actually it's from the *Star-Phoenix*. And the title is: "Higher rates for home care not unfair." And of course that's a quote of the Minister of Health. And he says:

Increasing home care rates by 66 per cent is neither unreasonable nor unfair.

And I think that's a statement that people should be aware of. The costs for services provided under the program will rise from \$3 per unit to \$5 per unit. And he goes on to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that:

The government had to decide if the increases would cause undue hardship to those under the home care program, and we didn't think it would.

Well, I think that if that's kind of the opinions that they are promoting in their cabinet and that they are promoting as a government, that we didn't think it would hurt, I think they should take another look and retract what they have done in terms of harming senior citizens. And rather than increasing 66 per cent home care rates to seniors in this province, they should perhaps try cutting the \$300 million a year-plus and they're giving to oil companies like Exxon, Texaco, and Shell — those starving, poor oil companies that use our money outside of this province.

The Saskatchewan Home Care Association put some figures together, and they said that the most expensive home care clients, representing about 4 per cent of all clients, cost the program less than \$1,200 a month each to maintain in the home, which is less, by the way, than half of the amount it would cost if they were admitted to a nursing home. The program serviced about 19,000 people in '86-86, providing 1.4 million hours of service — or dollars, I should say — and units, out of a budget of 22 million.

And of course the 9,591 people in nursing homes and level 4 hospital beds in the same period cost about, not \$22 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$200 million. So the home care program is a good program, and for them to increase rates by 66 per cent is a clear indication of where their philosophy is.

The Conservative government of Saskatchewan, in the budget and in this motion, are clearly illustrating to the people of this province that the philosophy of the Conservative Party is going to be the leading light, is going to be the symbol for people in this province over the next number of years, and they are implementing and enforcing that philosophy through the program cuts, through the acute protracted restraint program of the government, that of course will hurt middle-income and low-income people, and will help those that have a great deal of wealth and power, like the oil companies.

And I think that people will recognize, if they haven't already — and I can tell you that most people I've spoken to have recognized that this government's days are numbered — but they will recognize the government's day is numbered and they're gone in the next election campaign.

We have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some interesting statistics with respect to the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation as they apply to seniors as well. The senior citizens' home repair assistance Act, of course, that was terminated with this recent budget — another one of their wonderful moves in terms of providing programs for seniors. There was about \$5 million estimated in the previous budget, and of course this budget they're going to be spending \$10,000, and I think that that is interesting to note for seniors.

The Saskatchewan housing program provides grants to non-profit sponsors of senior citizens' accommodation. And that of course is another leading light senior citizens' program, and this government has cut it by 55 per cent. They've reduced it from \$5 million to \$2.2 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I can say that grants from the home improvement for the disabled program has not been cut. I mean, can you imagine people walking around this province and saying I never got fired today, or I never got my program cut, as sounding like good news? Well, I think that's terrible news. In terms of a program that provides assistance to disabled seniors, they have left it at \$200,000. A program like that, if they had any sincerity in what they say, if they had any belief in some of the rhetoric that the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster espoused earlier, then they would be improving programs for seniors.

Seniors have toiled in this province for the 65-plus years that they lived in it, and they have done a terrific job in terms of setting up programs like medicare and so on. And I guess what's happened is that the government opposite have failed to recognize that the people that worked in 1961 and '62 to put together the finest health care program in the world, let alone in North America, who are now seniors, are being rewarded. The recent 25th anniversary of the institution of the health care program

— rather than marking the 25th anniversary as the first time that a government on this continent thought enough of the people it governed to ensure that they had a right to stay healthy; rather than marking that celebration; rather than celebrating the 25th anniversary for the launching of a CCF model program which was created on the principle that a family's health shall never have to depend upon a family's wealth; rather than doing those things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what they have done is they have instead, by celebrating, they've reduced nursing positions by 30 per cent. They've fired highly-skilled doctors . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The member's comments are straying quite a distance from the motion. I would ask the member to speak on the motion before the Assembly.

Mr. Solomon: — Rather than celebrating the 25th anniversary of health care, they have fired doctors who provide services to . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order. I've asked the member to relate his comments to the motion that's before the Assembly . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Well, you're drawing a pretty long bow. I would ask you to stay closer to it.

Mr. Solomon: — What they have done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of the medical care programs as they pertain to seniors and to seniors' housing, is that they have provided a very heavy burden. They have lifted a heavy burden, rather than from the shoulders of seniors, they have placed this heavy burden of increased costs for health care onto the shoulders of seniors. And that goes for people that are involved with the provincial housing programs that are in place for seniors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on and on and on about the incredibly bad record of the Conservative government. And I think the member from Meadow Lake is encouraging me to do so, and I think that perhaps I should.

But I'd like to perhaps draw this into some kind of focus, and the focus being that the members opposite say one thing about what they've done for seniors' home programs, and they do the opposite. They say one thing in terms of health programs for seniors and others, and they do the opposite. And I can't figure out why they are doing that. Are they ashamed; are they ashamed of what the government has done with respect to seniors' programs? Because if I was a member of that government, I would be ashamed and I'd resign, because I wouldn't be able to put up with that nonsense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I must say that the former member from Saskatoon Eastview was quite an honorable person by taking that route.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to move an amendment to this motion at this point in time. The amendment I'd like to put forward, seconded by my colleague from Regina Victoria:

That all the words after the word "legislature" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

regrets that the provincial government has betrayed Saskatchewan's senior citizens by eliminating the senior citizens' housing program and by its erosion of health care and other services for seniors.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to join in this debate, because it's a significant debate in that it touches upon measures of protection for a group of people that through their labor and hard work have ensured that we have the wealth that we now have in this province -- the people who have built up this province.

Mr. Speaker, in addressing the motion, some thoughts come to mind about what is a government's approach. Why are they proposing to put forward this motion at this time? And if nothing else, the government's actions of late, as witnessed in the budget process and I think, exemplified in the motion, suggests a divide-and-conquer strategy for ensuring electoral support in the coming years. No effort, it would seem, is being spared, Mr. Speaker, to alienate some groups, while at the same time trying to shore up support among other groups. For example, we are pitting the weak against the powerful. It would seem that those in need of social assistance -- welfare, if you like -- get the short end of the stick and no end of insensitivity and crude comments from the minister responsible, while on the other hand, Mr. Chairman, there seems to be no end of public moneys available to assist corporate welfare bums like Peter Pocklington.

We see a government that seems to want to play a divide-and-conquer game when it comes to rural and urban farmers and workers. We see . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order, order, order. The question before the Assembly is motion no. 3 with the amendment from the member from Regina North West and seconded by the member from Regina Victoria. And I would ask the member to keep his comments to the motion and the amendment. He's straying quite a ways away from what's on the motion and the amendment.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Let's speak to the resolution. Providing protection, Let's look at how protection has been provided by this government when it comes to funding for rural municipalities, as opposed to funding for urban municipalities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I can read the motion:

(That) this legislature commend the Government of Saskatchewan for providing protection to Saskatchewan's senior citizens through the creation of a home repair program, enriched housing projects and the Senior Citizens' Heritage Program.

I can also read the amendment to the motion:

That all the words after the word "legislature" be

deleted and the following substituted therefor: regrets that the provincial government has betrayed Saskatchewan senior citizens by eliminating senior citizens' housing programs and by its erosion of health care and other services for seniors.

(1530)

So I'd ask the member to keep his comments to the motion and the amendment.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Chairman, surely protection would pertain to something as simple as property taxes. That we have seniors in rural Saskatchewan that have to pay property taxes; we have seniors in urban Saskatchewan that have to pay property taxes; and surely when I address matters of funding for municipalities that affect property taxes, surely we speak here of protection in the broadest sense.

Mr. Chairman, we've seen a provincial government that seems to turn its back on senior citizens in urban municipalities as they play this game of divide and conquer through massive cuts to urban municipalities, while on the other hand they continue this divide-and-conquer game by ensuring that funding levels are maintained for rural municipalities.

And I appreciate and I agree that funding levels should be maintained. I disagree, however, that funding levels, which provide a measure of protection, Mr. chairman, through ensuring that services are maintained, and through ensuring that property taxes are lowered and that property taxes are reduced.

But I really regret and would point out, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to protection they don't seem to provide that kind of protection for seniors in urban Saskatchewan. Simple things like, when we speak of protection, Mr. Speaker, in the broadest sense, you speak of enjoyment of life — the ability to enrich oneself, the ability to visit a library, because surely that's part of protection, Mr. Speaker.

We note, on the one hand, that the government provides a new book purchase program which will be applied to all libraries in Saskatchewan with the exception of those libraries in the larger cities, those that are funded by the municipalities. Again a divide-and-conquer game, Mr. Speaker. the list goes on; the list goes on. Government funds are available to help people install expensive swimming pools in urban centers or anywhere in the province. On the other hand, special home care rates go up. The list goes on, Mr. Chairman — divide and conquer.

And it now appears through the motion that the government is engaging in a pitiful attempt to curry favor with Saskatchewan's senior citizens and somehow, through the motion, trying to undo the kinds of things that it has done through its actions as exemplified in the budget process and its actions of recent years.

Let me suggest to you why this won't work, Mr. Speaker. I think seniors, perhaps more than most, know that you do

not turn your back on real friends and turn to fair-weather friends. They know that in a divide-and-conquer game, a group that is being favored today could just as likely be shafted tomorrow. They can see through your shallow, transparent veneer of concern that the motion puts before us.

It's real action and real concern that the senior citizens of Saskatchewan want to see. Fair-weather friends, fair-weather friends, Mr. Chairman. Friends when it suits their purposes, but not there when you need them. Friends that try to fool you. Friends with an inconsistent approach of concern one day, concern one day, and hardship the next day, Mr. Speaker.

And I would ask the members that moved the motion and the members on the other side do they really believe that cutting the senior citizens' home repair program one day and then saying to the senior citizens of this province: but you can take advantage of the home program that we put into place -- is somehow a blessing? I don't know where the blessing is in that, Mr. Chairman.

You take a home repair program that has fantastically inflated prices for work, for home repair work in this province; you take out direct help for senior citizens and say to them, but you can have help for senior citizens and say to them, but you can have help; under this program. You can have help now that prices have been grossly inflated as a result of the government's program — and that's a benefit for you. I'm not sure where the benefit is. They don't know where the benefit is.

It's an incredible feat or leap in logic on the part of the government, Mr. Speaker, to take away direct help for a group of people who we took the position and, as the government did for a short period of time, that direct help was necessary — was in fact a good thing, to encourage senior citizens to be able to stay in their own homes, rather than move into nursing homes or into hospital care, or what have you.

Now they say, well, those kinds of benefits don't make sense; you just take advantage of the program that's there, notwithstanding the fact that prices and labor cost and prices for goods under the home repair program have just been grossly inflated in Saskatchewan — grossly inflated.

And I would ask the members opposite whether they really believe that waiting until the last minute — waiting until the last minute in a desperate scramble to shore up political support — that waiting until the last minute to announce the continuation of the seniors' heritage program will somehow undo the hurt, will somehow undo the anxiety that has been created by your budget process which saw a discontinuation or a massive restructuring of the prescription drug plan. Do you really believe that? Do you really believe that taking that kind of callous, cynical, political action is somehow going to undo the hurt and the anxiety?

Do you really believe that, and especially the member from Wilkie, that he can rewrite history and expect people to believe himself? Do you really believe that you can rewrite history and expect the senior citizens of this province — in fact, all the people of this province — to believe you?

Do you really believe — and because the member from Wilkie said, Mr. Speaker, in opening his remarks, and even if the member from Regina North West couldn't hear him, I distinctly heard him say — that there was no senior citizens' home repair program prior to 1982? Well I just want to clarify that, Mr. Chairman.

Look here in the annual report of 1975 for the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, and it speaks of:

The Senior Citizens' Home Repair Assistance Act, 1973.

This Act enables the corporation to provide grants to elderly persons who require assistance in making necessary repairs to their homes.

Unless he thinks, unless he forgot about that, that maybe that was a temporary program, let's just turn to the 1979 annual report. And again, the annual report for the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation:

Programs, repair.

Senior citizens' home repair program provides an opportunity for senior citizens to remain independent in their own homes by assisting them with repairs that will make their homes more comfortable and livable.

In 1980, Mr. Chairman, we see it again:

The senior citizens' home repair program provides an opportunity for senior citizens to remain independent in their own homes . . .(etc.)

Unless he thinks that, somehow, that this is something that the government prior to 1982 might have discontinued prior to 1982, let me turn to the 1982 annual report, a report that was tabled in this legislature by the minister responsible, the member for Kelsey-Tisdale — the member for Kelsey-Tisdale, and that annual report, that annual report, Mr. Chairman, speaks of a senior citizens' homes repair program which assists senior citizens to remain independent in their own homes, etc. How can the member for Wilkie stand up in this House and say there was no home repair program prior to 1982? He's trying to rewrite history. It's a good thing that the people of Saskatchewan, and especially the senior citizens of Saskatchewan, will not forget.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Do you really believe, do the members on the opposite side really believe, and especially the Minister for SaskTel, do they really believe that somehow the senior citizens of this province and others in this province will forget that in 1982 a Progressive Conservative Party promised the people of Saskatchewan that senior citizens would have free telephone service as soon as they were elected? Do you think that somehow the senior citizens of Saskatchewan are going to believe anything you people have to say? Not after that one.

Do you really believe that through debating a motion in the House, and that putting forward a motion that again, as I say, is but a thin veneer of concern, do you really believe that somehow people are going to forget that at the head of the "keep our doctors" committee, at the head of those that opposed medicare in this province was Staff Barootes; Staff Barootes, the senator; Staff Barootes, the PC fund raiser? Do you really believe that the senior citizens of Saskatchewan are going to forget that? Fair-weather friends, Mr. Chairman, fair-weather friends.

And the unkindest cut of all — the unkindest cut of all — let's set the scenario here. Here we have a scenario, a scenario of a Premier who's trying to curry favor desperately with the federal government in Ottawa, and I speak of the present Premier who, a couple of years ago, in trying to shore up his own support in this province, trying to get help for western farmers, was willing to pay any price, any price to try and get that help -- any price at all. One of the things that the Premier was asked for was support for a motion which would oppose -- oppose! -- the federal government's announced intention of de-indexing pensions.

An Hon. Member: — And did he do it?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — And did he do it? No, he wouldn't do it. Would any of the members on that side of the House support that motion? No, they wouldn't do it. It was one thing for the Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba to join with the government of the day and say, we oppose de-indexing; we oppose coming down on senior citizens who have worked so hard to build this country; we oppose that kind of action. Would the Premier of this province do it? No, he wouldn't do it because he was trying to get help in other quarters from the Prime Minister, and he turned his back on senior citizens in this province.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — And that's one that the senior citizens of Saskatchewan will not forget. They will not forget, and they know your game of divide and conquer, and they know that in the divide-and-conquer game that one day you might be favored and the next day you might not be favored. They know that in the de-indexing debate that went on in this country, and in this province, that the Premier of Saskatchewan turned his back on them, and that he's likely to do it again at some future time if it suits his political purposes, if it suits your political purposes.

They know you as a government that will promise anything at any time to any group in this province in order to win votes. That's how they know you, and that's why they won't support you. They won't support you because you're fair-weather friends. They won't support you because they know that one day, yes, you might help them, but the next day you're not going to be there. They don't trust you.

Mr. Chairman, the senior citizens of Saskatchewan, indeed all the people of Saskatchewan, like substance. They appreciated the efforts of the NDP, and the CCF before it, to build a prosperous and secure province for all

of the people of the province. I emphasize, all of the people, not just the senior citizens, not just the elderly, but for the young and for working people as well because they're tied in to everyone in their province; they're part of the texture and the fabric of this province. They are not an isolated little group.

They have concerns, too, about youth unemployment, and they have concerns, too, about their grandchildren, and the fact that there's no hope, and there's no vision and there's no opportunities for them. They have concerns about that, too. That's part of their protection. That's part of their security, Mr. Chairman, to know that those kinds of opportunities exist, and they don't exist now.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

(1545)

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chairman, the senior citizens of this province appreciate real progress — real progress such as medicare, real progress such as the prescription drug plan. They will not support fair-weather friends. I think we should all recognize the contribution that has been made by senior citizens, the people who worked and labored so hard to build a prosperous Saskatchewan, even if it's been frittered away in recent years by the members opposite.

But we should recognize the kinds of things that they have done to secure for us a province that has many, many things going for it, and especially the people of this province. We should recognize them by being serious and sincere in coming to grips with the special problems that senior citizens face in this province; the special challenges that they face by virtue of their age; the special challenges that they face by virtue of infirmities and health problems.

We should ensure, Mr. Chairman, that after a lifetime of building, of setting the stage for our wealth, that we never turn our back to them. We should never, never condone the kinds of actions and the kinds of activities that we've seen from the government opposite in recent years. That's why I will not support the motion because, like I say, it's a thin veneer of concern. I will support the amendment, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak in support of the motion for the hon. member from Wilkie, and against the amendment.

Before I start though, I must say that as a relative newcomer to this Assembly, that I find it's somewhat appalling when I hear members of the opposite as we've heard in the last few days, and some of the behavior that we've witnessed. It's quite obvious why they're on that side of the House. But when I hear terms like garbage and liar, and the suggestion that members on this side are on drugs, or that because a different point of view is expressed that it sounds like he's been drinking, I think that the decorum of this place . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

An Hon. Member: — I haven't heard anything related to the resolutions before us, Mr. Speaker, and I wonder if you could bring the member to order.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The point of order isn't well taken. I've heard . . . order, order. I've heard members from their seat made these comments, and that does also enter into the debate as the Speaker can hear it, and I would ask all members on both sides of the House to refrain from that kind of conduct. I don't think it's . . . it isn't very good for the decorum of this House; it doesn't do anything for this House, and I would ask the member from Saskatoon Mayfair to refrain from that also.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the member for Weyburn could be quiet while I make the point of order. The point of order is simply this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want you to examine the record and to decide, on reflection, whether the point of order was in order or not. And I ask you to examine the record, and that's all I want you to do. And you can report back to the House later if you see fit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — I ruled on the point of order, and that's the way it'll stand.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased to be speaking in favor of the motion and opposed to the amendment. If I can point out that certainly in my constituency of Saskatoon Mayfair that we have a good many senior citizens. And it might come as a bit of a shock to members opposite, but many of them certainly do not agree with the position that they take as to this government's stand as far as seniors are concerned, and the services and programs that have been provided.

We're talking about people who have spent many of their working years contributing to their communities, whether in Saskatoon Mayfair or in other areas of Saskatoon, or indeed any place in this province.

There's no doubt about it that this government has been very involved during the last five years in building this province and making it a better place for all to live. And I can assure you that the senior citizens of this province understand full well the situation in regard to the economy as it is today. There's no doubt about it that they understand that there are times when programs have to be cut back to some extent, or the line has to be held, because most of these people have come up through tough times and good times, and they know full well that a government can only spend as much money as it has. They are ready to accept the types of changes that we have made, and are certainly in support of the types of things that we're doing.

And a letter that was sent to the editor of one of the papers

;in the province, I think, is indicative of the feeling that many seniors have, and it goes on:

As a senior citizen, I wish to compliment the Saskatchewan government on its efforts to balance the budget.

I raised four children as a single parent and never, ever took any welfare money. I always worked, and not in any professional positions, either. I'm now 73 years old and collect the pension (no subsidies). I've never lived better and I'd gladly pay my share to balance the budget.

Why don't people realize the government can only spend as much as it collects and it must collect from the producing people?

I wonder if the ones doing most of the complaining produce anything, and I also wonder if they pay anything.

And I think that's indicative of the feeling that many seniors in this province have, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Since 1982 this government has made the protection of seniors a special priority. First of all, our commitment to seniors is part of the Progressive Conservative belief in protecting the family and, in this particular case, the seniors. Secondly, we as a government believe in the dignity of the individual, and we know that there are certain people in the province that need help during specifically tough times. We are committed to helping those people who need that type of help.

Over the past four years we have built an impressive record when it comes to helping Saskatchewan seniors, and I'll deal with some of those specifically a little later, Mr. Speaker.

The motion before the House commends the Progressive Conservative government for what it has done in providing protection for Saskatchewan seniors with respect to the home repair program, enriched housing projects, and the senior citizens' heritage program. The home repair programs have helped many of my constituents in Saskatoon Mayfair who are seniors, and I think it's perfectly obvious, when we listen to some of the members opposite, that they, in fact, do not believe in change of any kind, that we shouldn't be reassessing programs from time to time and making changes that are in step with today's needs.

A prime example of that, of course, is the fact that the home repair program has indeed been changed, and we have to consider the fact that with the implementation of the Saskatchewan home program and also changes to the rehabilitation program sponsored by the federal government, that it is time to take a look at those programs where there are duplication and make changes.

These programs have helped seniors to pay for repairs and renovations on their homes that they might not otherwise have been able to afford. Since 1984, over 25,000 seniors took advantage of the program known as the seniors' home repair program, and it's expected that

many thousands of seniors will also take advantage of the current Saskatchewan home program.

During the history of the seniors' home repair program, many seniors expressed their gratitude to this government for helping them with needed renovations in their homes. The government of Premier Grant Devine was the only government in Canada . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order. I've asked members not to refer to other members by name: either by their position or their constituency.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — The government of our Premier, the member from Estevan, was certainly the only government in Canada to bring in such a useful and comprehensive plan to help seniors with home repairs. Seniors with homes will be able to receive the benefits of the Saskatchewan home program also.

Mr. Speaker, throughout history it has been said that a person's home is his castle. That's especially true for seniors. This government recognized how expensive it can be for seniors to renovate and repair their homes. The senior citizens' home repair program was a very innovative way of helping seniors to keep their homes in good shape. In fact, concerning the number of seniors that took advantage of the program during its existence are a clear endorsement of the success of the program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to note that all seniors can still receive those benefits through our Saskatchewan home program. I have reason to believe Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in all of North America to offer such extensive assistance to senior home owners for repairs and renovations. As a government we are indeed proud of that fact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a time a few years ago when there was another provincial government in office. They didn't have the same concern for seniors as does the Progressive Conservative government, although they tried to make out that they in fact do.

Let's look at some of the ways in which they ignored the needs of seniors. Their attitude was never to bring in such innovative programs for seniors as we have done. They liked to go back in history and talk about dates when home repair programs were introduced by their government. But let me remind them of a few other dates that have happened in the past, and the fact that they haven't always done what they would try to lead people to believe.

Nineteen seventy-five. We heard the member from Victoria speaking about that date not too long ago. Well let's think about a 1975 NDP promise. And what was that promise, Mr. Deputy Speaker? More nursing homes for rural centers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well in fact the result was that in 1976, the very next year after that election, they placed a moratorium on nursing home construction which was to last until 1982, when the Conservative government came in.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a fine example of a party

which makes out like they're the saviors of all of our senior citizens. They're the only ones that have ever done anything for them. Can you imagine — a moratorium on nursing home construction at a time when nursing homes were really needed and when our economy was very buoyant.

Well the PC record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since that time has been the building of over 1,500 nursing home beds across the province. We recognize the needs, and we have done something about meeting those needs.

So we talk about a party then that placed a moratorium on the construction of nursing home construction for seniors, and one really has to question the credibility of that particular group opposite. That shows how much they cared about seniors.

Let's look at another example. Let's go back to the 1978 election. What were the NDP promising at that time? Well they promised to improve ambulance service. Yes, they were going to improve ambulance service, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well in actual fact, by 1982 there was such a lack of funding for ambulance services that there was indeed a real crisis in the province.

Now what has this government done since then? We've increased funding for ambulance services by 83 per cent since 1982, and introduced a new funding formula resulting in better ambulance service across the province, and particularly in rural Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the main group of people that would benefit from that increased service are the seniors.

We talk about health care. What have we done there? Well let's take a look at that. In 1975 and 1978, what did the NDP go about the province promising? Well, they said, we're going to have the best health care system in Canada. The member from Quill Lakes was probably one of those who was running around making that very same promise, two different elections in a row. Well what did he do? What did he do? They waited for a long time for that new hospital in Watson, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I didn't see the member from Quill Lakes doing a heck of a lot about getting that new hospital in Watson. That's very much appreciated by the folks out there. And I'll tell you, when the next election rolls around, the people in that Watson and Quill Lakes area are going to remember that.

Well what did they do with the best health care system in Canada in 1975 and '78? They put that moratorium on nursing home construction. Do they ever talk about that?

What about the cut-backs that were made in funding for hospital beds and staff in 1976. We hear the members from Saskatoon Center talking about all these great things. Well, does she talk about the cut-backs that were made in funding for hospital beds and staff in 1976?

What about the cancer clinic? What about the expenditures there? This government has moved to improve the facilities as far as cancer treatment in this province are concerned.

Another thing that this government has done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we banned extra billing in this province,

something that the members opposite wouldn't do. We've added over 1,500 special care home beds for seniors. We've built and expanded hospitals in rural and urban areas and we've increased staff levels and improved equipment for hospitals. So indeed I think our record speaks for itself as far as some of the things that we've done in health care in this province.

(1600)

We can also take a look at our social policy — some of the things that have been done by this government in the last five years; some of the things that were lacking by the previous administration. One of the things that we did, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was to increase allowances for seniors. We doubled the income supplement from \$25 to \$50 a month for the single low-income earners, and for couples it was increased from \$45 to \$75 a month. Something certainly that was very badly needed in that particular time.

Another area that was mentioned here before, but I'm sure the members opposite haven't got the message yet — a 1975 NDP promise. Well, what was it this time? It was to have a voluntary pension plan to cover those without Canada Pension Plan or a company plan. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact of the matter is that no action was taken by that bunch in over seven years. The government then, now, until today, brought in our voluntary pension plan for Saskatchewan people, and that's something that's been very widely accepted by all of those in Saskatchewan. We brought it in. They're opposed to it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government has done a great deal is through those home programs that I mentioned earlier — the home repair program, enriched housing, and senior citizens' heritage program. You know, we hear a lot of noise from the other side of the House about the home care program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order. Members on both sides of the House will have an opportunity to enter into this debate any time that they would like to, so I would ask them to listen to the debate that's going on.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it wasn't long ago we heard the member from Regina Victoria talking about the home care program. Well I think that the letter that I have here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has a little bit more to it than what we were hearing from the member for Regina Victoria, and I think it's one that we have to consider when we consider who wrote this letter. It was written to the Minister of Health, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it says:

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Home Care Association, I am writing to thank you for the increase in home care funding and recognition of the assessment and co-ordination costs associated with the district co-ordinating committee. In these trying times every dollar counts, and you may be assured these will be handled with great care.

And this was from the president of the Saskatchewan Home Care Association. And I think, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, that one can consider that this is a person who speaks for seniors and for the home care program in Saskatchewan, and not the member from Regina Victoria.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you stop and consider the fact that over 6,000 Saskatchewan seniors have been provided better retirements through enriched housing, I think that's pretty significant. And I think it's a sure sign that this government does care about our seniors and is doing everything that we can to provide a better living for them in their later years. When you stop and consider that senior citizens' heritage program offers seniors a grant of up to \$500 for single seniors and \$700 for senior couples, that as well is very significant. And I know that it's been very well accepted by seniors throughout this province, and something again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was brought in by this government.

I would suggest to this legislature that few governments, if any, in Canada or in any other country could match the record of this government in protecting senior citizens. It says that we have built up a solid record of performance in providing for the future needs of those in their retirement years, Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. The record speaks for itself. Protecting senior citizens will continue to be a priority with this government. We're proud of what we have done to assist our seniors in this province and those in their retirement years.

As a government, we have shown leadership providing programs for seniors, and that is why I believe this legislature should support the motion before us. It correctly commends the government for what it has done for seniors. It recognized the Progressive Conservative Government of Saskatchewan in its efforts to protect senior citizens. And as such, Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that we all support this motion and oppose the amendment. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — I wonder if the member will entertain a brief question before he resumes his seat.

An Hon. Member: — No.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to take part in this motion, and what I consider is a very important motion in Saskatchewan. I see here that the Conservative government across the way has proposed a motion to commend the government for providing protection for senior citizens in this province. Well I want to say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the member who has just sat down from Saskatoon Mayfair, who did not address the amendment which I intend to address, but spoke of all the good things that have happened to the senior citizens in this province . . . and I want to say that is just not what's taking place out there.

I want to speak about the amendment, Mr. Speaker, the amendment which reads and talks about the health programs and the health care for our senior citizens. And I think that the members across the way who can stand up in this House and say that they support senior citizens on

one hand on the other hand they can take away the type of programs that they have taken away from our senior citizens — not only have they taken away affordable housing for our senior citizens, but they have taken away the drug program.

And I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, that there was not one of those members sitting on the other side that went around in the fall of 1986 and campaigned on the platform that they were going to cut the drug program in this province. They didn't go to the senior citizens' homes and campaign and say they were going to cut the drug program. They didn't go into the homes and say to the senior citizens that they were going to put on another burden, a 7 per cent sales tax. They never said that. But that's what they've done, Mr. Speaker.

They went out in this province and tried to destroy a group of people that deserve so much more and are getting so much less from the government. And it's happening on a daily basis.

And the hardships that the seniors are facing through this drug program. I have senior citizens who are coming up to me and are saying, instead of taking four pills, I'm just going to take one; I just can't afford to put the money up front. And that's the case of this government and the type of compassion that they're showing.

I want to talk about the deplorable situation that we have in northern Saskatchewan with our senior citizens, Mr. Speaker. And I have asked the minister of housing, who's in his seat and I'm sure will be closing off this debate, I've asked him to come up North and take a look at the deplorable situations that we have in northern Saskatchewan. I have asked him to accompany myself, and I would take him out and show him conditions.

I have a letter that I wrote to him four months ago, and he still has not answered the letter. That's the type of a minister that we have in Sask Housing. And he's in charge of senior citizens' housing.

He is also the same minister, Mr. Speaker, who canceled senior citizens' home repair program. Now he canceled that program. He said that it was working good, but I say it most certainly wasn't working good in northern Saskatchewan. Where senior citizens live — some of them 200 miles one way they have to drive to get materials to fix up their homes. There's a lack of carpenters available for them. And most certainly, they just don't have the money to put up front.

But the minister, he indicates, well if they've got \$100 and they spend \$100 and fix up their house a little bit, they can get \$50 back. but I say that that's not fair to the senior citizens. They're entitled to be able to spend \$3,000 and get 1,500 back.

And we had a program for senior citizens in northern Saskatchewan under the DNS housing, and it worked. Senior citizens had home repairs done to their homes, inspectors went out and inspected the houses to see what they needed. We had a delivery system for them. You can just imagine a senior citizen living 200 miles from the nearest lumber yard and wanting to get materials. They

don't have a vehicle. They just have no means and ways of getting it done. And I have asked the minister many questions and I put some pretty pointed questions in a letter four months ago, and I haven't received an answer.

Because it's not just senior citizens' housing in northern Saskatchewan. It's the whole housing structure we have in the North that's falling apart. And senior citizens who do not have homes are caught up in that spider web that has been wound up there. And they're living with sisters; they're living with their daughters; and they're living with friends and relations.

And you just have to go and see the type of poverty that exists in northern Saskatchewan. You have to take a look at the tuberculosis that are . . . it's increasing and it's increasing, and the Minister of Health will agree with me on that. And it's increasing because we have 20 to 25 people living in one household, and many of them are senior citizens. Many of them are senior citizens who no longer can afford the drugs that they should be taking. One problem is going to compound to another one.

Yet you take in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, when civil servants come up into the North or somebody comes up and starts a business, there is public housing available for them. But they're not available for our senior citizens. We have many senior citizens right now who just have no place to stay. They have no house to live in and there's no delivery system available to them. And I say that this government has to use some compassion, they have to get into northern Saskatchewan and take a serious look. They don't have to appoint a northern development advisory council to go around and hold meetings and to pay them big money. That's not solving the problems for housing in northern Saskatchewan, and most certainly not solving the problems for our senior citizens.

I ask this government to take a look and I ask the minister when he stands up and takes his place in this assembly to close the debate, that he will into northern Saskatchewan and he'll accompany myself and I'll take him in and I'll show him situations that are very, very serious. And this we just cannot let continue. For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment and I will be opposing the main motion.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I wasn't interested on getting involved in this debate, after I listened to the diatribe once again emitting from the members opposite, I feel that I've got an obligation and responsibility to stand in my chair and clarify some of the items that have been said by the members opposite.

First of all I would like to inform the member from Athabasca that I have made a trip to the North, and I have just recently been up there and completed it.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, please. Order, please. I'd like to ask hon. members to please allow the Minister of Urban Affairs to make his remarks to the House.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that every time I rise in this House, that the members opposite seem to enjoy getting after me for whatever reason. I wish the House Leader, who's sitting there, would get a little control among his benches.

If you want me to . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, please. Order, please. I would like members to refrain from interrupting the minister, and I would like the minister to get on with his remarks.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Speaker, obviously you have got control. It appears the opposition will be listening now. Thank you very much.

But I have been north, Mr. Speaker, and I have visited with several communities. Interestingly enough, I had discussions with those communities concerning their housing projects and concerning whether or not they were getting proper service as a result of the representation that they have in the North.

It seems that they had a lot of problem with that regard. Now I asked for a matter of clarification, if they had been in touch with their MLAs, if they had corresponded with my office, and the like. They said that, yes, they had but weren't getting anywhere. I assured all of them that I am interested in their situation and in their problems. And as a result, they are corresponding directly now with my office, and it seems to work out that way.

(1615)

The member opposite maintains that I haven't responded to a letter of his and that it's been unanswered for four months. If he would table that, Mr. Speaker, or would at least supply me with that, I beg to differ. I believe that I answer my correspondence immediately, and our record is very clear on that. It always has been, and that's one I'm proud of.

And I'm surprised that he would raise that issue at this time in the legislature. It's possible that a mistake was made. I know that on receiving one letter from the member opposite, it was sent to me, but in Prince Albert. Well obviously I don't work out of Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker; my office is here in Regina, and this is where it should be sent to. And as a matter of fact, the letter even had the wrong minister attached to it. If that's the one he's referring to, I can understand a delay.

But in any event, the member opposite is definitely confusing the issues here. We are talking what our government has done on behalf of the senior citizens of our province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'll try to read that letter in a moment. But in any event, as we were talking about the senior citizens issue, he started talking, Mr. Speaker, clearly about northern housing issues. Now admittedly, some of those northern housing issues are seniors living in them. Of course, we would expect that. But by and large, his remarks were more inclined to be with the northern housing problem rather than seniors.

As we all know, the responsibility for the northern housing, Mr. Speaker, has been transferred to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. We did that for a specific reason and after much consultation with the Northerners themselves. And they were all in agreement that if we could deliver these programs — they are mainly federally sponsored programs — and if Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation could deliver these programs and we were just simply a government agency that went wrong with it, we could avoid possible duplication. The people involved would only have to deal with one agency. And they agreed and recognized that that would be a proper way to handle that. So that's under control and in a different area.

I might say, though, that there is no decrease in activity in northern housing, whether it applies to seniors or whether it applies to the regular northern housing programs. They will continue to be available through the administration of Canada Mortgage and Housing to avoid any possible duplication. It will be delivered by the federal government and will continue to provide housing for those most in need, and it will be maintained by a presence of housing authorities throughout the North.

Be assured that I will continue consultation with my friends in the North. and in my past portfolio, when I was in Tourism and Small Business, then too, and the member is fully aware of that. I visited the North many, many occasions, many times, because I was concerned with economic development. Because as it relates to the issue at hand, Mr. Speaker, economic development in the North — if we can get economic activity going and we will — then it simply transfers into more taxes being paid. More taxes being paid means more lots can be serviced, more lots can be serviced, more homes for seniors and for our northern people. Priority has been given to the construction of rental accommodation for families and for senior citizens.

And in spite of these transfers, Sask Housing continues to handle the repair and resale of existing homes that do come vacant with our Northerners in that regard. And yes, there are some problems up there. There are many problems there. And it's as a result of these consultations and this process, Mr. Speaker, that hopefully we will come to avoid some of these problems in the future.

But getting back to the issue at hand, and the matter of the seniors, I'd like to clarify a couple of issues that the members opposite were speaking about that really discolored a few of the things that we were talking about. And that simply is that the senior citizens repair program, yes, was originally put in in 1973, and it provided \$200 based on guaranteed income supplement. You could get a little bit more. And that was the first program — \$200 for our seniors. Then in 1978 --1978 I guess happened to be an election year — out of generosity in 1978 they went all the way up to \$350, Mr. Speaker. And the member that was speaking on that earlier obviously has an appointment elsewhere. But I wish . . . maybe he'll check *Hansard* to clarify that. He was quoting from *Hansard* earlier, and perhaps he could refer to this.

Then in 1984 our government came along, Mr. Speaker, and yes, it's still based on guaranteed income supplement. However, seniors could get under that program, up to \$1,000. Quite a difference.

What happened over time, Mr. Speaker, is that the seniors simply used that home repair program to its fullest and there was a very small take-up left. So it only made eminent sense that rather than have another duplication of administration . . . And clearly the record of our government speaks for itself. Clearly, when we were elected in 1982, we understood that we had an administration far, far too large for the size of our province and we had to do something about it. So that as a result of very few people left to qualify for this program, Mr. Speaker, it made eminent sense to roll into our highly successful home improvement program, which the seniors can still qualify for.

The seniors' home repair program, however, did work out well; 75 per cent of the households that are eligible for the program took advantage of it. And now they probably look forward to this home improvement program that we have. And being that the seniors qualify for that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to talk on that for a moment.

It seems that when they have the opportunity during question period to question some of our home programs, they don't do that. But rather on an issue such as this this afternoon, they stand up in debate and throw a lot of facts and figures around that they'll get out of *Hansard* and read a half sentence and things along that line and kind of discolor the issue a little bit.

Clearly, in question period if they would ask me, we could clarify a lot more. But they stand and quote from letters and the like. and I too happen to have a letter about the home improvement plan and how it pays off.

And I don't know this gentleman at all, but it says that:

With regards to Saskatchewan Liberal Leader Ralph Goodale's comments ("A Gimmick that should be ended", Readers' Viewpoints, (in the *Regina Leader-Post*) June 11), I must comment on his incapacity to see reality. His claim that not one job has been created is the epitome of bad judgment and poor statistics.

Obviously he's been learning from the members opposite.

This firm, as a local manufacturer, (so obviously a firm was referred to) have created two jobs and are only employing eight people. I must add that all the business people I associate with in the Regina Home Builders' Association, the Regina Breakfast Club, the Regina Salesmasters Association, and others, have all claimed increases in sales (increases in) employment, (increases in) revenue and, needless to say, (increases in) expenses.

We've spent more dollars since the program started on tax revenue items such as gas,

advertising, purchasing of local services, tools, equipment and travel, to name a few.

How is it possible for a party leader to say that thousands of grants, having been applied for and approved, have not created employment? How could any intelligent economist suggest that the circulation of local dollars in such vast amounts doesn't create employment?

I do agree with Mr. Goodale's comments on freebies; they are always popular. But for once, they were helping those with disbursal income. If we are to slash giveaways at all, I'm in favor of slashing them all. Let the user pay. After all, are we so ignorant as to believe true socialism would work even under the Liberals?

So then he goes on to say:

I suggest he take a look at statistics of socialist countries and he'll find their standards far below that which this government is trying to repair in this province.

So our seniors — getting back to our seniors — they do appreciate what we have done for the. The enriched housing program is another one that I'll speak on in a moment. But I'll still continue, first of all, because it seems the topic of the day has been the senior citizens' home repair program.

Our home program, Mr. Speaker, as can be proven, not only be this letter, but by hundreds of letters that I received similar to this, is simply not a give-away. There is absolutely no question that it is an employment generator, I believe that it's fair to say that the NDP perhaps, may have campaigned on a give-away. It seems that nobody ever understood what their 7-7-7 was. I guess maybe if you were luckily enough you might have qualified for some kind of a give-away. What it would have created is totally unknown, at this point in time, and what it would have cost — what it would have cost. You know, we have some guesses that are just overwhelming.

But there is no question, Mr. Speaker, that our home repair program has created thousands and thousands of jobs. we estimate 25,000 will be created during the life of the five-year program. To date it has created some 12,000 jobs so far.

The beauty about our program too, Mr. Speaker, and even the seniors appreciate this when they go to repair their home — it isn't a give-away. They have to put in 50 per cent of their money, and we will match it. So how can it be a give-away? They're very cautious; they're very careful with what they're going to have repaired, with whom they're going to deal, with what price they're going to be paying, because it's not a freebie. It's not just simply a hand-out — here you are, do what you want. But, if you put in some, we'll put in some.

If it's a low income senior, it's no problem with that either, Mr. Speaker, because the beauty about the flexibility of our program is that the total amount that we can provide to them in assistance is \$1,500. However, if they've got a

little job that they would like to get done — replacing the linoleum in their kitchen or the like, and it might only be 4 or \$500 — that's fine. They can claim for that the first time, qualify, and get that grant at that time and qualify for the balance later on. They've still got four years left, Mr. Speaker. It's simply excellent.

In my new seat of Regina South I've got thousands of seniors that I have visited with, and they're just simply delighted with what we have provided for them in that area. There is no question that the Saskatchewan home program has been a tremendous success.

We'll go on to speak about another part of the motion, Mr. Speaker, and that's the seniors' heritage program. Earlier one of the members opposite said that program was a one-year thing and it's gone and never to be heard from again. We'll very soon determine, Mr. Speaker, as we start going through the estimates — if we ever got off the one that we're on now — that yes, in the budget that we've outlined, I'm pleased to say that our government again, under the leadership of our Premier, has put the seniors where they belong, and they do get the respect from this government that they rightfully deserve, and the heritage program will continue.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — During our budget process, as we were contemplating our expenditures versus our revenues — and it was a very, very difficult process, Mr. Speaker — we spent months and months going through our budget, line by line, item by item, trying to determine how best to spend our money. And you hear cries over from the other side — cuts, cuts, cuts. But yet I ask you seriously, and I ask the people; where are these cuts that you keep talking about? Efficiencies, yes. And there is a dramatic difference.

And in any event, as we went through the budgetary process and we started contemplating our various expenditures, certainly we looked at the heritage program. And the news media became involved in it and said, well, the NDP are starting a story that you're going to cut the heritage program and you're to be cutting the home program and you're going to be cutting this and you're going to be cutting that. Can you guarantee this, can you . . . Mr. Speaker, as you're developing a budget, how can you possibly guarantee anything? You can't.

But by the same token, the Premier, myself, other ministers involved, as we were questioned about this, certainly every program in government was being looked at. Every program in government was being analyzed for efficiencies to see how we could best spend our money, to see if it would generate employment, to see if it would diversify our economy, to see if it would continue building this province. And, Mr. Speaker, as we get on with these estimates, we will find that yes, this budget will do that, and the seniors will come out of it protected as they always have been protected by our Premier.

Now I'll talk for a moment, Mr. Speaker, about the enriched housing program. And the enriched housing program, I'm pleased to say, is something that our government has put into place. And the enriched housing

concept has been accepted from the width and breadth of this province — and highly accepted, Mr. Speaker.

(1630)

And it just gladdens my heart, and I could speak of opening after opening, of sod turning after sod turning, that I'm invited to and that I attend as the minister in charge of Sask Housing. And I'm just pleased and thrilled to see how these seniors really appreciate the comfortable style of living that they can now enjoy in this province. And as they continue on through life and the retirement comes along, and their homes get to be just a little bit too big a task for them, they want to continue their same independent life-style, which is understandable. They're the pioneers of our province. They're the ones that have worked so hard to get this whole province rolling. They've put us where we are in government: to continue affording the protection to the people of the province — not only the seniors, but to all the people, Mr. Speaker.

And they just keep telling me, isn't this lovely? Look at what we have here; we're with our friends. And this new enriched design where, along with the enjoyment that they have of independent living in their apartments, they also have the added capabilities of a little meeting room so that they can get together and play their whist or play their bridge or have a little party with their friends or whatever the case may be — celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. And they're simply delighted with it.

And these enriched housing projects, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say, are going up right around the entire province in large cities and in small centers and the like. And you know, it's just amazing how they . . . the small town Saskatchewan where they want to retire in their own neighborhood, where their own family and where their own friends have always been. And the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, Mr. Speaker, has generally been able to step forward and supply that badly needed home to the area where they don't have to move away from their family and from their friends.

Over the last year, Mr. Speaker, along with non-profit agencies, I am pleased to tell you that a new concept was designed. And in Saskatoon, there have been a couple of church organizations, Mr. Speaker, that working together with government, because of consultation that we so firmly believe in — because we do believe in talking to these people and sharing their ideas and taking their ideas and seeing if they can work — we did bring in a new, enriched type of housing program, Mr. Speaker, that the government supplied a one-time grant of 25 per cent. And then all of the volunteers in that community — they would be the ones that would get together and put in the hard work, and really make that work — they would put the project together, and they would get their architects and engineers to design it. They would go out and sell the system however they were going to do it. The government would be the facilitator of the grant, and it would go together.

I was at one the other day in Saskatoon where they have taken it another step, Mr. Speaker, and they sold life interest shares in these apartment units to the existing

seniors. What an entirely new concept! Because what it tells me is that the seniors in our province, although they want this type of housing, they also want it to be affordable. They recognize that the government can't come along and just build everybody a home. How can we? They don't expect that. But with a little bit of effort and with co-operation, with a caring government, with a government that consults, we can fit all these ideas together and we can make these wonderful things happen for them. And they're just simply outstanding.

Pleased to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that for this year Sask Housing has introduced what we are calling Innovation '87, and it is another form of moving along, and together with the private sector which we firmly believe in, together with the other interests groups, the non-profits, and the life, the various organizations, we're saying, fine. This year out of our allocation of 4486 units we will take 240 units and we will put them out into this new innovative process.

And now what we're saying is look, we're not smart enough to do this alone. I suppose a government can arbitrarily come along and impose this kind of housing as was done previously. And they can build it or they can not build it, or they can freeze it and quit building; and then you wouldn't see nursing homes. Next you wouldn't see senior homes. Lord knows what you'd see next with that kind of a government that is kind of a dictatorial, selfish, self-serving government. We've gone the other way, Mr. Speaker, and we just simply take it out to the people, and we say fine, here we are; we would like to facilitate these ideas; what can you do with it?

It's going to be interesting, Mr. Speaker, as this innovation process is begun, and as it starts, and as the private sector going out to do what I will call "hustle their business," because that's what they have to do. Those of us in business, or that have been in business, understand how you must keep working away to get this business to come in.

They will come up with ideas, Mr. Speaker. They will work with these other sectors, with the non-profits, and the charitable organizations, and come up with ideas that by financing 240 units could perhaps trigger 2,000 units. Now if that were to happen, just think of how far the taxpayers' dollars would be going. For the cost of 240 units you could maybe increase it tenfold.

That's what we mean by working together with the people of the province, the same people that wanted us to listen, that we are listening to, that we care about, that we are going to spend their tax dollars with great care and that's why we're back here, Mr. Speaker.

I listened with interest the other day, and as we come along to this innovative process, Mr. Speaker, I attended again in Saskatoon with about 70 different people in this area that would be interested in this innovative concept. And I was just thrilled to see such a large turn-out, and I have to freely admit that Saskatoon picks up on these new ideas and away they go, and they're interested in making it work.

And the business people that were there, I discussed with

them again. And interestingly enough, as we were talking housing, they happened to see the House Leader of the Opposition the other day in his remarks claiming to be the savior of small business. Well, what a joke. And they said, they said, what does he mean, the member from Riversdale, what does he mean that given the proper mix, given the proper mix he can support the free enterprise system and small business? And how does this, you know, how would my housing project work out? How could we continue building these enriched homes, and what does he really mean by that mix?

And I said, well I can't, I can't speak for him. I don't know how you can really mix that, or if you looked at the *Regina Manifesto* which they declared, you know way back when, they clearly didn't have any use for small business and free enterprise. And how he can do that now, I don't know.

But in any event I said, I'm here to talk to you about this enriched housing program for our seniors and I'm here to tell you that we are prepared, as we have been in the past, to continue working with small business. And so long as we are on this side you just simply won't have to worry about that; you won't have to worry about the meaningless statements that come forward from the other side. Because probably we would go back — all of the housing situations would go back to how they were in the olden days. And the olden days are rapidly disappearing now, fortunately. But they want to live in the past, and they just don't want to be seemed to be to come forward.

And housing is a typical example because it is the small-business community after all, Mr. Speaker, that's going to build this housing. I suppose if they were here, maybe not. Maybe we would have the . . . along with the Sask Housing corporation, we would have the Saskatchewan whatever corporation building all these things for people. And pretty soon that part of the free enterprise system would be gone too. And you know, they would be building their homes for everybody, and whether you're a senior or whatever, whether it's your first-time buyer or whatever, you might have to deal with the government to get your home built.

Seniors don't quite see it that way. and I can tell you that through this innovation process, Mr. Speaker, some of the proponents of last year's projects were there. and they just couldn't say enough good things about it. and they were just so pleased with how it was going. And now as they look at this new situation that we are trying to establish, they're wondering if they can qualify for more units because they would like to proceed even further.

Well we explained to them that it was going to be an innovative type of a concept and certainly we would be prepared to share their ideas along with all the other ideas that we had, keeping in mind that the enriched housing is necessary throughout the entire province, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to try and be fair about that. We will allocate these units throughout the province as we have done for the last four or five years.

And strangely enough, I recall very vividly in 1982, Mr. Speaker, when I happened to be the caucus chairman for the government. And as we went out and we started our

consultations early, we held caucus outside of Regina and the like. And as we were going to different communities, there was a horrendous line-up for these senior projects all over the province, Mr. Speaker, that's all I ever heard was: when can we get a seniors' unit? When can we get a seniors' unit? No matter where we went.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we move around, that isn't the case. But the opposite is true. The seniors come up to us and say: boy, you're doing a magnificent job. We're sure happy that we've got these units, whether they be six or eight or four in the smaller centers. We're just delighted that we can live with our friends. They're going through all . . . there they go again, Mr. Speaker. I mean what can I tell you. But it's true. As I travel around the province, that's what they keep telling us, and how delighted they are, now when they see that they have this new opportunity.

I was speaking to some administrators, Mr. Speaker, that looked at this new innovative process, and said, well, we only need two units, two seniors' units in our little town. Can we qualify under your program? Certainly, you can, just come up with a good idea. Consult with us. Talk to us. We're willing to listen. We're willing to work with you.

So, having made those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, and having addressed most of the problems, I believe, that originally came up, obviously I will support the original motion. I really can't see the purpose of the amendment.

And I see now this letter that was handed to me by the member from Athabasca originally, and it's true, it is some four months old. But if you check it, you can see that I had already responded to it in prior correspondence. But none the less, if he needs another response, I can repeat the letter, and I will respond to him very shortly.

But in any event, Mr. Speaker, I do thank you for the opportunity of speaking about what our government has done for the seniors, and what our government will continue to do for the seniors. There is no question that the seniors will enjoy the benefits of the home improvement program, whether they be on low income or whether they are in a position of retirement, Mr. Speaker.

The home program is for everybody in this province, and it doesn't matter whether their budgets be large or small. It's an all-encompassing program that the seniors can qualify for. There is no question that it will go on and do the job that it's deigned to do. It will help our economy; it will create jobs; it will assist the seniors in repairing their homes and the like.

I have spoken at a little length on our enriched housing units. There is no question that it's just a tremendous success. The seniors in our province really appreciate that. They will continue to appreciate it even more as our innovative '87 gets on.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we do go through our estimates, we will see that the seniors' heritage program will once again be back in place. And I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the seniors, throughout the entire province,

will be just delighted with that news.

And I can assure my member friend from Athabasca, yes, I will continue to consult with the people from the North. I will continue to visit the people from the North. I will continue to respond to your inquiries, Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of the original motion. Thank you very much.

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I stand in opposition to the original motion and in support of the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I just came in from northern Saskatchewan over the weekend, and I did have a good chance to talk with some seniors in regards particularly to the issue of housing that is being talked about in the motion and the amendment.

(1645)

And I would like to say, in a couple of minutes, what they have told me. And Mr. Speaker, in due respect to them, I will speak in a couple of minutes in the way that they have expressed to me here over this weekend and also in the past, you know, few months in regards to the housing.

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

So I guess, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the translation, what the elders in northern Saskatchewan have told me in regards to the housing issue is one where that they recognize it is not a completely new problem, you know, throughout history, but what it does prove is that at particular points in history the situation becomes worse.

In the minds of the elders that I've talked to, they pin-point two periods of time history — one in the 1930s and also in the 1980s. As I talked with particularly the Cree of Sandy Bay in relation to the housing that took place in the 1930s, for historical reference points, they stated that they saw the Churchill River Power Corporation come in to their community at Island Falls and it was being built, and they said the government was working close in hand with a big corporation, with a new corporation to establish the housing.

They said there was brand-new houses in Island Falls, approximately 40 were built. They had electricity, running water; they had all the modern goods. And in relation to that facility, they had even recreation-type building. They had a swimming pool. They had all types of recreational facilities, including the golf course and so on. And there was great help, according to the elders, in regards to the help for people that were working at the corporate level, you know, versus they who had to live downstream from the Island Falls town.

They said they were not allowed to live in those houses, and other people who came to live there moved into those houses. And they said they had to be able to take the lumber that was the remains of the blasting of the dam, you know, to build their houses, while everybody had, you know, brand-new houses, you know, from across.

And they said that was the very first time in history that we realized that a government can only back up the big

business interest, not only in regards to development, but in regards to housing. So here it was. Just one and half miles downstream they had to build their own house, while at the same time across they had knocked off all their best forests from that area to build the dam. But none of those that they helped chop down the trees — that they chopped down — was used to build their housing. And as talked with the seniors from northern Saskatchewan, that's precisely what they talked about. They said there was one way of dealing with big business as it moved into the North in the 1930s, and another way of dealing with the people when they were around, at that point in time.

As I talked with them over the weekend, the seniors also mentioned, they said: the government says that it comes here and consult us. And I again, of course, overhead the minister from Regina South say that he comes into the North, but he must be talking about Regina North because the people weren't talking about the minister. I don't know where the consultation comes. What they said was it wasn't only a question of consultation that they were worried about. As I heard the minister say, we have housing for everybody in this province. But what the elders were telling me is that, look at those fancy houses with electricity, running water. Even in 1980s we don't have electricity and running water in a lot of our housing in northern Saskatchewan, and they've been having this since 1930s.

So what they have been telling me was an important lesson in history. In 1980s again the same situation occurs, they said. Now they say, they're just big-shot that is moving in from the United States, you know, taking over our forests. They took over our forests here, in around Island Falls, in the 1930s. Now they're taking over our forests again.

That lumber they're using, you know, helps them out more than we. They've got big fancy buildings in P.A. and all that, but what are we left? Some of us are still living in slab housing in northern Saskatchewan. We have to work very hard to build our log cabins. But what do they give the large-scale corporations? They give them big fancy buildings. They say we can see them from miles and miles as we go into P.A. or elsewhere.

And they said, we wouldn't feel so bad because we could get jobs from that. But they said, we haven't got jobs from those. Very few of us are working, you know, in the forestry industry. Very few of us are working at the pulp mill. They said, they promised us jobs. They said they would encourage this new boss called Weyerhaeuser to encourage us for employment. They said, we don't see too many of that.

The other thing in regards to the housing, as the member from Regina South has said, is that it's affordable. Of course it's affordable when you give it free to the multinational corporations. But in many cases as I talked to the elders they were saying, our families were being pressured out of their homes in this past year.

And I had letters. They were being threatened to be removed from their housing. Three families in one house moving in and the government wants them to keep paying for them on a daily basis. But the seniors said,

what is wrong here? what is wrong with this government that has one law and one method of dealing with housing for big-scale corporations and other one for dealing with seniors and our children.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — As I looked at the senior repair program that was cut — \$5 million was cut back. And the effect, of course — whatever little that had come into the North is even greater for us in the North. In many cases that home repair program and programs like that, the housing program, which was virtually stopped in 1982, is something that is very important for our children but it doesn't . . . it has been terminated and eliminated, virtually.

What the seniors have told me is this; if only this government could treat us fairly.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — If only they could provide the support services right in the North, and not only for the people who live . . . from United States or elsewhere who come into our area.

We want the support, you know, right for our children in the North, is what the people are saying.

As I talked to one other senior, they said, did you know that one of our seniors died in P.A. last year? The senior had died in a home in P.A. They said, why don't they bring those homes into the North, right in northern Saskatchewan where we can take care of our elders right in the community level? Why do we have to move them into P.A.? Why does this government not change its policy and work with us in the same way that they say they will work for everybody? And by everybody, they mean only big business. If they did that, we would be dealing with it, and felt that we were justly treated.

But right now the way it is, Mr. Speaker, the way it is . . . This government brags, but I'll tell you something. As a person coming from northern Saskatchewan, they can't brag nothing. In the past five years we've been just cut back and sliced back on everything, including seniors' housing and all kinds of housing. We expect jobs from that, and we get nothing.

Just slowly but surely, everything is being knocked back. And the seniors are telling me, make sure that that message is heard to the government that is in power; make sure that they have a little bit of sympathy, a little bit of justice and fairness for us and our children in northern Saskatchewan.

So that's the message I leave with the government, Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment, and go against the motion.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have a good deal more to say on this at a later point in time, and as such I would beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.