

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
May 18, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have about 500 signatures to add to the most publicly demanded project in our province this year. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure programs towards double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in the province.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

These come from all across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to present them on behalf of the people of these three provinces today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers, recognizing that gun control and crime control are not synonymous, and allowing provinces to deal with gun control legislation on a provincial basis.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Arcola, Steelman, Lampman, Fox Valley, Rosetown, Brock, Herschel, Sovereign, Landis, across the province, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have hundreds of petitioners also who want to throw their weight behind the gun legislation. And I will read the prayer only:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers, recognizing that gun control and crime control are not synonymous, and allowing provinces to deal with gun control legislation on a provincial basis.

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners this afternoon come from Kindersley, Rosetown, Outlook, Sovereign, Yorkton, Glendale, Eston, Turtleford, in fact all around the province, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a group of 52 grade 7 and 8 students from Vincent Massey School, which is located in my constituency, and they're in the west gallery. And with them, Mr. Speaker, are their teachers, Morris Sulatyski and Lynn Driedger. And they're also accompanied by Val Beyette, Margurite Wolfe, Marlene Bacik, and Laura Seidle.

They visited some sights in Regina. They'll be touring this building. I'll be having a visit and refreshments with them, Mr. Speaker; we'll have our photo taken as well. And I'd like all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming the students from Vincent Massey School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cline: — While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I also want to introduce a constituent of mine, Mr. Alec Postnikoff, who's seated in the west gallery and he's the former director of education for the Saskatoon (West) School Division and also for the independent schools. And I'd just like to welcome Alec here as well today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased also to introduce to you and through you to members of the legislature, a high school group sitting in the west gallery from Pangman. Twenty grade 11 and 12 students are here today to visit the legislature along with their teacher, Doug Sully, and chaperons Gene Kessler, Marion Scott, and Al Huckabee.

I'd just like to welcome the students here today. I hope they enjoy question period. I'll be meeting with them later for a brief discussion and refreshments and a picture. I'd like all members to join me in welcoming the high school students from Pangman.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, a group of 15 guests that are from the Ukraine. And they're with individuals from the University of Saskatchewan. And they're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm going to attempt to read their names, if I may. First we have their instructor, Volodymyr Fisanov, if he would stand please, and if others would stand as I read their names. Also

students Oleksandr Badovskyi, Ruslan Vakarjuk, Victor Hohots, Igor Melnytchouk, Volodymyr Roskrut, Yuri Yurichuk, Alina Joukhimets, Zhanna Parashchuk, Natalie Rustovit, and Kateryna Fedorak.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — I'd also like to introduce a couple students from the University of Saskatchewan, Kelly Kobes and Jenara Franklin, if they're here, if they would stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — They're accompanied by Hans Michelmann of the University of Saskatchewan and Kelly Kozak, who's an administrative assistant to the University of Saskatchewan international. So we'd like to welcome all these visitors to our Assembly today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to introduce another group of students. This group has 54 grade 4 students from the Wadena Elementary School, accompanied by their teachers, Reg Glennie and Joan Sweatman. They also have chaperons Bev Cyr, Viola Mill, Isabel Fidelak, and the bus driver — who probably has the hardest job — Marcel Pelletier.

And I will be meeting with these students later, and I wish them a good trip, and I hope they learn something here today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming the students from Wadena and particular Reg Glennie who is from my constituency and who, every once in a while, comes down as an MC (master of ceremonies) for some of our sportsman suppers, and I'd like to welcome Reg and the students here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a special privilege for me to introduce seven people who are seated in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all members of the Assembly, although I know they need no introduction to many of the members of the Assembly here.

I'm very proud — and I know my colleagues are — to associate ourselves with these folks who have two things in common. One, they're known to be winners and leaders in their own communities. And secondly, they will all be New Democrat contestants in the next provincial election, whenever that might be.

If I might introduce them to you and ask them to stand as I do: the candidate for Battleford-Cut Knife is Sharon Murrell. If you

please stand, Sharon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — For Estevan, Larry Ward.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — We'll just ask members to withhold applause and I'm sure everyone will want to go crazy when I'm done here.

For Moosomin, Glen Gatin; for Regina Lakeview, John Nilson; for Regina Sherwood, Lindy Kasperski; for Swift Current, John Wall; and for Wood River, a familiar face to the members of the Assembly, Allan Engel.

I'll ask all members to show them welcome to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Athabaska Airways Inaugural Flight

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Oh how soon they forget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Tuesday truly was a good day for Athabaska Airways, for Saskatchewan tourism and business, and for the travelling public of Saskatchewan and the northern United States.

The official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the inaugural flight of the new Williston to Regina to Saskatoon and back route took place. This new route will have connections on our end to Prince Albert, Stony Rapids, and La Ronge. On the other, there are easy connections to Minot, to Bismarck, Dickinson, in North Dakota, and to Denver, Colorado.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is no longer on a single east-west air axis. We can get there and they can get here much quicker and more efficiently.

So I would like to today join with my colleague, the member from P.A. (Prince Albert) Carlton, and others, in congratulating Athabaska for becoming the first air carrier in Canada to receive a licence under the new open skies treaty.

I know that Athabaska is excited about the potential for bringing visitors from the States into Saskatchewan and that our already vital tourism industry will be enhanced. Obviously an increase in tourism will mean more jobs, more economic activity in our province, so I think that's very good news.

The Glass family and the management and the staff, Athabaska Airways, have shown admirable entrepreneurial initiative, and we look forward to the activity that their new venture will

create. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Promotions

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that congratulations are in order today for a couple of government employees from Regina. Now I'm not referring to the employees that have been outside the Legislative Assembly here today asking the government not to negatively affect their livelihoods and their families' livelihoods.

No, Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to a couple of people who have done very well by this government. And I think I'll quote from a letter, Mr. Speaker, and I think it sums it all up: I'm very pleased to formally announce the promotion of Garry Simons to senior executive management positions in SaskTel.

Now we all remember Garry as the former CEO (chief executive officer) of the New Democrat Party and a campaign organizer. It goes on to say: his team will include SaskTel Mobility, the sales and service, the network service divisions, under the respective leadership of Diana Milenkovic, also a former secretary and political aide for nominations to the Premier.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, patronage is doing rather well by this government even though the Premier told us before the last election that would never happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Allan Blakeney receives Distinguished Canadian Award

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on a definitely more principled note, I would like to say that during his presidency, John F. Kennedy once spoke at a White House dinner to a group of Nobel Prize winners. He said this was the greatest gathering of intellect ever in that dining-room, except when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.

In Saskatchewan we have our own Jeffersonian equivalent, Allan Blakeney — Rhodes Scholar, professor of law, president of the World Federalists of Canada, maker and author of Canada's constitution, and former premier of Saskatchewan. And on Tuesday night he became the recipient of a Distinguished Canadian Award from the Seniors' University Group at the University of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, there are some very few people in Canada who, by their deeds of a lifetime, give real definition to the term, public service. Allan Blakeney is one and I am proud to know him.

There are other members here who have a longer and closer association with Mr. Blakeney. But I, like many others, think of him as a mentor — because of the thoughtful integrity of his ideas, because of his precision and clarity in expressing them, and because of his patient willingness to exchange them with

students and colleagues alike.

I was happy to see him recognized by the seniors' group and I know we all share their admiration and gratitude for his lifetime of service, first to Saskatchewan, and lately to the world.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Big River Trade Show and Roadeo

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the session coming close to an end, I know members will have lots of free time on their hands. Just in case they can't find something that will fill that time, I would like to invite them to two events in my constituency.

On May 27 and 28, Big River will host the Big River Trade Show and Big River truck roadeo, and both of these events will take place in the Big River arena area.

The trade show, Mr. Speaker, is the fourth annual and will feature more than 60 exhibitors, businesses, artists, craftspeople, and hobbyists. Meanwhile, the truckers and loggers' roadeo involves about 60 contestants. And the competitions include skidding, falling, bucking, and truck driving.

The events are key to Big River, with 1,000 people or more expected to attend. At this time I want to wish the organizers good luck and to invite everyone to Big River on May 27 and 28. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Pilot Butte Library

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate the Pilot Butte Library, my home town library, for having been chosen as branch of the year for 1994.

The award was given at the Southeast Regional Library's annual meeting in Weyburn recently. Out of 50 branches, the Pilot Butte branch library was recognized for overall improvement in the performance of a branch.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, the Pilot Butte Library was cited for its ongoing efforts to encourage new uses for the branch and to raise library funds. In 1994, Pilot Butte conducted many different programs that were innovative and well used. These included a summer reading program, puppet shows conducted by older children for younger children, and a drama performed in the library. Fund-raising included selling oranges, bingos, bottle drives, and running concessions at ball tournaments.

The library was noted for remaining open on evenings and Sundays. As well, circulation reached 14,549, meaning on average everyone in Pilot Butte read 10 books last year. Ours is

a smart town, Mr. Speaker.

I'm also pleased to note that the Pilot Butte branch was runner-up in the branch programming award.

I want to congratulate all staff, volunteers, and users of the Pilot Butte Library, especially Anne Wolff who's the librarian. This award belongs to everyone because the Pilot Butte Library is truly a community library. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Thank you to Legislature Staff

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For some reason day 71 just seems to be the right time to acknowledge that there are a whole host of folks around this building that help us do our jobs effectively.

I'd like to acknowledge the effective work of the pages who serve us here in this Assembly, courteously and efficiently; all Clerks of the Assembly at the Table and elsewhere and their staffs who keep proceedings working smoothly; to those who work in *Hansard* to ensure an accurate record of the proceedings gets out promptly and accurately; and to those in the library for their effective research for us and our staffs.

To the Sergeant-at-Arms and the security staff — who are looking good, particularly good, this session, Mr. Speaker — for helping us all feel secure; and also to visitor services for helping all the people who visit this building to feel welcome; to those in the Dome Cafeteria for keeping us fed, and sometimes a little bit overfed; to those in Property Management for keeping the building spic and span; and to our caucus staffs for doing their best to help us look good.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, to yourself for keeping these proceedings moving reasonably orderly most of the time. Mr. Speaker, the members feel privileged to be served here proficiently, competently, and courteously. And I know that I am joined by all members of this Assembly when I say the two most important words in the English language — thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sergeant-at-Arms' Retirement

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 1985 a 27-year veteran of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) was appointed Sergeant-at-Arms in the provincial legislature. I refer of course to Mr. Bill Goodhand who, after retiring from the RCMP, was in charge of the legislative security unit of the Wascana Centre police for several years before taking his appointment.

Mr. Goodhand was the first full-time Sergeant-at-Arms and is responsible for the overall security of the Legislative Building.

In 1985 the new Sergeant-at-Arms had a goal: to make the

Legislative Assembly highly accessible to the public yet maintain a high level of security. Mr. Speaker, I believe he has accomplished this goal, and security and accessibility are an important component that complement responsible and open government.

Mr. Speaker, Bill Goodhand is a friend of this legislature. He brings personality and humour to pomp and ceremony. His great respect for procedure and protocol is evident every day. He is able to maintain professionalism while ensuring a human touch in his day-to-day encounters with staff and members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Bill Goodhand has the respect of all members of this legislature and will be remembered as a friend. I know that all members will join me in wishing Mr. Bill Goodhand a long and happy retirement, and especially very extra special luck on the senior PGA (Professional Golfers' Association) tour.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SaskTel Construction Contract

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, your union-preference tendering policy has already been shown to be costly to taxpayers, but now we see an example of its adverse affect on Saskatchewan small cities and towns and its barriers to local employment.

In a recent article in the Battleford telegram local contractors have indicated that it's possible local people will not be involved with the new \$1.5 million SaskTel building. Mr. Premier, the reason is simple: local contractors who bid on your contracts will be forced to terminate long-standing employees to make room for union workers parachuted into their communities by international union halls based in Regina and Saskatoon.

Mr. Premier, can you tell this Assembly how this jibes with your promise to create jobs for local people?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I thank the hon. member for his question. I think that he doth overreact a little bit to the situation on the building that he's referred to. I would encourage all contractors to apply for construction contracts that are tendered through the commercial Crown corporations in Saskatchewan.

The whole intent behind the Crown corporations tendering policy was to give a level playing-field for all contractors in the province, whether they be union firms or non-union firms. And certainly, as a government, we've tried to accomplish that and we encourage all contractors to apply on those contracts as they become available.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister, that's not what

the contractors in North Battleford are saying. Local electrical contractor Malcolm Smith says he won't be bidding for the work in the SaskTel project and neither will a vast majority of the contractors that he knows.

In fact in the article, he says that your union preference policy is a trap aimed at forcing all companies in the province to become unionized. And the more unions there are, the more political donations there are for the NDP (New Democratic Party) to get.

Now he says and I quote: "This policy was created for one reason — to get the taxpayers of Saskatchewan to directly line the NDP pockets."

Mr. Premier, this is a stinging indictment of your failed economic development policy. It shines a light on exactly what this is all about — a patronage at a massive scale. We now know this helps you, Mr. Premier. But given the fact that most of the North Battleford and area contractors will not be bidding on your SaskTel contract, can you tell me how this benefits the people of the North Battleford area?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the hon. member that we would want to encourage all local contractors to apply on the work that becomes available. It's certainly a bit of an exaggeration put out to a large extent by the members of the former administration.

We believe that the Crown construction tendering policy will work. We encourage those people who are local contractors to apply. We feel that the process put into place will have a level playing-field for them. And certainly it's not the intention of this government, Mr. Speaker, to disrupt the standard business practices of any of the contractors in the province. We encourage them to, in fact, apply.

If there is some misunderstanding, as you state, from the local area, I'd be more than happy to meet with those individuals and they should seek further clarification on the policy as it has been put down in the document agreed to by the commercial Crowns and by the association involved. And I think it has fairly broad acceptance, if the members opposite would only give it a chance to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well wrong again, Minister. This is not a level playing-field and the people up there have already read the contract. They know what's in it and they know what they want to stay away from.

This is not the sort of thing that just comes from people trying to grind an axe or to create some kind of a smokescreen like you and your cronies.

This comes from people, this comes from contractors, who are worried about their livelihoods and their communities. This comes from people that know what they're getting into and

what they don't want to be into. And it also comes from the city council.

Mr. Premier, on Monday the North Battleford council voiced its disapproval of your union preference policy and backed the local contractors. They have asked whether or not the SaskTel contract can be exempted from your policy. What is your answer to their request, Mr. Premier? Would you exempt the SaskTel building from your union favouritism policy and in doing so save the taxpayers thousands of dollars and preserve local jobs for local people in the Battleford area?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I appreciate very much that the people in the North Battleford area do need the work, they need the contracts; and I again encourage them to enter in the bidding process. Even the incoming president of the chamber of commerce, as I understand, on a provincial level, says give this policy a chance to work. And that's what we're asking.

We don't want people to be excluded. We want people to be included. And we aren't going to exempt one particular project from an overall policy that has been agreed to. We operate differently. We set out plans; we implement policies of this government. Unlike the former administration that worked on a piecemeal basis without any plan and drove this province into a \$15 billion debt that we've had to climb out of and struggle out of over the last previous years of this administration, and we'll continue to do that. We think that we have a plan in place that will work.

For heaven's sake, give this a chance to work and I think it will bear fruit just like the balanced budgets that we've had to bring into place under some very trying circumstances. We'll continue to proceed with the determination for economic development and jobs in this province second to none anywhere in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Speaker. Obviously, Minister, your program has been put to the test. It has its experiment. It's not working and the only people that like it are the unions and the government. And the contractors and the business people don't like it.

Mr. Premier, you and your NDP government have said time and time again that you were going to create an environment conducive to economic development and job creation. Instead you have done exactly the opposite through massive tax increases and unfair tendering policies. As a result you have resorted to buying jobs with taxpayers' money just before the election. That's all you've got to offer.

It's indicative of this entire session and it's indicative of your entire term of office. Bonni Clark of the Battleford *Telegraph* sums it up nicely. And she says, and I quote:

In its efforts to bolster the union strength in numbers, it

appears the provincial government may have done so at the expense of smaller private businesses. In this part of the world where PST is a major issue, where economic development is needed, and where people want to make a life for themselves, it is unfortunate we will most likely be forced to support outsiders rather than our own friends and neighbours.

Now, Mr. Premier, it's time you pulled your head out of the sand and rethink your position. It's time you repealed this union favouritism and instead support the Saskatchewan jobs and Saskatchewan taxpayers. Will you do that today, Mr. Premier, for the people of The Battlefords and the people of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well the member seems to be purporting that he represents the people of Battlefords. Actually, Mr. Speaker, I represent the people of The Battlefords constituency and intend on doing so for a fair amount of time into the future.

This government stands on its record of bringing in a balanced budget, making sure that we serve the people of Saskatchewan with some plan which goes beyond just today but into the future. And I think that the member will find out very soon that that plan will be borne out with fruit by people who support what this government has done in Saskatchewan.

In regard to the Crown construction tendering policy, I tell the member again: give this a chance to work. Give this a chance to work for a year. We'll have a look at it and we'll see whether it's working or not. If it's not working, then we'll do a bit of . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I want to call the member from Maple Creek to order. He can't get up and take a lengthy time at asking his question and then constantly interrupt when the minister is trying to answer the question for him.

So I'd ask him to please . . . Order. Please quit interrupting when a minister is answering his question.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I'd suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member opposite go out and look for fossils instead of regurgitating some of the old lines that came from the previous administration.

This government, under the direction of the Premier, has done a very good job in terms of economic development. I point out to the member opposite that Saskatchewan has only one-third of the labour unrest of other jurisdictions across Canada. Saskatchewan has a very stable work environment.

We have people investing in this province like never before to expand their businesses, new businesses coming in, jobs being created. Be positive about what's happening in Saskatchewan. Don't keep spreading this negative doom and gloom around the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Battlefords Constituency Office

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also to the Minister of Labour, the man that claims that he represents The Battlefords.

Mr. Minister, your NDP colleague, Dick Gibbons, has informed the media that a charity is finally being selected to receive a donation from your NDP landlords, PDN Ventures. However, Mr. Gibbons is refusing to say which is the lucky charity.

Now, Mr. Minister, I was wondering if you could spin the old wheel of fortune and tell us who the lucky winner is. Which charity is the beneficiary of your taxpayer-funded generosity, sir?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — If you promise not to accuse me of grandstanding going into a provincial election campaign, I'll tell you here this afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that most taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan would love to see the Minister of Labour stand up and tell us which charity he has been able . . . which charity has the Minister of Labour become the sugar-daddy of North Battleford for, with his taxpayer-funded office scheme.

So if Mr. Gibbons won't tell us, Mr. Minister, which charity has been selected, why don't you just cut out the anticipation that we all have and cut to the quick and do it in question period rather than waiting for later in the day?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Battleford Union Hospital Foundation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that given what has transpired with health care in this province under an NDP administration, these people need a little help.

And I'm sure that the Union Hospital fund in North Battleford is probably a very worthwhile charity. I'm sure people in that community, Mr. Speaker, donate on a very regular basis to the Union Hospital fund in North Battleford.

But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Because the Minister of Labour found a little loophole for his NDP-run corporation, charged the highest rent in the province of any MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), got up \$35,000 that probably would have never seen the light of the Union Hospital Foundation, and because it has, it's been found out.

So I ask you, Minister of Labour, and I ask you, Mr. Premier, particularly, because you didn't answer it yesterday, do you think it's appropriate for the office rental money of the MLA from North Battleford, taxpayer-funded money, to now be going to the Union Hospital in North Battleford because it is coming up short because of your policies? Do you believe that's proper for him to do that in this Assembly, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I appreciate all the notoriety here this afternoon. I want to make three basic points. First off, to dispel the false information that that member passes out; he says that I pay the highest rent. In one of the years there are at least 18 members of the Legislative Assembly that paid higher rents than I do. I believe it was the '91-92 period when Gary Lane was still a member of this House, he paid \$16,000 rent that year. The same year the member from Estevan, the former premier, paid \$15,000 rent in that year. During that same year I paid \$10,320.

For my constituency office, I paid \$860 a month when I went into it in 1986. Today I still pay \$860 a month for rent in my constituency office. It has never changed.

I tell the member what the Premier said in estimates yesterday. If you have some example of wrongdoing, quit making these accusations and turn the file over, either to the Board of Internal Economy or the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) to do an investigation. I would be very happy to be able to have an investigation into my constituency office to clear the air and stop the false accusations that you have continued to make on my character and the character of this government. Shame on you, member from Thunder Creek.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, whether he's got the highest rent in the province or he's got the lowest — do you believe it is proper, Mr. Premier, do you believe it is proper for this type of a charitable donation to be made to the Union Hospital fund or any other fund in the city of North Battleford or anywhere else in this province with MLAs' office allowance money being used in this way? Do you believe it's proper, Mr. Premier?

It's time to get on the record in this House of whether you think that is the way this province should be run.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I would point out to the member and to the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that the arrangement in my constituency office is one between a tenant and a landlord. I am quite sure that the member opposite who asked the questions would not feel that anybody should be able to tell his landlord what to do with the rent money he pays for his constituency office. Nor can I tell the landlord, who owns the constituency office that I'm in, what they do with the rent that I pay to them.

Mr. Speaker, everything in regard to this is within the rules of the Legislative Assembly. It's within the rules of the Board of Internal Economy. And if the member suspects otherwise . . .

(inaudible interjection) . . . and members calling from the back, "not", take it to the Speaker, take it to the Board of Internal Economy. Please, take it to the RCMP and stop making the accusations, stop making the accusations that are falsely based and cast innuendo on myself.

Likely all you're doing is helping get me more publicity in my riding and you'll be beaten even worse when it comes election time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Plains Hospital Closure

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, throughout this session we've seen this particular government constantly messing up and then trying to fix up one issue after another, from gaming to pensions to health care.

And first the NDP say, well there are no health district deficits, and then they're forced to admit that there were. And then the Minister of Health says, well, oops, I guess they're \$15 million. And then the Provincial Auditor comes along and says no, they're \$30 million. Not only has the NDP undermined the quality of health care, they now have placed the entire system in financial jeopardy.

So my question this afternoon is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, is it true that the Regina District Health Board intends to speed up its planned closure of the Plains hospital in an attempt to deal with their serious deficit situation? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I think I can refer the Leader of the Third Party to the front page of the *Leader-Post*, or the third page of the *Leader-Post*, where the Regina District Board has made quite public what is in fact happening. They have a group of highly respected health care planners who are working with them and their capital planning regarding the Plains hospital, Mr. Speaker.

It's there for the Leader of the Liberal Party to read on the third page of the *Leader-Post* today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well it is very, very interesting that finally we have the Minister of Health stating that indeed it is true they're going to speed it up, that he's had to call in reinforcements from B.C. (British Columbia) because his health care reform has finally gone into a state of collapse. It's interesting that he chose not to go to the people in this province first who had expertise, to avoid these kinds of problems in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, the Plains hospital was built to serve the residents of rural communities all throughout southern Saskatchewan. Those individuals went out with ice-cream pails and bake sales to collect money to help finance that particular hospital. And all over this province this government has closed facilities without

a back-up plan in place, shut down beds in urban hospitals who neither had the staff nor the budgets to cope with increased patient loads.

Mr. Minister, given that neither the General nor the Pasqua hospitals in Regina have plans to be able to absorb patients that will be displaced by this early closure, this is a recipe for added chaos. Why should patients and staff at any of these facilities believe that the situation that we're going into now is not just another NDP health care disaster waiting to happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it may take a moment to respond to everything that the Liberal leader says in this House.

Again today we see the leader, who would want to lead this province, twist the facts — twist the facts — to create some political points for her effort, Mr. Speaker. She talks about outside experts — the nerve! She, who would bring in Texas-style auditing to health care in Saskatchewan. Now this matter of twisting the facts seems to be contagious among the Liberal candidates.

Mr. Speaker, here I see her candidate in Melfort, one Rod Ganterfoer, saying, quote: that the health care districts are much too small. Now here, Mr. Speaker, I see her candidate, Dr. Jim Melenchuk, saying that the health care districts are what? Much too large. Here I see her candidate here in Regina in the Regina Lakeview constituency — Gary Johnson — saying, well it's just right because we're going to continue with health care reform. And what does the member from Shaunavon say? Well he says, it's all wrong and we're going to go back to the old way.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the debate in this House and the debate across Saskatchewan, because it is an important debate, would be well served if the Leader of the Liberal Party would be consistent, not attempt to twist the facts, and share with the people of Saskatchewan what truly is her plan, which is a Texas-style audit on health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, if these people, and particularly the commander-in-chief of the New Democratic Party whose health care slogan is now, save medicare, sell your hospital; if these people had bothered to do any kind of audits, had ever gone to the experts in health care in this province, there wouldn't be this kind of mess.

Mr. Speaker, this so-called plan would require \$100 million in upgrades to both the Pasqua and General hospitals. The planned savings that would be realized if the Plains is closed is going to amount to \$10 million a year. And this money crunch comes at a time when the Regina District Health Board is predicting an operating deficit of what — \$4 million. And they tell us that all these so-called savings are going to go to wellness.

Well I want you to explain, sir, how all of this is going to add

up. Okay. Here's your question. Given that you're going to spend 10 times the annual savings from closing the Plains just to renovate alone, how can there be any money at all left over for your wellness? Explain that to the people of this province.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as the Liberal leader and member from Saskatoon well knows, this capital planning is developed by the Regina District Health Board. It's in a widely distributed plan called Towards 2000.

Now the last time that the Liberal member got up in this House and did what she's doing today, which is attacking the Regina District Board, the CEO of the board had to go public and say, well that information is just false. And I'm afraid again we're going to have that kind of circumstance.

Now I want to know how this is going to add up, Mr. Speaker. She talks about reducing the size of government; she says shrinking the size of government by 5 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, within the Department of Health that means a reduction of \$80 million in the Department of Health alone, 250 government-wide, \$80 million out of Health — that's what she proposes.

Now add to that what her federal Liberal cousins are going to deliver on this province — and we're not sure yet how many tens of millions or hundreds of millions that's going to be — now that, Mr. Speaker, puts the scare back into medicare.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gaming Addictions Treatment

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, you've told us many times how well your gambling addiction program is working. I was wondering if you could explain the overall goal of this program.

Mr. Speaker, when a VLT (video lottery terminal) addict goes to one of your counsellors for treatment, what is the goal? Is it to help them stop playing VLTs, or is it simply to cut down the amount of money they're losing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, whenever an individual has an addiction problem, that problem will be dealt with by a professional in the field of addictions counselling. In most cases, I think it will be an abstinence then from the problem, whether it be a liquor addiction or a drug addiction or a gambling addiction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that you said it's an absolute end of the problem, because I think between controlling the amount of money they're losing and stopping it is a very big distinction. Because we've learned from

other gambling . . . gambling addiction counsellors that the stated goal of your addiction program is something called controlled gambling.

Your goal isn't to help gambling addicts to quit playing VLTs; it's simply for them to cut down on the amount they are gambling. Controlled gambling, Mr. Minister. That's like advocating controlled drinking for an alcoholic. And most people who work in the addictions problem area will tell you that's the wrong approach.

Mr. Minister, why are you advocating controlled gambling for VLT addicts when complete abstinence is a much better approach? And why don't you take a stronger approach and help them kick the habit?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the member is quoting from or where he gets that kind of information. I repeat that those who have a . . . when someone has a problem, they will be treated by a professional.

When we talk, Mr. Speaker, about the control of gaming opportunities, the public of Saskatchewan know what we're talking about. It is a complete control of the gaming opportunities in our province.

That is limiting — limiting the number of VLTs in this province. That is negotiating limits on the number of casinos which, by the way, Mr. Speaker, is something quite, quite different than we've seen in Conservative Manitoba and Conservative Alberta where the opportunities of gaming in those provinces are significantly, significantly greater than in the province of Saskatchewan where we have, where we have chosen to control and regulate.

And, Mr. Speaker, finally let me say this. In your Conservative Manitoba and your Conservative Alberta and Conservative wherever you want go, you will not find the commitment to prevention, education, and treatment that you'll find here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Environment Department Renews Partnership with SARCAN

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take great pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, in announcing that my department has renewed its partnership with the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres for another five years.

SARCAN has been overseeing the province's beverage container collection and recycling program since 1988. In that time it has made it one of the most comprehensive recycling systems in North America, one that all Saskatchewan residents can be proud of.

Since opening its first recycling depot, SARCAN has grown from the ground up into an effective and efficient recycling network with 68 people in 62 Saskatchewan communities. And in building this wonderful program it has been able to bring environmental, economic, and social benefits to the people of Saskatchewan.

In the last fiscal year alone, SARCAN recycled 160 million non-refillable, used metal, plastic, and glass beverage containers. By diverting this potentially harmful material from landfills, our province's environment is healthier and cleaner, and we are closer to our goal of providing a sustainable future for our children.

SARCAN also offers our province an important social service. The company employs 250 people on a permanent basis, more during peak periods, and the vast majority of its employees are persons with disabilities.

The employment opportunities offered by SARCAN are yet another way in which people with disabilities can contribute to and benefit from the general feeling of prosperity that we're now feeling here in Saskatchewan.

SARCAN also makes good business sense. SARCAN's recycling operations generate millions of dollars for our provincial economy, through wages, rents, transportation and processing, and we are proud to be able to support it and watch it grow.

Mr. Speaker, SARCAN creates jobs, keeps recycling dollars here, and reduces waste that would have ended up in our municipal landfills. These are concrete, tangible benefits for the province of Saskatchewan and the people of our great province. And I can only see these benefits continuing with the renewal of our agreement with SARCAN. It is a prime example of the type of cooperation we encourage here in Saskatchewan and that the people of Saskatchewan have come to expect.

We offer SARCAN our continued support and commend all SARCAN employees for the great work they have been doing. They should be proud of their continued environmental leadership. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's good to see that at the dying days of the legislature that the ministers responsible have reverted to their bush-league tactics of not providing any copies of the ministerial statements. We thought that . . . while they had started that way at the beginning of the session, they haven't done so since then.

Mr. Minister, SARCAN is indeed a very good program, a very good program that was developed by the previous administration in the early '80s to help two areas of this province — one being the environment, and the other being the handicapped people of this province who had difficulty gaining employment. The SARCAN program was put in place to assist

them.

But it's been a very good program. Unfortunately, it's come to light now, Mr. Speaker, that there are some very serious problems developing in this area dealing with harassments and assault on the very clients that the SARCAN program was designed to aid. And the minister has been abdicating his responsibilities in that area by trying to deny responsibility and pass that responsibility off onto others.

He's more than prepared to rise and stand in his place to seek the glory that he can try to gain from making announcements on this area — that it's the renewal of the five-year contract, Mr. Speaker — but when it comes to looking after the clients, the clients that the SARCAN program was developed to protect and to aid and to provide employment for, that minister is not there to assist them.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Executive Council
Vote 34**

Item 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps the Premier would wish us to wait a minute while the rest of his officials file in . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well that's good, Mr. Premier, I'm glad to see that you've got a handle on it.

You know it was nice for once to see the Liberals comes to the House today and bring something that was actually of some importance. And unfortunately they beat me to the punch because here I thought your estimates would be the perfect place to read back to you some of the quotes that you used to make when you were in opposition, about the evils of patronage and how awful those Tories were in practising that particular thing. And darn it all, the member from Shaunavon squeezed it into members' statements. And the Speaker didn't sit him down for doing what he did but . . .

A couple of more New Democrats went to government heaven today, and it's really sad, Mr. Premier, when . . . And I happen to know Ms. Milenkovic; she's a very intelligent, well-spoken, articulate person. But it's really sad that people that have a long history of involvement with you and the New Democrat Party have to feed off of the public trough in a way that you said would never be possible under your administration. You said this simply wasn't possible to happen.

(1430)

And it's one reason, Mr. Premier, that we have so much difficulty for instance with your gambling policy, because we

see the former treasurer of the NDP Party now the executive director of the Liquor and Gaming Commission. I mean if there was ever a place to start inserting people, it'll be that whole gambling culture, that gambling megalopolis being put in downtown Regina here called a casino. And there'll be all sorts of nifty little niches where you can put people into.

So I'm wondering why you think, in the face of all of the pronouncements you made in opposition about this issue of patronage . . . that you now forge ahead in the dying days of this administration into an election campaign and you still are taking people with those strong associations and putting them over into prominent positions where they can draw down very large salaries and do very nice, thank you, when you know full well what the public wants is that type of thing to be brought before the Legislative Assembly in a proper manner and people put in positions because of merit. And if they're New Democrats and they've got merit, then just come to the House and say, these are New Democrats, they've got merit; what do you think, boys and girls?

What do you think of that idea, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well I frankly think your idea is lousy, if you want to know the truth about it all. The idea that a committee of the legislature is going to be able to go beyond the desk of the CEO of a Crown corporation — in this case, SaskTel, Mr. Fred Van Parys — and they will be in a better position to judge all the subordinates that should or should not be appointed and decide whether or not they're New Democrats or Liberals or Conservatives and should be appointed, that's ludicrous.

What we do is we appoint the board of directors, the board of directors appoint the CEO, and the CEO runs the operation. And if he or she can't run the operation, there's a new CEO or a new board. But surely to goodness we don't put ourselves in the position of hiring the employees that are below.

And the two individuals that you named were the long-time employees of SaskTel with experience in that area and have been recommended for the positions by the CEO of SaskTel. I'm not going to second-guess the CEO of SaskTel. I'm going to judge the CEO of SaskTel like I'm going to judge every other CEO, by the board's judgement of them and whether or not they fulfil the corporate functions of the Crown corporation. That's the only way to do it, surely.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Mr. Premier, you know that that's ridiculous. Come on, people in this province aren't stupid. You've got your friend Don Ching running CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) which runs the Crowns.

I mean for you to even suggest that those Crowns are in any way independent from you is just simply foolishness, and the public in the province understand that. I mean if it wasn't the case you wouldn't have needed to take George Hill out and put your friend Ching in. Okay?

And I say there was just as much problem with the appointment of Mr. Hill as there is with Mr. Ching. But the simple fact is that that person and the board of CIC control the Crowns, and that's why the auditor says that that Crown business should be done in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Premier, so that those issues are depoliticized, that the running of the Crowns become strictly a commercial operation. Commercial — and then you can go out and hire the best people that the business has to offer in telecommunications or power generation or natural gas transmission. And you can know full well that those people are operating on a business climate, a business playing-field, with a business mentality, to serve the natural monopoly which they have.

Now don't you agree, Mr. Premier, that if you're going to have a political appointment in charge of CIC, the master of the Crowns, removed from this Legislative Assembly, that you're probably going to have patronage all through the Crown system? Wouldn't that make some sense, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — It would make sense perhaps to the peculiar rationale and thought processes of Conservatives because the question realizes and reveals exactly the way in which you people would operate. But it does not make sense to me; it does not make sense to this form of the government.

First of all, the question is factually wrong. CIC does not control and operate all the Crowns. It can't do so by law — it would be in an illegal position to do so by law. The boards of directors of each Crown, by law and by statute, is responsible for running each Crown corporation including the appointment of the CEO and including all the policies.

The best that CIC can do is to make sure that such things like borrowing requirements are done in a coordinated fashion, that pay rates are roughly done in some sort of coordinated pay-rate schedule, that general objectives of government with respect to dividends paid to the shareholders are met. That's about all CIC can do and should do.

On time from time CIC will deal with some of the very big megaprojects that your administration entered into — all the ones which I could enumerate but I won't do in the interests of time today — but it doesn't belong to Crown corporations and you know it doesn't, and if it did it would be breaking the law. Wouldn't do it.

Now what do Crown corporations do with respect to the revelation of information — exactly what I told the Leader of the Liberal Party last night and which I'm telling you today. The Provincial Auditor said in his May 1995 report, they're filing reports. Now they have to file all kinds of prospectuses, he says. In fact the exact words are, intersessional tabling of annual reports.

The order in council approved the tabling of an explanatory report with respect to acquiring of shares or the creation of a body corporate. There is the Crowns Corporation Committee of course, which is a standing committee of this legislature.

There is much access to information and accountability, more so than any other province in Canada in this area. So quite obviously we have very competent people in place. They are independent, they are non-political, and they're accountable. They're accountable through this House, through the committee of the House, through the various reporting mechanisms, and accountable to the Provincial Auditor and other auditors.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Premier, I'm sorry to always be contradicting you, but you know full well that early on in your administration that the board members of a bunch of the Crowns were none other than your own cabinet ministers. They got rid of all the boards. The only people that were the board of directors were cabinet ministers, NDP cabinet ministers — your cabinet ministers taking your direction, okay?

And they were busy doing their hiring and firing at that time and getting the Crowns the way they wanted them, which meant hiring people like Mr. Nystuen and Ms. Milenovic and Mr. Ching — and need I go on?

I mean you see this bunch of paper I have here, Mr. Premier, that's all of your patronage appointments over three and a half years. It's quite impressive really that so much work could be done by so few in such a little bit of time and with so much public money expended besides. It's quite a record.

It's not something I think you'd be particularly proud of. And if people in Saskatchewan in 1991 had known during that leaders' debate that you were going to put together such an impressive record as this, I'm not sure they would have been quite so enthusiastic about your premiership.

So I say to you once again, Premier, the fact that you had boards of directors made up entirely of ministers of the Crown for a while and the fact that they did a lot of hiring and they did a lot of firing and they made a lot of patronage appointments, wouldn't you think it would be more reasonable to help you keep your election promises if perhaps this Legislative Assembly dealt with those issues of the Crown corporations and their hiring and firing, rather than your political appointments or your political ministers? And please don't try and lay it off on some board of directors that everyone in Saskatchewan knows simply won't wash.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well I've heard the argument a second time today, and frankly I think it's just as lousy the second time as I thought it was the first time. You can't have a political chamber like the legislative Chamber do those kinds of things that you advocate. You simply cannot do that.

You will know that Mr. Fred Van Parys was engaged to be the president of SaskTel, not by our administration but by your administration. Mr. Van Parys did whatever he did with the two people that you identified today — Ms. Milenovic and Mr. Simons — himself in his capacity of CEO and president. That is the way the system worked then; that's the way the system works now; that's the way the system should work.

Now should we have the corporations accountable in terms of their expenditures, their goals, objectives, commerciality? Of course we should. Should we try to build in more systems of accountability? Of course we should. I think we've made wonderful strides in this regard. We have less people on the patronage list, as you describe it, by a country mile than was existing before 1991.

But we don't want to get into a system where this Chamber gets down below the CEO on the line chart, organizational chart, and starts to decide whether or not this person or that person should or shouldn't be appointed or what the pay rate should or shouldn't be because, believe me, if you want to get into politics, that's the one sure way of doing it.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Premier, it perhaps doesn't have to be done on the floor of the Chamber. I understand in other jurisdictions that they now do use a committee structure. And during that time they are able to assess the needs of things like Crown corporations vis-a-vis the professional type of people that they require within their organizations in order to do the business of that corporation.

But this province is unique, Premier, and you know it is. You can't talk about other premiers and other provinces in the same way because, for instance, the province of Alberta virtually has no Crown sector. The province of Manitoba has a small Crown sector. Some of the Maritime provinces virtually have no Crown sector at all. There isn't the opportunity that there is in this province to play around with that sector because it doesn't exist the same way.

Here you have a very extensive Crown sector. As a matter of fact, you've been creating them at a fairly rapid rate. And I'll be incredibly amazed . . . because I go through this list here, and it is many, many pages of individuals, and I look at the various board appointments. I look at some of these positions that you've meted out in the last three and a half years. If this happy little operation down on Saskatchewan Drive, where the Economic Development minister is playing around with about 20 million bucks of the folks' money, if there isn't going to be a whole bunch more people show up on this list . . . Because it's just prime, absolutely prime.

And that's why, sir, I don't believe that the government should be doing that sort of business. You can control it, but you shouldn't play around . . . (inaudible) . . . like you're going to because you'll have it full of NDP appointments. Already got the executive director of the liquor and gaming corporation coming directly out of the executive of the NDP Party, directly out of the executive of the NDP Party.

Now do you think, do you think for a minute, Mr. Premier, that he isn't going to go looking around for birds of a feather to fill up the positions in the new casino, fill up the positions as gambling expands across this province?

Of course he is because you have set the pattern, sir. You said that patronage was evil. You said that before 1991, and now

you've allowed it to happen. Don't you think that he's going to go out and look for birds of a feather to fill up all of those nice positions downtown in this new casino operation that your government is venturing into? Would you give the assurance today then, in the Assembly, that that will not happen?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, the job of a CEO, by law, by law — forget about whether that CEO is Progressive Conservative, NDP or Liberal, male or female — by law, is to do the very best that he or she can do in order to maximize the performance, the efficiency, the returns, of the corporation or the agency to which he or she has been designated to head. If a CEO breaches that duty in law, hires people who are incompetent, hires people for political reasons alone, does other malfeasances, commits other acts of transgressions, he or she is in violation, not only of contractual obligation but of law.

I do not believe that of Mr. Nystuen. I do not believe that any of our CEOs unless I have evidence to the contrary. So when you ask me the question — don't you think that he'll go out and hire a whole bunch of NDPers — the answer is no. I don't think he will. Will he hire NDPers? He might. Will he hire Liberals? He might. Will he hire PCers? He might. Will he hire people that have no political affiliation? He might. His obligation in law is to hire the people who can perform the job for which he is ultimately responsible to the minister in this House and for whom the minister is ultimately responsible to you in this House. And that's the way that system works.

Mr. Swenson: — Well tell me this then, Premier, was his position publicly advertised and done through the Public Service Commission or some other agency in order to select? Was that a publicly advertised and sought-after position by many people, or was that individual selected just out of the blue?

(1445)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I'll get myself informed and provide the member some answer on that. I see that the Liberal member from Shaunavon has something that he wants to add to you. Do you want to . . . the two of you, do you have something you want to add further on this thing?

I might add, Mr. Chairman, I shouldn't have said that because you know he had some information on so-called patronage lists — the Liberal member from Shaunavon, which he used in this House that blew up in his face. So make sure he's not doing the same thing to you, too.

How's my cousin making out — cousin?

Mr. Swenson: — So I understand, Premier, then, you're going to tell me whether that position was publicly tendered for. Well I notice one, two, three — at least three former ministers of Gaming in the House here today out of the five or six that you've had. Surely to goodness one of them knows if that position was publicly advertised and went through a selection process of some public nature.

There's one there, there's one there, and there's one there. Surely one of them must know something about it.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I'm sure that they all know about it. And since the member's asked the question, in the case of Mr. Nystuen there was no public competition and he was appointed by the cabinet in his position. And the reason for his appointment was obvious.

An Hon. Member: — Very obvious.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Yes, very obvious. His academic background and his demonstrated competence and his abilities in this area — which, I might add, have been proven since he assumed the position. And I would say to the member opposite, give me an example of where you think that the administration of the Liquor and Gaming Authority has been handled incompetently or wrongly, as a matter of public policy, which would demonstrate that the person is filling this position by virtue of political title only. You can't find it.

You may disagree with the policy of gaming. That's not his job to decide that. That's the job of the Chamber to decide. He's been a very competent and efficient person in this area.

I might add, while you're at it, we asked Mr. John Wright to take on SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) without competition.

And you might ask, why do you do that? Well Mr. John Wright was the deputy minister of Finance under your administration. He was deputy minister of Finance under our administration. You had confidence in him for the four or five years that he was deputy minister; we had confidence in him in the three or four years he was deputy minister. This is a proven, full-time professional civil servant with all the credentials in financial and business matters to take over and run a corporation like SGI immediately. That's why.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Premier. But please don't compare those two individuals. Mr. Wright is an extremely competent public servant and always has been. Always has been. And I would have preferred . . . and I think knowing a little bit about Mr. Wright, I think he would have been able to compete with anybody — anybody in the private sector for that job because he is an extremely competent individual.

But I'll give you the résumé of the other guy. And you said there was ample reasons why he was hired. MA (ministerial assistant) 3, part-time, started May 4, 45 grand a year; MA 3, part-time, 45 grand a year. We went from May 4, May 31, June 1, all in '92, then October 1, '92, and we kept going, MA, MA, MA — I guess he was moving around through ministers here, I'm not sure. Anyway, we kept getting a little bigger salary as we went along.

And then poof, CEO, Sask Gaming Commission, 60 grand. When was that? October, '93. And then poof, Acting CEO, Liquor and Gaming Commission. We got another little bump

here. And on and on it goes. That's the résumé, Mr. Premier. And then of course before that we had our time in service with the NDP Party as treasurer.

Now this, according to the Finance minister, is about 100 million buck a year potential for the Consolidated Fund. This is what we asked the Minister of Finance, Premier, about the process with the casino. We wanted to know if the planning and the spending and all of those things went through Treasury Board, because we wanted to know that Treasury Board practices were being followed by these folks that you've been hiring. And she wouldn't give us an answer. She said, that's none of your business, basically, of whether that happened or not.

And that's why we ask these questions of you, sir. You were so dead set against patronage and now have an individual that's in patronage up to his neck, playing with — not tens of millions of dollars — hundreds of millions of dollars and the opportunity to hire all sorts of people.

We've got a casino being built that has never gone through Treasury Board as far as we can determine. And you've got, you've got an NDP hack in charge of the whole operation.

Now, Mr. Premier, do you think that that's appropriate, or should we have a different process for handling hundreds of millions of dollars of people's money?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it is impossible to answer the question because the facts leading up to the question, I say with respect to a member that I like, for whatever it's worth from his point of view, but I quite admire and like him, I say with respect his facts are so doggone garbled that it's impossible to make head nor tail out of the question.

The résumé that you give of course ignores the fact that Mr. Nystuen is a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, 1983, University of Saskatchewan, with great distinction. He completed two years College of Commerce department in accounting, University of Saskatchewan. He served, in addition to being an MA, a commercial accounts manager at the Bank of Montreal, '86; credit adviser at the Farm Credit Corporation; a managing partner in Golden Acres Seed Farm; senior adviser to the deputy minister to the Premier; and the chief of staff on Environment and Public Safety matters, and then moved into the question of the Liquor and Gaming Authority.

Now you left all of that out, either because you did not know or you wanted to leave it out in order to paint the worst-case scenario.

Now look, do whatever you want about Mr. Nystuen or about our position, but for goodness' sake, at least put all the facts out there. And that's the facts about this person.

I say this is a qualified person. This is an educated person. This is a person with experience in a variety of areas related to the question of his duties which he takes up.

Now the next thing you're talking about is the development of the Gaming Corporation. This is an entirely different body. The head of the Gaming Corporation charged with the renovation of the Via Rail station, if I may put it that way, I think is Mr. Ron Stengler, who has been around as a professional civil servant in a variety of functions in governments here and elsewhere. And that is an agency which is entirely different than the Liquor and Gaming Authority.

The Liquor and Gaming Authority's job is to regulate the number of VLTs, regulate the liquor outlets, make sure they follow the rules of liquor service, and so forth. That's Mr. Nystuen — same traditional rules. Mr. Stengler's job and the corporation's job with their various contracts is to establish the casino which is being located for the Via Rail site.

And you intermesh these into two and you build it up to a hundred million dollars. It's growing faster than my pension, this question of yours, by every minute. And then you say, is this an appropriate way in which to deal with public funds?

Well if I accepted your facts, I'd have to say, of course it isn't. But your facts are in error. And I'm trying to rectify those facts by giving them to you and asking you to accept that that is the circumstance in this particular situation.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Premier, you can try and dance around the problem all you want. And the man can have education till it's coming out his ears. But if he's got that kind of education and he's got the kind of ability that you claim, why wouldn't he be prepared and why wouldn't your government be prepared, when hiring an individual of a gambling operation which is province wide and is, sir, in the hundreds of millions of dollars range and your take is going to be a big chunk of that, when you're hiring a person who is going to manage an operation of that size, fraught with all of the dangers that gaming has — and I mean, sir, if you are saying to this Assembly that gambling has got no downside attached to it, please stand up and say so — that when you're hiring an individual that's going to manage all of those problems and all of that money, for goodness' sakes, what would be wrong with going to some kind of a public process so that the people are confident about the individual?

And if this gentleman has all of the qualifications that you say, he should be able to compete with anyone out there, anyone at all — not have your cabinet ministers who know nothing about gambling, making the choice.

Unless you're claiming that some of the five or six gaming ministers that you have all of a sudden became qualified enough. I mean, sir, don't you agree that if you've got the qualifications and you're a professional who is capable of dealing with those issues, you could probably compete with the best in the world? Wouldn't you agree with that?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, as a general proposition, the notion of advertising and open competition is one that I subscribe to and my government subscribes to, and we try to follow it as much as we can.

But there are occasions when it is reasonable for it not to be followed. I want to make the following points with respect to this particular individual and this particular agency. First of all the agency is regulatory. I don't mean to diminish your argument that this doesn't impact on lots of dollars. It does. But it is regulatory. It is not operational. It is a question of policing the circumstances.

The second point I want to make is that Mr. Nystuen served for a considerable period of time as the Acting CEO. So there was a track record by which we could judge him to determine whether or not he could do the job. And clearly he could do the job, and was only after we saw in the acting period that he was doing such a good job, that we decided competition, advertising, only delays, and we're not likely to get anybody better than him in any event. He's proven competent at it, and let's appoint him, which we did. That was the process.

And I invite you to take a look at his track record since that time. How's he done? Ask the hotels' association executive. I think they'll give you the answer. Ask anybody, and there is certainly no issue which has been raised in this House to the contrary. As a regulator, this person, this agency, has done a pretty good job. That's how the history of it applies, and that's how the explanation is given as to why in this case there is no public competition system that was applicable.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Premier, I'll tell you how well he's done. And this is according to Mayor Gabrush of the community of La Ronge, and I quote; this is how well he's done:

The 36 VLTs in the community are victimizing the poor, draining thousands of dollars out of the local economy, contributing to a sharp increase in crime. There were 493 property crimes reported in town last year, an increase of more than 50 per cent from the year before.

This is Mayor Gabrush from . . . Morris Gabrush, mayor of La Ronge. You were asking me how well that your friend Nystuen had done, and I'm just telling you what Mayor Gabrush says that he's done . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes, that's totally . . . we'll do that another estimate, okay?

You see the problem is, Premier, that all across this province people are questioning that policy, they're questioning its implementation, they're questioning the way the communities are being treated. And that's why I thought maybe having gone to some kind of a public process when selecting the head honcho in the gaming business, except for the folks that you have circling around through your cabinet, it might have been good to have somebody that was a pro at it so at least the folks in the province would have some empathy with what's going on.

You see, Premier, this stack of paper that was just brought in, these are all the folks around the province that have been writing in to us asking questions, and we haven't had

opportunity . . . and I don't think I'll bore you with all of them today, but a goodly number of these people question gaming. They question the way that you seem to want to use patronage and the way that you seem to want to use the heavy hand of your government to push gaming down the throats of Saskatchewan communities.

And I only ask these questions on their behalf and about your friend, Mr. Nystuen, and others that you have put in patronage positions who are now obviously interfering in the lives of a lot of people in this province. And if you wanted to do gambling, all I suggested to you was why not go through a public process of at least selecting the people that are going to implement your gambling policy, and then maybe people wouldn't be quite so upset with it.

I'm giving you an out. And you're saying to me, I don't want the out; I'm just going to forge ahead and I'll put all of my NDP friends in there and we'll run this gambling corporation and we'll just ram it down the throats of Saskatchewan people. And we'll make a bunch of money, and I'll balance my budget.

Well, sir, that's not how you make a society and you know it — not in this province. You're always telling us about cooperation — well I don't think Mr. Nystuen and the bunch over there are doing much cooperating with a lot of people these days, and they're upset about it.

So why wouldn't you want to have those kinds of individuals selected in a public way? Especially given your commitment, your strong commitment, to Saskatchewan people in 1991 in that election campaign that patronage ought not play a role in the formation of government and government policy. You said it, sir. What is so different in the spring of 1995 when we're going into another election campaign? What's so different now than then? Or is it just the chair you sit in now instead of the chair that you sat in four years ago? What's the difference now?

(1500)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — There's absolutely no difference. We've been doing exactly what we said we would be doing in 1991. I want the member to write this down. In 1994-95 there were 1,168 appointments, of which 1,160 or 99.3 per cent — 99.3 per cent — were hired by competition or under the terms of a collective agreement; .6 per cent — less than 1 per cent — by order in council appointment; and 1.1 per cent under a special section 7.23 appointment. Ninety-nine point three per cent. That's the hiring record.

Now if we want to get into the hiring record of your administration in a percentage way — there goes the Liberal member from Shaunavon again but be careful of those names that he gives you, I say to the hon. member from Thunder Creek — if you want to compare those percentages to yours, this is a fantastic improvement.

So I guess we've got .7 of a way to go to make it 100 per cent. Well I don't think any government's going to make it 100 per

cent. We're obviously going to have to hire some people who believe in our policies. We're not going to hire a deputy minister who believes in the hack and burn and slash policies of the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Not going to hire a deputy minister of health care who believes in the Texas-style audit to attack the nurses in the health care system, as the Liberals do. I'm not going to hire a deputy minister of Finance who believes in the approaches of Alberta, like you do. I mean that would be foolish of me, surely. And that is the way government operates.

But 99.3 per cent of the public service having been filled by this kind of competition, compared, sir, to your record — and I've got the clippings, but again in the interests of time I'm not going to use them — compared to your record. You ask me in the question — and I'm going to sit down by giving the same answer I did at the very beginning — what's changed? Nothing's changed.

We started the approach to revising and strengthening and making independent the Public Service Commission. We've made tremendous strides. We've done the same with the ABCs, the agencies, boards, and commissions. We've made excellent progress there; we can continue more in that category. We've appointed good people who have done a good job for the province of Saskatchewan, regardless of political belief or ideology.

And by any comparison, either to any other party in this province, or for that matter any other government in any other part of Canada, we're number one in leading the way for doing the right and correct thing with respect to appointments in government.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Chairman, no one in this Assembly has ever said that the member from Riversdale was not crafty and good at what he does. He's been practising politics in this province for more years than most of us care to remember, and he's very good at it. But he would have the people of the province of Saskatchewan listening today believe that we're talking about Public Service Commission hiring. And you know, he'd slip that by a lot of people. And he's very good at that.

But we're not talking about Public Service Commission hirings here. And the Premier knows it — knows it full well. I go through these pages and I don't think the board of the Western Development Museum or the Rates Appeal Board or the Crop Insurance board, or . . . it just goes on and on and on, Premier; none of that stuff's ever been done through Public Service Commission, and you know it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well why do you even try and confuse the issue, you know? You were misleading the people in the province of Saskatchewan. I mean all of these pages here haven't got anything to do with the Public Service Commission, and you well know it, you well know it.

What you should talk about is the number that you've done by LG in C (Lieutenant Governor in Council), and the people that your friends that are already there have hired. I mean go

through most of these appointments, it wouldn't matter if you did pick '93-94, you had a lot of it done before then.

It's amazing that you would say in 1991 that patronage ought not to be part of public policy in the province of Saskatchewan, and then so quickly the worm turned. And I guess, sir, we can't belabour it because obviously you've made that turn — the worm has turned — and now that you sit in the Premier's chair it's quite all right to do.

So I just hope when the election rolls along — and I expect it shortly — that you will, in the next leaders' debate, say I got to apologize to the folks in the province Saskatchewan; I had a slip of the tongue in 1991 and I said that patronage ought not to occur. But times have changed in the province of Saskatchewan and there were all these loyal New Democrats out there that needed a job and I had a Gaming Commission to fill up and I had a casino corp to fill up, and I had all of these things to do and I had to have loyal and faithful followers helping me do it.

And, sir, if you do that, I will give you all the credit in the world. I think it would be a tremendous stride in public life for you to stand up and tell the folks of this province the truth about your views on patronage. And if you did that, well people then could probably make their own judgement, couldn't they?

Don't you think it's about time that we started to treat the people we expect to do the work of the people of this province a little bit differently, and we start looking for professional people? And as a Conservative, I know maybe I don't have the best record in the province of Saskatchewan, but you know what? I had to pay a terrible price, Premier, because people believed your broken promise, and as a Conservative I had to pay the price. And if you don't learn from your mistakes, then what's the point of going on in life?

So don't you think, sir, it's time that we both learn from our mistakes and that we use a more public process of hiring in this province than the one that you currently have in place in your government?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, the member says he's coming to an end in this line. It's up to him if he is or isn't, but I think he is, because I want to say I made it very clear in my last answer — maybe not to him — but I'm going to take just a moment of the House to make it clear to him and to the House.

Essentially there are three categories of civil service. There is what I call the regular public service employees. There is another category which I will call the immediate small people at the front end surrounding the cabinet who are advisers — political and policy advisers. And then there's the third category, what I call the ABCs — those are agencies, boards, and commissions.

Let me tell you about each one of those. First is the Public Service Commission. Unlike your administration, 99.3 per cent

of everybody who went under The Public Service Commission Act and Public Service Commission rules for appointment got appointed under an open-competition system — 99.3 per cent. That's near perfect. I've given you the breakdown as to how the .7 fell down.

And now you have another category — our categories as ministerial assistants, deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers, cabinet secretariat, the small numbers in relative terms who advise . . .

An Hon. Member: — Crown corporations.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Fine, the members says throw Crown corporations in there. I will say throw in the Crown corporations. I don't totally agree with him, but even throw in the Crown corporations, you can have five or six of them, you can name them — the Power Corporation, CIC head, SaskTel, so forth. They had five or six of them; that's about all there is. Add another four or five if you want below them, as you started off. That's a second category, very small, both numerically and from a percentage point of view.

Those people are selected on a different basis for one very good reason. To give you the example, if we are implementing a gaming policy, something that you're railing against, what should I do? Should I appoint you the head of the gaming policy? I don't mean this facetiously. No, of course. What you should do always is appoint a person who has got competence and ability and integrity, but generally supports the policy of the government. These are the career, professional civil servants.

Now comes the ABCs. This is what you said I was trying to confuse the public with. ABCs is shorthand for agencies, boards, and commissions. I will tell you that there are 2,282 appointees in the province of Saskatchewan on ABCs.

But I'll tell you this, unlike '91, you now have to apply; you now have to have references and endorsements and screened.

An Hon. Member: — Oh I'm sure they get the references.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Oh yes, sure. And the applications are made. And I'll tell you, of the 2,282 — 576 are civil servants or members of the Legislative Assembly; 1,700 are members of the public. Almost every one of those ABCs are represented in some form or another by direct nominees of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), College of Physicians and Surgeons — you name the particular agency which is involved. You've been in this game yourself.

And at the end, what you might have is, quote, the patronage list — 76 or whatever the names were that you and the member from Shaunavon had. The patronage list, yes; 76 out of 2,282. You know, let's not be ridiculous about this; let's not be ridiculous about it.

It's only a province of a million people and you have to get the best qualified, most publicly oriented, publicly minded people wherever they come from. That's exactly what we've done. That's been a tremendous reform. That's what I will intend to tell the people whenever the next election takes place. And I'll tell the people of Saskatchewan and don't take a chance on going back to the old Liberal patronage game or the old PC (Progressive Conservative) patronage game. And I don't think they will go back.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, I have been contacted by a constituent of mine who owns a small trucking firm in Burstall, Saskatchewan — that's their base. Now they have been informed by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) in the United States that SGI insurance is no longer recognized in many states. They believe it is because of the implementation of the no-fault insurance by SGI, but there may be some other problem as well.

As a result, the state won't recognize the first \$200,000 of coverage that people are buying under the SGI insurance program. Now obviously truckers are having to go to private insurance firms to be covered by what SGI claims to already have covered. Which means, of course, they are being double-billed, having to buy two insurance policies to accomplish the same coverage.

What will you do, Mr. Premier, to address this problem of an international nature?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, what I want to do is I've asked one of the officials already to go out and see if they can contact officials at SGI to get us a complete story of the situation, and then proceed on that basis.

I can hardly believe it's because of no-fault, but it might be. Because the United States preaches a lot of free trade but practises a lot of protectionism. You know this with respect to the export of durum. You know what their attitude is on the Canadian Wheat Board. Sometimes we as Canadians can't change our policy to suit them. I'm sure that you wouldn't want . . . well maybe you would want, but at least I don't want us to change, as Canadians, the policy in the Canadian Wheat Board just to satisfy the American . . . and American regulatory approaches.

But whatever we can do to try to ease the situation for this trucker that you're referring to, and other truckers, we will do. In the meantime, I'm asking the people at SGI to come up with a brief description of the problem for me. Maybe before 5 o'clock is done, I can provide an answer. If I can't, I'll get something to you in writing very quickly thereafter.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Premier, I appreciate that. And I want to say two things: first of all, I agree with most of what you just said. But we might have to change in order to accommodate our citizens and to allow them an opportunity to survive in the business world. We may not have that option or that luxury.

Now the other thing that I want to say is that I'm quite sure that SGI will be able to get you this information because we've already been asking them for three days and haven't been able to get an answer from them. So they probably have had ample time to gather this information together for us. And so we look forward to you finding out for us because . . . and I'll elaborate just a little bit more. It's very important probably to quite a few people. And it's important to us that we have trucks that move north and south. We have to bring in some vegetables for our folks to eat and we have to take, as you've mentioned, some durum wheat and things like that down there.

So I would appreciate it if you would look into this issue since the individuals that are in question have been informed by their private insurance companies that the cost, the additional cost to them to get the coverage that they now need, will be about \$3,000 extra. And they would like to know what use it is to have the government insurance at all if the protection that they've paid for really isn't there when they get out of the country and get going down the road.

My constituents have talked to the American representatives of the CCC in both Philadelphia and Washington. So your SGI people might want to take that into account and check with them.

So will you commit of course to having your staff or agencies find out what's going on down there totally? And I think you have, but I'll just let you reiterate that. Because if it is the no-fault thing, we think we might be able to rectify the thing at home. If it's something else and we haven't been able to find out about it, maybe you can. And that too might be able to be rectified.

And so for Allen and Elaine Job of Burstall, I will ask you to make a commitment for them.

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well I hereby repeat my commitment. And I hope to get it before 5 if I can. If not, we'll get something in writing to you. My officials have noted the commitment and will get the letter to you at the appropriate time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Premier. I certainly hope that we can resolve this problem for a good many of our truckers in the province of Saskatchewan. It is a very large business base for Saskatchewan people, ever more so since the diversification of agriculture has become essential. Many farmers of course, being of a mechanical nature, find it easy to get a rig and go to work because they know them, they understand them. They understand the machinery. They understand the principles of that kind of business, and so they fit in very naturally.

So these are the people that we're basically going to be helping because they're the ones that haven't really studied all the rules and regulations like the big trucking firms that are already in business. They've probably got some of these answers. But we do need to share that around so that people can be helped.

I want to talk to you for a few minutes, Premier, about The Labour Standards Act. Now as you are aware, your government's changes to The Labour Standards Act were passed last session under some storm and controversy which we tried to bring to your attention. And it seems that no one liked the Bill, especially in the business community. The labour leaders obviously might have liked it, but the reality is that all of the business sector opposed these changes.

My question I guess to you is: do you feel that it was appropriate to reintroduce this legislation, and this kind of legislation, given that these issues were not pressing emergencies to the province as a whole? And was it, do you think, worth the political strife to alienate all of the business community in our province at this time in our history?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think there are two sides to the coin on this issue. Clearly our businesses have to be competitive, and we want to make sure they are competitive. And your comments on trucking are an example of your shared goal that I have about making trucking competitive in the United States and elsewhere. So we have to have our business which is competitive. Let's take that for granted.

The flip side of the coin however is this fact. The fact is that there is a growing phenomenon of people who are part-time employees. That's a growing phenomenon everywhere in North America and in Saskatchewan. Some of us don't like it. I don't think the part timers like it very much because of the job insecurity.

And with the part-time phenomenon, you will note that such things as part-time benefits are very often not applicable or paid to these people for whatever economic or good, solid, competitive reasons there may be. The result is that in many cases there is little incentive for these workers to continue working as part-time workers. They're just on that boundary line between being productive employees and slipping down into a social safety net of some nature.

And many people who have read this about this problem have simply said, you're either going to pay . . . we're either going to pay as a society now, or we're going to pay later. Sooner or later the system, the social safety net, through increased taxes, will be looking after people who are struggling hard on part-time but don't have any of the basic amenities and decencies associated with labour. That is going to be a cost. It'll be a cost to the business person, as sure as I'm standing here, now or later.

Now the legislation which we introduced obviously had difficulties all around. We tried an approach which I thought was sensible, getting business and labour to sit down around a table and come up with a common, reasonable compromise approach to tackle two problems — keep business competitive and look after the part-time workers. It didn't work out that way, and in the net result we have whatever is left of Labour Standards Act.

I think the problem remains unchanged. We've tried our solution. It is the best that we can proceed in the province of Saskatchewan. That is it. The debate has been debated, and we proceed on. But I don't think the member should blithely somehow — I'm not saying that he does — assume that there isn't a problem both ways, both from the business side, but from the worker's side. It is a complex, at least two-sided concern.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Premier, I know how much you hate to hear the comparison between us and other jurisdictions. However it is a fact of life that Alberta doesn't have this kind of restrictive legislation, and it is a fact that they have a pretty happy group of people over there. In fact they're so happy that most of our children in this province end up going there to find work — meaningful employment with meaningful wages.

Now I won't deny that we all have some concern about the problems of part-time employment and those kinds of ramifications that are going to visit us in the future if we continue along these lines.

And obviously we have to worry because we see that example in the United States to the south of us. And for all of us who have looked at that whole area, it is a serious concern. Because when you find young people having to hold down three or four different jobs all at the same time, working two hours at one, three at the next, four at the next, and five at the next, and having to run all over town and all over every place to get from one job to the other and literally driving themselves crazy as well as working themselves to death, certainly nobody could be happy with the development of that kind of a society.

But that's not what this legislation really is all about. You see what this legislation is really all about is the effects on the business base, the people who provide the jobs that can in fact be full time. If we destroy the competitiveness and the equal playing-field or the level playing-field of our businesses as compared to other jurisdictions closest to us, and most importantly Manitoba and Alberta in this context because we are not in a big competition with the United States so much as we are with Alberta right now, obviously that has to be our first goal is to equal that playing-field between those two areas.

And we found while we had this process going on, we didn't seem to see any attempt really to consult with businesses. The results are already in, this has been in the process for two years. The results . . . it's no longer an experiment. The results are simply this: business community has collectively said that the rules that you are imposing with your tendering policies, the rules that you're imposing with your labour law changes, are unacceptable and make us uncompetitive with our neighbours in other provinces.

We find our children having to leave this province to get work, not only just in Alberta and British Columbia and places like that, but now we are finding them having to go into the international stage of employment in order to find meaningful and rewarding employment.

And I recall some rhetoric of the past where people were told that we're looking for economic and social justice for the people of Saskatchewan. Well to me economic and social justice for people in Saskatchewan would be to provide them with an opportunity to be able to stay home in Saskatchewan to live.

What good is a good economy or a good justice or social justice or anything else if you can't find a job and stay in the province where those things are at? I mean it's all self-defeating if we don't do something to provide a base for people to be able to stay here.

We saw things, Mr. Premier, as you're well aware, but oftentimes I think you are so busy that you don't have a chance to really listen to us. And we heard your minister say things about the business community while this debate was going on, like calling the business community ruthless, greedy businessmen.

Do you really think that that kind of an approach by your ministers while you're busy working at other matters is a proper approach for them to take in the province? Is that a proper approach for them to take, and is it a proper approach for your minister to introduce legislation that puts Saskatchewan out of synchronization with the rest of the world around us?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, it is not proper for any minister of this government to say what the member alleges that the minister on this side said. And I accept the minister of Labour's explanation for those words and I do not believe that the sentiments were as echoed.

He knows, then minister of Labour, as much as you do and as much as I do, in a province of a million people we must cooperate in economic endeavour. And that has been the policy and is the policy of the government, as is the introduction of legislation.

There is some belief that a minister just gets up on his own behalf and says, here's a Bill; I've got a good idea. You know it doesn't work that way. It goes through the cabinet, it goes through the caucus, it becomes a matter of government policy. And that's why it's introduced. And we introduced it for the reasons that I explained in the previous question that you directed to me.

But I want to say a word about labour climate before I take my place, because you're talking about labour climate. I think it's important for the member to understand the following: Saskatchewan's workforce is very stable. Employees remain at their job longer here than in any other province. Job tenure in Saskatchewan is approximately 40 per cent higher — 40 per cent higher — than it is in Alberta, and approximately 19 per cent higher than it is in Manitoba.

We have the second highest high school completion rate in Canada, and our students are at the top of national and international testings. Our manufacturing labour productivity is rated second highest in Canada. It's equivalent to Alberta and

50 per cent higher than Manitoba. Again, StatsCanada.

Average wage costs are lower than in all other Canadian provinces, with the exception of P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island), already. Average weekly wages are approximately 15 per cent lower than Alberta and approximately 4 per cent lower than in Manitoba. Average weekly construction wages are approximately 20 per cent lower than Alberta and approximately 11 per cent lower than Manitoba.

Average rate for workers' compensation is one of the lowest in Canada, workers' compensation. It's 22 per cent lower than Alberta, 16 per cent lower than in Manitoba, and unlike any other province, our Workers' Compensation Board is absolutely fully funded.

Now it doesn't give me much pleasure to recite some of these facts because it indicates that the workers are very capable and innovative but by comparison their wage rates are less. So when you talk about competitiveness and competition, please keep in mind these kinds of figures.

Take a look at Manitoba. Manitoba has a payroll tax. We do not have a payroll tax. Take a look at Alberta. Alberta has health care premium charges which in effect amount to something like \$780 for a family of four. We don't have health care premium charges.

I know you folks over there, the Liberals and the Conservatives, say oh well, that's not a tax, that's . . . something — I don't know what it is. Comes out of heaven, I guess. But it's a tax. And it's a tax on business just as much as it is everybody else.

And in the result I agree with you, the key is to have a good job and have a good quality of life. In the result, because we've been able to balance the budget and because we have put these sensible policies into play, we are now seeing the turnaround. Unemployment rate is the lowest in Canada and has been for some time. Our retail sales in '94 were up second best in all of Canada.

Well I could go on and on. I'll spare you that speech because you know in almost every community of this province there is more optimism and more hope than there has been in one heck of a long time. I don't take all the credit for it, far from it; it belongs to the people of Saskatchewan.

But I do take credit for a combination of sensible laws which relate to working people, relate to business people; tax laws which assist people in manufacturing and processing. I put that all together to indicate that there's a dawning of a new day. That there is a new day of opportunity for working men and women and for the business community. And I believe the business community senses it. At least that's what they're telling me whenever I attend the various chamber meetings.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well thank you for your observations, Mr. Premier. I wonder if we could have a copy of the paper that you have referred to. Perhaps you would either table it or send a

copy across and likely the Liberal members would likely want a copy as well. So we'll await that.

And I'd like to just discuss with you some of your opinions, because I think it's necessary in the process of debate to try to come up with some balance so that we can improve life for people. You talk about the figures of Alberta where people have to pay \$700 for their medicare. So let's just talk about that for a second because the statistics you've got are nice, and I'm sure they're on paper, and everybody in the world is impressed by statistics and facts and figures and all the things that you can compile through computers and printed things like that. But the statistics that I believe more than anything in the world are the real people in the real world that I deal with.

I've got family; four kids who've gone through the university process, not one of them in this province, not one of them able to find a job in this province that comes anywhere close to paying the kind of wages that they get for the same work in other jurisdictions. Four out of four. That's the kind of statistics I believe in. Four people out of four people that have had to leave this province, Mr. Premier. Under your kind of level playing-field, they've had to go out of this province to find gainful employment and even to finish their education.

The truth of the matter is that that's the kind of statistics the people in Saskatchewan look at — they look at their own families. They're not looking at your pieces of paper. But we'll look at them and we'll study them because I think they'll be flawed like everything else about your government. You're flawed in your whole presumption that things are better.

The reality is you started from nothing. You're down to zero. You got this province running around almost to where it isn't existent any more in competition. And what do you got? What have you really got? You've got an improvement from zero.

Well I don't think that's much to brag about. And my kids certainly aren't looking forward to bragging about the great province of Saskatchewan except to say that it was a nice place to leave.

You talk about \$700 worth of medicare costs over in Alberta, and it's true. And the kids tell me, yes, that's a bill they have to pay. And I say, well do you like paying it? Well of course not. We don't like paying any bills at all.

But they said compared to what you guys have done in Saskatchewan where you're paying \$4,800 a year more for taxes and utility rates per a family of four, I'm pretty well off yet because I've still got \$4,100 more to the good, living in Alberta, to use on myself and my family.

Now that's what they tell me when we talk about the political climate here and the reasons why they're there and whether or not they'd consider coming home again. Not a chance to come back to Saskatchewan — not a chance.

(1530)

Not just my family. I've talked to lots of young people over there, people that they've met that came from Saskatchewan that are also over in Alberta; in Japan where one of my other daughters is; in United States where another one of them is at right now. I talk to these young people and they all tell me, not a chance they'd ever come back to Saskatchewan under the conditions we've got here. Because, they say, the story isn't being told straight. First of all, you don't have a business base, you don't have a job base, you don't have a wage rate, and you don't have any opportunities.

And when you say that over there they're going to pay more for something and that should be something that we should worry about? My friend, believe me, believe me, what they're paying for health care in Alberta is not a factor in those people's lives except on the general rule in principle — and it is that — that people do like to complain about what they pay for. Everybody will do that. But when you get them complaining about what they've got as problems and ask them to compare it to what we've got in Saskatchewan, they say, thank you, but we'll keep our problems and stay in Alberta.

So your argument is not well taken that you're doing such a great job in Saskatchewan with the cost of medicare and providing things for people. People would be much better off paying a little bit for their medicare and be rid of the \$4,800 per family in utility costs and taxes that you have piled on them since 1991.

Now you brag about having brought the province out of a period of recession and depression. My friend, you did not do that. As great a man as you are — and I have the highest respect for you, and you're doing as best you can probably — but the truth is you had nothing to do with it. The recession wasn't caused by a government in Saskatchewan; the depression of the dirty '80s wasn't caused by a government in Saskatchewan. And you didn't bring that change about; it happened in spite of us.

What is responsible to you though is the playing-field for business that could develop this province into a province like Alberta. You know very well the history of this province. At one point in history we had more population than Alberta. Why did the people continue to pass through Saskatchewan to Alberta? Not because they've got more resources or mountains. They went there because they had opportunities. And those opportunities were created by a political climate, not by nature.

We've got as many resources in this province as Alberta has ever had. We've got more. When this exploration thing ever gets finished, I am going to challenge the people of this province to look back on this day when I'm going to say to you that I believe we've got more gas, oil, and uranium resources than Alberta's ever had. We've got them here and we just haven't had the level playing-field to allow business people to go out and explore them to the extent that's been done in Alberta.

So, Mr. Premier, don't sit in your place and brag to me about how great a job you've done. With your ideology, it's just not

working. And the people, when we talk about these new Crown tendering laws in other jurisdictions, they laugh out loud. They just can't believe that we'd be so foolish as to put into place tendering laws that would force companies, force companies either to unionize or else try to circumvent the system. And that's exactly what you've got going on today: companies forced to circumvent the system and your own government having to help them. Your own government having to help them circumvent your own policy by — by what? By eliminating one of the areas that has to comply with your Crown tendering. You eliminate one area, the pipeline people, because you knew very well it could never work. And so you start with an exemption already. Here's one.

Now you've got the Battlefords crying up north; they need an exemption. And they do, Premier; they very much do. And then pretty soon it will be somebody else that needs an exemption. And pretty soon you'll have so many holes in this policy that it'll look like a sieve. And I'm telling you now, you ought to reconsider your plan.

Having seen this and observed all this, Mr. Premier, don't you think it would be better just to throw all of these tendering policies out and start over again?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I have to respond first of all by saying that I'm very sorry to hear the hon. member tell the House how his children feel about Saskatchewan. I guess they have to make their choice. I'm actually quite saddened to hear the vigour by which the hon. member opposite elevates Alberta over Saskatchewan while sitting in the Chamber of Saskatchewan.

I'm also interested in knowing when the children left exactly because your Progressive Conservative ideology had nine years to turn things around. Nine years your children . . . I don't know when they left. But for nine years the Conservatives had a chance to open her wide up, just like Alberta. And we know what the result was, 14, \$15 billion debt, highest per capita deficit, Saskatchewan on the abyss.

We've only been around three years and some several months, and your children are blaming it all on me? I don't think so. I haven't met them. I'm sure they're very decent people. I think you're taking a little bit of liberty, if I may say so, with their comments, to try to ignore the dismal nine years that went on.

The other thing that I really want to say is that we're only beginning to recover. I'm not happy with where we're at. We're going to go higher, and we're going to succeed.

And the third thing that I want to say is, sir, you have to get your facts right. And I'm going to take a moment of the House to tell the facts. I'm comparing Calgary and Saskatoon, just for the moment. Here's what I'm going to compare: provincial income tax, tax credits and rebates, health premiums, retail sales tax, gasoline tax. I'm going to compare rent, electricity, telephone, auto insurance, and household charges, and I'm going to do it for a family of four at \$50,000 income.

Here are the numbers. Provincial income tax: Calgary, 2,662; Saskatoon, 3,842; it's higher. Tax credits and rebates: zero, zero. Health premiums: Calgary, \$780; Saskatoon, zero. Retail sales tax: Calgary, zero; Saskatoon, \$920. Gasoline: Calgary, 180; Saskatoon, 300. Mortgage costs: Calgary, 7,213; Saskatoon, 4,911. Property taxes: Alberta, 1,787; Saskatoon, 1,910. Home heating: 711 for Calgary; 720 for Saskatoon. Electricity: 611 to 748. Telephone: 224 to 242. Auto insurance: in Calgary, 1,530; Saskatoon, 704.

Total up those two columns and the cost of living for taxes and household charges for a family of \$50,000 income: in Saskatoon, 14,297; Calgary, 15,698.

By the way, to round the story out, if you're \$25,000 income: Saskatoon, 8,563 versus 9,680 in Calgary. And if you're \$75,000: Saskatoon, it's 18,232; and Calgary, 18,308. In each one of those categories — 25, 50, and 75,000 — taxes and household charges are cheaper by those numbers that I have identified.

I find it astounding that members who are sworn to uphold the service of the people of the province of Saskatchewan in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan get up like the member opposite does and lauds and sings the praises of another province and another jurisdiction when the facts don't even support the song that he's singing. The words don't fit the medley that is being sung. But how in the world can this be done with a credible appeal to the people of Saskatchewan to say, I really love Saskatchewan more?

That's what the Liberals and the Conservatives do. And I just find this absolutely mind-blowing, to use that old cliché. And I'm saying to the people opposite, to the Liberals and the Conservatives, the Conservatives and the Liberals, that Texas-style cutters and the Klein-style cutters, the hack-and-slash people, the I-can-do-less, the no-I-can-do-even-less-than-less. I can do lesser. No, I can do lesser than less than less than lesser. I can give you a bigger tax break. No, I can give you a bigger tax break.

All of these people, all of these people, the Liberals and the Conservatives, they are so incredible in 1995 with that kind of a campaign where the people of Saskatchewan a short three years and some several months ago, having come through the crisis that we came through together, to see these people say, let's go back to the good old days of 1992. We're going to offer you all kinds of tax breaks all over again, and we're going to do it by doing away with all the MLA pensions; you've got them all.

I tell you, Mr. Chairman, I'll be very lucky to see . . . well they'll be very lucky to see a handful together coming back after this next election is over — a handful on this because the people of Saskatchewan are not going to be fooled by that kind of Newt Gingrich, no-government, mean-spirited approach to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Nobody in this province is going to buy that. And whether it's Newt trying to defeat Gingrich or Gingrich trying to defeat Newt, or Newt and Gingrich, the Bobbsey twins over there, the Liberals and the Conservatives, those days of the old style politics of pork barrel and name-calling and accusations which prove to be unfounded — long gone, my dear friend from Maple Creek. Long, long gone, about as long gone as you will be after the next provincial election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Mr. Premier, we almost started out agreeing, but of course now the agreement has to end because the truth of the matter is that I would like you to seriously table those figures. We need to have a record of that because it is very significant. And thank you, I note that that the Premier is tabling the figures, and that's great because people who fiddle with figures run the risk of having someone listen, and you run the risk, sir, of having somebody do a computation that will dispute and refute your arguments.

You start off with the comparison between Saskatoon and Calgary, and that's a good one; it is excellent. Do it with Edmonton too, my friend, because again you fiddle with the figures on statistical data sheets. I deal with the reality of the statistics of the people that have gone there and told me the facts as it applies to their lives.

Taxes in Saskatoon, my friend, are \$3,842 compared to 2,662 in Calgary — one big difference, my friend, right there. Taxes are higher in Saskatchewan by a big bunch, and so are utility rate bills, the second item you went to — way into the sky compared to Alberta.

And where do you find some item that you can pull out of the air that you can find that costs more money in Alberta in order to offset that? You have to go to the cost of the dirt, the cost of the property and the housing. And you have to go there knowing full well that there's more demand for the property in Alberta. And as a result the prices have escalated. More people want to live there, and therefore their property and their houses are far more expensive, and their mortgages are higher as a result of that. And it's as simple as that. When you go there, you pay the price because everybody wants to be there.

They want to be there. Why? You don't dare talk about the wages that people get over there compared to Saskatchewan. They want to be there because they can afford these extra costs. They can afford it because they haven't paid the taxes, and they haven't paid the utility bills, and they've got jobs that pay them 20 or 25 per cent more than anything you've got to offer them in Saskatchewan and anything more than our businesses can offer them in Saskatchewan. And why sir? Because of your policies and your unfair labour tendering policies, your unfair labour laws, your unfair package of complete package of government. It is totally unfair, and it is not conducive to allowing business to start up.

So I'll tell you, my friend, when you start to fiddle with figures and go on the hustings in Saskatchewan, we'll meet you there. And we'll meet you in a debate in Maple Creek in the Town Hall any day you want, if the people there will allow you into town because the truth of the matter is they know what 9 per cent sales tax does to their businesses in Saskatchewan when they have to compete with Alberta that doesn't have one.

(1545)

And you tell me that people would rather be in Saskatchewan because of some figures that you've got on a piece of paper. My friend, your statistics are as phoney as your government because you don't compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges. You forgot all about that years ago.

The truth of the matter is, my friend, the truth of the matter is that all of these problems did not start yesterday. But then you're not a young man. They started back in the '60s and '70s when your governments were in power and destroyed this province right from the basic roots going back 30 years. It has got nothing to do with you personally. But you've added to the problem, and you've magnified it and made it so much worse.

That's what the reality of life is here. The reality of life is that all you can do is try to buy votes from your union buddies with legislation that is driving business out and making it impossible for people like my family to be able to stay in this province in the future. And that is a fact of life. And they're not as old as you think they are . . .

An Hon. Member: — When did they leave?

Mr. Goohsen: — They've only left.

An Hon. Member: — When?

Mr. Goohsen: — In the last three years.

An Hon. Member: — In the last three years.

Mr. Goohsen: — Yes, one by one.

Now let's talk about what we could do to attract them back. And let's talk a little bit about what we could do, sir, about cancelling out the long litany of problems that your ideology has caused in this province from the '60s and the '70s. That's where the root problems began. While Alberta was sky-rocketing ahead with the development of their resources, we had guys like Tommy Douglas sitting around saying: well oil will never rot in the ground, so we'll leave it there. Great philosophy that was. Of course, it didn't rot in the ground; it's still there . . . Never got a job, never had any development, didn't have to build an oil well.

Well, my friend, that's where your problems start. That's where they start, and now you make them worse. You make them worse because you put us out of competition in this province, and the example is The Battlefords today.

You've got a tendering policy out there that even the mayor of the town says cannot work. You're driving the jobs away from those local people to your union halls to try to buy a little support for this election — that you have to call a year early because you're scared frightless that you can't wait another year and have people wake up to the reality of what you're doing to this province because you're going to go down in flames if you wait any longer.

You know very well that the people on the west side of this province are looking at Alberta, and they're seeing the difference. They're seeing the difference on how much better it can be, just with a few fundamental differences. And the first fundamental difference has to be an end to your Crown-tendering policy and your union-preference policies.

And, Mr. Premier, I know well. I know well that you are a fair person. Now not many people know this, but I remember you well when you were in university; I was there too. I happened to have watched you and admired you. I don't admire the political direction that you've taken, but I admired you as an individual because I know that you're a fair-minded person. But I believe you're being dragged down by your comrades around you.

And so having given you the opportunity to respond before my rebuttal of your remarks, I'd like you to reconsider that list that you put towards us. I'd like you to take out the mortgage values on your list and then tell Saskatchewan people what you're going to do to equalize the things in the areas of taxation, utility bills, and those kinds of things that come directly out of families' pockets in Saskatoon, as compared to people in Calgary.

What are you going to do to level that base? What are you going to do to level the business people's base in The Battlefords and in the rest of Saskatchewan so that they can get back to tendering with Saskatchewan employees instead of having to bring in Alberta workers or union workers from Regina or Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to the Crown tendering practice as it's called, I think the Minister of Labour today in question period put the argument the best. He said, for goodness' sake, give this thing a chance.

You accuse me of ideology. I think, sir, I've tried to exhibit some pragmatism none the less, by the statement that says give it a chance. You don't even want to give it a chance. Your ideology is so locked in that you want it out right now. And I'm sorry we have a disagreement there; we have to see how it operates.

It has been the policy, the union-tendering policy in Crowns for the federal government since, I think 1967 anyway. It's been part of the United States Government of America since about 1947-48. It's in operation in six other provinces, 31 states, and these people opposite would have us believe that this is something which is pulled off from Mars to destroy the

business people of Saskatchewan.

I mean look, you know, the sky isn't falling down. It might be on your political heads, but people will survive without Tories or Liberals. The sky is not falling down economically; things are looking up very, very well.

Now when I answer the question, question says, what do we intend to do? We intend to do, Mr. Member, what we have been doing as best as we can, given the strait-jacket that we were in on November 1, 1991, occasioned by the huge deficit and debt.

We are targeting our tax reductions to those areas where we think we can get the biggest bang for our buck, the most employment. Manufacturing and processing reduction, the 9 per cent for new construction that brought in Cargill. If you do all your manufacturing and processing in Saskatchewan, for example, you'll have the lowest corporate income tax rate in all of western Canada.

We now have the second lowest small business corporate tax. I want the member from Regina North West to listen to this — second lowest west of Quebec, the small business corporate income tax. The member from Shaunavon probably hasn't told you that, but that is a fact. Because what we're trying to do is in fact buttress up the small-business community.

I could continue on with a whole variety of other initiatives. And what we intend to do is, as we achieve two or three objectives, lowering the debt, thereby lowering the interest payments to continue tax relief for individuals and for business people in a very targeted way. That's responsible. And the remaining one-third we're going to give to health care and to education. That's responsible.

Now the Texas-style cutters over there, their approach is totally different. The Texas-style cutters will simply cut \$250 million like that. And they say that they will cut the \$250 million by finding efficiencies. Well, this is going to be a nice trick if you can do it, since this is the most efficient government in all of Canada today on a per capita operating expenses basis.

I would ask the hon. member from Regina North West to really listen to this. You can measure, you know, the services of government — highways, roads, hospitals, education, that kind of thing. You can say how much it cost you to deliver it, and then you can compute on a per capita basis. And you know what? We come out the lowest in Canada -- lower than Alberta, lower than Manitoba.

And you people think that you can even reduce it more. And you're going to reduce it by \$250 million more. That's what you're going to do. And the member from Shaunavon says, hear, hear. And the member from Regina North West shakes her head in dispute to this thing. And that is what they're going to find.

I tell you teachers and I tell the health care workers and I tell the small-business people . . . Oh you're going to do away with

the Department of Economic Development too, aren't you? Yes, you're going to do away with the Department of Economic Development. The member laughs.

An Hon. Member: — Well go on with your story because then I can . . .

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well let me . . . I have the Liberal platform document. Well that was last week's; maybe it's changed.

An Hon. Member: — I'll give you an updated version. Which one do you have?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I have it here. Here's a headline of what a prominent Saskatchewan Canadian businessman says: "Liberal economic development proposal flawed," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, May 12, 1995. The following is a personal viewpoint of the writer, president of PIC Investment Group, Mr. James Yuel, president of the Saskatoon Economic Development Authority. Do you know what Mr. Yuel says?

As history and common sense dictate, those who fund the band call the tune. Therefore, those businesses funding the authority will determine what industries are pursued, to the exclusion of all other opportunities.

Corporations looking for site locations want to know that the people they are dealing with have the ability to follow through on their statements.

They generally accept the credibility of senior departmental staff but would view with some doubt statements coming from a non-governmental body.

That's your proposal. That's what the business community is saying about your proposal. That's what the Texas-style cutters are going to do.

An Hon. Member: — I think that we're going to have you in so much trouble in a few days on . . .

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well I tell you. The hon. member says he's going to have me in so much trouble. I tell you I might be in trouble, but not in as much trouble, my friend, as you will be the moment you step out of this legislature and repeat your statements in the legislature, of yesterday, pertaining to the contract north of Regina and basing by innuendo that the contract was based on favouritism.

An Hon. Member: — With your relative?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Yes, with my relatives. You say it out there, and we'll see what kind of trouble you, sir, are going to be in.

An Hon. Member: — Let's go do it. I'll do it.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Go ahead. Go ahead and do it. And go

ahead and do it and start off the campaign. I tell you the happiest day of my life in this caucus was the day when this member left this caucus and expunged it, expunged it, expunged it . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — . . . expunged it, expunged it of the lack of honesty and principle to the whole operation. Oh how he pleaded otherwise. But anyway, I'm off that case.

I say to the hon. member from Maple Creek: member from Maple Creek, give it a chance. We'll monitor it. We said we'd look at it. Give it a chance. I think the business people in this community are prepared to give it a chance. Don't be a doom and gloomer.

Come on, the sun is shining, it's a brand-new day dawning in the province of Saskatchewan. We're pulling together. A new day. Join the wrecking . . . not the wrecking crew; the building crew. You're on the wrecking side. Join the guys that want to build. Join in getting Saskatchewan into the 21st century. Come on now, everybody wants you to be onside.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Premier, for that oration. I knew very well that my arguments were winning in this debate when I asked the Premier a question and he gets up and answers it by attacking the Liberals. I must have got something right because he couldn't even bother with the line of the debate any longer.

But I do have to get back to this line of debate, Mr. Premier, because quite frankly I thought you had more class than to send over your own budget book as evidence of some kind of reality. An unauthenticated, phoney piece of paper that was contrived with figures that are pulled out of the air with absolutely nothing to substantiate them. It's your own book that you wrote yourself, and who knows where these figures ever came from.

But even using these figures -- and we'll give you one for just a minute here -- even if you did use these figures, I'll make my point once again. If you take out the mortgage part of the whole process, comparing Saskatoon to Calgary, it costs a lot more money to live in Saskatchewan than it does in Calgary.

And because your mortgage is higher and your property is worth more, when those young people sell that piece of property, they're going to get more for it and they'll still be ahead. So that's what I think of your proof.

Now let's talk about something that is documented. And I just got handed a piece of paper here that shows me that in 1985 the tax-free days of our province, back then — June 14 for Saskatchewan and June 23 for Alberta -- it took longer to pay your taxes in Alberta back in 1985 than it did in Saskatchewan. Alberta was behind us. In effect they weren't as well off as us.

But let's take a look at the time period now that comes into your administration — 1994. Now we feel the full effects of a New

Democratic government and their kind of approach to financing a province. And the figures change here to June 30 for Saskatchewan and June 17 for Alberta. And we have had just about a complete reversal in the trend.

Now, Mr. Premier, this comes from the Fraser Institute, June 1994. Now I know you don't like them, but at least they are somebody else other than the government and other than me. And they've got more chance of being right because they have to authenticate what they say, and I don't, and I won't pretend to try. But I will bring that to your attention that there has been a reversal.

And the reason for that reversal is the high cost of taxation and the high cost of utilities. And you have a good argument for why you did that. And we say that we've got a better argument for how you didn't have to do it that way, wouldn't have had to do it that way. We say you could have cut from the top the way that Alberta did. We say that you could have taken it easier on the people. And we say to you that it's unfair.

A little while ago you commented about how great you were because you balanced your budget. Well even Newfoundland's budget is balanced, and they don't even have any fish any more. Because budgets, you see, are only a plan for what you intend on doing. And the plan doesn't necessarily have to be right, or the plan can be as phoney as a three-dollar bill . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I'm not going to get into a discussion with the member from Swift Current because he's already done like dinner as well.

The reality is though, Mr. Premier, that the budget is only balanced on the backs of the people. You balance this budget by taking away the money that the farmers in this province were entitled to have. Alberta farmers got their money. Ralph Klein didn't take it away from them.

(1600)

In Manitoba, my colleague says, they got the money as well. That Premier didn't take the money away from them in order to balance the budget. He didn't put that dividing line between rural and urban the way you're doing. You are the one who has pitted rural against urban in this province more than anyone in the history of this province.

With that single act alone, you magnified it by hundreds of times. But there are many more examples of what's going on here. Health care, I don't even have to start with that. You've already heard all about that. But the people in Maple Creek will tell you again if you want to come out and listen.

The truth of the matter is, Premier, you've had choices. You've had choices to bring statistical material to us that was factual, and you chose to clutter it up with all kinds of fiddling of the figures. And the people won't buy that. They're not going to believe you any more when you do that.

So, Minister, and Premier, we want you to take a hard look at

this province and see what you've done to it, because realistically if we do have an election and the polls happen to be right, as they may be, you might be the Premier for a while longer. And recognizing that great potential, we're not going to stand here and try to make you our most bitter enemy. We want to try to guide your thinking into a different direction — into the direction of developing prosperity for this province and putting it on a level playing-field with Alberta.

We can be as good as Alberta. We can be better than Alberta. There is a solution to the problems we have in this province, and the solution can be to provide opportunities for people to stay here and to build the base. We can create instead of destroy. We can build instead of tax.

We can have more people sharing the cost, instead of dumping it all onto a few. We can have urban and rural working together instead of being pitted against one another for election purposes. That's what your union policies are all about, is to give control to the union bosses in the big cities. Because you know full well that the rural people won't support you any more, and they certainly would never join a union, not voluntarily.

So rethink what you're doing, Premier, and take a look at these figures and the way the balance has worked out and how the shift is swinging.

So, Mr. Premier, in fairness, will you take a hard look here at what you've done to the province, pull these labour Bills, go back to work on the regulations.

I mean after all, when you've got a piece of legislation that affects the entire province and the well-being of all of the people in the province, like your legislation, your labour legislation that requires regulations to be more important than the law itself, and it takes you two years and you still haven't got those regulations ironed out, doesn't that tell you that there's something fundamentally flawed in your thinking or the way that you've gone about it? If you can't get the regulations straight after two years . . .

And you've still got the business community totally upset. You now even got the union people getting totally upset. Because now it's starting to figure out that people are already circumventing the whole process and looking for loopholes and ways around it so that nobody's happy any more. Surely that's got to tell you that the thing is flawed.

Would you not think it might be better to put this whole mess on hold until after the next election? And if you do come back as the Premier, then let's start with a new law and do it right this time, instead of pitting rural against urban, instead of pitting union against worker, instead of pitting unions against the business people, and the employers against employees — anyone you want to take, whatever comparison you want to make.

We're too much into this adversarial approach in Saskatchewan

for political partisan gain. I believe you can get elected without this. I think if you were honest with the folks, cut taxes, allowed people more opportunities, and said the unions are going to do what's fair and not have power and control over the workers and the employers, I'll bet you could still get elected.

So why not do it right, Mr. Premier? What do you think?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the member talks about cooperation. I'm certainly prepared to cooperate with him. And I believe that as a general way to operate in Saskatchewan, that is the way to go. I've said it many times today and I've said it many times in my political life, I think cooperation is the key.

I'll just make a few quick responses and then take my place. First of all, the member cited Fraser Institute figures on tax freedom day, and then alleges that they have been extended, the tax freedom days in Saskatchewan, post-1991. I'd want to be absolutely careful that I did an analysis of Fraser Institute figures before I adopted them. But on the assumption that I do adopt them, there's a very simple answer. And the simple answer is that in 1991 we had the highest per capita deficit of any government, province in Canada. Highest per capita deficit.

These aren't some theoretical numbers, you know. This deficit was \$900 million. We have a cumulative debt of 14 billion, \$15 billion now.

An Hon. Member: — We'll check it.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well you don't have to check it. It's in every . . . every official document in this province and outside this province tell you those are the numbers.

You talked about dividing rural and urban. We're not. Farmers' portion of GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) payments they've received back. That's our policy.

I think I'm going to close by simply saying — these aren't my words. Ian Russell, vice-president, Investment Dealers Association of Canada, May 20, 1994, a direct quote:

The deficit attack by Saskatchewan's NDP government is the most advanced in the country. They cut program spending by 3 per cent over the last two years, which compares to 6 per cent increases on average in the three years that preceded that (that was your administration).

Pardon the language, Mr. Chairman, but it's a direct quote — Mr. Russell says:

That's a hell of a turnaround. (It's actually, if I may add my own words, it's a 9 per cent turnaround). That's more than any other government has done in that period.

Mr. Ian Russell, Investment Dealers Association of Canada, says.

And my last quote comes from Wood Gundy, February 21, 1995, reviewing the Minister of Finance's budget, they wrote the following:

Saskatchewan took some tough steps in 1993 to dig itself out of a deep fiscal hole, and its success in moving from large deficits to surpluses. It is noteworthy that Saskatchewan will still have no nominal spending growth this year and that the province is able still to ease up slightly on its tax load.

That's Wood Gundy. And that is a tremendous accomplishment. Can't deny it. You can't deny it. And that's why both of you know what's waiting for you in the next few weeks. You can't deny it because the people of Saskatchewan know it too.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, I have a few short questions to ask but they actually belong in Justice estimates. And I got an agenda handed to me when I came in at noon and I just need to ask the question. If you could find out from one of the . . . whoever would know, whether estimates from Justice were coming back on tonight or not. Otherwise I won't ask you my questions.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, the estimates for Justice will be called very shortly today, the moment that I finish. And I don't know what time that is. It could be 5 o'clock, Mr. Acting House Leader, for Justice?

An Hon. Member: — Yes, or 6.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Could be early as 5 or 6, but they're coming on after me.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you very much. I won't be asking you any questions. I'll leave it. Thank you.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have just a couple more questions while my colleague has gone to get some statistical information so that we can bump heads with the Premier on a level playing-field here on statistical sheet. Anyway for the note that was passed, we will get the names that you asked for and we'll get them right away.

But, Mr. Premier, you say that you've had a turnaround, and we went through this part of the debate earlier, but I guess I'll have to rebut what you say because you seem to want to conclude somehow on a note of optimism which is hollow and rings hollow. Because I'm simply going to say that yes, there was a turnaround here on paper; and yes, on paper you've done what some people call a good job.

I will tell you this though, that the common man on the street, the ordinary farmer out in his fields, school teacher walking to his classroom, doesn't care what Wood Gundy or anybody else thinks about your record. What they want to know is how are they doing themselves. And they're saying they say see

precious little difference this year from last year — higher taxes, more utility bills, and no better prosperity for them as a person.

Now you may have made the province look better on paper, but you did it at the cost of every individual person in this province. You taxed them right to the bottom hole of their trousers in order to make yourself look good. In order to make the paper look good for the province as a whole, you've decided to break the people. And that's what they know when we go to the hustings this next month, if that's what you want to do. And that's the story that they know. And that's the truth they live with. They know what you've done to this province. You've created a turnaround on paper so that you could brag in the newspapers and try to get a momentum for your election. You did it for partisan political purposes to try to win an election. You didn't help people at all.

And you sure didn't help this province to grow. You only changed some numbers on some paper that are as phoney as this list of figures on this particular book which happens to be your budget, which has no credibility whatsoever for any of the people in this province.

You, sir, have nothing to brag about. You have nothing to boast about in this province. And if you think the people are going to swallow this in the election, then you will probably win. But I don't believe they are. Because the truth of the matter is, they don't care about your statistics on paper. They don't care about your long lists of numbers. They care about the reality of what their lives are.

Talk to the person in downtown Regina who's trying to live on welfare. Ask them if they're very happy about the prosperity of the province. Talk to the people in Saskatoon who are standing in line at the welfare office and the unemployment office looking for jobs. Ask them how much they think it's great that the province's economy has turned around so that the Premier will look better.

Ask them if they really give a care about your numbers on your paper. Or ask them if they care about what is happening in their lives, their opportunity to get health care without having to fly to Calgary to get it — and in many cases that's what's happening, we are told. Ask the people how they feel about you making yourself and your government look good at their expense.

Now that's the question that needs to be answered. Not the question of whether you've had a 9 per cent turnaround estimated by some banker from New York or California or perhaps Bay Street. Because the people of Saskatchewan are going to vote on the basis of the prosperity that you did not give them as individuals.

Now, Mr. Premier, don't you think it's time we quit playing games here. Why don't you stand up and tell the people of this province that if you're elected, you'll do something to change this province around from the direction we're presently going?

Why don't you tell them that you will take these labour legislations and start over with them? Why don't you give them that kind of hope as an election campaign promise? Give them something that they really could look forward to that would be meaningful.

How could you square with your conscience that you are winning an election on partisan propaganda of a past record that really doesn't mean anything to anybody, rather than a view for a hope for the future.

Isn't that what we're really supposed to be about here? I mean you took a crack at me awhile ago about saying it would be nicer to be in Alberta than Saskatchewan, standing in this Assembly being paid by the people. I don't apologize for that statement because it is better over there right now — tax-wise, utility bill-wise, job opportunity-wise. But I'm not saying it has to stay that way.

I'm not saying that you couldn't put this province in the same category that they're in. That's why I'm here, is because I think there is hope for this province. I believe even you could deliver that hope. If I didn't think that I wouldn't run in the next election. I'd sell out and go to Alberta. I mean it's not that hard to move. People do it every day.

(1615)

They tell me that the average family moves seven times, or something like that, in their lifetime. I've still got two or three to go at least. So I really don't have to stay here, sir. But I choose to stay here to fight for this province because we have the ability, the potential, and I know that even you could accomplish it if you set your mind to it.

So knowing full well that the opportunities for people to come back are not yet here, why not take a look at the future? The futuristic approach, a dynamic approach to campaigning, a dynamic approach to government. Tell the people how you're going to change things so that we can not only catch up to Alberta, but scoot right on by it. I think we could leave them in the dust. What do you think?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not in a particular competition with other provinces and wanting to leave them in the dust, but I will say to the hon. member opposite, that Saskatchewan has great opportunities. It has natural riches and resources and we've got the hardest working, most innovative people in the world and we're going to do very well — we're going to do very, very well indeed.

The member, however, is fixed on his ticket for doing very, very, very well that somehow that we should repeal a whole slate of imagined or real labour legislation — that is his ticket for scooting past Alberta and leaving them, quote, in the dust, end quote.

I don't happen to agree with that. I think that it's going to take a little more hard work than that and I think the average person in

Saskatchewan knows that it can't be done that simply either.

You know, the hon. member, as I take my place, talks a lot about taxes. He wasn't in the legislature and I don't know if he was in the political process or not prior to 1991 . . .

An Hon. Member: — Never.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — No, he never was. That probably explains why he . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, well maybe. Then you obviously didn't hear the former premier, the former leader, your former leader, the member from Estevan, say over and over and over again, one thing. Deficits are deferred taxes, deficits are deferred taxes, he said. And you shake your head, not right.

And you know what happened from 1982? And you know, I say this to the member from Regina North West — I say this to both the members opposite, both the Liberal and Conservatives — do you know what happened from 1982 to 1991? There was a deficit on average of a billion dollars a year.

An Hon. Member: — Doesn't make it right.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — No, the member said it doesn't make it right, they're deferred taxes. And now he has the audacity of getting up and criticizing us that the party is over, and the rest of the people of Saskatchewan have to pay for the profligacy and the waste, that somehow this is a matter which is resounding to our detriment? And he says it doesn't make it right.

Where was your voice from 1982 to 1991? Got laryngitis?

An Hon. Member: — Nobody listened.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Nobody listens. No, I know how it is. A prophet in his own land in his own time, the member from Maple Creek, and nobody listened. I know the feeling well.

But that's the answer; deficits are deferred taxes. And that's our problem here that we have. We're working our way out of it. People in Saskatchewan are working their way out of it.

I do not say we've reached nirvana — far from it. We have many miles yet to go. And we're going to be as competitive and as aggressive in getting business and take as many good ideas from your side and anybody else that we can get. All I can say is after three, four years, we've come one heck of a long way. And that's a source of joy, rejoicing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, and officials, I'm glad that we were talking about deferred taxes and how the previous administration had run up the bills of a billion dollars a year for every year they were in power because the figures do indeed show that. There's no denying the statistics because those facts are there.

But what seems to be your *faux pas* or your inability to admit, Mr. Minister, that there was some debt there previously. You're always saying, you left \$14 billion in debt. Well you're right; \$14 billion in debt was about the number that was left at the end of the member from Estevan's term as premier of Saskatchewan.

But when we look at those numbers, Mr. Premier, not all of that debt had been generated by the member from Estevan. If we're at \$14 billion and he was in power for nine years, nine from fourteen leaves five. So that means when you were in government previously, you had left \$5 billion in debt — deferred taxes to the people of Saskatchewan.

And I hear a bunch of groans from the back benches. Well I guess that's their only opportunity to speak in this Assembly is the groans that they get to provide once in awhile.

Well, Mr. Premier, they still wish to deny that those facts are true. If the \$14 billion is correct, and if what you said that the \$9 billion is correct — a billion dollars a year — if that's the truth, then that you left \$5 billion in debt for the member from Estevan when he took over as premier, then that has to be the truth also; that you left it. If your figures are correct, then you left \$5 billion in debt.

And in fact, even the Provincial Secretary, the highest paid secretary in the land, admits that. In his addresses this session, he has admitted in estimates, in questions, that indeed that debt was there.

Let's look at the debt that is in position today. The Provincial Auditor estimates that there is over \$20 billion in debt today, Mr. Premier, over \$20 billion. Well if it was \$14 billion in 1991 and this is 1995 and there's 20-plus billion in there today, that means, Mr. Premier, you personally as Premier of the province of Saskatchewan have added another \$6 billion.

Well, Mr. Premier, you've been Premier for three and a half years. If it was \$14 billion that your figures that you were using in 1991, and the Provincial Auditor is correct that we have over \$20 billion today — that's \$6 billion in three and a half years — that's almost \$2 billion a year that you have added to the provincial debt, Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier.

So when it comes to pointing fingers at the volume of debt added every year to the provincial coffers, then you have racked up the record for individual yearly record. You, Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, not someone else.

So when we add these numbers together, \$5 billion prior to 1982, 5 to 6 billion since you've been in power in the three and a half years, we're reached a position of over half of the debt is attributable to you, Mr. Premier, you and your colleagues, including each and every one of them.

So, Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, you can stand there and try and fudge the facts if you want to, but the numbers are clearly there. Now some of your colleagues would like to add in the

provincial . . . the Crown corporation debt for the years 1982 to 1991. They would like to add into that the teachers' pension plan, and then all of a sudden that's not part of the realistic debt. We can't include that from 1991 to 1995. Oh no, we can only count the consolidated debt so it looks like you've dropped it.

Well, Mr. Minister, the Provincial Auditor says we have to look at the total picture of the province of Saskatchewan. The total picture, not 60 per cent of the picture that you would like to look at today even though you wanted to look at the whole picture in 1991. We have to look at the whole picture today, Mr. Premier, not 60 per cent of it.

And the whole picture shows that you have added on more than half of the debt of this province — more than half, Mr. Premier. And what have you done? You've increased the taxation of the people of this province to pay off all of the debt, the 50 per cent-plus that you've added on and the 49 per cent or so that the premier from the previous administration had included into that.

And when we look at the economic climates of the 1980s, compare that to the 1990s. Grain prices . . . the bottom fell out of it. And you yourself have said when it comes to balanced budget legislation in here, well you know we can't have it too iron-bound because what if we have a drought? What are we going to do if we have a drought? We might have to run a debt. What are we doing to do if we have grasshoppers? We might have to run a debt. What happens if oil prices drop and we can't meet our commitment to balance the budget in any one year? We might have to run a debt. What happens if the other resource sectors drop? We might have to run a debt. What happens if the Liberals in Ottawa cut the transfer payments? We might have to run a debt.

Well, Mr. Premier, throughout the '80s, what happened? Grain prices dropped. Oil prices dropped. Potash prices dropped. We had droughts. We had grasshoppers. We had all of those things, Mr. Premier. And yes, even the Minister of Economic Development will now admit that the member from Estevan faced tough times throughout the '80s.

And his comment is, nobody ever said politics was fair. Nobody ever said politics was fair. But you have certainly benefited in your three and a half years with rising grain prices, bonuses for land sales in the oil patch, high prices for potash. All of those areas, resource areas, of our economy are prospering, Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier — not because of your efforts, but simply because of the world economy, simply because of the world economy, not because of any special efforts on your part.

Indeed the oil patch is doing quite well. Why? Because you left it alone, that's why. Thanks to inattention and the rules set in place by the previous administration, the oil patch is doing well.

And I hear scoffing from the back row again, Mr. Premier, from the areas that don't have oil but do have flooding this year. And I've seen the Minister of Agriculture up here browbeating the Minister of Finance, begging for something to be done about

the drought up in the north-east . . . not the drought, sorry, the flooding up in the north-east corner of the province.

Because he knows there's an election coming up and wants to see something happen in his area before he gets blown right out of the water. And they certainly have a lot of water to get him blown out of, because seeding isn't happening out there.

So, Mr. Premier, when it comes to the debts of this province, you're responsible for half of it and your solution is not to bring more jobs into this province, not to provide employment for our youth, but rather to simply tax those that are captives of this province.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, if I could figure out how the hon. member arrived at the \$6 billion that he attaches to us, I'd at least be able to answer it somehow. I don't want to drag my officials into this, but nobody around the front benches can figure out how the 6 billion was coming at, so I don't know how to respond.

Other than to say that it would be nice for him to understand that the '91 election is long gone now and we're looking at a new election. If you want to try to refight '91 to see if a different result would take place, good luck to you. But I don't think it will.

And all that I know is that we have a debt management plan. We're going to reduce the debt by 1.2 billion by March 31, 1999. On average today we're reducing the debt at the rate of \$661,000 a day. That's a marvellous turnaround — \$660,000 a day. We're reducing the debt — not the deficit — the debt, in a balanced way.

And what more can I say? I think the people of Saskatchewan think it's the correct approach because it's a plan. It's the Saskatchewan way. It's a good plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well it seems the Premier isn't sure where the debt comes from. Well let me ask him a question: how much debt is there today in the Consolidated Fund?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, the Department of Finance officials are not here. We're going to have to get the documentation.

Let me . . . What the member is trying to say — but is not quite able to say it — is the following. He's trying to say . . . I'll back up. There are two kinds of debts. There is a debt which is known as a self-liquidating debt, example being a debt which is attached to, say, a commercial Crown corporation whereby the commercial Crown corporation, through its procedures, will be able to pay down the debt through the profits and the financing arrangements of the Crown.

(1630)

Then there is, in addition to that, another kind of debt which is not self-liquidating debt, sometimes referred to . . . I don't, but others refer to it as dead-weight debt. That is the debt which is used to run the government: highways, roads, municipal transfers, schools, and so forth. You can't charge people to make a profit on it unless you put up a toll on a highway which, by the way, was one of your former administration's ideas.

This is the debt we're talking about. When I compare operating expenses of Saskatchewan to operating expenses elsewhere, that's what I'm doing, this latter part. I'm saying that you people spent a billion dollars a year on the latter part more than you took in. Every year you take in taxes, and you spend the taxes on operating expenditures of government to provide services of government. You took in less, by a billion dollars than what you spend every year.

Just as these quotations I gave you — Nesbitt, Burns, and the Investment Dealers Association of Canada . . . you put the province right on the abyss of bankruptcy. That's what you did. That is what we're paying off; deficits equal deferred taxes. You put the province in this jackpot, and I'm saying to you that our situation is one where we are working our way out of this, logically and sensibly.

Now the member can use all kinds of other figures. And, as I say, if he can ever figure the 6 billion on his own enough to explain it to me and the rest of us, we might be able to have a sensible discourse in this area. But I don't think the member's got a very solid grasp on this issue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Premier, when you can't even come up with the numbers of the debt, I don't think you have a grasp on the situation. I asked you a very simple question. You were saying how much debt had been left on this province by the previous administration. And then when I ask you for a very simple question, a very simple number, dealing with the debt of the province that it stands today, you can't even answer the question.

Don't you pay attention to what the Minister of Finance is doing, or do you just simply go wandering off to New York and have a good time when she's out there asking the bankers in New York for more money? Is that what you do?

Obviously you should know a little bit about the numbers of this province. If you're talking about self-liquidating debt, in 1991 there was about 7 billion. And there was about 13 billion of non-self-liquidating, and then there was the teachers' pensions plans, the unfunded pensions over and above that.

And if you look at the numbers today, it's significantly bigger, Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier. So I think when it comes to the numbers, you were certainly more than ready to pump out some numbers about Saskatoon and Calgary when it suited your purpose, but you're sure not willing to talk about numbers when all of a sudden your figures don't quite add up with your rhetoric. That seems to be a major problem.

You can hang your head all you want, Mr. Premier, but those are the facts. Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, let's talk about some other facts. We asked you for some globals back in the beginning of February, some global questions related to your department. We asked the same things of every other minister.

Well, Mr. Premier, we've got the globals for almost every other one of your ministers, but for some reason it just seems to take your officials a lot longer to do their work. And I guess the problem is they're too busy running around the province playing politics to look after the issues of the day in this province. And I guess that's why you don't know what the numbers are . . . because you haven't got time to spend looking after the province. You have to run around and go and play politics.

So Mr. Premier, let me ask you a very simple question relating to your running around playing politics. How much money did you and your department spend on travel in the past year?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I've indicated to the other Conservative members who were asking these questions about the globals so-called that we would have these either by later today or tomorrow. I've given to the House, publicly and privately, the explanation for that, and that is the situation that we adopt. We will provide them as soon as we have them available to you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Premier, it seems that as soon as possible means when we're no longer available to ask questions related to your running around the province and your travel, when we're no longer available to ask questions concerning the employees in your office, when we're no longer available to question the politics and the political appointments within your office. That seems to be the time that you're prepared to give the answers.

You can't give answers about the debt, and you can't give answers about what's going on in your office. You can't seem to give answers about anything other than rhetoric, Mr. Premier. And that is a very sorry state of affairs for the people in this province. When the Premier of the province can't even answer a few simple, direct questions about his own office and about his own financing, I think that's a very, very sad state of affairs and a very poor comment on the Premier of this province.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, there are a number of other issues that we should deal with before you're allowed to proceed with the spending for your office. I'd like to read you a quote from a document from which you like to quote very, very often. It's your little baseball card, your platform from 1991. And it says here that . . . on the back of it, it says a better quality of life. And this is what you were going to do. You were going to introduce an environmental bill of rights to guarantee the public access to information and participation regarding environmental impacts.

Well, Mr. Premier, you kept your word on that. You did indeed introduce an environmental bill of rights. So I guess you could

say, as you go around the province campaigning this time . . . you see this? I kept my promise. I did indeed introduce an environmental bill of rights. And what happened? You kept the letter of your words, but you did not keep the spirit of it, Mr. Premier, because here's what happened to your environmental bill of rights.

And this is the first report of the Standing Committee on the Environment, a standing committee of this legislature on which the majority of members are members of your own government, your own party. And the summary recommendation of this particular report reads:

It is recommended that the minister should use this report as the foundation for further consultation and preparation of new environmental rights and responsibilities legislation. The committee recommends that existing government structures be used wherever possible to implement the recommendations of this report.

Bill 48, 1992, should not be reintroduced. That particular Bill, by the recommendation of this committee, threw it out. And your government never did reintroduce an environmental Bill of rights.

So while you're always bragging about how your little baseball card . . . you've kept all the promises of that, Mr. Premier. And indeed on this one particular issue you did indeed keep your promise, but you certainly never kept the spirit of that promise, just like the rest of these, Mr. Premier. You have not kept the spirit of them.

Remember 4.5 billion is enough? Well what are we at now — 5.2, \$5.3 billion in spending in this province? That's certainly not keeping the spirit of your promise, Mr. Premier. And it goes on and on, Mr. Premier, like that.

You have failed to keep your promises to the people of this province, and they will judge you accordingly. They will judge you accordingly. You're failure in the environmental fields. You have failed in dealing with taxation. You have failed in delivering jobs in this province. It's very difficult, Mr. Premier, to come up with successes — very difficult indeed.

You can say that you've balanced the budget. Yes, that's one of those things that you can claim until you look at the GRIP program that the member from Rosetown destroyed. And there is nothing left for protection for farmers in place today, nothing left if there's a crop failure this year because of flooding in some areas and drought in others. No protection, thanks to you and your government.

So, Mr. Premier, when it comes to keeping your promises, are there going to be any promises in the upcoming election campaign that you will be keeping the spirit of? Because you certainly have failed in doing so in the past.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I'd say to the hon. member, stay tuned

when we call the election. We'll let him know what promises we make.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Premier. As we're into probably the dying days of the legislative session, we have a number of things that we want to speak with you about.

In the '91 election campaign, sir, you made a number of commitments to people across this province about what you would do as the Premier of Saskatchewan and what your government would do. And you gave them essentially the guarantee that during your term as Premier of this province you would make no promises we cannot keep. That was the statement that you made September 20, 1991, just at the beginning of the election campaign; we will make no promises we cannot keep.

And then you set out to break a number of those commitments, sir. And there are a lot of people in this province . . . I think the vast majority of people in this province would like to know the reasons why you broke those promises to the people of Saskatchewan. We'll ease the tax burden for ordinary families . . . was one of the promises you made, and yet we haven't seen that fulfilled.

The Associate Minister of Finance said on May 21, 1991: the NDP won't raise any personal taxes for four years. That was his commitment to the people of Saskatchewan. It's promises like those, Mr. Premier, that you made in the '91 election campaign that people of this province want to hold you accountable for. What is your answer to those folks today when you made those kinds of commitments?

And I know you're probably going to get up and say something to the effect that you didn't know how much the debt of the province was and things of that nature. But the fact of the matter is, sir, you had sat in this legislature for nearly three decades, two and a half decades prior to that time frame, and everyone I think believed that you are a competent MLA and a competent minister in the Blakeney government and all of those kinds of things, wouldn't believe for a moment that the Premier of this province didn't have his finger on all aspects of government. And I don't think they would believe that you didn't know the case, the finances of this province at that time.

And that's why I think a lot of people don't believe you any more when you get up and stand up . . . when you stand in your place, with that inflamed rhetoric in your eye, and give that speech about opening the books and how we didn't know. I think that just kind of flies in the face of what a lot of people in Saskatchewan believe that you would have believed, Mr. Premier.

So I would ask the very simple question: how does your performance rate with the commitment that you gave to the people of Saskatchewan, the very simple promise, we will make no promises we cannot keep?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, the people will judge

this in due course. I don't think it's worthwhile for you and I . . . although you're welcome of course to continue on, to have differing opinions on this — but I will tell you that this is what we promised the people to do. It's called "Let's do it . . . The Saskatchewan Way". The Conservatives mockingly call it as the baseball card.

Baseball card — call it what you will — it's our platform card. And it is very straightforward. And as I look down the list, I can almost say that most if not all of these have been accomplished. "First Things First — Common Sense Financial Management" — that's the first platform plank.

Open the books. A public, independent audit of the province's financial affairs to cut government waste and mismanagement.

A comprehensive review of all PC privatizations and business deals, to determine if they are in the public interest.

A balanced budget in our first term of office . . .

By the way, we've achieved that.

Then we say: "New Directions, New Priorities". "Jobs, Fair Taxes, and Wealth Creation". We say under that:

A commitment to save 7,500 jobs threatened by the expanded 7% PST. We will **repeal** this unfair tax.

(1645)

We've done that.

Work with local manufacturers and businesses to increase the value-added processing of our resources and commodities for . . . domestic and export markets.

I think the spate of announcements as a result of the Minister of Finance's tax changes verify we've done that.

Jobs and savings through a comprehensive energy conservation strategy and the development of a new technology to improve the application of renewable resources.

The Minister of Energy has tabled a comprehensive energy strategy.

Under "A Better Quality of Life" we say:

Work with students, families, and educators to develop a world class, accessible education system.

I can't say that's complete, but I say it's ongoing and we're working toward it.

Commitment to a new, community-based health care

system based on the "wellness" model.

I can say it's not complete but we've started it as promised.

A commitment to Saskatchewan's Aboriginal people to honour land entitlements and promote self-government.

Not complete but it's well under way.

Introduce an Environmental Bill of Rights to guarantee the public access to information and participation regarding environmental impacts.

Your colleague criticized that because the legislative committee set up decided to shelve it. All right, we have to come back to that.

Fair labour laws, developed in consultation with working people and employers to promote harmony in the workplace.

We've moved in this area as well.

And I could go down the line. I won't because of the interest of time.

Money for agriculture and rural communities; open, honest, and accountable government — all of these are set out. The member from Shaunavon campaigned on this platform and he got elected on this campaign.

How are we doing it? We're doing it exactly the way we promised it and I think we did a very good job in doing so.

Now I want to say one word about the member's anticipating that I would say that I should not have believed the Minister of Finance. Well he can tell me this now. I have in front of me the letter directed to myself:

Hon. Roy Romanow, Leader of the Opposition, (by the Minister of Finance). I'm writing in reply to your letter of September 22, 1991, in which you request an independent verification of the provincial government's current revenue and expenditure statements and current year's deficit forecast.

And it goes on and on; page 5, Mr. Hepworth said this:

As you can see, there are numerous factors at play that must be taken into consideration. On balance, however, I see no reason to alter our target of a \$265 million deficit. The mid-year update will detail our projections for you and for the people of Saskatchewan.

Two hundred and sixty-five million dollars — that's what the minister of Finance wrote to the public.

Now the Leader of the Conservative Opposition says I should not have believed the minister of Finance. I should have relied

on my own knowledge, my own experience, my own expertise. I should have said that the minister of Finance of the day was not being forthcoming, if I can use a diplomatic word, to the people of Saskatchewan.

That's what the minister of Finance of your administration wrote. That letter was publicly tabled. It was on that basis upon which our promises were made and which we've accomplished so much thereof.

I don't know how the people will view what we've done, but I think they'll view it favourably because what we said we would do, we did do.

We opened the books and we've balanced the budget for the first time in over 12 years — for the first time in over five years of any government in Canada. We've lowered taxes in this budget for individuals and for business people. We have renewed the health care system — necessary to save the health care. We have seen a spate of economic jobs which are unprecedented in the province of Saskatchewan.

And we're turning this province around. We've set out a four-year plan which is going to lead this province to making sure that we have the 21st century in our grasp, that the debt will be reduced, the taxes will be reduced the more, and that the quality of health care and education is going to be maintained. That's a solid, credible plan.

Those are the promises that we have made and we have kept; that is the direction that we are basing. Let the electorate decide. But I'll tell you one thing that I'm confident about. They will never go back in the foreseeable future to your party, a party which you tell me now yourself you're rejecting, that I should have been smart enough not to have accepted this \$265 million deficit which turned out to be a billion dollars deficit. Typical Tory.

They'll never go back. We have accomplished great things in this province of Saskatchewan, working together. Instead of not acknowledging that . . . instead of acknowledging that, instead of trying to attack it, what you should be trying to do is build a forward-looking platform for your own direction rather than trying to refight the election of 1991 all over again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Premier. Well it's a great speech, a great election-type speech, but there isn't anybody believes it any more, Mr. Premier. Because you made the promises in 1991 to the people of Saskatchewan and they don't believe that you kept those promises. Things like success should be measured by adding a total of 30,000 new jobs for the economy. That was one of the promises you made to the people of Saskatchewan.

Have you completed that? Have you completed that? It simply hasn't happened, simply hasn't happened. "Roy Romanow capped off the NDP annual convention pledging to eliminate

poverty." And has that happened, Mr. Premier? Eighty thousand new people on welfare in this province and you say that you are going to eliminate poverty in this province.

Mr. Premier, that is why we have this stack of letters from people across this province. This is the kind of thing that the people in this province believe about you and your government. These are the kinds of questions that they'd like to ask you about your completion of the agenda that you laid out for the people in 1991. They didn't believe you then and they don't believe you now.

Mr. Premier, the fact of the matter is, the fact of the matter is, is the people bought some of your arguments in 1991. And, Mr. Premier, they didn't believe you, they don't believe you any longer, because you've broken most of those commitments.

I'd like to table all of these letters that we've received from people across the province about you and your government, sir, and the promises that you have not kept, that you made in the 1991 election. We will be into an election, I'm sure, very, very soon. I'm sure we will be into an election very soon. And we are going to hold you accountable for the people of this province on each and every one of those promises; we're going to bring them up time and time again.

We will make no promises we cannot keep — that is the kind of commitment you gave the people of this province. We're going to eliminate the PST — that is what you gave the people of this province in the terms of promises. We won't raise taxes for four years — that's what you said to the people of this province, Mr. Premier. And you've broken each and every one of those commitments.

Personal taxes have gone up by 10 per cent. The PST has been raised from 7 to 9 per cent. Families have been squeezed an extra \$4,500 on a per-family basis in Saskatchewan, each and every one of them, when you take into account taxes, fees, and utilities.

And the Madam Minister of Finance is shaking her head, but she knows that that is true; \$225 million net taxes have gone up in this province since 1991, and she admitted it herself in this legislature in her own estimates. She made that commitment. She made that view known to the people of this province.

Mr. Premier, those are the kinds of things that people in this province want to hold you accountable. And that's why I think if the election call is soon — and I expect it will — you might be in for a surprise about the outcome of it. I think people are going to want to know whether you've kept those promises.

You were going to spend more on agriculture, you were going to spend more on education, you were going to spend more on health care, you were going to do everything for everyone and at the same time lower taxes. And what have you done? Exactly the opposite.

And the only defence that you have is to stand up and say that

the former minister of Finance sent you a letter that has a budget figure, a deficit figure of \$265 million, when everybody in this province knows that budget figure was predicated on the fact that there was a harmonized taxation system and a whole number of other assumptions, all of which you did away with.

In terms of Crown corporations, the amount of dividend that the Crown corporations were going to be paying to government, and the write-offs that you made subsequent to the last election, there's been all kinds of editorials that have explained the debt situation then and the \$700 or \$800 million figure that you use after the election campaign.

The debt of this province has actually gone up under your administration, sir. There were over \$20 billion of debt when you take into . . . all aspects of debt. So you've added about \$5 billion, if you want to use your figure of \$15 billion debt. We now have a \$20 billion debt in this province, not a \$15 billion debt as you would have everyone in this province believe, that you somehow or another magically put the brakes on the debt situation in this province.

It isn't so, is it, sir? The debt is \$20 billion today. Crown corporation debt, accumulated debt, pension liability, all of those things were rolled in after your administration took over in 1991. And now those figures, I think, in the election campaign will come back to haunt you, sir.

As we have travelled the province — and we certainly have extensively in the last few months — talking about your record, people are becoming more and more cynical about you and your promises, the promises you made to the people in the last election campaign.

Farmers are saying to us things like, where is this more money for agriculture? Where was this Premier that was going to fly off to Ottawa and get more money out of them down there and come home to Saskatchewan and spread it around for the farmers of this province?

And what did you do? You propped up the member from Rosetown-Elrose and he ripped up the GRIP contracts of each and every one of the farmers of this province. And that's why that member will never sit in this legislature again after the next election campaign. He will lose in spades, I will predict. He won't be around after the election campaign.

The member from Rosetown-Elrose simply doesn't have a prayer in the next election campaign . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well the member from Rosetown-Elrose chirps from his seat that we'll see about that. Well we've been doing some polling in your constituency, sir. We've been doing some polling in your constituency and you're in deep trouble — deep, deep trouble in the Rosetown-Elrose; deep, deep trouble in that constituency. That member, for that one single thing of ripping up the contracts with farm families, he will be defeated in the election campaign upcoming, I predict.

And there'll be a number of others as well. The minister from

Melfort, she will lose in the election campaign, I predict. And I think a number of other members on the opposite side . . . I suspect in Meadow Lake he's in a little bit in trouble up there right now. Maybe not from the Conservatives, but I suspect he's in trouble up there.

The member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster's in trouble. And the latest member to walk into the room is in trouble as well. I think that that member is in trouble as well, Mr. Premier.

And it's all because, sir, you made the commitments to the people of this province to do a whole range of things and you haven't done them. You made the promise, the solemn commitment to people in this province, that it was going to be better under your administration — taxes were going to go down, services were going to be better, more services to the people of this province, not less services.

That's what you promised, sir. And that's why people don't believe you any longer. In the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, November 9, you promised to restore the prescription drug plan and the school-based dental plan. And the only commitments now that the Premier wants to say that he made to the people of this province are to hold up the baseball card and say, these are what our commitments were. But you made a whole lot of other promises, didn't you, sir, besides the baseball card promises? You made a number of other promises. The elimination of poverty, that's what you said.

Another NDP MLA, back in December 8, said: constituents told me that they cannot take any more of these heavy tax and utility rate increases. Indeed they'd like to see some of these increases rolled back. How many have you rolled back lately? Did a little bit in terms of SaskEnergy. But have you done anything with SaskPower or SaskTel or SGI? Oh yes, the average family in this province has seen their telephone rates and their average amount of charges go up, not down. That's the truth of the matter . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, wrong again, the member from Swift Current says.

I'd like to see you go out on the campaign trail in Swift Current and tell the people of Swift Current that taxes have gone down. There's a good reason why that member isn't running again . . . because in his constituency the sales tax issue alone would defeat him, boarded up stores all downtown Swift Current. And that member says the economy's better in Swift Current than it is today . . . simply isn't true, and he knows it.

Mr. Premier, the election . . . I'm sure you're going to call it. Everyone understands that you feel the polls are probably right for you. You said in the last few weeks that you're going to wait and see what the mood of Saskatchewan people is. And that's why you've been polling as extensively as you have been polling. You think the time is right. Even though your promise to the people of Saskatchewan was for things like set election dates, a four-year mandate, not a three and a half year mandate.

But nevertheless I think you will find the same thing that a David Peterson in Ontario found out. You're going to the polls,

and you're going to go early, and the people of this province are going to hold you accountable for the promises you made. The farm families, the business people, the ordinary working people of this province are going to say no to you in the election campaign.

(1700)

I think they're going to say no because of the commitment you gave to this province that you broke on each and every one of the occasions that you made those promises. And that's why, sir, I think you and your government are in a lot of trouble in the next election campaign. And I think the people of this province are going to want to know the answers to those questions, those concerns that they have, the hundreds of letters that we receive from people across this province.

I wish you the very best, but I think you're in a great deal . . . I think you're in a great deal of problems, have a great deal of explaining to do to the people of Saskatchewan, primarily to taxpayers of this province who you've raised taxes when you promised you wouldn't.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for granting me just a few minutes, and I'll not indulge him or the members of the House beyond a few minutes of response to his rather passionate, if not eloquent, address — as he sees it.

And my response, Mr. Chairman, will be as follows. I'm reading here from an article, an editorial in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*:

Saskatchewan taxpayers can only come to the conclusion that the provincial Tories are unable to tell right from wrong. They appear to operate without a conscience or moral guideposts. Otherwise, how could deputy Conservative leader Rick Swenson and Tory House Leader Bill Neudorf accuse the NDP of lying about the deficit during the election campaign.

The Chair: — Order, order. Order, order. Order, order. Order, order. Order, order. Some words are not permitted, and we cannot use those words directly, and we cannot use quotations to do indirectly what we cannot do directly.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I accept your rule. I will simply say not . . . to the Chair. But generally in my 28 years in legislature, the rule always was you could read, but I'll accept your rule. That's fair enough.

I'll start:

Bill Neudorf accused the NDP of (blank) . . . about the deficit during the election campaign. During the past few months, the Gass Commission and the Provincial Auditor's report have unveiled a litany of Tory

extravagances and ill-conceived expenditures, all of which contributed to the province's staggering debt load.

Here's my conclusion to the new leader of the new Progressive Conservatives, quote:

Despite the report's overwhelming indictment of the Tories' fiscal mismanagement, Neudorf and Swenson had the audacity to claim that during the election campaign Premier Roy Romanow pretended not to know the Tories were (blank) about the provincial deficit.

Remember these words:

The absurdity of this situation and the complete moral bankruptcy of the Tories is not lost on Saskatchewan taxpayers. That's obviously why they're in opposition.

That, Mr. Chairman, was written in 1992. If there is anything to rebut the thesis of the Leader of the Opposition's attack on this government, which attack was along these lines, it was this editorial, valid three years later as it was in 1992.

I wish you good luck too. I just wish you hadn't gone to forecasting in the election business because I don't think you'll be any better there than you were in finance matters.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, members of the committee.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 10 agreed to.

General Revenue Fund
Executive Council
Electoral Expenses
Vote 34

The Chair: — This is all authorized by law. Are there any questions? No questions. That concludes then estimates for the Department of the Executive Council.

MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, with leave, Mr. Chairman, I move:

That, notwithstanding the rules and proceedings of this legislature, the House recess until 6 p.m. this evening.

The Chair: — The rules of the Assembly and committees is such that a motion at this point would not be appropriate because it pre-empts the authority of the House. But if there is

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agreement on the members of the committee to recess until 6 p.m., then we shall recess until 6 p.m.

Now is there agreement to recess until 6. I see there is agreement, so therefore we will recess until 6 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 6 p.m.