

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
February 9, 1994

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday I shall ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation: please provide information on special warrant no. 6394 authorizing an additional expenditure of 14.776 million for a write-off in the corporation, including why the write-off occurred, what the write-off was for, where these figures will be documented in *Public Accounts*, and when this figure will be documented in the *Public Accounts*.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one question that I give notice that I shall ask on Friday next the government the following question:

Regarding the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation: please provide information on special warrant no. 6494 authorizing an additional expenditure of \$83.902 million for the corporation including (a) what area the deficiency occurred; (b) why the deficiency occurred; (c) where the deficiency will be accounted for in *Public Accounts*; and (d) when the deficiency will be accounted for in *Public Accounts*.

Thank you.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Friday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation: how many farmers have dropped out of the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance program during the past year, and how many acres have been taken out of the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance program during the past year that are no longer insured.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group of grades 5 and 6 students — 45 in total. They're from Thomson School in my constituency and they're seated in the west gallery. They're accompanied by two teachers, Loanne Myeah and Jeanne Reiley, and also by Mrs. Verity and Ms. Michel.

It's my pleasure to see them here today and to join with them after the question period for a visit. And I would ask all members to extend them a warm

welcome here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to members of the House a group of 22 civil servants sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

These public servants are a part of a tour which occurs several times each year. They're in the building today, in the Legislative Building all day with a program that is designed to show them how this building functions and familiarize them with some of the things that we do here.

The people involved are from the departments of Finance, Social Services, Energy and Mines, Municipal Government, Economic Development, Justice, the Public Service Commission, the Property Management Corporation, and the Legislative Library. I'd like members to welcome the participants in the civil service tour to the House today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Casino Gambling

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier.

Mr. Premier, your government recently announced that it would be introducing casino gambling into our province. This policy decision, which is going to have a major social and economic impact on our province, was made without any public consultation and without any debate in this legislature. It has not been clearly demonstrated, Mr. Speaker, that the benefits of casino gambling will outweigh the costs. And it has not been clearly demonstrated that the people of Saskatchewan indeed want casino gambling.

Mr. Premier, will you allow that debate to take place during this session of this legislature, and will you allow a free vote on this very significant issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to answer this question with respect to gaming in Saskatchewan. Let me start by saying that this has not been an issue without a wide degree of public debate in Saskatchewan over the past months. We've debated the gaming issue in this legislature almost on a daily basis in the last session.

The last session the opposition continually asked, when are we going to make a decision? Well we've made a decision and I want to say, Mr. Speaker, not without consultation. We've met with aboriginal groups, we've met with chambers of commerce, we've met with exhibition boards, we've met with church groups.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I've been around this province, speaking with people from all areas. As well, we've done considerable polling on the issue, and quite clearly the people of this province indicate that they will accept expanded gaming, 70 per cent of them will, if it's controlled and well regulated by the Government of Saskatchewan. And we intend to do just that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Member, Mr. Premier, a unilateral decision was made on this gambling. We did not have the opportunity to debate; we did not have the opportunity to make individual decisions on this matter as representatives of the people.

And I am sure that there are several members of your caucus, like the member from Regina Albert South, who do not think that casino gambling should be in our province. I know there are members in my own caucus; we are not completely unified in this matter in our own caucus.

So allowing these differences to be exposed in this legislature should not be viewed as a sign of weakness. It would be viewed, I submit to you, a sign of strength of our parliamentary system that members are allowed to express the views of their constituents.

Mr. Premier, I ask you: would you place a moratorium on casinos in this province until public hearings can be held and until MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) are allowed to express the views that they hear at those meetings through a free vote in this legislature? Will you do that, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the member's question, let me suggest to him that there will be lots of time for debate. This forum quite clearly during question period on a daily basis will offer him the opportunity to ask questions.

Our policy is quite clear with respect to casino expansion. And we intend to expand, in partnership with aboriginal people and the exhibition associations, casino venues in both Regina and Saskatoon.

And I want to say that this is subject to consultation with those communities and with the players involved. I want to also say to the member opposite, if your government had consulted as widely with respect to your deficit budgeting in the 10 years that you were government as we have done on every single issue since we've been government, we wouldn't be facing \$16 billion worth of debt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — The policy of deflection and blame throwing starts again, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately

I'm going to stick to the topic, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Premier, your government has yet to release any studies that it has done on the social impact of casino gambling — the impact that it will have on Saskatchewan families, particularly families whose members are unable to control their gambling.

Mr. Premier, I'm sure that you know many Saskatchewan families will find it ironic that in this, the International Year of the Family, the federal government makes it easier to buy smokes and the provincial government makes it easier to gamble. There's an irony in that, Mr. Premier, and I sense that you recognize that.

But the only difference is, Mr. Speaker, that I've never heard of anyone spending their entire pay cheque on cigarettes. But I've heard of many people who've spent their entire pay cheques on gambling. Significant difference, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Premier, what studies have you done that measure the impact of your casino gambling policy on gambling addicts and their families? Will you be able to table those studies for us today in this legislature?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, what I would be is be pleased to send a copy of the advisory committee, the Minister's Advisory Committee on the Social Impacts of Gaming, to the member from Rosthern. This was presented by the chairman, Professor Harley Dickinson, who is well-known in this province for his research and for his background with respect to this area. And I'd be pleased to send that to him.

I want to say that on behalf of ... and because of that committee's advice, we are well on our way in terms of implementing the recommendations. Some have been implemented and some will be, in the near future, implemented.

I want to say that they have indicated that they wanted to do a base study and requested the government do a base study with respect to the prevalence of gambling. We've done that. I say that gambling has increased fairly dramatically in the 1980s. In the 1980s the bingo revenue, as an example, increased from something in the neighbourhood of \$4 million to something over a hundred million dollars without any study.

We're taking a responsible approach to this. We understand the implications of expansion of gambling. And this government will high-profile and will determine in a very positive manner what needs to be done, and we will do what is required.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just so we understand each other, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Premier, I'm going to summarize with my last question.

Mr. Premier, once again you are telling Saskatchewan people, trust me; we've done these studies but we just won't show them to you. That's what we were told last year about your video gambling partners. And just recently one of your gambling partners, VLT (Video Lottery Technologies Inc.) was thrown out of Quebec because of the suspicious circumstances surrounding their business deals. Quebec would not deal with these folks.

If you really have done your homework, Mr. Premier, why won't you release your studies that your government has done, initiate public hearings on this issue, and hold a free vote in this legislature? Will you do those things for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member opposite, the study will be made public. I will be sending a copy to the Leader of the Opposition and to his caucus, and to the Leader of the Third Party and her caucus for their perusal. But I just want to say, I find it ironic that this new-found caring for Saskatchewan families, from members who would put each Saskatchewan family \$15,000 in debt, has little credibility.

This government . . . Per person, I'm sorry. This government will act in a responsible fashion with respect to this particular issue. We will keep you apprised of the studies that we do. And I say to you, Mr. Member, we will give you all of the information that you have asked for with respect to the prevalence study, and that will be forthcoming soon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crop Insurance Premiums

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the minister in charge of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance. I've been getting calls from farmers all over the province, including his own seat, and what they're concerned about is their plans for spring seeding. They're concerned their premiums for crop insurance will be going up again but they don't know by how much. By how much will their premiums increase, and when will you be passing on this important information to the farm families, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question that the hon. member asked will be clarified very shortly at budget time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, last year crop insurance premiums increased up to 55 per cent for barley alone, and the coverage went down. We could have dealt with that last budget, I guess. We don't have to answer these questions in the upcoming budget. However because of the high increases in

premiums and low coverage from last year, farmers have been dropping out of the program at an alarming rate. In fact to the point in the '92-93 years insured acreage was cut in half.

Could the minister tell us: where is the plan that will make it more affordable for farmers to purchase crop insurance?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member, I'm sure he's aware that crop insurance is a federal-provincial program. And again I stress that the crop insurance details will be here before us at budget time, and I wonder where the hon. member was last year when he supported those initiatives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — That, Mr. Speaker, is why I'm on this side today.

Mr. Speaker, crop insurance has a deficit approaching some \$600 million. Because it is so high, would the minister tell us: is it true some risk areas in the province are looking at an additional 5 per cent surcharge to cover the deficit? And can you identify these areas of the province that have to pay more once again?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to tell the hon. member that those details will come forth at budget time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, we'll try and get an answer from the government on one of these questions. Mr. Speaker, the decline in eligible acres under the crop insurance program even has members of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool questioning its viability.

To the minister, if you won't draw premiums, will you write down the debt and start all over again so farmers can afford to insure their crops?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member, as mentioned earlier, crop insurance is a federal-provincial program, and I'm wondering if the hon. member did write to his federal counterparts in regards to his concerns. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, I have been in contact with the federal Agriculture minister. And what I'm asking . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Will the member from Rosetown-Elrose please come to order.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, for the government member's information, I have been contacting the federal Agriculture minister. However I see on the buildings in rural Saskatchewan, it says, Saskatchewan Crop Insurance office, and there's a

minister in charge. So I would like the minister to give a response.

Mr. Speaker, every farmer that drops out of the crop insurance program costs his neighbour more money. The government was willing to write down debts of its Crown corporations, but it isn't willing to write down the debts for the crop insurance debt which affects the farmers.

Mr. Minister, farm families feel you are attacking them. Rural Saskatchewan feels alienated because you have a different set of rules for farmers than you do your own Crown corporations. Will the government do something to help farm families?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member, I'm wondering if he can share with us what the response was from the federal government, maybe perhaps by tabling the information. And again I want to say the details of crop insurance will come out at budget time. Thank you.

Rural Physician Services

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health. I have some questions that I'd like to ask on behalf of Liz McKay, a young woman from Crystal Springs.

Liz's grandmother, Mrs. Percy McKay, lived at Birchview Nursing Home in Birch Hills for 10 years before suffering a severe stroke on Friday, December 10. Previous to your health care reforms, local resident doctors were called in to treat patients at nursing homes. Since your reforms, Birch Hills doesn't have a hospital any more, and now physicians are called in from the Prince Albert Community Clinic.

On the night of Mrs. McKay's stroke, the nurse in attendance phoned the Prince Albert doctor on call to come immediately to see Mrs. McKay, but the request was denied — it was denied, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the doctor told the nurse Mrs. McKay was too old.

Liz McKay says, wellness is a fine concept, but what do you do when you're not well? She would like to know if there is an age cap on medical services in rural Saskatchewan today, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I am not able to comment on the specifics of the individual the member raises in this House, nor am I prepared to comment on medical diagnoses which are made by professionals. I am prepared to comment at all times on public policy. And when the member wants to stand in this House and make grandstand statements about caps on age, I'm not sure that deserves a response, Mr. Speaker.

But let me say, in terms of health care broadly, and in particular, long-term care needs, the member will be

aware that HSURC (Health Services Utilization and Research Commission), the utilization review commission, has just provided its own study of the issue with some very important observations and recommendations which we, as government and working in conjunction with the district boards, will be looking at very seriously.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, I think Liz McKay will pass judgement on who is grandstanding here this afternoon. She says and I quote: I can get a doctor out to treat my cattle faster than I can get a doctor to treat me.

Mr. Minister, that's a pretty sorry state when people in our province in rural Saskatchewan can have their cattle treated faster than the people of rural Saskatchewan. That's a strong statement, Mr. Minister, but understand Mrs. McKay's grandmother passed away. That's exactly where your health care reform has left this province today.

What are you doing for the people of rural Saskatchewan like Mrs. McKay who fall through the cracks of your wellness model, just like Liz McKay's grandmother did? What are you doing for those people, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, for the individual situation the member raises, for people across our province of all generations, we are endeavouring to build, with the resources available to us, the strongest health care, the best quality health care, the long-standing health care that can carry us into the future, Mr. Speaker.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, this task would be made easier, would be made considerably easier, if we were not living with a \$16 billion debt, not living with interest payments of \$850 million a year — a direct legacy, Mr. Speaker, of the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, it's all fine and dandy to say that you are talking to people, district health boards are making decisions, these changes will improve health care, and the rest of your health care script, but the bottom line here is reform is not improving health care services to rural people. In fact, Mr. Minister, Liz McKay says your health care reforms are a disaster.

Mr. Minister, rural Saskatchewan has fewer doctors with heavier patient loads, fewer hospitals, with more cuts on the way, and I understand now that you are looking at a health care services utilization study that will shift even more elderly from long-term care to home care in order to save \$15 million. Doctors aren't even showing up at nursing homes, Mr. Minister; I doubt they'll start making house calls.

Mr. Minister, when will a decision be made on the health care utilization study?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I noted with interest, listening to some news broadcasts this morning, that Dr. Robert Murray, Dr. Bob Murray, who the members opposite will remember headed the Murray Commission, commissioned under their government, asked to comment on the recommendations and findings of the utilization commission, said that they were right on track, Mr. Speaker.

Now here is the difference, Mr. Speaker; here we have a government on this side of the House that has the courage and the will to act, to reform and renew health care for the future. We lived for 10 years, Mr. Speaker, with a government that did not have the courage or the will to act, to reform. What they did was to try and build themselves into re-election. It didn't work, Mr. Speaker. What we are trying to do is weave the rope of reformed health care for the next century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I wonder if you would also have the courage to speak with Liz McKay. She wrote to your office; she also wrote to the member for Kinistino, to her MP (Member of Parliament) and has not heard a word from any one of you.

She's not even received a phone call from your office. At least the Leader of the Third Party had the courtesy to answer Liz McKay. The only problem was the letter she returned said: if things get worse, let me know.

Mr. Minister, Liz McKay is just one more example of rural people who are looking for your help. They are looking to you for compassion and fairness, and their requests are falling on deaf ears.

Mr. Minister, will you commit today to calling and talking to Liz McKay personally and looking into this very serious matter? Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm naturally troubled when reports come to this House or to any circumstance that indicate letters have not been responded to, and I will follow up on that immediately. And I will make the commitment to the member, if he provides for me again today the name, I will most certainly be in contact with the family involved.

Cigarette Taxes

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Madam Minister, it is the official opposition's belief that the federal government has imposed a national solution in this collection of

taxes for the tobacco industry, for what is essentially a problem in Ontario and Quebec. Once again, we see the federal government implementing solutions to help Quebec, which will hurt everybody else, especially those in western Canada.

The fact that these provinces will have different taxation levels will only shift an international problem, Madam Minister, to an interprovincial problem. And as such, Madam Minister, I would like to know what your government has done in the last 24 hours to inform the federal government of our opposition to this initiative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have made it clear to the federal government, going way back to our meetings in Halifax, that we oppose any reduction in the tax on cigarettes. And letters to the federal government will be mailed in the very near future to emphasize that point.

What we said to the federal government was, we do believe that taxes have to be enforced, that smuggling has to be cracked down on. But we also said that if they are going to enforce the taxes on the books, they also have to ensure that those taxes are fair. So we have called on them in their upcoming budget to start plugging the loopholes and to do it quickly.

We have also said to them that we will not participate in some quick fix on the GST (goods and services tax). We want the whole tax system reformed so it's fair.

The final thing we said to the federal government was this: if in fact the federal government, despite its deficit problems, has 3 or \$400 million lying around to spend, we have much better suggestions as to where we would have spent that — things like lowering the tax burden.

An Hon. Member: — Crop insurance.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes. We are quite . . . lowering the tax burden on middle income families or paying off the deficit. Quite frankly, we are . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Madam Minister, did you specifically talk about the \$200 million that's going to go to informing the people of Canada the hazards of health in increased smoking and what it's going to cause on the people of the province of Saskatchewan? Did you ask the Minister of Finance from Canada whether in fact he was going to provide some of that money to the province of Saskatchewan so that we could tell the people of the province the seriousness of the health situation in relation to the consumption of tobacco?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do support the idea that you need to have education with respect to smoking. But what we are concerned about is the Liberals' predisposition to high taxes in this country. They have said with respect to the GST that they are going to get exactly the same revenue out of the GST. They have said that in their budget there are going to be tax increases.

What we have said to them is we have made the commitment to this electorate to not raise taxes on individuals and families. What we expect from them is a similar commitment, but at the same time we expect them to make the system fair by plugging loopholes and by looking at a comprehensive reform of the tax system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLEING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day I wish to table pursuant to section 62 of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act the 1992-93 annual report of the Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner.

MOTIONS

Name Substitution on Committees

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave, I would like to change and update a couple of our legislative committees and to that end I move, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, that by leave of the Assembly:

That the name of Mr. Johnson be substituted for that of Mr. McPherson on the list of members on the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

The Speaker: — Order. I wish to inform the Government House Leader that the member from Saskatoon Nutana does not wish to second that motion because that's the Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, inadvertently we put your constituency down. It should have been the farmer from Broadway.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try this again, seconded by the member from Melfort, that by leave of the Legislative Assembly:

That the name of Mr. Upshall be substituted for that of Mr. McPherson and that the name of Mr. Koenker be substituted for that of Mr. Van Mulligen on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for The Battlefords that by leave of the Assembly:

That the name of Ms. Hamilton be substituted for that of Mr. Solomon on the list of members on the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, finally, I move, seconded by the member for Regina Churchill Downs that by the leave of the Assembly:

That the name of Ms. Lorje be substituted for that of Mr. McPherson on the list of members on Private Members Bills Committee.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, it's an honour for me to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the official opposition today and I believe on behalf of a lot of Saskatchewan taxpayers and voters.

It's my first statement of the fourth session of the twenty-second legislature and I would like to recognize and welcome once more the new member from Regina North West. My sincerest congratulations go out to the new member on her election victory and wish . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Could we please have the courtesy of toning down the House a bit and letting the member have his privilege of speaking in the House.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I was extending my most sincere congratulations to the new member from Regina North West. Her victory was attained in extremely difficult climatic conditions and it's a tribute to the member's staying power that she was able to campaign through that period of time in probably the toughest winter we've had in this province in over 20 years.

I'm sure that she will find many of the debates and

duties in this Assembly to be just as rigorous. The only difference is that somebody will probably be throwing the snowballs in her direction.

Mr. Speaker, and hon. members, when I listened to the delivery of the Speech from the Throne, I imposed a fairly rudimentary and unassuming test on the blueprint of the government, a blueprint that they laid before the Assembly Monday last.

The test consisted of one question and one question only. And if that question had been answered, Mr. Speaker, I think this session could have been one of the most productive, efficient, and cooperative sessions that this House has ever seen. Because the challenges that face this province, Mr. Speaker, are of that magnitude. They are of such a magnitude that you must have cooperation, you must have productivity, in order to handle them.

And that question was: has the government been listening? Has it been listening to the people of this province? Mr. Speaker, I sat very patiently during the Speech from the Throne and during the two speeches delivered by government members — the mover and the seconder of that throne speech. I listened for the signs and the signals that the government has been listening to the people that they have been duly elected to serve, the people that they have sworn to serve in their cabinet oaths.

And what did I hear? I heard from government members that it was time to change the rules. Not to create jobs, but to once again benefit their friends, to benefit the union leaders of the province of Saskatchewan. Job creation, Mr. Speaker, is a number one priority with the people of this province. As I said in my opening comment, Mr. Speaker, some of the issues facing us today are of an extreme, emergent nature. And yet the government of the people decides its priorities; its wishes are the wishes of a very few, of the union leaders of this province.

And I ask the question, Mr. Speaker, because there must be tens of thousands around this province asking that question, what is broken that needs to be fixed? What in The Trade Union Act and The Labour Standards Act needs immediate — immediate — attention of this Legislative Assembly over the immediate needs of taxpayers, of farm families, and of the electorate of this province?

Are we behind, Mr. Speaker, the other provinces in western Canada? Are we out of step with our major trading partners in North America and around the world? In fact, Mr. Speaker, this province remains the envy of our country in terms of employee working conditions, hours of work, minimum wage, etc., etc., etc.

In many ways, Mr. Speaker, this province has sacrificed business investment and job creation to maintain the workplace quality that we have today, that quality that has become a sense of pride, Mr. Speaker, for all Saskatchewan citizens. There are some that would criticize this policy; others who

applaud it. But the fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that employment conditions today in our province are not a priority with Saskatchewan people. Employment is a priority with Saskatchewan people.

The latest government numbers verify this, Mr. Speaker. They show that there are 12,000 fewer people employed today than there was in 1991 — 12,000, Mr. Speaker. Employment levels that are at the lowest they have been in 10 years. Job creation is an issue, Mr. Speaker. It is an issue that all members of this Assembly should be concerned with. Union creation is something that is on the minds of only a few in the province of Saskatchewan.

And the verification of that, Mr. Speaker, is in the government's own polling — the polling that this government spends taxpayers' money on every quarter. It's no secret. The people were not hiding their thoughts on this issue. It showed up clearly. So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say to all members of this Assembly, why on earth does the throne speech speak of spending taxpayers' time and money making it more difficult to attract investment?

Once again I ask the question, what is broken with The Trade Union Act and The Labour Standards Act that would compel this government — a government, by the way, Mr. Speaker, which has pledged 30,000 new jobs by the end of the decade — why would they want to add more cost to doing business in this province?

Thirty thousand jobs was the pledge by the end of the decade. You add 12,000 more to that, because that's the number that has dropped, Mr. Speaker, since 1991, you are looking at an immense task — a task that is going to require cooperation, as the Premier is fond of saying. It is going to require Saskatchewan people pulling together under very trying circumstances. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think that you could argue that changes could be made to The Trade Union Act which could help increase employment instead of decreasing it.

(1445)

There was a recent situation, Mr. Speaker, in my home community of Moose Jaw, with the Woolco store. I think it is something that all people around this province have become aware of.

My information is, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it to be true, that a majority of the employees in that store have been trying for several months to decertify their particular workplace. But they have been unable to achieve that because of the rules, which are clearly in the favour of the union.

This situation, Mr. Speaker, has become even more desperate for those people since it has been learned that the Wal-Mart store chain is not picking up the Woolco store in Moose Jaw. And I believe they are doing that, Mr. Speaker, because of what has transpired with the Labour Relations Board in this province, with the fact that that particular place is

unionized against the wishes of the majority of the people who work there.

And when the Labour Relations Board refused to decertify, it means that 150 jobs are in jeopardy — 150 jobs that the city of Moose Jaw can ill afford to lose; 150 jobs, Mr. Speaker, that this province cannot afford to lose. Those are in many cases single parents, those are the sole breadwinners, those are taxpayers, Mr. Speaker — all in the name of union solidarity.

So I go back to the test, Mr. Speaker, the simple test: was the government listening? Obviously not. But even worse, Mr. Speaker, a criticism that the former NDP (New Democratic Party) opposition levelled so often is that you are only listening to a few. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that is even a worse indictment of the government's throne speech than if they simply weren't listening at all.

People are demanding that their representatives concentrate on job creation before job enhancement. And as such I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, as I can assure the Premier and his government, that the official opposition will do everything in their power to protect the jobs of people like those employed at the Woolco store in Moose Jaw. And we will not allow the union movement in this province to have rules which go against the very basic tenets of democracy.

Those people should have the right to vote, Mr. Speaker, and they should be able to vote with a secret ballot to determine the rules of their workplace. The guiding tenet has to be, jobs before union leaders, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government's own *Partnership for Renewal* economic strategy has as its key goal, and I quote: "Creating a positive environment for economic renewal."

In the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, I did hear the government talk about working with the private sector in conjunction with the initiative to lower trade barriers across Canada. They talk about the economic goal in conjunction with those lower trade barriers, of working with the private sector. And yet what we have seen are nothing but steps backwards, because this government has hiked every utility rate and tax rate in this province in the last two years.

So on one hand, Mr. Speaker, we talk about creating new bureaucratic institutions to work with people as trade barriers come down, when the government is busy creating barriers to business, creating barriers to job creation, by raising utility and tax rates all across the province.

And the strategy, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, described in the throne speech doesn't address that. The only job creation strategy I saw through that particular document, Mr. Speaker, was the creation of jobs in the bureaucracy. And that, Mr. Speaker, will simply not create those 42,000 jobs that this government has pledged to this province by the end of the decade. I see committees and boards and councils

that will make great work for officials but very little else.

Mr. Speaker, in this session we will be holding the government to its own plan to create a positive environment for business and jobs. And we will also highlight economic development projects that the government has failed to realize for this province.

There's another area, Mr. Speaker, that I watched for very carefully in the Speech from the Throne. It's an area that has been highlighted in this Assembly already. I listened for the evidence of compassion for the people that the government has sworn to serve.

Our caucus, Mr. Speaker, during the long debates in this last few years over health care, have said time and again that there needs to be a rationalization of health services in the province of Saskatchewan. But the number one consideration of any rationalization must be the effects it has on the people, not necessarily the treasury.

And I remember well, Mr. Speaker, as do many in this House, that when the former administration attempted to rationalize health care the howls of derision from the opposition — the NDP opposition — were deafening.

Do you remember when there was that small deductible added to the prescription drug plan and the now Hon. Minister of Education said, and I quote: seniors are now having to make a decision between buying groceries or prescription drugs. Groceries or prescription drugs, Mr. Speaker.

That's a very serious charge. That means that people are going to starve in our province because they could not access prescription drugs. And at the time, Mr. Speaker, I was stunned by that statement because I thought there had been a fair degree of homework done, that there had been a lot of consultations done with seniors' groups and there hadn't been any evidence at all to back up a statement like that, that seniors were going to give up eating so that they could have prescription drugs.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? That charge necessitated a second look. That meant that it had to stop and people had to go back and reaffirm that seniors in this province were not going to go without groceries. And a result of that, the prescription drug plan had to take into account special needs considerations.

So the opposition was doing its work and said seniors were going to starve. Government, go back, reassess, rethink, come back with a better plan. And it was brought up in this House question period after question period so that seniors would not go without groceries.

What do we find today, Mr. Speaker, when we put the test to the throne speech? We find a government that has more than tripled the prescription drug plan deductible. Calling it a drug plan any more is really a

fallacy, Mr. Speaker. For the average person out there, it simply doesn't exist any more.

The dental plan has been cancelled. There have been user fees added. There's 52 rural hospitals closed. Every fee including home care, ambulance services, nursing home rent, insulin, oxygen — they've all gone up, some of them quite dramatically. And the list goes on. Our office is flooded with calls and letters all the time, Mr. Speaker, with people complaining, as we saw in question period today.

The member from Kindersley raises real concerns of Saskatchewan residents. Because the test of compassion is not being met. What has been the response to the concerns of these people? What does the Premier of the province say when people say, slow down? The Premier proudly says, the train has left the station. Not we'll look into it, or perhaps there's a better way, just the train has left the station.

I wonder what the Minister of Education says today when those seniors that she was so concerned about not having food on their table, that couldn't access drugs because they would have to give up their groceries, when her own leader and Premier says: I'm sorry, Madam Minister, the train has left the station.

Mr. Speaker, how quickly the defenders of medicare have become the champions of I don't care. I don't care, the Premier says, the train has left the station. Well it's left the station all right, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately more and more Saskatchewan people are getting on it and they're leaving this province. That's why our population is going down, Mr. Speaker. That's why the jobs aren't here. They can talk all they want about the unemployment levels in this province, but if you don't have anybody left to employ, Mr. Speaker, you won't have a high unemployment level.

And you know what? The unfortunate part is, Mr. Speaker, that most of our seniors who spent their lives building and sweating and raising their families in this province don't have the wherewithal or, at this stage in their life, the courage to get on the train and leave. They have to stay here, Mr. Speaker, and face the I-don't-care attitude of the government.

Mr. Speaker, in this upcoming session the official opposition will continue to monitor the unfair and ill-advised changes to health care that are being enforced by this government. And I think we will bring enough examples into this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, of the kind of real hurt and damage that this attitude of I-don't-care approach can have on the people of this province.

And we hope, Mr. Speaker, that as those concerns, the concerns of real people who will be bringing their questions to this Assembly . . . that the government will take the time to reassess, re-evaluate, and do some of the things that would allow the test of compassion to be put on the throne speech of this province.

I listened very carefully, Mr. Speaker, along with about 60,000 farm families, to the long-awaited plan for what is still the number one industry in our province — that is, agriculture.

For over 10 years, or nearly 10 years, Mr. Speaker, that I've sat in this Assembly, I've heard the NDP Party say that they know how to bring prosperity back to rural Saskatchewan. So far, Mr. Speaker, the plan hasn't dealt with prosperity; the plan has done with the complete gutting of the revenue insurance plan. It has meant that nearly every input that farm families use in the production of food in our province has increased.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you're a farmer and your input costs all go up, it means that at some point in time during the year you're probably going to have a cash flow problem. And in the case of agriculture, those cash flow problems are fairly immediate. They can cause large debt situations to occur. And, Mr. Speaker, without there being a government that understands, they can be absolutely ruinous.

But the government says, don't worry, farm families, don't worry; we have the answer. It's called Agriculture 2000 — Agriculture 2000. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if that's the name of the report or the number of farm families that will be left in this province after the NDP government is through with them. But because of its vagueness, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that most of the government members avoid it like the plague, I suspect it is the latter rather than the former.

(1500)

So when you look at agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and you look at what else is going on in rural Saskatchewan, from the closure of 52 rural hospitals to the closure of rural service centres to the elimination of electoral . . . eight rural constituencies, cuts to transfer payments to towns and villages, the hijacking of federal infrastructure money headed for small communities, it almost would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, and to those listening to the throne speech, that the abandonment of rural Saskatchewan at every turn by this government is real, it's tangible, and some would say, Mr. Speaker, that it is deliberate.

I have an example, Mr. Speaker, that I think confirms a lot of what I have said, and I bring you back to the issue of the government's handling of The Hospital Revenue Act. Last year, Mr. Speaker, the Premier told the delegates to the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention that his government would not continue to enforce . . . or force municipalities to pay for hospital services they no longer had.

My hon. colleagues in the opposition took the Premier at his word and we introduced legislation to repeal that particular Act. Simple private member's Bill; could have been dispensed with, I think, fairly expeditiously, Mr. Speaker, because we were simply backing up the Premier's pledge to SUMA. Unfortunately it was defeated by the members of the

NDP government and the hospital levy continues to this day.

Now once again, Mr. Speaker, SUMA delegates have asked the government to remove health care funding directly and indirectly from the responsibility of urban governments and the property tax base. And once again, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition will act on their concerns and the pledge of the Premier of Saskatchewan and we will introduce legislation in this session to repeal the levy from 2 mills to 1 mill and then zero.

Because, Mr. Speaker, if what I said about the government's agenda for rural Saskatchewan isn't true, then I see no problem with that particular piece of legislation going through this House very quickly. Because we believe, Mr. Speaker, we believe strongly that the families and the individuals in places like Eston and Nipawin and Dorintosh and Porcupine Plain and hundreds of others have every right to expect equal treatment from their government. And we will be reminding, Mr. Speaker, government members that life does exist outside of Regina and Saskatoon.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we went through that throne speech delivery, as I listened to the member from Biggar and the member from downtown Regina, I listened in the area of education about how we would modernize our education system, rather than the so-called rationalization that they're doing in health care, so that we could live up to the commitment of this Premier and this government that they will have an educational system in place that will train Saskatchewan people for Saskatchewan jobs — the 30,000 that have been pledged.

Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the throne speech for the government's plan to eliminate poverty as they in opposition pledged each and every year except for the last two when they are now in government. Or perhaps an indication from this government in the throne speech that there would be a commitment to the real needs of the families in this province that are on welfare, and there would be some reform of the system. And perhaps instead of a welfare system that degrades, we'd talk about a family income system that educates and re-employs people, Mr. Speaker. But I heard nothing that would tell me that that test was passed in the throne speech.

So when you put all of those components together, Mr. Speaker, you put all of the components together and you put the acid test to it and it comes up empty, then the only conclusion that you're left with, the only conclusion that anyone could be left with, is that the Speech from the Throne has failed in what it supposedly set out to do. In other words, the government has misread the agenda of Saskatchewan taxpayers and Saskatchewan's voters. And I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that it takes a deaf person, a deaf person, to hear what that agenda is, to hear what the people have been asking for.

Mr. Speaker, the defeat of the former provincial

government, my government, and the election of the present one in 1991, I think was a very powerful message, one that I have constantly tried to learn from in the past two years. In 1992 the voters in this province voted no to more than just the unity question in the referendum. They voted no to a lot more than that simple question. The reasons for the defeat of the federal government in 1993 were a culmination, Mr. Speaker, of what happened in '91 and '92 and those reasons became very clear to the average person in this province. They should be very clear to the people who are sworn to serve them as their elected representatives.

And I think what was even more telling, Mr. Speaker — at least it was to me — just last week we had a by-election in the province of Saskatchewan. My party ran a poor third. But the real story was not the fact I think that Ms. Bergman won, although we congratulate her — the member from Regina North West, sorry, Mr. Speaker, won, and I congratulate her on her win — but the fact that only 45 per cent of the eligible voters, and I think in fact there was only 43 per cent in fact, got out to vote.

That means, Mr. Speaker, that more than half the people weren't interested in who represented them. That hasn't happened in this province since the Second World War, Mr. Speaker; 57 per cent of the people in that riding said it makes no difference which one of them I elect. They aren't worth me taking the time to leave my house and go down to the polling station and cast my democratic vote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when people in those kind of numbers tell us, none of the above, then we have a serious problem on our hands as political parties in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, people are demanding a change in the way government is run. They just don't want us to change the rules; they want us to change the game. It's not just the rules, Mr. Speaker; it's the game they want changed.

An Hon. Member: — They want a hockey game.

Mr. Swenson: — And the Premier flippantly says they want a hockey game. Then, Mr. Premier, I say to you, start listening to the 57 per cent that said that none of you qualify. None of you qualify to give me the leadership and the direction that I demand of my political parties and my political system. That's what they said. They said, get out of town if you aren't prepared to change the game.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for over two years I have listened. I have listened. And proudly member after member of the New Democratic Party government has stood in this house and said, we are the party of democratic reform. We even produced a handy-dandy little pamphlet before the last election. We told everybody about how we were going to change the system.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? So far what we have seen from the Premier, from the member from Riversdale, and his party are little snippets around the edge. Because most of the reform that people are

demanding out there, the people of Regina North West and elsewhere, most of the reform they're demanding would get in the way of the manipulation of political power by the Premier and his Executive Council. That's why we haven't seen it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've also seen the Liberal Party, the member from Saskatoon University, before the last provincial election, talk at great length about these things — talk at great length. But you know what, Mr. Speaker, other than coming into this Assembly and saying, I'm different, trust me, for the last two years, members of the Liberal Party have simply let the opportunities slip by.

Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that it is time that the issues be put and that those issues become unavoidable for all of us, regardless of our political party.

Mr. Speaker, in this session of the Legislative Assembly, the Progressive Conservative caucus will bring forward a number of reforms designed to bring democracy and the government process closer to the people it is sworn to serve. So instead of all the talk we've heard from all political parties, it is now time to make our democratically elected institutions more accessible and accountable. Because I honestly believe, Mr. Speaker, there is universal agreement on this issue. Legislative reform in the past has been very infrequent — if it has changed much at all.

So I think it's time that all of us . . . And I give you the pledge today, Mr. Speaker, that at least the Progressive Conservative caucus in this Assembly will stop all the rhetoric and present what we think are logical answers to the 57 per cent of electors in Regina North West who didn't bother to exercise their franchise.

Number one, we will be introducing a formal mechanism to bring Saskatchewan residents' questions directly into question period. People have said over and over again that question period sometimes is not the best forum to discuss their views, that neither the questions nor the answers seem to have a lot to do with the real issues that they face in their everyday lives. And as such, we will be inviting Saskatchewan residents to write us with questions that they would like to ask directly to the Premier and his cabinet ministers. Each week a portion of question period will be dedicated to asking these questions of the government. We will then send that person the government's verbatim answer from *Hansard*.

The process has already begun, Mr. Speaker. The questions are beginning to come in, and we really look forward to being able to present those as a responsible opposition should do, and we look forward to the answers that the government will be giving, as a responsible government should do.

Number two, Mr. Speaker, we will be proposing an all-party committee to make appointments to government boards and commissions. The Premier once pledged that he would eliminate patronage from government services if he were elected Premier. Not

once, but I'm afraid time and time again, Mr. Speaker, we've heard that mouthing from the member from Riversdale, the Premier. And we can only conclude, Mr. Speaker, is that it has failed. The initiative that the Premier promised when he was Leader of the Opposition has failed.

And I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe for a moment that you can entirely eliminate patronage from the British parliamentary system. But I do think, Mr. Speaker, I do believe, that this mechanism will ensure that most appointments are made based on merit rather than political affiliation. And I say most, because there will be times, Mr. Speaker, when even a committee of the most astute will not be able to eliminate patronage.

Number three, we will introduce legislation to establish an all-party committee open to the public and the media to review proposed utility rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, in light of recent developments, there isn't a politician in this province can honestly say that people are bringing this issue to the fore; they're demanding protection from unilateral and unwarranted increases — things like their phone, their power, their gas, their insurance rates. And I think it's incumbent upon all of us as duly elected members to allay those concerns that people have.

(1515)

I think it would make sense, Mr. Speaker, in these days of tight money to say to them that we don't need to create a new bureaucracy. You're already paying MLAs, so why not have a committee of MLAs with a majority of government members, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, who would review and debate the increases on behalf of those who pay them. So we don't have to have the expense and the bureaucratic stuff that went on with PURC (Public Utilities Review Commission); we don't have to have some of the problems that other jurisdictions have run into as they addressed this issue. Why not have Saskatchewan strike out with a new format and see if we can come up with a system, Mr. Speaker, that allows Saskatchewan residents to feel comfortable about the rate increases that they now perceive to be nothing more than hidden taxation?

Number four, Mr. Speaker, we will be moving amendments to The Legislative Assembly Act to allow for fixed election dates every four years. And I do congratulate the Premier on the changes that were made vis-a-vis by-elections. I think that was a move that was long overdue in this province, and the Premier and his party and his government are to be congratulated on it.

The current legislation, Mr. Speaker, stipulates that an election must be held within five years of the last election, at the discretion of the government. We believe that discretion needs to be removed. And I would say to the Premier, if an election had been held in June of 1991 instead of October, I believe that his

majority would be much slimmer, that closer to four years would in fact have been much better for my party than it turned out by going the full term. Four years, Mr. Speaker, seems to be a number that appeals to a lot of people in our province. And we will bring that legislation forward.

Number five, we will be seeking a legislated reduction in the number of cabinet ministers, specifying that the number be proportionate to the number of MLAs in the Legislative Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, that is quite different than anything that I have heard proposed in any other jurisdiction. If we limit the number of cabinet ministers to 25 per cent of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker — 25 per cent — that would mean that the Premier's cabinet would be reduced to 16 members. And that would save approximately \$2 million annually. When this Assembly is reduced to 58 members, the cabinet would be reduced by two more members, and that would save an additional \$1 million annually, Mr. Speaker.

Now those are not big numbers, Mr. Speaker, in the scheme of a budget in this province that is in the billions of dollars. But if we agree — and the Minister of Justice most eloquently said last year in debate, that reducing the number of MLAs to 58 is feasible and worth doing, Mr. Speaker. It's worth doing because of the savings that we will achieve in delivering government to others — then why should the difference in the number of cabinet ministers be no different, Mr. Speaker? Because the arguments made by the Minister of Justice and others should hold true.

And I think taxpayers around the province of Saskatchewan would view this as another positive step in the reform of their political institutions, so that premiers in the future do not abuse the privilege of naming people to cabinet simply to pacify certain political considerations or geographic considerations or promises made prior to an election. These would be viewed as a very positive result by the average taxpayer.

Number six, Mr. Speaker, we will be seeking to convert votes on all pieces of legislation in a free vote by stipulating that a government may only be defeated by a specially designated vote of non-confidence.

I honestly believe, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to the pressure within one's own caucus, many MLAs, and indeed many MPs that I've known in my political career, refused to vote against a piece of government legislation because of the consequences of bringing down the government, even when the wishes of their constituents clearly, clearly indicate that a no vote is the preferential vote for that particular constituency.

And I only think back, Mr. Speaker, on this issue to a very close friend of mine, a very dedicated public servant, a member of the Parliament of Canada for 12 years, by the name of Doug Neil, a man who represented the Moose Jaw constituency from 1972 to 1984. Mr. Neil was one of 16 individuals who voted against the Official Languages Act in the Parliament of Canada. And I honestly believe that that stigma stayed

with that individual throughout his parliamentary career.

And, Mr. Speaker, there was no more dedicated MP than that individual who represented Moose Jaw so ably for all of those years. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, in visiting Ottawa and talking to people, the fact that that vote occurred . . . and Mr. Neil was simply living up to the expectations of his constituents. If you had polled that constituency, they would have demanded overwhelmingly that Mr. Neil vote against that particular piece of legislation, which he did. And, Mr. Speaker, it should be no different in this Assembly here today. There are many questions of morality, of issues that are even beyond the main budgetary items of government, which should be opened to members to express their views in a more open manner.

And that is one of the major criticisms of our system, Mr. Speaker, that everything is done behind closed doors; that the whip is in control, that the leader is in control, that executive government is in control of your everyday life.

We intend, Mr. Speaker, to put that to an immediate test if it passes — an immediate test. And it was brought up today, and I hope the Premier listens very closely because he has expressed a personal view in this issue.

Once again our government has launched off on a major decision affecting the lives of Saskatchewan people, with very little consultation. For all the protestations of the member from Prince Albert about his travels around the province and how many people he's talked to, the simple fact is that the issue of gaming and gambling and casinos has not been widely discussed with Saskatchewan people.

This has basically been done behind closed doors, Mr. Speaker, and I think that there is enough there on the social and economic and moral side of the issues to demand a wider presentation of the facts. No debate, no questions, no answers, no reviews, nothing.

The average taxpayer is saying, oh, open and accountable government have struck again. That's why, Mr. Speaker, people in the majority stay home at election time. So regardless of what one's position is on this casino issue, I think the public needs to be brought into the decision-making circle.

I know there's a debate going on amongst the NDP caucus. It's been well documented in the media. And I know there's a difference in my own caucus, Mr. Speaker. I know that there are strong differences in my own caucus on this issue.

What we need to do, Mr. Speaker, what we need to do then is debate it in the legislature. And with these new rules in place, Mr. Speaker, we could do that. We could have that wider scope, a more honest debate, and I believe a more productive debate on this issue than the way it's presently being handled. The way it's being handled, Mr. Speaker, is simply to satisfy the

wishes of executive government. The wishes of executive government, I believe on this issue, are monetary ones — strictly monetary ones, Mr. Speaker — and that should not be the only criteria attached to this issue, not the only criteria.

Mr. Speaker, if we do these proposed changes, issues such as casino gambling and their presentation in this Assembly will become routine in their delivery. Members will not hesitate to rise to their feet no matter what party they represent, and they will discuss those issues in a way that the public will feel once again comfortable in placing trust in their political representatives.

Mr. Speaker, what I brought today to this Assembly and to this debate on the throne speech is not all-inclusive. There are lots of other issues, there are lots of other initiatives out there, but I believe what has been brought today is a certain amount of food for thought that can get the ball rolling.

A lot of people out there question me on things like the recall of members. I'm not sure about that, Mr. Speaker, but if it needs to be added to the list and discussed in here, then we should do it. We should do it before it is forced upon us by an angry, an angry electorate, an angry group of taxpayers who are simply going to say a pox on all of you, out you go.

Some of these things, Mr. Speaker, my political party has talked about every weekend over the last month and a half as we do our round of policy sessions in this province. My party continues to demand of me as the leader of a political party, change, and they will not accept anything else.

Some of these initiatives that I talked about today, Mr. Speaker, come from other political parties. Some of them come from the party led by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. Some of them come from the party led by the member from Saskatoon University. Some of them come from the members of the Reform Party, but regardless of where they come from or what jurisdiction they come from, Mr. Speaker, they are issues that must be dealt with, they are issues that are on the minds of people.

And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because all too often the argument boils down to who came up with the idea first. Whose initiative was it? Well, Mr. Speaker, what I heard on the doors of Regina North West was that they don't really care. They really don't care, Mr. Speaker, who thought of it first or whose initiative it was first. They're simply saying, get it done.

And I say to the Premier today, if he wants to stand up and claim credit for all of them, so be it. If the member from Saskatoon Riversdale wants to claim credit for all of them, so be it. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the feeling of this caucus and I think the Progressive Conservative Party and the majority of people around this province is stand in your place and get it done. That's what they're saying. Stand in your place and say yes to those initiatives and get it done. They're not new ideas; they've been around, some of them, for a

long time. But start to get it done. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the challenge before us, the challenge before this Assembly.

And I say to the select members of the media and some in the political system in this province who always, always criticize initiatives, who always say why didn't you do that 10 years ago when you had the chance, who always say well your political party has no credibility, what you have to do is just pose that simple question, the simple question that I put on the throne speech: is the government listening?

(1530)

And you will know, Mr. Speaker, that it's on. I give you an example, Mr. Speaker. I give you an example. You can think about moving your chair, Mr. Speaker. You can think about that in the future. And you can think, I should have moved my chair in the past. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? There's only one time when you can physically move that chair, and that is right now. That's the only time you have the power, Mr. Speaker, to make that happen.

That, and I say to the naysayers in the political system of our province and in the media, the time is now. Look at the issues for what they are, and look at the opportunities for what they are, and look at the benefits of the political system for what they are, and judge them on their merit. Not like some person who's on a far-off star, looking down and passing judgement, but actually being a participant in the system.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say to the Premier — and I'm glad he's here today to hear these words — that it's time for his party and the members of it to not be stuck on simply criticisms of the past.

And I say to the members of the Liberal Party, the third party now represented in our Legislative Assembly, it's time to stop simply dreaming about your chance to form government in the future. And it's time for my party to remember the mistakes made in the past.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you put all three of them together, when you put all three of them together, if they will give up a little bit of that political ground, you know what? The now is very doable and possible. And that's the challenge in front of this Legislative Assembly.

We have the ability to make fundamental change. The government can honestly say in its next throne speech that we have learned from the mistakes of the past and we won't repeat them. We can honestly say we can have the acid test of are we listening, do we have compassion, are we looking to the future with a positive agenda, not simply helping out a few of our friends to their agenda.

Then I think, Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech in 1995, the government could honestly say: here are the tests that the people are placing in front of us, and we are addressing them and we are passing them. And then, Mr. Speaker, we won't have to go through this

awful exercise again of debating a throne speech which is vague and seems to fail every test being put to it by the taxpayers of this province today.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we will be doing what all of us should be proud of being and that is elected members of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan who truly represent the interests of the constituents they were elected to serve.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day that pride and that honour is really what counts in the delivery of our political system. And, Mr. Speaker, that's going to require some soul-searching and that is going to require some give and take. But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, that is what is important. Because that is the only test that ultimately each one of us as elected members goes through every four years: were you serving the interests of the people you were elected to represent?

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech has not done that. And I believe it's time that we started putting in place systems that allow those throne speeches to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into this debate in response to the Speech from the Throne for 1994.

I'd like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by offering my congratulations to the mover and seconder of the speech, the member for Regina Lake Centre as well as the member for Biggar. Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to their addresses yesterday afternoon and found them to be thoughtful and was impressed with the fact that both of them, in moving and seconding the Speech from the Throne, spoke with optimism and they spoke with compassion and they spoke most importantly, Mr. Speaker, with faith in the future of Saskatchewan.

Many of us have not had the honour that they have had to move and second a speech which outlines the plan for the government for the year. But I want to add my words of commendation to both the member from Regina Lake Centre and Biggar and say that I commend you for having performed the honour with distinction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I hope as well for you that this proves to be not only a spirited but a purposeful fourth session of the twenty-second legislature, over which you'll preside. And I express my voice of confidence, Mr. Speaker, that you will have the combination of patience and decisiveness and a sense of serious purpose as well as a sense of humour that will allow you to preside over the proceedings here with just that right balance that enhances the respect for democracy, and that democracy will prevail in this session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I want to join as well the other members who have offered their congratulations to the newly elected member for Regina North West. I say to you that I hope that your time in this House will be rewarding for you and that it will be felt to be responsible representation by your constituents. However I'm sure that you will understand as well that I stop short of wishing you a lengthy stay in this House. But congratulations to you.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the words of the Leader of the Opposition. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition is . . . A friend and colleague from Rosthern tells me he also even listened to parts of that speech and there were others as well, Mr. Speaker.

But I listened carefully to the words of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, my good friend and colleague, the member from Thunder Creek. And I listened carefully to the things that he talked about as priorities when he addressed remarks to the response to the Speech from the Throne. And he expresses concern for democratic reform.

And he recognized, Mr. Speaker, that when commenting upon the by-election that was held in Regina North West, in fact that by-election was held because this government, two years ago — two years ago — passed a law that said, never again in Saskatchewan will the representation of the people be betrayed as it was by the Leader of the Opposition's party when he was in government. And that never again will people in this province go more than six months without representation. That law was passed by a New Democrat government and the by-election was held. And we are into a new era of democratic participation and reform in the province of Saskatchewan today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — I listened carefully as well to the kinds of suggestions that the Leader of the Opposition made as to what he describes as democratic reform. And I find it kind of interesting, Mr. Speaker, that they have a vague resemblance, and in fact some of them not such a vague resemblance, to what goes on in the version of democracy that rules supreme south of the border in the United States of America . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . My colleague points out, Mr. Speaker, direct democracy, not representative democracy.

In many ways diversions away from our parliamentary system that in fact celebrates, celebrates in the Canadian and the Saskatchewan, throughout the Commonwealth, the legitimate and noble role of political parties as a way of providing a voice for ordinary people to these chambers.

Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the changes in structures that the Leader of the Opposition suggests, in many ways puppeting what Mr. Manning has been saying for some time. And in doing that, Mr. Speaker, I think betraying some of the commitment to the tradition of representative democracy, responsible

democracy, that are so much a part of our proud tradition in this province.

And so I listened to them, Mr. Speaker. I trust that we will have opportunity to debate them. But as a representative of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, and truly committed to parliamentary democracy, I must say that I listen with a bit of trepidation.

I also note with interest the Leader of the Opposition neglects to recognize one of the most active forums of participatory democracy that has been undertaken by this government over the last two years. Because, Mr. Speaker, it is known, it is debated, but it is known very clearly from this day forward, it is the case that when it comes to health care in the province of Saskatchewan, the decisions made for the priorities and the delivery of health care will be made by local people with local priorities taking care of themselves and not out of the city of Regina.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — That's democratic reform that has been taken already.

And I listened carefully, Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition said that he was wanting to see compassion in the Speech from the Throne, and he couldn't see it. Mr. Speaker, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, through you, if he didn't see it, it was because he didn't want to see it. Because it seems to me that compassion was a central thread that was woven through the Speech from the Throne that I heard on Monday of this week.

And so I'd like to touch on the Speech from the Throne in three contexts, Mr. Speaker, which I think were characteristic of it in the context of history and also in the context of compassion and cooperation. I think there were some lessons to be learned as we reflect upon the Speech from the Throne, both about our past and our present, but most importantly our future.

In 1994, we mark two important 50th anniversaries representing two important victories for democracy. World War II, representing a victory for democracy, for freedom for Canada and our allies. And on behalf of the constituents of Moose Jaw Palliser, Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to express my humble thanks to those men and women who served at home and abroad and a special gratitude to those who were afflicted and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

On the home front, Mr. Speaker, in 1944, there was a victory for social democracy with the election of the first social democratic government on the continent, the first social democratic government led by Premier Tommy Douglas in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud, I'm proud to stand today as a political descendant of that social democratic government as a New Democrat about to begin . . .

An Hon. Member: — He would never stand with you, what you've done today.

Mr. Hagel: — The member from Morse, his remarks, Mr. Speaker, I know that he doesn't have the same opportunity to express his pride in the traditions of the government that he was a part of; I know that. But I stand proud to be a New Democrat, Mr. Speaker, on the verge of beginning the second half-century of social democratic government in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — The question was, would Tommy stand with you. That's the question.

Mr. Hagel: — Well the member, Mr. Speaker, wants to know about Tommy. And so, Mr. Speaker, maybe I can just spend a little time sharing with the member some of the words of Tommy. It's been an interesting phenomenon in recent times. Tommy Douglas, there's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, was the leader of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), the forerunner of the New Democratic Party. But, goodness gracious, even the member from Morse, his party has claimed ownership of Tommy at times. The Leader of the Liberals also claims affiliation with Tommy at times. There's only one party that can do it with legitimacy in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And as I look at the history of Saskatchewan, I see it, the history of Saskatchewan since 1944, as containing compassion and cooperation that is a part of this Speech from the Throne.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member asks, what did Tommy say? Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know in this House and across the province of Saskatchewan, no one loved a good story better than Tommy Douglas. And I'd like to refer to one his favourite stories known by many people in the province of Saskatchewan, entitled "Mouseland." Mr. Speaker, a tale that I think has lessons that continue to be true today.

Mr. Speaker, as we all recall, the Mouseland fable, as it came to be known in the province of Saskatchewan, began with these words:

It's the story of a place called Mouseland.

An Hon. Member: — It's a good thing we had a change of the session. They could repeat what they said last year.

Mr. Hagel: — Well the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, I know that they are waiting with enthusiasm to hear the words of Tommy because they are just as relevant today as they were then. I can understand why they're a little troubled with the tale of Mouseland, Mr. Speaker. They are just as troubled by Mouseland today as their predecessors were 50 years ago, Mr. Speaker, as their predecessors were.

I won't read the story verbatim, Mr. Speaker, for two reasons: in the interests of time, but no one could tell the story like Tommy Douglas anyhow. But Tommy Douglas went on, Tommy Douglas went on to talk about Mouseland, the place where mice lived. And they had this unfortunate habit, Mr. Speaker — they has this unfortunate habit . . .

An Hon. Member: — Even your Premier can't stand any more of this; even the boss can't stand it.

Mr. Hagel: — Oh, oh. Now, Mr. Speaker, my goodness gracious. The members opposite do seem to be a bit troubled by Mouseland, and I can understand that. But if they listen carefully, Mr. Speaker, if they listen carefully they may learn a lesson here and find an opportunity to prevent having to learn the lesson yet again in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker.

But Mouseland, Mr. Speaker, in Mouseland they had this unfortunate habit. Every now and then they'd have an election. And what they would elect unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, were cats — cats — governments made up of big, fat, black cats. Well, Mr. Speaker, in the words of Tommy:

Now if you think it's strange that mice should elect a government made up of cats, you just look at the history of Canada . . . and maybe you'll see that they weren't any stupider than we are (today).

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're kind of getting to the point. Because, you see, what would happen is over a period of time as the elections would come, election after election, the mice would march out and they would elect a government made up of cats. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, they voted out the black cats and they put in the white cats.

(1545)

An Hon. Member: — I've heard this before.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, now there's the member of the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there is a new-found Liberal here in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and he takes great interest in this story about the cats too, because he knows that he too is one of the stars of the story of Tommy Douglas who talked about the cats . . .

An Hon. Member: — He must have heard it in your caucus before.

Mr. Hagel: — Well some cats don't know what colour they are, Mr. Speaker. Some cats keep changing colours. Well we've got black cats; we've got white cats; we've got some over there that aren't sure what colour cats they are but cats they are nevertheless, Mr. Speaker — cats they are nevertheless.

Mr. Speaker, in fact we had that phenomenon, interesting phenomenon here in the province of Saskatchewan last October when, depending on your

point of view, the people of Canada voted out the black cats and voted in the white cats. Or did they vote out the white cats and vote in the black cats? We don't know, but cats they got, Mr. Speaker.

And in fact, as Tommy told this story, Mr. Speaker, there were cats; there were white cats, there were black cats — every now and then they had coalitions. They had coloured, they had blacks and whites together. But, Mr. Speaker, he also recognized the phenomenon — and listen carefully here — that there were cats that tried to make a noise like a mouse.

Mr. Speaker, and these noises that were made like a mouse were often made — is it any surprise, Mr. Speaker? — at election time when the cats would talk like a mouse. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that some things never change.

But what did they do? They ate like cats. Because at the end of the day a cat is a cat is a cat.

Tommy went on to say, as he concluded the story, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

You see, my friends, the trouble wasn't with the colour of the cat. The trouble was that they were cats. And because they were cats, they naturally looked after the cats instead of mice.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are taking great interest in this story, and I think they're enjoying it because they are recognizing that they are part of this play, that this ongoing saga unfortunately the people of Saskatchewan continue to be subjected to today.

But, Mr. Speaker, the most recent example of cats taking care of cats was just yesterday — just yesterday. Mr. Speaker, we all heard, we all heard about the cats in Ottawa telling us that they were going to reduce the price of a carton of cigarettes by \$5. Now who are they doing it for, my colleague asks. And this is a good question, Mr. Speaker.

Now was it for the mice? My good friend, the member from Swift Current, he asked if it was for the mice. Well let us see, Mr. Speaker. I picked up the *Leader-Post* today and it said right there on the front page: "Cigarette price-cut confusion". Confusion; confusion reigns supreme. It was a catastrophe, as my . . . Mr. Speaker, and if I may be allowed just the slight liberty of the English language, Mr. Speaker, it ain't "purr-ty", it ain't "purr-ty" either.

Mr. Speaker, it made it very clear in this article where the mouse stood, where the mice were. In referring to, Mr. Speaker, in referring to the Minister of Finance for the province of Saskatchewan, the article says that:

... she's also concerned Ottawa is sending a message that it's acceptable to break the law and not pay taxes.

"So we support their increased enforcement with respect to smuggling. We support the tax

on tobacco companies. We support the anti-smoking campaign.

And she concludes:

"What we do not support is the cut in taxes on cigarettes and we will not be following suit in Saskatchewan."

Well, Mr. Speaker, surely the cats in Ottawa wouldn't be making a decision that was not in the best interest of the mice. But I look in the *Leader-Post* and I find again another article entitled "School board adds its voice — Opposes gov't move." And I quote in part:

The Regina Public School Board added its voice Tuesday night to those opposing the federal government's move to reduce taxes on tobacco.

... a letter to be sent to Premier Roy Romanow in support of the province's stand against reducing the price of cigarettes.

"If you lower the price of cigarettes it encourages more smoking, particularly among young people" . . .

And another article, Mr. Speaker, that says: "Tax cuts attacked — Big mistake, groups say". It says in part and I quote:

"I'm not pleased. There's no excuse for this," said Paul Van Loon, director of health education for the Saskatchewan Lung Association."

"I don't think you'll find one health organization in the country that agrees with this plan."

Well, Mr. Speaker, if this is a decision of the cats that's for the good of the mice, then who's it for? Who is it for? Mr. Speaker, could it have anything to do with the fact that cats of the same colour have got an election coming in another province distant from here, Mr. Speaker? Could this have something to do with cats taking care of cats, Mr. Speaker? Might it have anything to do with cats putting cats ahead of the mice?

Well, Tommy said, sometimes they make a noise like a mouse, but they end up eating like a cat. And I noticed today, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member opposite stood in question period and he asked the question about crop insurance. He made a noise like a mouse. He made a noise like a mouse.

But while he made that noise like a mouse he conveniently ignored that the Liberal government in Ottawa is giving up millions of dollars that it could put into farm safety programs if it chose — to the farm safety net — but instead he is content to make a noise like a mouse while his country cousins in Ottawa continue to be cats serving cats.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Tommy concluded, and I quote:

Presently, there came along one little mouse who had an idea. My friends, watch out for the little fellow with an idea. And he said to the other mice, "Look fellows, why do we keep on electing a government made up of cats? Why don't we elect a government made up of mice?" "Oh," they said, "he's a Bolshevik. Lock him up!" So they put him in jail.

But Tommy always concluded, Mr. Speaker, with this point:

But I want to remind you: that you can lock up a mouse or a man (or a woman) but you can't lock up an idea.

And what a powerful idea it was, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious to us all the Mouseland was Saskatchewan. And the cats are the two old, blind parties that take such great interest in this story about Mouseland.

But the idea simply put, Mr. Speaker, was this — the idea was social democracy; social democracy based on three precepts. One, that government has a noble role to play, to influence the quality of life that is truly available to all citizens, as the equalizer of opportunity and security. Secondly, that good government acts with compassion for the most vulnerable and the least powerful among us. And thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the most powerful way to overcome barriers is through cooperation. What a powerful idea.

It was a powerful idea in 1944 and for the next 50 proud years for the province of Saskatchewan. And that belief in the noble role of government with the principles of compassion and cooperation brought a number of things to Saskatchewan over that time.

Hospitalization was introduced for the first time here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — I believe it was 1947 — where people could have hospital care without having to first of all open their wallets as they walked into the door of the hospital.

And the Public Service Commission was introduced, Mr. Speaker, because up until that time Saskatchewan had to have government only by cats. And when the black cats would come in, Mr. Speaker, then the black cats would work and out would go the white cats. And when the white cats were elected, Mr. Speaker, the white cats would work and out would go the black cats.

And Tommy Douglas said, Mr. Speaker — and the member from Morse knows precisely what I'm going to say — Tommy Douglas said that this waste has to end; the people of Saskatchewan deserve to be served by professional, competent public service employees. And the Public Service Commission was introduced in the province of Saskatchewan to ensure that people

who worked for the government worked on the basis of their competence and not on the basis of their political loyalties.

And, Mr. Speaker, rural electrification was introduced in the province of Saskatchewan to bring convenience to many people throughout the rural part of our province, to be able to enjoy one of the newly developed standards in quality of life.

And provincial social assistance came into being. Social assistance was moved from being a municipal function, which provided the level of comfort — not comfort, heavens only knows, it was more accurate to describe it as a basic means of existence — that it would become a right of Saskatchewan citizenship, that there would be a standard across the province not dependent upon either the wealth or the charitable intentions of the local municipality.

Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office came into existence to provide general and affordable auto insurance as well as general insurance, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Saskatchewan people had an affordable way of giving themselves the basic level of security.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the proudest times in Saskatchewan history in 1962, one of the most beautiful gifts from the people of Saskatchewan to the people of Canada — medicare — 30 years ago, 32 years ago. Here we are 32 years later, the people in the nation south of the border the Leader of the Opposition likes to epitomize as having the characteristics of what he calls good, democratic reform 32 years later those folks, Mr. Speaker, are trying to decide whether they should have medicare. That's what they're trying to decide.

President Clinton spoke to the governors of the United States of America back in August, and when he did he said to those governors, those most powerful people in the United States of America, that it was a shame that in the United States of America, where they were spending 14 cents, 14 per cent of their gross domestic product in health care in the United States, as compared to 10 cents, 10 per cent on the dollar in Canada, that there were 30 million Americans — 30 million Americans — without medicare.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say, you turn over our system to the democratic system in the United States and that's where we're heading. Because in the United States of America, the lobbyists and the big corporations become very, very dominant in the political decisions and priorities in that country. When members of this House have opportunity to rub shoulders, members who live within a parliamentary democracy have opportunity to rub shoulders, over and over again they tell us, don't give up what we've got. Where we can in this system that we live, we can represent with our constituents' priorities first, not the lobbyists.

And we remember in this House, Mr. Speaker, we remember the actions of the Leader of the Liberal Party in 1962 who was happy to be associated with the Keep Our Doctors committee and the march on

the legislature, one of the largest marches on the legislature that this Legislative Building has ever seen. And he was happy to lead that revolt at the time, Mr. Speaker, against socialized medicine — medicare. And he came and he kicked on the door as the Leader of the Liberal Party. One of the cats came and kicked on the doors of the Legislative Assembly to show his disgust for this wild and crazy social democratic notion that was intended to be introduced in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1600)

And all of these things, Mr. Speaker, all of these things were done while the government continued to work to eliminate the debt inherited from the old-line parties, from the fat cats, on the belief that we have the greatest freedom to act on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan when we're debt free. Mr. Speaker, that truth is just as significant to us today in 1994 as it was in 1944.

And over that 50 years, Mr. Speaker, we saw the introduction of human rights legislation to protect our citizens against discrimination. And some of the most progressive labour legislation in the nation, providing minimum standards for those people who are working without representation by collective agreement, as well as legislation to permit the democratic organization of working people to group together.

Mr. Speaker, in that 50 years we saw aggressive ownership and management of our natural resources, to keep down personal taxes, as the only means to pay for our services. And as we look at history today, we recognize that unfortunately privatization has been part of Saskatchewan's history, and that aggressive ownership and management of natural resources no longer exists, and as a consequence, the taxes have gone up — a surprise to no one.

More recently, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the federated Indian college at the University of Regina and children's dental care and Crown corporations becoming world leaders in technology. The settlement of century-old Indian treaties, expansion of public health, and now finally, the third step of Tommy Douglas's dream for health care. Hospitalization and medicare and now wellness, where our system strives to help us stay healthy and doesn't just involve us when we're sick.

Mr. Speaker, that idea is alive and well in Saskatchewan today. Mr. Speaker, social democracy is in good health in Saskatchewan today. Mr. Speaker, the dream lives on and it beats in the hearts of New Democrats in Saskatchewan today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — You see, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan the fact of the matter is New Democrats' dreams come true. In 1994 New Democrats still have dreams, Mr. Speaker. In 1994, New Democrats dream of a time when there is truly equity in employment. When racial discrimination is a plague of the past. When our

environment is a heritage we are proud to pass on to our children. When education is truly available to all. When children can grow up without fear in their homes and with hope in their hearts. When governments will be trusted again to be about a noble task and to be a politician is considered to be a noble calling. When women and men expect meaningful work with reasonable rewards and security. When seniors all retire with dignity. When Saskatchewan people enjoy physical and mental and spiritual health and strive to stay healthy and are confident in our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, as social democrats begin the second half-century of social democracy in Saskatchewan, there is no shortage of dreams. But if there's anything that we've learned in the past 50 years, it's how to make dreams come true. The formula isn't complicated. One, those dreams that cost money, you build as you can afford to pay for them. And secondly, you set goals, you work hard, and you take one step at a time.

And in this spirit, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to associate myself with this throne speech as a plan for the year ahead, putting into practice government acting with purpose and with compassion and cooperation. I'm proud to associate myself with the progress towards a balanced budget in 1996 as promised. And this is a political party, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't make promises it doesn't intend to keep — there will be a balanced budget in 1996, I am confident.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to associate myself with the new structures that invoke the principles of cooperation and social democracy in the '90s, to develop our economy and jobs. Cooperation is just as important as a way to solve problems in Saskatchewan today as it ever was — it's different times and so the structures are different — and in this Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, it invokes cooperation in the formation of regional economic development authorities, bringing together communities in the province of Saskatchewan and people in those communities to cooperate in the building of our economy instead of competing with them each . . . with each other and tearing down our economy in the process.

Cooperation in our new tourism authority, which will be introduced in this session, Mr. Speaker, bringing together the private sector as well as government, working to build a tourism industry in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which I believe has all kinds of potential to be so much more than it is today.

Cooperation, Mr. Speaker, in this Speech from the Throne is invoked in the introduction of a new trade development corporation which once again brings together the private sector and government, working in cooperation in the distribution of Saskatchewan-made goods around the world to enhance our economy and create jobs for our people.

Cooperation is invoked in this Speech from the Throne in the development of opportunities in research, information technology and telecommunications, bringing together different sectors of Saskatchewan industry, education, and government again.

And, Mr. Speaker, cooperation is invoked in the starting of new enterprises with the aid of the newly introduced Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation that we will again see in this sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be associated with the modernization of labour standards for all working people — all working people, Mr. Speaker. And I point out to the Assembly that this will be the first revision of labour standards to take place in this chambers for 17 years. And how the world has changed in the last 17 years and the workplace has changed, and so I am proud to be associated with the modernization of our labour standards for all working people in the province of Saskatchewan, as well as legislative improvements to the laws that govern workplaces where employees democratically organize themselves.

And we must remember, as we are tempted to get into acidic rhetoric in this House, Mr. Speaker, that this is what this is about — a very important Canadian, and in fact, North American tradition, to give legal authority for working people to democratically organize themselves, and we will see improvements in that kind of legislation in this session.

Mr. Speaker, in this International Year of the Family I'm proud to associate myself with the action plan for children, bringing together, both within government as well as outside of government, different interests and agencies and departments all of whom put first, the interest of working for the benefit of children in the province of Saskatchewan. And they put that ahead of the protection of their institutions and of their own turf and territory.

And I'm proud to be associated, Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of the children's advocate to aid those most vulnerable children who come into the care of the government. Mr. Speaker, it was about seven years ago, when it was my honour to serve in this Assembly as the Social Services critic for the New Democratic opposition, I called for the introduction of a children's ombudsman at that time. And I want to acknowledge today in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, the committed and fervent support for a children's advocate, for this important initiative for children who are in special need of love and security, that was brought to this Chamber by the former critic for Social Services for the New Democratic government, Peter Prebble.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say and associate myself with the fact that Peter's dreams for vulnerable Saskatchewan children will come true with the introduction of the children's advocate this year.

Mr. Speaker, I would be irresponsible if I didn't in my

concluding say thanks to the people of Saskatchewan. The democratic reality is this: progress is only made by governments which act as instruments for the people they represent. In democracy, changes only remain when people want them to remain. So for the support for progress for 50 years, and particularly, Mr. Speaker, for the extra sacrifice of the last two years made by the people of Saskatchewan, I want to say thanks.

When we come to vote on the Speech from the Throne, I trust it will be a recorded vote. And, Mr. Speaker, I will stand — proud to stand — in my place on behalf of the constituents of Moose Jaw Palliser. And when I stand in support of the Speech from the Throne, I will stand to say yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — I'm very thankful for this opportunity to speak today on behalf of constituents from the Sutherland-University constituency and bring to this Legislative Assembly some of the concerns that I have heard from them.

First let me say that personally this Speech from the Throne is a breath of fresh air. I say this for two reasons. First of all, it comes as a breath of fresh air after 10 years of government on a binge with the excesses of privatization and megaprojects and silly escapades like M.A.S. Medical and Joytec and the like that bankrupted the province.

But not only a breath of fresh air from that form of government, but a breath of fresh air from the kind of government we've seen the last two years that for all practical purposes has been under siege because of that legacy of debt and bankruptcy; a breath of fresh air to a government that has been forced to deal almost solely to the exclusion of many, many other pressing social, economic, and political issues, with the issues of debt management and putting the province on a firm financial foundation.

And so this Speech from the Throne marks a breath of fresh air within the life of this government. The deficit monster is now under control; it's on a leash. And with the 1996 budget there will be a balanced budget for the first time in Saskatchewan for over a decade.

And I want to say here that the times here in Saskatchewan the last couple of years, the last number of years, have in fact been very rough for all Saskatchewan people, especially for those who are poorest in our province. There have been very, very difficult times, having to absorb the extra cost of prescription drugs and such things. Farmers have made a lot of sacrifice. All segments of Saskatchewan have made sacrifice.

And I know that I speak for members on this side of the Legislative Assembly when I say that the people of Saskatchewan have our appreciation and our deep thanks for the heroic sacrifices in some instances that they have made the last couple of years in order to balance the budget.

We need to say then, and give credit where credit is due, that the changes that have been brought about in the last two years have not simply been the result of government action, but have been the result also of public response and public sacrifice.

The significant thing about this Speech from the Throne for me then is that it marks a bit of a turning point in the life of this government in the journey of renewal that we are on for the province of Saskatchewan. A turning point also in public policy.

There's no doubt about it that in this Speech from the Throne there is a marked emphasis on economic development. Economic development being emphasized now because the government has put first things first for the last two years and has dealt with the deficit and the budget balancing and has established a positive trajectory there. Now we can turn to creating jobs and economic development across the province.

And I'm very encouraged by some of the announcements in the Speech from the Throne, particularly that the government will be working in cooperative fashion with communities for regional economic development authorities and community development across the province. There's no doubt but that this is the way to go in the years ahead with local Saskatchewan people and communities rebuilding the province.

I'm also encouraged to see the announcement of a trade corporation being established. I think we can take heart that the government was the first province in all of Canada to sign the federal-provincial infrastructure agreement, and we'll be pressing forward to bring those jobs and economic projects into the provincial economy these next weeks and months.

(1615)

It's also very positive that SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) with all the excesses of the past 10 years is being replaced by a new vehicle for economic development.

And so I'll say that for me there are all the signs of economic activity and renewal in this Speech from the Throne with respect to the private sector. And with the small-business sector the government has had a good, solid agricultural policy in its Ag 2000 document.

But this focus, I dare say, is only one arena of economic activity. As someone is given to talk about only one engine of economic development, namely the private sector, there are two other engines or vehicles for economic development in our province that this Speech from the Throne really doesn't touch on. I think it's important that they be noted to the public that the government is working in these two areas.

In the months ahead they're going to see, the people of Saskatchewan are going to see developments with

respect to Crown corporations, and they're going to see economic initiatives in the Crown corporation sector . . . in the cooperative sector rather, as members of this caucus begin turning to those two engines of the economy and begin firing them up as the private sector has been fired up with our *Partnership for Renewal* document.

Job creation and growth have to see activity in all three sectors of the economy. In the public sector we need to look for in the months ahead, an expanded role for our Crown corporations. There's a hint of that in the Speech from the Throne when it talks about SaskTel's involvement in the chunnel project and some of its technological expertise, and the information highway and those sorts of things. But we can expect a lot more from this government with respect to Crown corporations, and we will be seeing more from this government with respect to Crown corporations in the months ahead.

Another area of public sector enterprise has to do with the field of job training, apprenticeship programs. There's a crying need for that here in Saskatchewan. A number of my colleagues, the member from Redberry and the member from Bengough-Milestone, have commented on their commitment to work on apprenticeship programs for the province. And I can tell the people of Saskatchewan that in the months ahead they will be seeing work done by this government on apprenticeship programs because of the efforts of people like these two members from Redberry and Bengough-Milestone.

I could tell them also that there is room for the public sector, in firing up the economy, to go back to an old program that is a good program. A program like students in industry, graduates in industry, that had been funded years ago by the Saskatchewan Research Council and provided job opportunities for young people and support for employers, small-business people, especially in technology fields across the province. And I intend to work on that sort of program with the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Research Council.

With respect to the cooperative sector, we've got a big role, a big job to do there to revitalize and to renew that sector of the economy. I don't know that government members have even begun to turn their mind to the many opportunities that exist in that sector of the economy, but I can tell you that this is a task the government members need to be addressing and that they will be addressing in the months ahead.

Simply put, we are not going to be content to see the economy limping along on only one engine or driven by only one vehicle. We need to get all segments of the Saskatchewan economy working together.

It's with this perspective on economic development then that I feel I need to say a word about the issue of gambling in the province. And I want to begin by saying that I appreciate the careful and deliberate manner in which the government has wrestled with this issue. I think that the minister responsible for the

Liquor Commission is nothing less than heroic with some of the efforts that he has put into wrestling with this issue. And he deserves . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — And he really does deserve the appreciation of the Saskatchewan public. Now I know there's criticism of our policy with respect to gambling. I know there are lots of concerns about our policy with respect to gambling, and I say that's as it should be.

And people having those concerns need to raise those concerns with their individual members and make them clear. And the government members have the responsibility to take those concerns to heart and to deal with those concerns and to communicate with the Saskatchewan people as to what the Government of Saskatchewan is doing with respect to casinos and other forms of gambling.

It can't just be the minister responsible for gambling and the Liquor Commission that deals with those concerns single-handedly, as capably as he is dealing with them. There's got to be an increased dialogue established between people who hold concerns with their individual members of the legislature. And I certainly encourage people to contact their government members on this score and discuss these very difficult issues.

And they are difficult; they are immensely difficult as we know. Morally they are difficult; socially they are difficult; economically they are difficult. And I say it's very easy for people to stand on the sidelines and to criticize and to take pot-shots at government policy on this score, but it's much more difficult to find a balance when you're dealing with these immensely difficult issues related to gambling. And it's even . . . well we can deal with the issues, or try to deal with the issues, but to find solutions that appease all portions of the public, not even a heroic minister can do that.

My wife says, people gamble nowadays in large measure, Mark, because they've lost hope. And I think she's right. And I think it's very important for us as elected members, no matter which party we're in, to recognize that there really is a crisis in hope across our province. There are many people who feel that they will never make it in the above-ground, so-called real economic world.

An Hon. Member: — The legitimate economy.

Mr. Koenker: — The legitimate economy. Because they're unemployed, they've been injured on the job or they're discriminated against, they're poor to begin with, they can't pull themselves up by their bootstraps. They have no child care, as the member for Saskatoon Wildwood points out. The cards are stacked against them and they've got nothing to lose.

So why not go to the tables or the VLT or the casino and the break-open, the bingo, whatever it is, and see if we can't win. Any maybe, just maybe, if I win the

649 then my life would change. But there's precious little hope of things changing when I'm unemployed and poor or I'm a single parent.

And so we do have a crisis of hope and we have a responsibility to these people when it comes to the larger discussion of the gambling issue, and not to focus just merrily on the issue of gambling but to focus on the issue of economic development and what we're doing to provide real, palpable hope for people who need it, for people who don't have jobs or who don't have opportunities.

Gambling in large measure is false hope. We all know that. We need to provide real hope for Saskatchewan people. And I dare say, the last chapter on gambling policy hasn't been written yet; the last word hasn't been spoken. Share your concerns with us. Share your concerns not only on gambling but share your concerns with government members, with opposition members, on ideas for economic development.

Now I know that there are individual members like the member for Shellbrook-Torch River constituency who has a lot of small forest operators in his backyard. These are people who often will employ only one or two other people in a small mill in the bush but they'll create a quality product from our Saskatchewan resources.

There are problems there. There are problems with respect to supply, with respect to allocation of wood, and these are problems that I can announce to the people of Saskatchewan with this Speech from the Throne that marks the breath of fresh air, getting away from our fixation with debt and the deficit. These are problems that are going to begin to be addressed by the Government of Saskatchewan in the months ahead.

Because our priority is now putting jobs and economic development to work, and to look at questions like wood allocation. And I can tell the people of Saskatchewan, members like the member for Shellbrook-Torch River are going to be looking at those issues, the member from Nipawin, the member from Kelsey-Tisdale, and they're going to be wrestling with . . . the member from Meadow Lake, and they're going to be wrestling with these issues and they're going to be coming up with solutions. But not without the help of the Saskatchewan public and their constituents. And you need to be talking to them.

We're all in this same boat together. Some of the members, like the member from Turtleford, the member from Redberry in the forest belt, have problems with beavers. Their constituents have lots of problems with beavers. It's not a big problem in Saskatoon Sutherland-University constituency; they're all nicely cooped up in the forestry farm pens. But in some parts of Saskatchewan it's a problem.

And I say there ought to be some opportunities here, some opportunities for economic development to use those pelts, maybe to use the meat. I don't know who wants to eat beaver meat; maybe it's good only for

dogs. I'm told dogs love it. Some people eat seal flippers. But I want to tell the people of Saskatchewan, we need to work together to find markets and opportunities for some of the God-given resources right on our front doors and in our back yards. And government members are committed to work on those things in the months ahead.

That's on the micro level though. Those are the small things. They're very important because that's how we're going to pull this province back into economic stability and security by paying attention to these small details.

But it isn't just the small details. This government is going to be doing it by paying attention not just to the micro economies and the front doors and the backyards, but to the macro economies as well.

I'm thinking, for example, of revamping and renewing our whole forest strategy. And that's on the books, folks. If you want to see the draft forest-strategy document, contact any one of your MLAs. They have it. And in a few months the forest strategy for the province will be announced, just like the economic development strategy was announced, just like the ag strategy was announced. And there are going to be some big changes in the province because of these things.

On the macro level, I think of some of the opportunities. I come back to the Crown sector again. I think that we're going to be seeing . . . I hope that we will be seeing in the months ahead some activities maybe to — well let's dream a bit — to commercialize some of the medical opportunities, the health opportunities that we have with our expertise here in the province and with the health reform program that the government has embarked on. Opportunities to commercialize some of the things that we're doing and share it with people who desperately need improved health services in the rest of Canada and in the rest of the world.

(1630)

So there are all sorts of possibilities for economic development in this province. This Speech from the Throne highlights some of them, but the people of Saskatchewan have other ideas and we need to hear those ideas and concerns so that we maximize the opportunities.

And I just want to say parenthetically here that part of maximizing the opportunities for our province is putting into place progressive labour legislation which protects people and ensures that there is stability and security in the workforce. This is long overdue and I think it's a breath of fresh air to have amendments to The Labour Standards Act and The Trade Union Act as part of this Speech from the Throne.

Finally, I want to comment in terms of economic development and activity on the importance of environmental matters. We can't talk nowadays

simply about economic activity and jobs. I know that that's what was done in the Speech from the Throne and I dare say it's an oversight. But I want to assure people here in Saskatchewan that just because concern for the environment isn't mentioned in this Speech from the Throne, environmental initiatives are high on the government's agenda. Just like we've inherited a financial mess from the previous government, we've inherited an environmental mess from our past generations, sometimes going back literally generations. There are excesses that need to be cleaned up. We need to be responsible about our stewardship of what we've inherited and what we pass on to future generations.

And this government will be taking increased initiatives in the field of the environment to protect our environment and ensure that we maximize opportunities for economic development as well. For example, with the forest strategy.

In the months ahead I think the people of Saskatchewan can expect to see the marriage of opportunities using waste reduction and recycling technologies to promote economic activity in the province.

And I might add here that I'm very anxious to hear what the Leader of the Third Party has to say in terms of elaborating on her support for the nuclear industry and a high-level nuclear waste storage site here in the province. It'll be very interesting to hear what she has to say about that. And I hope that she does share with the people of Saskatchewan precisely where she stands on this issue of environmental sustainability and economic activity in our province.

Some members say from their seats that she's likely to just comment on the process. That may well be. Again, we need the public to enter into a partnership here and ensure that she is held accountable for her views on this subject.

So these are just some of the musings I have on the Speech from the Throne, and more importantly, some of the directions that I see the government going in in the weeks and the months ahead, some of the government agenda now that we have the deficit beast on a leash.

And I want to say that government members will be working on a very ambitious agenda in the months ahead. We invite others to share their concerns and their comments with us. This government is listening, and this government is willing to be corrected, it's willing to be informed, it's willing to learn.

The bottom line to all of this is that we all are in the same boat together. But we're sailing ahead into the future. Life is stabilizing here in the province. The room has stopped spinning, so to speak. People can put their feet on solid ground, sometimes only tentatively, but it's solid. And they can begin to plan their lives and begin renewing the province. To do this we need to all pull together. We need each other. We need to deal with the real problems we have in front of

us. And we need most of all to build a better future, not only for ourselves — we need to do that, that's for sure — but also for our children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise in the legislature today to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne. It is a privilege to represent the people of Redberry at the fourth session of the twenty-second legislature of Saskatchewan. I would like to commend the Lieutenant Governor for a fine delivery of the Speech from the Throne and the Premier for clearly setting the direction for our government that is being emphasized by the public during our tenure.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the member from Regina Lake Centre for moving the Speech from the Throne, and the member from Biggar for his seconding. Both members spoke on many issues of major importance to the people of Saskatchewan.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new member from the Regina North West constituency on her recent election to the Chamber. You ran as a Liberal, you won as a Liberal, and you have taken your seat in this Assembly as a Liberal alongside your leader. Our political views no doubt are different, but we do respect both you and your leader for the part you play in Saskatchewan politics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — In some ways it was rather unfortunate that in order to be compatible with my government's policy and the legislation that we passed, that the election had to be held within six months, so that some of the campaigning had to be done in less than ideal weather, as you no doubt noticed. The by-election was held within the six-month maximum to be consistent with the democratic reform of my government.

Congratulations. I am sure that you will make a major contribution to this Assembly and find it a very interesting experience.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great satisfaction that I listened to the Speech from the Throne. It was a speech that definitely outlined many of the major steps forward on the route that my government has embarked. Responsible government was and continues to be the commitment of our government to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — The major progress over the last two years in health care reform is a tremendous accomplishment, and it's also a matter of great pride to myself and to my government as we complete the

second major step forward in health care in Saskatchewan. The compassionate matter of approaching a very delicate subject is much appreciated by the people of Saskatchewan. It once again can be said that we in Saskatchewan are leaders in health care, a position that we held since the days of Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd, and Allan Blakeney.

The health district members are a dedicated group of men and women who have the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan at heart. The long hours and many miles these people cover in getting this program started is an indication of the commitment of Saskatchewan people to the well-being of their fellow citizens.

It must also be recognized that Saskatchewan health care workers are adapting to the new system and are continuing to provide first-class health care for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — It would not and could not work without their cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, in the field of education I am pleased to say that our government has implemented some major initiatives. A review of all post-secondary education has been completed in the first two years of our government. The issues are now being addressed by government and institutions themselves. A report on the provincial high school system will soon be completed.

An education council has been established to advise on key issues and options for education. Overall an approach to education is being encouraged so that the process involves everyone — parents, teachers, students, the business community, labour, and others with a real interest in education.

Saskatchewan Communications Network, consisting of a cable network and a training network, began broadcasting some time ago. For example, in the Redberry constituency residents in and around places like Radisson, Blaine Lake, Rabbit Lake, and Marcellin are benefiting from SCN's (Saskatchewan Communications Network) training network and the services it provides with the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

The government's commitment to distance education provides the opportunity, through the use of television and SaskTel, for rural students to have the same access to education as students in large urban centres. Distance education provides rural residents with the opportunity to take various K to 12 classes as well as various post-secondary and continuing education classes in a cost-effective manner to both the province and the students.

In K to 12 education we have initiated a program to address the needs at risk, children, and their families so that government agencies and community

organizations are involved in a coordinated and integrated approach.

A new and fairer process to allocate capital funding projects has been developed. The new process encourages the joint use of facilities within a community. I am pleased to say that our government is funding a modest building program which is resulting in a new facility, K to 12, in Maymont in Redberry constituency.

We are working hand in hand with small rural communities, not only to keep them alive but also to create an atmosphere where people can live, learn, raise their families, and retire with dignity.

New Careers Corporation was transferred to Education, Training, and Employment in March, 1993 as part of the government's restructuring. The corporation provides training and employment programs to Saskatchewan social assistance recipients. The total community employment program funds grants by New Careers Corporation to Redberry constituency amounted to over \$60,000. It employed 14 people for 20 weeks in 1992-93. In 1993-94, Redberry constituency benefited by community employment program funds amounting to over \$80,000 employing 19 people at 20 weeks each.

Mr. Speaker, along the same line of thinking, my government is assisting communities to join together in developing REDAs, regional economic development authorities, in order to bring rural communities together to jointly develop the economic advantages of a whole region.

I am pleased that within Redberry constituency REDAs are in the process of being organized. A great deal of job creation and business opportunities are being researched through this method. This program is consistent with Saskatchewan's tradition of neighbour helping neighbour, to everyone's advantage.

The need for jobs for our unemployed and our youth is often brought to my attention. It's brought to my attention by the good people of Redberry that 711 projects were developed within Economic Development; 2,235 jobs were created; 1,285 jobs were maintained.

(1645)

Delivery of programs and services for small business has been streamlined and enhanced by introducing a single-window system of access. As phase 1 of this system, a geographically directed province-wide 1-800 number has been installed in the department's regional office for initial assessment of callers' requirements and appropriate pathfinding services for individuals needing information and support for economic or business development. Saskatchewan people are becoming much more optimistic as the responsible approach of our government becomes more evident.

Mr. Speaker, more and more other provinces throughout Canada are following Saskatchewan's lead in attempting to regain control of their destiny. Unfortunately for many Canadians, the cut-and-slash approach is being used instead of reform addressed with compassion, such as the methods employed by our Saskatchewan New Democratic government.

June of this year marks a very important date in the political history of our province. June is the 50th anniversary of the election of Tommy Douglas and the CCF government to Saskatchewan. Humanity first — the motto of the CCF — is still guiding our socialist movement to this day. The socialist component of our movement is what guides our government in the decision-making process adopted by caucus when we assumed office, just the same as the CCF approach to the government some 50 years ago.

Government has to have the deficit under control. It cannot allow the province's finances to be uncontrolled if we are to govern with a social conscience.

I am proud to say that our government is showing fiscal responsibility, and with the direction laid out by the throne speech, it also is proving, as the CCF did a half a century ago, that we can also govern with the view of humanity first.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1930s when the Tories were thrown out of office, we were rid of them in Saskatchewan for nearly 50 years. I can only hope we as Saskatchewan people are as slow to make a similar mistake in the next century. I am very optimistic, despite the comment I heard the other day, that the Tories are just like the measles — you only get them once in a lifetime.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — And once is enough.

However, another right-wing danger is of course the Liberal Party. I remember discussions some years back about how big a disaster the Conservatives were in government. A political observer of the day made the comment to me that the Tories were not so bad. They simply did nothing. While the Liberals were in power, they did something to you.

I often think of that when I remember that it was the Liberal government that killed the Crow and changed the usury Act that allowed the interest to rise from a high of 12 per cent to over 24, not to mention the more recent broken promise, the more recent broken election promise by the Liberal Party of Canada to reopen negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement.

It is just a grim reminder, as the Liberals take office in Ottawa, that they are in fact quite capable of doing something to you. Yes, doing it to you even if it is only passing into law an agreement drawn up by Brian Mulroney to fulfil the plans of his corporate agenda. Yes, I expect that we will see major changes in

Saskatchewan politics as the Conservatives line up with the other Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, known as the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that my government is making every effort to be informed on regional issues. I would like to thank the members of the cabinet and the Premier himself, for the approach and their willingness to meet with individuals and groups throughout Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — The ministers have a wide range of issues to deal with. The concerns of Saskatchewan people in downtown Saskatoon or Regina vary a great deal from the concerns that are brought forward through my office in Redberry constituency.

I am pleased to say that the cabinet is now well aware of our national animal. Beaver concerns were the number one source of calls to my office, and I am pleased to say that the minister in charge of Sask Water and the Minister of Environment and Resource Management are cooperating in controlling what has become a national nuisance, at least in Redberry.

The *Agriculture 2000* outline and the report of the agricultural committee outlining three options to work on for farm support programs are a very useful foundation for our government to base our policies on.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Minister of Agriculture and the 32-person committee of individuals and farm organization representatives on a job well done. Partially because of your efforts, Saskatchewan farmers have a brighter outlook today than just one year ago.

It has not been easy ever since the Mulroney government failed to come through on their promised third line of defence. This was money that was designated to go straight into the pockets of Saskatchewan farmers. Without it, those same farmers are forced to fight the treasuries of Europe and the U.S. (United States).

Therefore the farm situation is still very difficult. But our government is helping farmers work through a very awkward situation created by the world grain wars, repeated attempt by the federal government to offload their responsibilities onto the province and directly onto Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Speaker, another more positive situation is being developed through such regional tourism associations as the Heart of the Old Northwest. A great deal is being accomplished in the tourism field. I mention the Heart of the Old Northwest because Redberry constituency is entirely included in this tourism area. We have a large number of big game animals, excellent fishing, hundreds of scenic camping areas, beautiful winter playgrounds for year-round tourism in Redberry constituency. A very friendly population that makes every effort to make visitors welcome —

summer and winter.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to make progress in the social services area. This is a tough area, as tough economic times place a great burden on this document.

Mr. Speaker, one announcement in the throne speech that I am very happy to see is the announcement of action plan for children with the creation of a children's advocate in the Ombudsman's office. This plan will allow preventive action instead of action after the fact. Children at risk can be helped before, not after a crisis develops. It is far easier to prevent tragedy than undo it. This is a proactive legislation, not reactive; another example of this government responding to a perceived need.

In response to the comments from the opposition members this may well be the B team. It's quite a relief from the BS team that we're used to hearing from your ranks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order, order. I think the member would do well to refrain from that kind of language. It simply adds nothing to the calibre of the debate in the House. I just warn the member to continue, but with parliamentary language.

Mr. Jess: — Mr. Speaker, in the highways and transportation area there have been several major accomplishments which have benefited Redberry constituency. The strategic highway improvement program was developed. A \$70 million five-year joint federal-provincial program to improve highways identified under the national highways system. This includes completion of four-laning between Saskatoon and North Battleford along No. 16 Highway.

With the twinning of the Yellowhead Route, Redberry is receiving a good share of the highway construction. This past year, Saskatchewan construction on the Yellowhead Route took place within Redberry. I am pleased about this project because it not only creates jobs, but it also deals with the long overdue problem of death and injury on a very dangerous stretch of highway.

We in Redberry have been fortunate also to have had a good share of resurfacing and maintenance projects. In the interest of safety, improvements are being made in areas that are dangerous because of the lack of sight distance. The directions that our government has taken with the Saskatchewan Transportation Company is that it will move STC from a bus company to a transportation company.

The results will enable STC to operate on a system of internal subsidization of passenger services by express revenues not exclusive to profitable passenger routes as originally conceived.

Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to have met our

commitment with the first nations people. The Saskatchewan milestone was reached with the passing of The Treaty Land Entitlement Implementation Act. The Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement will provide 26 Saskatchewan entitlements bands with 450 million over the next 12 years to purchase land and mineral rights and will allow them to create a strong economic base from which to build.

A tripartite framework agreement was signed in February of 1992 by the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada and the Metis Society of Saskatchewan. This agreement will enhance Metis administration and control over matters which affect their lives.

Indian and Metis economic development programs were transferred from the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat to the Department of Economic Development. The transfer will ensure more efficient and effective delivery of government services.

Mr. Speaker, there was a comprehensive review of the lottery system in Saskatchewan. This review addressed key issues of accountability, accessibility, social relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness. The new Saskatchewan lotteries community grant program, formerly TIP, has been designed to provide funds to community volunteers, volunteer organizations, who provide programs and services in sport, culture, and recreation.

Through a cooperative approach between Saskatchewan municipal government, Saskatchewan Sport Incorporated, Saskatchewan Council of Culture Organizations, and Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, significant improvements to the program were made which will enhance the development of sports, culture, and recreation throughout Saskatchewan.

The additional components within the program which will include seniors and target populations such as the disabled, aboriginal, and women, will provide more opportunities for people to participate. Sixteen communities in Redberry constituency have benefited through the Saskatchewan lotteries community grant program for the various projects, youth as well as seniors' projects.

In the housing division, increased emphasis has been placed on providing adequate and affordable housing in Saskatchewan's North. With respect to community housing, in order to make better use of existing housing units, many units are being moved from communities where they are no longer needed to others where need has been expressed. This results in a significant saving to government while the particular community's needs are met.

Mr. Speaker, non-renewable resource revenues are up 61 million over 92, helping meet the government's deficit reduction projections. This money is more than welcome as it is the least . . . it helps to fill the void left by the federal offloading.

(1700)

Mr. Speaker, the oil and natural gas development has increased dramatically creating much optimism in the more westerly parts of Redberry. I am also pleased that the SaskPower Corporation is relocating the 40-plus-year-old three-phase lines out of the farmers' fields.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — In conclusion, I would very much like to reiterate my praise for major players in health care in Saskatchewan. The dedication and total commitment of the health board members, health professionals in Department of Health, is a matter that deserves the recognition and a show of support from all members of this Assembly. The well trained and very professional workers are adapting very well to the changes that have resulted as the new districts are formed. Health reform is alive, well, and able in Saskatchewan, no doubt in better shape than ever in history.

The second phase of medicare is important to all of us. We will have a better emergency care service and respite services in rural Saskatchewan. Through consolidation we will be able to keep medicare affordable. Remember, in the U.S. where health care is provided by private insurance it costs them 14 per cent of gross national product compared to our Canadian universal cost at 10 per cent.

This government is setting a course of responsible development and consideration for all Saskatchewan people. Because this throne speech commits the government to programs based on humanity first, it will be an opportunity to express my pride in the government actions when I stand in my place, as I will, and vote in support of the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Assembly adjourned at 5:03 p.m.