

April 17, 1986

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Standing Committee on Non-Controversial Bills, I wish to present the 14th report of the said committee which is as follows:

Bill No. 17 — An Act to amend The Land Titles Act

Mr. Shillington: — As chairman of the Non-Controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 17, An Act to amend The Land Titles Act, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in committee of the whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move the said Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 18 — An Act to amend The Builders' Lien Act

Mr. Shillington: — As chairman of the Non-Controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 18, An Act to amend The Builders' Lien Act, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in committee of the whole on Bill No. 18 be waived.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 20 — An Act to amend The Teachers' Superannuation Act

Mr. Shillington: — As chairman of the Non-Controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 20, An Act to amend The Teachers' Superannuation Act, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in committee of the whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 20 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 21 — An Act to amend The Teachers' Dental Plan Act

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Non-Controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 21, An Act to amend The Teachers' Dental Plan Act, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 21 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to the Assembly today, two gentlemen seated in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Edward Ruru, consul of Indonesia, stationed in Toronto; and Mr. Sudarmadji, vice-consul of Indonesia, stationed in Toronto.

These two gentlemen are on their first visit to Saskatchewan, familiarizing themselves with our province, are interested in increasing trade relations with our province and, perhaps, investment opportunities going both ways. They will be meeting with departments of Economic Development and Trade, Agriculture, Energy and Mines, and Science and Technology.

I would wish that all members of our Assembly give them a warm Saskatchewan welcome and hope that in the future our trade relations will improve with that particular country.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weiman: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure on two accounts to be able to rise today to present to you and to the members of the Assembly a group of students from Father Vachon School, which is literally an arm's throw away from my house.

On the first account, as I said, it's always a pleasure to introduce students from a visiting constituency. They come down every year, and I'm grateful and thankful that they do, as they are accompanied by three of their teachers, Carol L'Heureux, Tim Prytula, and Glenn Hunks.

As to the second account, Mr. Minister, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to pass on a particular sentiment from my colleagues. I realize that singularly time does not permit

for all of my colleagues to pass on this sentiment so that I will pass it on collectively for them, and that is I would like to wish a happy birthday to Mr. Glenn Hunks, one of the teachers. It is his birthday today.

I will meet with the students at 3 o'clock for pictures and refreshments. I trust and know that you will find the proceedings informative. I look forward to meeting with you, and I ask the Assembly to please join in with me in welcoming my students from Father Vachon School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gerich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, and through you, and to the members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to introduce to you a group of eight people from the Leask senior citizens level 3 and nursing home committee. They have met with the Minister of Health this morning. I hope that they find this half an hour of question period interesting and entertaining. Please welcome them to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature a group of 31 students, 31 grade 12 students from the Birch Hills High School in Birch Hills, Saskatchewan. They are seated in the west gallery. They are attended by their teacher, Grant Getz and, as well, Bill Yeaman.

I do want to wish the students and the teachers a very warm welcome here to the legislature. I will be meeting with you for photographs and drinks at 2:30, and I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Prices

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, earlier this week your Minister of Consumer Affairs met with oil companies, and later your minister told reporters that she was confident Saskatchewan consumers are not being overcharged for gasoline and diesel fuel.

I ask you, Mr. Premier, how can she and you say that when Canadian refineries are selling their product to United States customers for one-half the price that they're charging Canadian customers for the same product?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I never said that the refineries were operating in any fashion that I thought was appropriate or inappropriate or anything else, so the hon. member shouldn't put words in my mouth or anybody else's. I said I was glad to see that the price of fuel is coming down, and it is.

Two weeks ago I forecast that fuel would be down to 30 cents a litre in this city, and it is, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite laughed and they hollered, and they didn't

believe it. Well, Mr. Speaker, I forecasted it, and it's continued to fall. We have the lowest priced fuel that you will find any place in Canada right here in Regina and in the province of Saskatchewan. I suspect that you are going to see that fuel prices will go down.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that oil companies or refineries in Canada or in Saskatchewan should be selling fuel cheaper in the United States than they do here. Anything that they do and they sell with respect to people in the United States should be offered at the same price here.

We have met with the oil companies, and the minister has met with the refineries, including Imperial Oil, the Co-op, others, and saying, if you're going to have lower fuel prices, Saskatchewan prices have to be as low as any place else in North America.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, you should have a conversation with your Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. She told reporters after her meeting that she was confident Saskatchewan consumers are not being overcharged for gasoline and diesel fuel as is reported.

Whose side are you on, sir? You're supposed to be representing the interests of Saskatchewan consumers, but from the actions of your minister and yourself it sounds like you bought the oil companies argumented position, hook, line and sinker, and you didn't press them to drop their prices at all. Will you please respond to that, Mr. Premier, and explain the position of your Minister of Consumer Affairs?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite had an opportunity to do things about gasoline prices when they were in power and you did nothing but tax . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You don't want to talk about that, but we'll talk about it, okay? One, your record; secondly, Mr. Speaker, gasoline prices and fuel prices in this province have been falling for the last month and a half to two months. In Kelvington and in Wadena today the prices are down to 32 cents a litre — 32 cents a litre. In the city of Regina they've been down to 30 cents a litre.

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were in power they taxed people on gasoline and fuel. I have here, Mr. Speaker, the NDP policy alleged during the campaign in Manitoba that said that they were going to give a 9.5-cent-a-litre break to consumers and farmers. That's what they said during the campaign. You flip it over today, Mr. Speaker, and what does Mr. Pawley do in Manitoba? He said he's not going to be able to keep his election pledge, and he's not going to be able to provide 9.5 cents a litre.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP whether in Ontario, the NDP whether in Manitoba, the NDP whether in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they charged consumers and farmers for gasoline; they took off the rebates; they didn't live with their campaign promise. Mr. Speaker, everybody knows in Regina, in Kelvington, around Saskatchewan, gasoline prices are lower here, and fuel prices are lower here because there's a Progressive Conservative government in power and not an NDP government, because they've been taxing them through the nose.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — They don't like to hear that. They want to make a little bit of noise. But the truth is simply that it's lower under a Progressive Conservative government than any other administration in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I direct a question to the Premier as a supplementary, and I continue to refer to the comments made publicly by your Minister of Consumer Affairs. And she spoke of the different methods by which American and Canadian prices are set, and she said that the Canadian method cushions consumers from wild price fluctuations.

What I want to ask you, Mr. Premier: how many consumers have asked you to cushion them from price drops that are being enjoyed by American consumers but are not being enjoyed by Saskatchewan consumers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, an awful lot of Saskatchewan consumers said to me that they appreciate the fact that we took the tax off gasoline and removed the administration that taxed them all the time. That's what consumers said.

Consumers now appreciate the fact that you can buy gasoline at 30 cents a litre in the city of Regina — and they haven't been able to do that for decades — and the fact that you can buy it across the province and it's going down. And now for the first time farmers will be able to receive, in addition to that, 4.5 cents a litre rebate, which can drop it well into the 20s, Mr. Speaker, and they appreciate that.

They know they won't get it from Howard Pawley in Manitoba because he refused to live up to his campaign promise. He just said that he would provide a 9.5 cent a litre rebate, and then after the election he wouldn't do it. If you can compare gasoline prices or fuel prices in Manitoba, or in Ontario — any place where the NDP has got anything to do with the government — it's higher than it is in Saskatchewan, because we have taken off the tax, we have provided the rebate. And, Mr. Speaker, consumers still appreciate the fact that there's no tax on gasoline in the province of Saskatchewan, and there will not be, as long as we are sitting right here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I deal now with the question of diesel fuel and diesel motor oil used by farmers. And I want to ask you, sir, whether you or your minister sought an explanation from the refineries as to why these prices have not gone down — virtually not a penny — notwithstanding the fact that world crude oil prices have dropped by 60 per cent.

Did you seek and did you obtain an explanation as to why you can buy in Chinook, Montana, Canadian diesel at 19 cents a litre, when you have to pay across the border in

Coronach, 33.8 cents a litre for the same Canadian-refined diesel fuel?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, it's simply not true that diesel fuel prices haven't come down. They have come down. And if you look at recently in Weyburn and in southern Saskatchewan, they announced a 3 cent a litre decline already. So they have been going down, Mr. Speaker. And as I said two weeks ago and three weeks ago in the House, fuel prices and diesel fuel prices will be going down — and they are.

And we will be making sure that the benefits received from anybody, from refineries in Saskatchewan, are passed on to farmers and consumers. And we will not, Mr. Speaker, like the member opposite, tax them. We are not going to tax consumers in this province like the NDP did. We are not going to tax them on the diesel fuel; we're not going to tax them on farm fuel; we're not going to tax them on gasoline. They do in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and they do in Ontario, but not in Saskatchewan.

The NDP, they don't even have the right to raise the question, Mr. Speaker. Under their administration they taxed all the time. They would tax clothes and they would tax utilities. They would tax gasoline. They would tax insurance rates. Mr. Speaker, they don't even have the right to raise it. When you give them the answer, they won't even be quiet long enough to listen to it.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Final supplement, Mr. Premier. Are you saying, Mr. Premier, that you are not going to take any steps to see that farm diesel prices drop in Saskatchewan to something comparable to what they are in Montana for the same Canadian-refined diesel fuel? Are you saying you're not going to do anything but wait until the refineries make their own move?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the price of diesel fuel was coming down. I'm saying we're providing a 4.5 cent a litre rebate to farmers. And I'm saying that refineries in this province and refineries across Canada should not be selling fuel in the United States cheaper than they can sell it right here.

Now you put those three together, Mr. Speaker, and farmers in the province of Saskatchewan are going to get the lowest price fuel that they will get any place in Canada — any place in Canada — as a result of what we're doing, as a result of the rebate, and as a result of the decline in the prices, and because refineries are advising us, Mr. Speaker, that they're not going to be selling fuel cheaper in the United States. They are going to be selling it here at the same price as they're going to sell it any place else.

Relocation of Saskatchewan Computer Utility Corporation Office

Mr. Lusney: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Computer Utility Corporation.

Mr. Minister, can you confirm that the head office of this public company is to be relocated, and can you tell us, tell the people of this Assembly, what location that office

is going to be moved to?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Well, first of all it's not a public company, it's a Crown corporation. My understanding is public companies are those that have publicly-issued shares. I think most people would recognize that, and I'm very much surprised you don't know the difference.

My understanding is that the offices will be moved to the . . . You can interrupt and shout and scream from your seat as you've been doing for the last two months, but I would like to answer the question.

My understanding is that the corporation is moving its office from the old SaskTel building to the building at Hamilton and 11th . . . dental building — I forget the name of it — the Canada Trust building.

Mr. Lusney: — A question to the minister responsible for Sask Computer Utility Corporation. Mr. Minister, you've just confirmed that you're going to be moving the office to the Canada Trust building on 11th. Mr. Minister, I think when you look at it, would you not agree then that this company, the company that leases — the leasing agent for Canada Trust building — is run by Koyl Real Estate of Regina? Mr. Minister, I think if you check you'll find that that is the case.

The company owned by Saskatchewan Computer Utility Corporation, this company that is going to be leasing this building for the corporation, is owned by the chairman of Sask Computer Utility Corporation, D. Gavin Koyl. That is the leasing agent. That is the leasing agent for the Canada Trust building — chairman of the board of Sask computer utilities, Mr. Speaker. Would you agree that that is true? And does the minister not see this set of circumstances as being somewhat of a serious conflict of interest between the public company and the responsibility of the chairman of Sask computer utilities? Or, Mr. Minister, do you consider this to be just somewhat of an unfortunate coincidence?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — No. The choice of the building and the location of the property, as the hon. member well knows, is done by the space allocation committee, and that was the decision made by the space allocation committee. Secondly, the Koyl Realty is the leasing agent for the Canada Trust building. The chairman of the board of SaskCOMP Utility Corporation made that clear to the board and absented himself from the discussions and on the choice in the meeting.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Are you now confirming, Mr. Minister, that the offices of SaskCOMP are going to be moved to the building, the leasing agent of which is Koyl Realty, the firm of D. Gavin Koyl, the chairman of the board of SaskCOMP? Are you confirming that, and do you not see that as involving any conflict of interest?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Yes. And I've made it clear . . . I'm assuming that the names are correct. But the allegation you're making is that the leasing agent and the chairman of the SaskCOMP board, if it's going into that building, there is a conflict of interest. And what I've indicated — that, according to the conflict of interest guide-lines, that

the chairman of the board complied with the conflict of interest guide-lines, absented himself from the discussion, absented himself from the decision. The choice, however, was made by the space allocation committee.

Commitment to Introduce a Tax on Pornographic Materials

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Premier. My question is this, and it deals with the commitment which his government made in April of 1985 in the provincial budget.

In the budget speech the former minister of Finance said, and I'll quote:

It is the intention of this government to introduce a tax on the distribution and the purchase of these (pornographic) materials . . .

The government will consult widely during the next several months to determine how best to proceed . . . I expect that the tax will be in place later this year.

That was said more than a year ago. Can you tell the Assembly what consultations your government has had on this question and what is the status of the promised tax on pornographic materials?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I can only briefly say, Mr. Speaker, that we had consultations with the public and the decision was no, not to tax it. And as a result we didn't. I can take notice and get more information with respect to the number of people that we talked to, but I would refer to the minister and the minister can respond if he want to provide any more information.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary. Mr. Premier, you have indicated in the budget speech, a rather formal document, that the tax would be imposed. You now, I gather, have indicated that yet another initiative of the former minister of Finance will be replaced, along with the minister. I ask you now, sir, and I quote again from the minister's speech in April of 1985:

The government is not in a position to prohibit the distribution of these materials (and I'm quoting in part) but it will take steps to make their distribution less profitable . . . and to significantly increase the price to those who continue to purchase them.

I ask you, sir, what steps have been taken to make distribution less profitable and to make prices higher.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was against the tax to start with, and now he's for the tax. I'm not quite sure what he would like, if he would like us to tax pornography or not tax pornography. I mean, he's been on both sides like he has on many other issues, Mr. Speaker, that one day he's for royalty holidays and the next day he's against it. It depends on what town he's in or what community he's in. He was against pornography tax, and now he's for pornography tax. I said to the hon. member, we reviewed it with the public and we decided

not to do it. Now I can't provide any more information at this time than that. I'll leave it at that.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Premier asks what I want. The answer is: a simple answer to a simple question.

You have said in your budget speech, Mr. Premier, that you were going to make the distribution of pornographic material less profitable, and you were going to increase the price to those who purchase them. One year has gone by. I ask: have you done either? Do you propose to do either? That is, do you propose to make distribution less profitable? Do you propose to make prices higher?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, we consulted with the public, and we decided not to impose the tax.

Finances of Saskatchewan Transportation Company

Mr. Lusney: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for the Sask Transportation Company. Mr. Minister according to the annual report for the company tabled in this legislature, it confirms your government's total mismanagement of the public's bus company. Your government has shown in that report a huge loss in each of the last four years, totalling some \$8 million, Mr. Minister, including \$1.7 million for last year. Mr. Minister, why does your government continue to be trying to run this Crown corporation — public utility, bus company — into the ground so badly? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the financial management of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, I think it's fair to comment that the loss that was sustained by the corporation in 1985 was somewhat less than it was the year prior, and that, due to very, very sound financial management and new systems in place, new computerized systems, the company is decreasing its loss each and every year. And in the following years you can expect that loss to be decreased, and in very short order a profit will be made by that corporation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lusney: — New Question, Mr. Speaker. You say there will be a profit in the next short while, whenever it is. Four years you've run it into the ground. Is that not true, Mr. Minister. You've been going into a deficit position to some \$8 million. Mr. Minister, you've sold off the highway equipment; I understand that. Now we see the same thing happening in buses. When, Mr. Minister, will your government provide some new buses for this company so that it can provide a service, the required service to the people of Saskatchewan, where it can start to make some money; because the service required is there, but they need some equipment. When will you get some new equipment for that bus company?

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, due to a great deal of noise on the other side I was not able to fully get all the details of the question. But I can tell the member this: that there will be sound management of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company.

And I know I mentioned the word profit. Now that is something, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite know nothing about. They feel that profit is a dirty word. And, Mr. Speaker, just the mere utterance of the word profit, I know is upsetting to the members. But I will give them the assurance that under the direction of myself as minister in charge of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, it will be well managed financially, and you can rest assured that that company will be very, very stable for a number of years to come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lusney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I asked: when do you intend to purchase some new buses, or will you be doing it this year for this bus company so they can provide that service?

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — We are presently reviewing, Mr. Speaker, the whole fleet acquisition program for the coming months. And I will let the member know in due course when we plan to purchase buses. And as a matter of fact, if the member would like, I would invite him to come with me when we go to review proposals from different suppliers. I believe the former minister had made that same invitation to the member opposite to come with him to help him select some new buses. He asked for co-operation, but there is no co-operation from the other side. The only things that the members — the career critics — on the other side can do is complain. They can offer no constructive help whatsoever.

Mr. Lusney: — New question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I heard that same story last spring. And I did go — for your information — I did go with the former minister to see some of the buses. But what happened? None of them were purchased. There were no buses purchased, Mr. Minister. And I'm sure you would agree with that because we haven't seen a new bus in the company. Mr. Minister, you have, however, purchased a number of used buses from Murray Hill of Quebec . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . junkers, as some of you people refer to.

Mr. Minister, can you inform this House, and the people of Saskatchewan, of some of the buses that you purchased. I'll give you some of them here which I would like some specific information on: a 1980, MC9, bus number 739 — how much did you pay for that bus? What did you trade in on it? And the cost of the trade-in — the value of the trade-in. In 1983, MC9, bus number 740 — how much did you pay for that bus, and what was the value of the trade-in? And Mr. Minister, while you're at it, will you bring to this House how much was paid for bus number 741, 742, 743, and 744? And what the value of the trade-in . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. When the member is asking a question and his colleagues are making as much noise as they were today, it was impossible for the minister to hear that question. I would ask for order.

Mr. Lusney: — I'll repeat it and I'll shorten the question, Mr. Minister. Can you give us the cost of the buses that I referred to — and I'll go through them quickly — and the

value of the trade-ins? Bus number 739, the value of it, the cost of it, and the value of the trade-in; bus number 740; bus numbers 741, 742, 43 and 44 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Some of your members are asking if I can give them the serial numbers. If they want that, I'll give them that. Could you give me the cost of those buses and . . .

Mr. Speaker: — I'm going to ask for . . . Order, please. I'm going to ask for order on both sides of the House. It's impossible to hear here.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, I think that the question asked by the member opposite is very, very indicative of the attitude on that side of the House. I could not possibly be expected to know what the cost was of bus number 739 and 741. I can give the member the assurance that in estimates I will be pleased to provide the precise information — or in Crown Corporations. But I am not prepared here today, Mr. Speaker, to carry those precise details in my back pocket. And the question, I believe, is very, very out of order. I think the member should have more respect for question period than to ask such a specific question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POINT OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: —Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to rise on a personal point of privilege which I view as a very, very serious matter.

On Tuesday, April 15th, there were certain allegations made by the member from Quill Lakes. Today is the very first opportunity that I have had to address those certain allegations. I would like to quote from *Hansard* of Tuesday, April 15th. And the quotation says:

But before they appointed him Minister of Highways, they let him auction off the sale of the highway equipment.

Referring to myself, Mr. Speaker. That statement, Mr. Speaker, is totally untrue. It is a falsehood. The member knows full well. And I would ask the member for an apology, or I would ask the member for his resignation, or I would ask the member to step outside of the Legislative Assembly and repeat those words where he is not protected.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you would review that case that I put forward.

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make a correction. I should have said, auction off some of the equipment or some of the property of Sedco, rather than Highways.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — In *Beauchesne's*, paragraph 19, it says that:

A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

I think, under that terminology, it's not something that can be dealt with from the Chair.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Health

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 32

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I want to say at the outset how . . . that we're disappointed, I guess would be an understatement, with the minister's ability or willingness to answer the questions that have been put to him in the Assembly on his Health estimates.

We have now been here for a number of days and a great number of hours trying to get out of him — as my colleagues from Regina North East and Athabasca and Cumberland and the Quill Lakes have been asking a good number of questions, reasonable questions, about nursing shortages and the promise of the minister to increase funding of bedside nursing and where these nurses will be located. He has refused over and over again to give that information. Even though information at this time is going out to individual hospitals, he refuses to give that information here in the Assembly.

When it comes to the important issue of alcohol advertising, the minister rises in his place and indicates he knows nothing about where the pressure was coming from to allow alcohol advertising on television, which many people believe uses young people to increase the consumption of alcohol — or brand preference, as he says — of the young. And when we ask him for studies that would indicate whether the trend is to increase the alcohol consumption among young people, he says he doesn't have the information, even though everyone knows that that information is available to the minister and he could and should bring it to this Assembly.

When it comes to transfer payments, the documents that are being released by other provincial governments about the proposed changes that were included in the federal budget — the Conservative federal budget to health care funding by the federal government — the minister says that he doesn't have to give it here in the Assembly, that it's irrelevant. He says we don't have to know, because we will stop it from happening.

And even though we know very well what happens when this government goes to fight with their friends in Ottawa — that they continually get beaten up by the federal government — he will not give us the numbers as it would apply to how much money will be lost over the next five years by changes that are proposed and changes that are presently being implemented by the Michael Wilson budget and by the Mulroney government.

When it comes to advertising, I say here again, when it

comes to the advertising and polling being done in this department, important questions about the kind of questions that were asked, the making public of the questions that were asked and paid for by the taxpayers, this minister fails to and refuses to give the information to the committee.

And I say that in many other areas . . . My colleagues from northern Saskatchewan, both of them, when they were talking about very important construction programs — and I use only the hospital and nursing home construction at La Ronge yesterday — not only do you not give the information, but you rise in your place and act indignant about having to be here answering those questions. And I say that's an unfortunate position for the minister to be taking.

And I want to say as well that, when we've been travelling around the province in the last year, what we've been finding is one department where there are a great deal of difficulty, whether it's ambulance care coming out of northern Saskatchewan — or I would refer more directly to Meadow Lake — we find that there is a problem, and they tell us about it very clearly. And the member from Meadow Lake will know full well what we're referring to. He will know that the nursing staff who are continually arguing with the minister about meetings and about staffing, have held meetings across the province, all-candidates meetings, to which the minister has not taken the opportunity — and I understand if he can't make it to every one — but I can tell you that the MLAs, when you have 53 of them, you have no excuse for not sending a representative to every one of those meetings to express and to debate whether or not, in fact, the nursing shortages are there, as we believe they are and as the people of the province are telling us.

(1445)

I say when we find and see nurses demonstrating on the steps of the legislature, as we saw last week in Saskatchewan, it causes a great deal of concern to many people as to what is happening to the medicare system in this province, when you have nurses for the first time coming and demonstrating against the minister's inability to apportion nurses to the hospitals where they're needed, or to come clean on where his promises of nursing staff will be located.

And I say that in many other areas . . . My colleague from Cumberland has talked a good deal, and my colleague from Athabasca, about the food subsidy cut that your government allowed to take place. And you, as Minister of Health, certainly had a responsibility to stand up in cabinet and argue the point that that food subsidy should have stayed in place for the health of northern residents.

I say that if the people of the province were given an opportunity right now, you would find that you would be on the outs and those two members, who have spoken loudly for the North, would be sitting on that side of the House. And I would challenge you to convince the Premier to call an election on the health issue.

I say, as well, the waiting lists in the hospitals in Saskatoon of 8,000, by your own numbers that you sent across the

other day, are putting people in this province in a position where they can't afford four more years of this kind of mismanagement of the health care system. I have the numbers here which you sent over. The city of Saskatoon: University Hospital, 2,070 people waiting; City Hospital, 3,036; City Hospital, 2,902.

We were using the number in the House of 6,000 and asking you whether or not that was close to being accurate, because those were the numbers we had gotten from the hospitals. And at that time you were saying that we were exaggerating the numbers when we were using 6,000. And now we come into the Assembly in estimates and you send across a piece of paper that indicates there are 8,000 people waiting for surgical problems to be solved at the hospitals in Saskatoon. And that doesn't include any of the problems and waiting lists in Regina. And this list that you sent across, prepared by the SHSP on April 9th of 1986, summary of surgical waiting list, indicates there are 8,000 people waiting for surgical needs at the city hospitals in Saskatoon.

And I say to you that when we look at all of the areas where you have failed to do your job, including coming into this Assembly and defending the record of your government's stonewalling day after day, I want to say to you, Mr. Minister, that we're tired and fed up with this kind of a minister who will come here and treat this important matter with that kind of lack of respect and disdain.

And I want to tell you that when I look at other areas like the Nielsen report, which proposes that the federal government would get out of funding altogether of Health in Saskatchewan, and you refuse to make a statement on it, I say that's unfortunate. The area of mental health in the province — and we look at the cuts in the budget, of your budget this year — I think is shocking and disturbing that you would take advantage of those people, who can't fight back, and cut back in the staff and the program in that area.

And I want to say that there simply will be many people in this province who will look a good deal different on you than they did when you were elected in '82 because I think that you created optimism in people, that you were going to do something in Health, particularly in mental care health, and you haven't done anything. In fact, this budget proves that you are cutting back very significantly and that is unfortunate.

Now I want to say, Mr. Chairman, that I have a great deal of difficulty trying to get answers out of this minister. The people of the province are saying that they can't get meetings. The doctors over the last weekend, shortly after the minister rose in his place, I believe it was last Friday, and said how he was meeting with doctors on an ongoing basis, and he had met more than any other minister. The doctors went publicly to the press and said, well that is a different story than what we have and they said, and I paraphrase, we are getting fed up with the Devine government and their inaction and their inability to meet and consult with us. That's what they said.

And that's not an NDP line. That, I believe, was the president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association. That

was his word over the weekend, if I was listening closely and got the line right, is that they are fed up with the Devine government's ability to handle health care issues in this province.

And I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that because of all of these reasons that I have listed, and because of the days we have spent here trying to get answers out of this minister — and I don't for one minute blame the people who are advising him because I know they are professional people — but I am going to be moving a motion:

That the salary of the Minister of Health be reduced to \$1.

Because I feel that even \$1 for this individual, who is destroying the health care system in this province, that it is too much.

But I am going to move this motion, seconded by the member for Regina Centre, and then I want to have a chance for members opposite and others to get involved, because they've been sitting very silently, and debating this most important issue of Health.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Chairman, I want to say a few words on this. I don't recall having been put through an exercise of this sort in the years I've been in the legislature. I don't recall having spent . . . I don't recall, in the 11 years I've been in this legislature, having spent two weeks on the estimates of any department. I may be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Well we spent two weeks on Pioneer Trust, and the member from Kindersley will no doubt recall that with relish. But with respect to the estimates, I don't recall having spent two weeks on the estimates of any department and getting — I don't recall having spent that long on a department, period — but we have not got any information out of this minister.

I can understand, Mr. Minister, that some information is going to be politically damaging to you. But I don't understand the arrogance with which, and the disdain with which, you have treated this legislature. Simple, routine questions, that I don't think have a lot of political content but are important to the public and perhaps important to members in serving their constituents, are routinely sloughed off.

I swear, Mr. Minister, if I were to ask you the time of day, you'd turn and you'd say, well now I'm proud of the way Saskatchewan people can tell the time, and time is an important subject, and away you'd go, and you'd never give us the time of day, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I want to recall . . . I haven't been in this House continuously for the last two weeks, but I want to recall some of what you have put us through, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, we have asked you for — I recall, and very early in these estimates — we asked you for the waiting lists. You said you would try to have it ready on Wednesday. I had, frankly, difficulty believing that you

didn't have it before you. If you didn't you're the first Minister of Health who ever came to do estimates without that information. Monday came and went; Wednesday came and went; and we got the same silly, pathetic answers from the Minister.

With respect to every conceivable subject we have raised, you have either told us you don't have the information, or you just don't bother to deal with it, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, we have asked you, I have asked you, for waiting lists; we have asked you for staffing levels; we've asked you for where the new staff positions are going to be; we've asked you critical questions with respect to federal funding, and what seems like a thousand other questions. Every time we ask you, Mr. Minister, we get some silly speech on a subject which is only barely related to what we asked.

Mr. Minister, I don't know what it takes to get your attention, and I don't know what it takes, Mr. Minister, to induce you to deal with this Legislative Assembly for what it is: a duly elected body of representatives who have every right to ask questions with respect to the way their constituents' money is spent. This is not some exercise, Mr. Minister, designed solely to make you uncomfortable. We are fulfilling the most basic responsibility of any parliament or legislative assembly, that of control of the public purse. You, Mr. Minister, have spent two weeks trying to thwart us in doing our duties.

I don't recall a single, significant bit of information that you've given us in two weeks. I don't know what you think you're doing. I don't know what your game plan is. I don't know what you think you're accomplishing. I certainly don't understand. If you think there's any good politics in this charade, that has certainly passed me by, too. But I've never seen it, Mr. Minister.

And it's particularly critical this year. I and my colleagues have spent more time on the highways and byways of Saskatchewan in the last year than I ever have. I have, I think, been in the accompaniment of each and every one of my colleagues in the opposition. I have not been in a major community in Saskatchewan where the issue of health care hasn't been raised. It is raised in every community.

It's a matter of serious concern. And I and my colleagues heard about this from July 1st, when we adjourned last year, until March 17th, when we re-adjourned this year. I don't think there is a single other subject that I have heard as much about over the last year as health care.

Mr. Minister, in a last-ditch, sort of gasping last effort, you announced a program to provide more nurses. Mr. Minister, that didn't satisfy us. It hasn't satisfied anyone. I don't know anyone who has said to you, Mr. Minister, well we want — we think that's grand; that's all that's needed.

Without exception, nurses, doctors, those administrators of hospitals that you haven't intimidated — every one has said, it isn't enough. Every one has said, in addition, Mr. Minister, we don't know what it means; we don't know where these positions are going; we need more information.

It is on behalf of those people, those professionals in the field; it is on behalf of the public of Saskatchewan; the people who are ill, waiting for hospital beds, who can't get in; the people who are in hospitals who are alarmed about the lack of staff to look after ill people; it is on behalf of the public of Saskatchewan as a whole that we have asked these questions.

And you, Mr. Minister, haven't given us any information. You have . . . If the minister . . . If Mr. Minister has answered any questions, I would like you to stand up and list them. Because I haven't heard you answer anything. I have never seen as arrogant a display as anyone — by anyone, Mr. Minister. I have never seen a charade like this.

It would be bad enough, Mr. Minister, if it were not on so important a subject. There are some things which come before this Assembly, some of which are more important than others. This, Mr. Minister, is a key issue with the public of Saskatchewan. I suppose our own good health is foremost in the mind of virtually every living human being. And the good health of this province is a concern to people.

When they see hospitals, when they see the fresh food subsidy taken off a northern Saskatchewan, when they look at the other institutions which your department funds, people do not feel secure about their own good health, and with good reason.

Mr. Minister, there may be some reason why our health care system should have been allowed to deteriorate the way it has. We don't know what those reasons are and certainly the public don't, but if you have them, this is your opportunity to defend what you have created. You've done none of that, Mr. Minister. You have stood for two weeks and told this Assembly how grand things are when that is patently false. That is patently false, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, the Premier yesterday accused the members of the opposition of wasting time, of not getting on to important subjects. I say, Mr. Minister, that this Assembly has wasted about two weeks, but it hasn't been through any fault or act of the opposition members. It has been because we still haven't got the answer to the first question we asked.

(1500)

Mr. Minister, the very first questions we asked were: what were staffing levels? We had, previously, the staffing levels of the city of Regina and none other. To my knowledge we still don't have staffing levels of other communities. We do not have waiting lists. We have not heard a single intelligible comment from the minister opposite with respect to federal funding, a key issue in the fiscal health of this province.

I remind you, Mr. Minister, that the credit rating of this province has been de-rated two times in as many years. I cannot think, Mr. Minister, of another province or another state which has fallen from grace so rapidly.

To be fair, part of the problems that this government has suffered are bad luck; but to be fair, Mr. Minister, some of them are bad management. One of the ones, Mr. Minister, which I suspect rests with bad management is the loss of funds from the federal government. I suspect that provincial taxpayers have been ill-served by Conservative governments who have gone to Prime Minister Mulroney and who have had nothing more intelligent to say than: keep up the good work, Brian.

Well I say, Mr. Minister, when I see those Health estimates, when I see what the federal government is doing to you, I think that anyone could think of something else to say than: keep up the good work Brian.

Mr. Minister, we'd like to know a little more about Brian Mulroney's good work. We'd like to know if you have been doing anything, anything Mr. Minister, to justify your salary. Mr. Minister, any single member of your caucus could come into this Assembly and could answer these questions better than you can. I could ask a question of any member of your caucus, and I would get better and more intelligent answers that would be of more use to the public than I have from you. I have never seen a display like this.

If I sound a big angry, Mr. Minister, I am. I am. You are treating this Assembly with disdain. And I see the minister yawning, yawning when these comments are being addressed to him. I wonder if the minister is going to stick out his tongue today at us, as he did yesterday, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I ask you if you have anything more intelligent to do in this Assembly than stick your tongue out at members of the opposition?

The questions which we have raised involved an issue which is one of the most fundamental to people — their own good health. They are fundamental questions to this province's financial good health, something that is an issue of concern as well throughout the length and breadth of Saskatchewan. And about all we have got from you is that you stick out your tongue at us. I must say that is a gesture that I haven't seen before, Mr. Minister. I don't recall having seen anyone do it, much less the minister whose Health estimates are being dealt with.

An Hon. Member: — I saw a tooth fall out one night, but not ever a tongue.

Mr. Shillington: — Well I think that the teeth fell out accidentally. I don't think the tongue fell out of his head accidentally.

Mr. Minister, we are waiting for questions, issues, such as a fresh food subsidy in northern Saskatchewan. And a number of my colleagues, including the member from Shaunavon and the Leader of the Opposition, spent some time last spring in northern Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: — Where? Tell me exactly where.

Mr. Shillington: — Where was it? La Ronge, Buffalo Narrows.

An Hon. Member: — Who did you meet there?

Mr. Shillington: — Who did we meet? I don't recall the names at this point in time, but there were a goodly number of them. I can tell you that in La Ronge we met with the priest. I don't remember the name.

But I'll tell you people, if you think there's something funny about hunger, then all I can say is, you haven't been where I have been. You haven't been where I have been. One of the key health issues in this province are the food banks. I take off my hat to those dedicated individuals who are on the corner of South Railway and Albert Street trying to deal with an enormous problem. That's hunger in this city. They are making a major effort.

But, Mr. Minister, I wish your government would address yourself to this issue. I wish you would address yourself to the issue of hunger in northern Saskatchewan, which I and my colleagues faced last year and we didn't enjoy it. I can tell you, Mr. Minister, I wish you'd address yourself to the issue of hunger in southern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, we have asked you questions about alcoholism, about the rate of alcohol consumption. Mr. Minister, you didn't give us the answers. You didn't undertake to give us the answers. Once again you treated the issue with the utmost disdain.

Mr. Minister, I ask of you and I ask you to tell us . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well with every respect to my colleague from Quill Lakes, I disagree. We do need a House Leader. This House has run since March 17th without a House Leader. And that's one of the problems. That is one of the reasons why we have wasted two weeks in this Assembly. . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. The debate before the House is not about the merits of whether or not we have a House Leader. Please stick to the topic being discussed.

Mr. Shillington: — The point I was going to make, Mr. Chairman, had I had the opportunity to do it, is that if there were a House Leader in this Assembly, this would not have carried on for two weeks. The matter would have been resolved.

We have one House Leader who's absent, and one House Leader who is simply too arrogant and full of himself to deal with the job. And this Assembly lacks a House Leader, and that's part of the problem. I cannot imagine anyone other than members opposite allowing this problem to continue for two weeks unresolved, with nothing other than a lot of banalities coming from the other side with respect to, what we do, and what we've seen, and who I visited.

I say, Mr. Chairman, that who I visited in northern Saskatchewan is not terribly important. If the Acting House Leader were to address himself to the problem of these Health estimates, instead of who I and the member from Shaunavon and the member from Elphinstone met a year ago in La Ronge, we might not have reached this level of frustration. We might not be moving this motion. We might be making progress, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, doing the job that we are being paid to do.

I do know, Mr. Chairman, what it costs to run this Assembly per day. I've never seen an accurate assessment of that. But I'll tell you that in the last two weeks, the members of this Assembly have simply not earned their money in the afternoon or evenings, and I think that's through no fault of ours. I think that is through the arrogance of the minister opposite and, perhaps, the government.

There may be some grand plan which totally escapes me, Mr. Chairman, to stonewall these estimates until the middle of 1987, until April of '87. I don't know; that may well be the plan. I don't understand the logic of that. I don't think the public are going to understand the logic of that. I think the public expect us to come here, do our job, do it as efficiently and as cheaply as we can, and finish the business of this Legislative Assembly. They don't expect us to come back day after day after day and ask the Minister of Health routine questions which we know he has the answer to but which he doesn't chose to give us.

If he chooses to rise in his place and say, I have that information but I do not think it's in the public interest to give it, then that at least is responding. But this has been . . . This game of hide-and-go-seek has lasted two weeks. We ask the minister a question, he goes and hides, and we go seeking after him — and that is what has been going on for two weeks, Mr. Chairman.

An Hon. Member: — Ned, tell us what a chicken sounds like. How's that again?

Mr. Shillington: — Well the member from Meadow Lake wants to know about cowardice. I have witnessed nothing but cowardice over the last two weeks. I can only assume, Mr. Minister, that you're not giving us the answers because for some reason or other you're afraid to. I know you have the answers to a goodly number of the questions that have been asked. I know you aren't giving them. I can't think you're proud, Mr. Minister, of your behaviour over the last two weeks.

I must assume, Mr. Minister, that you are afraid to give us that information. Some of it . . . I do not understand why some of it worries you as much as it appears to. I don't understand why, for instance, you couldn't give us the figures on the federal government funding. I think you have that information. I think you might well say to this Assembly — if I can suggest an approach to you, since someone needs to give you some assistance. Neither the former House Leader, who we have not seen in a week, nor the present House Leader, who we wished we hadn't seen for the last two weeks — neither of them have given you any assistance, so let me try.

You might approach the federal issue, the issue of federal funding, by saying to us: these are the figures; we are satisfied with this as an appropriate means of distributing the tax dollars in Canada, if that would be your position. Or you might say to us, Mr. Minister: I don't believe this is an appropriate division of tax dollars in Saskatchewan, and I and my colleagues are going to attend federal-provincial conferences, raise the issue as vigorously and effectively as we can for the taxpayer of Saskatchewan. You might have done either one of these.

Instead, what we have got, whenever we've asked you that question, is you have stood up and you've praised something or somebody. Well I am very proud of the people of Wawota, or Wapella, or Indian Head, or wherever it is that your mind happens to be at the moment. Nobody questioned the worthwhileness of the people of Wapella or Wawota or Indian Head. They are, no doubt, all fine people.

But I say, Mr. Minister, that that wasn't the issue. I don't think people in Wapella and Wawota and Indian Head ever thought that was the issue. I think, Mr. Minister, that they thought the issue was nursing homes.

Mr. Minister, we have been asking you over the last two weeks about nursing homes. Each and every one of us is continually approached by constituents who have serious personal problems because of lack of nursing homes. I could name any number of people, Mr. Minister, who come to me and who say, I have a relative whom I love but whom I cannot look after, and it's killing me to be unable to look after him in my house and to be unable to get him into a nursing home. I can't think of many problems which can be as tragic for individuals. And I say, if the minister is laughing, then call an election and the public is soon going to wipe that smile off your face, because the electorate of Saskatchewan are not laughing.

They are concerned about this problem. We come to this Assembly and we ask you questions about nursing homes and we get a speech on how grand the people of Wapella are. Well, I tell you, Mr. Minister, I know the people of Wapella, through a coincidence. They are fine people, but I don't think the people in Wapella believe that the answer to all questions about nursing homes in Saskatchewan is a soliloquy on the glories of Wapella or Indian Head or the other communities you mentioned.

The issue can be resolved by sensible and serious debate among the informed and responsible electors. If you people are informed, then you've cleverly disguised that fact, and you certainly are not being responsible. You certainly are not being responsible. I do not recall a time in this province for the last 15, 16 years, Mr. Minister, when as many health issues have been raised simultaneously.

Given the nature of your portfolio, there is always one or two health issues before the public. That's the nature of that department; it's not an easy department, Mr. Minister. But, Mr. Minister, you have more health issues which . . . You have more dragons standing before you than I can recall in some time. It may well be that the serious problems created by the former Thatcher government in 1969 to '71 were worse, but you've got to go back to that period to think of an era when as many health issues were being raised by as many people in all walks of Saskatchewan. I'll stop for the minister to yawn, if you must. Mr. Minister, I cannot recall a period of time . . . I'll stop for you to stick out your tongue if you want to.

(1515)

Mr. Minister, I cannot recall a time when there were as many health issues raised by as many people at all walks

of life. It doesn't matter whether it's the member from Shaunavon and I in Buffalo Narrows, or Hafford. We listen to people raise health issues. The member from Regina North East and I were in a small community — it was Hafford, to be precise. We spoke for 10 minutes, answered questions for about an hour and a half, and health issues consumed 90 per cent of the time.

And that's not unusual. There's nothing unusual about that community. That is absolutely typical. Apart from the agricultural crisis, Mr. Minister, this is the number one issue in Saskatchewan today — health care. These issues, Mr. Minister, apparently cannot be resolved by your government.

The function of this Legislative Assembly is it gives electors an opportunity to reasoned and sensible debate to arrive at answers. You, Mr. Minister, have spent two weeks trying to thwart that process. You may think that serves some purpose. I frankly don't see it, nor do the public of Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, we don't lightly lower the salary of anyone in this Assembly to \$1. Mr. Minister, we do not lightly make a personal issue out of what has heretofore been a public issue. We don't lightly engage in personal attack but, Mr. Minister, I don't know any other way to get your attention. I don't know any other way to get you off these silly, superfluous speeches on a subject that is of little concern to anyone.

I don't know how else we get you to deal with the issues which have been before this Assembly with respect to nursing homes, with respect to staffing levels, with respect to patients in the hospitals who are worried, with respect to key issues of federal-provincial funding, with the equally key issue of food in northern Saskatchewan, and food in my riding, and alcohol and alcohol consumption. I don't know how else we get you to deal with these issues.

Now, Mr. Minister, if you want to get up and start to deal with some of these issues, we'll be happy and delighted to get on. I and my colleagues do not want to spend the entire summer in this Legislative Assembly but we are determined that we are going to do our job. We have been affected, both politically and emotionally, by enough hard-luck stories — and they're not hard luck; by enough hard stories — over the summer from various people who have problems with health care that we came to this Assembly determined to deal with these issues.

It was a note of some optimism that the House Leader called the Health estimates first. We assumed when you called the Health estimates first that you recognized the priority of the problem; you were putting this department on first so that we, as representatives of the public, might deal with these all-important issues and take whatever time was needed.

But we haven't. We have been stonewalled for two weeks. A level of anger and frustration has built up in the opposition. I don't apologize for that, Mr. Minister, because we reflect the anger and frustration in the public, as we are being paid to do. You can aggravate and inflame that level of frustration in us and in the public by carrying on as you have. Or you can attempt, Mr. Minister, to defuse some of it by discussing these

questions in a rational and responsible fashion.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister: are you going to do your job?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Chairman, I have sat here for three-quarters of an hour and heard the people talk on and on and on, and never ask one question in that period of time. There have been accusations and allegations, attempts to mislead the people of Saskatchewan about the activities of the Health department. I will indicate to you that over the period of time since 1981-82 when we became government, there has been an increase in the Health budget from \$741.5 million to \$1.212 billion — a 63.5 per cent increase in health care services.

Mr. Chairman, I've explained in detail — I know they don't like to hear this — but certainly about the 2,349 nursing beds that have been constructed and are in the plans of being constructed in this province — 2,300. I read every community that's getting nursing home bed, where they've been. To show the intent and the respect towards estimates that the members have opposite, I heard the member from Regina Centre get up and talk and go on and on about Wapella, Saskatchewan. The town I talked about and invited him to was Wawota. So that shows the degree of sincerity, the interest that they have.

They know very, very well that the people of Saskatchewan, if you go out on the street today, Mr. Chairman, and you walk down the street of any town in Saskatchewan, I will guarantee you, and you stop and talk to people at random, the vast majority of those will say that if there's one thing the Devine government is going to be remembered for in its first time in office, its first period, is health care — safeguarding health care, building on health care. Never before — never before — has there been a \$300 million capital fund. Think of that — \$300 million. Never before has there been a \$100 million staff enrichment program. Those are very, very large figures. Never before has there been 1,600 nursing home beds in the period of time that there is today — 1,600 nursing home beds.

So let me tell you, Mr. Chairman, that I will stand here any time — all summer, if they want — and defend activities of the Devine government in health care. In times when we see oil revenues and wheat prices declining, and we come with a budget of 11.6 per cent increase in health care, I think that indicates unequivocally the commitment of people in Saskatchewan towards health care in this province.

They talk about support of the nurses. They make no . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You know, it's very difficult in here. It's very difficult in here, Mr. Chairman, for a sincere member to stand and make a point, because you're always interrupted with people clucking like chickens. This goes on . . .

I have been in here eight years. I have never seen such a low level of decorum from the other side — talking about jelly beans, clucking like chickens, acting like children that I taught in grade 3 or 4. And I see, day after day, young people from Saskatchewan coming into this legislature, coming in to see the people that they have elected, how the debate and the activities and the

decisions of state are made in this province.

I can tell you as a man that spent 15 years in the class-rooms in Saskatchewan, when I see the antics of my colleagues — I suppose they're colleagues — but the people opposite clucking like chickens, talking about jelly beans, throwing socks in the air, I'm embarrassed. I'm embarrassed. I can tell you we're getting letters and phone call after phone call from people around Saskatchewan saying, what is going on with that NDP opposition?

I mean, this legislature and the activities of the opposition has sunk to the lowest ebb it has been in the history of the province. When I see men elected, people with law degrees, who can only stand up in this House and cluck like a chicken, I say what in heaven is wrong with democracy when a person like that can be elected?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — That's the problem here. That's the problem. You people are just degrading democracy. I mean, if you think somebody voted for you . . . My mother-in-law lives in your constituency, and I can tell you her and many of her friends have phoned me and they're greatly embarrassed that their member, their member would sit in this legislature and cluck like a chicken when the Premier of the province is on his feet. That's the total disrespect he has for this place. I'll rest my case on that point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of points that I would like to make in response to the motion. Perhaps the first point that I would like to make, Mr. Chairman, is that the two members from the NDP opposition who have moved this motion just left the Assembly. It shows, Mr. Chairman, the lack of sincerity that we see on the part of the opposition when it comes to raising issues in this particular Assembly. I think that at least they would have the dignity for this Assembly to remain in their places and to hear members on all sides of the House respond to the motion that they brought forward.

But I suppose we shouldn't be surprised. I suppose we shouldn't be surprised, Mr. Chairman, because when we see the following kinds of things, when we see the following kinds of things coming from the members opposite, we know, Mr. Chairman, that they are in the very desperate throes of a party that understands very clearly that they don't have any positive points to advance. And so they have to resort to personal attacks on people in an attempt to get headlines in the newspapers.

Mr. Chairman, we have been in this Assembly now for almost two weeks, almost two weeks, and the members opposite have yet to get a headline in the newspaper. They know full well that they are not going to get a headline in the newspaper, and so they have to resort to personal attacks on the integrity and on the dedication and on the professionalism of the Minister of Health. Mr. Chairman, that indicates to me that the party opposite, the members of the NDP party who sit in the opposition here today, are

really in serious, serious political trouble — serious political trouble.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Health, my colleague, inherited a Department of Health that had been seriously ignored by the NDP opposition. And I want to tell you some of the things that they found when the Minister of Health took over.

Under the NDP, cancer treatment services were allowed to deteriorate to the point of crisis proportions here in the province of Saskatchewan. The NDP cut hospital staff to the tune of some 400 positions. In the area of mental health services they deleted nursing positions and psychiatrist positions. Hospital construction — virtually no hospital construction under the NDP from 1977 to late 1981. They basically put a moratorium on the construction of special care nursing homes.

That was their record in health care. And I would remind the members of this Assembly, when we consider voting on this motion, that last year the members opposite spent, I believe, the sum total of around two hours questioning the Minister of Health, because they knew that the record of this government in health care was a sound record, was a record that the people of this province could be proud of.

Today they know that there's an election just around the corner. They know that the people no longer believe the big lie that somehow the Tories will take away medicare. They know that that issue was put to rest a long time ago, and that in fact we have strengthened medicare here in the province of Saskatchewan. And so they have only one option, Mr. Chairman: they have to resort to personal attacks, personal attacks on a very credible, a very professional, a very dedicated Minister of Health who is doing his best to advance the cause of first-class health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

Not only, Mr. Chairman, do they resort to personal attacks on the Minister of Health, but they resort to personal attacks on the Premier. And we know that if the people of Saskatchewan could corporately sit together in this Assembly during question period and see the behaviour of the members opposite, see their childish antics, see the kind of accusations which they hurl across the floor that have absolutely nothing to do whatsoever with providing the kind of sound, forward-looking, progressive government that the people of Saskatchewan want — if they could sit here and see that personally, they would be deeply ashamed of the members of the 1986 version of the NDP party of Saskatchewan — deeply ashamed.

(1530)

We didn't come to this Assembly to mount personal attacks, Mr. Chairman, on any member of this Assembly. We came here to do the best that we can for the citizens of this province. And when we see the members of the NDP opposition bringing forward today the kind of ludicrous — and there's no other words to describe it — the kind of ludicrous motion that is on the floor today, then I think that we have no other option but to conclude that the members opposite indeed find themselves in a desperate

political situation. They really aren't all that concerned about health care. They're more concerned about getting headlines in an attempt to somehow bolster up their political image in the province.

The motion before us today, Mr. Chairman, is really a vacuous motion. It's a motion that indicates that they are in serious trouble. It's a motion that stands in stark contrast to the kinds of things that, in fact, professional people are saying about the Minister of Health. And I would only quote one item to you today from the Saskatchewan association of optometrists, directed to the Minister of Health: "I would also like to commend you on the excellent way in which you run your department."

And I suspect, Mr. Chairman, that that comment could be echoed numerous times around the province. In 1982, Mr. Chairman, we inherited a situation where the hospitals were crumbling here in this province. They should have been rebuilt; they should have been refurbished; new hospitals should have been constructed; but it hadn't happened under the NDP. Instead they took our money and they spent it to buy uranium mines; and they spent it to buy land for the land bank; and they spent it to buy potash mines. And they abolished positions, Mr. Chairman, in the health care system so that they could find more money to put into their so-called family of Crown corporations. And as a consequence the health care system deteriorated and deteriorated and deteriorated.

That is what we faced when the member who today is the Minister of Health took over. And in those four years, Mr. Chairman, we have begun to rebuild the hospital system here in the province of Saskatchewan. We have put back the nursing positions that the members opposite abolished, and we recently announced an additional 1,500 new positions which are going to go into our health care system. We abolished extra-billing under the leadership of the Minister of Health. There are so many good things that have been done — new cancer facilities here in the province of Saskatchewan — that the NDP ignored.

Mr. Chairman, we could go on and on and talk about the many good things — the many good things which have been accomplished in the last four years, and we know that there are many more good things that will be done in the next four years. We know that because of the record of the Minister of Health since he took over.

Mr. Chairman, today under the leadership of the Minister of Health, the Government of Saskatchewan, the Progressive Conservative government, is spending \$1.2 billion on health care. That is hundreds of millions of dollars more than was ever spent under the NDP party. And we can understand why, because instead of spending the money on health care where it should have been spent, they spent that money to expropriate potash mines, to expropriate uranium mines, to expropriate farm land for their land bank. It was an example of a perverted sense of priority. A perverted sense of priority, Mr. Chairman. And what we see today in this Assembly with this motion, that is a personal attack on the Minister of Health, is once again a perverted sense of priority.

Unfortunately, I guess we shouldn't be surprised. And that's a sad commentary on what has taken place here from the members opposite when we see them performing as they do in question period, when we see them making the kinds of personal attacks. Really this is, I think, this motion itself is a travesty of what this Assembly is all about.

The Assembly is here to further the cause of health care, and that is what the Minister of Health has done so dramatically and so effectively in the last four years. This Assembly is here to debate the serious issues which confront this province. This Assembly is here to do justice to the people of Saskatchewan. This Assembly is not here to debate this kind of a vacuous, personal attack on a Minister of Health that everyone in the province and certainly every member of this Assembly should be very, very proud of, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I don't know what the headlines are going to read tomorrow, Mr. Chairman. We're really not here to seek headlines. We're here to provide good government. We're here, Mr. Chairman, to do the kinds of things that the Minister of Health has been doing; for example, to get six new CAT scanners here into the province of Saskatchewan to provide better quality health care for people like my parents and my children.

And that's a good example of what a forward-looking, progressive, innovative government should be doing. And if people write headlines about that, that's fine. And if they don't that's fine. We know that good health care is being delivered when that kind of thing happens.

But, Mr. Chairman, of what benefit is it to health care to bring forward this kind of a motion, this kind of a personal, vicious attack on a member of this Assembly. And the members opposite basically admitted that it was a personal attack.

I can only wonder what is going through the minds of the NDP party these days when they sit in their caucus and they say: what shall we do today to question the Minister of Health; do we have any new ideas to advance that will further the cause of health care in this province; do we have any innovative suggestions as to how we can bring new equipment here into the province of Saskatchewan; do we have any means whereby we can ensure that the seniors who are now going to have more nursing home beds than they ever had; do we have any innovative ideas that are going to help the cancer patients here in the province of Saskatchewan, and today they have better cancer facilities than they ever had; do we have any of those innovative ideas?

And I suspect that the two members opposite who raised this motion, who don't have the respect to be here to hear it debated, I suspect that in good conscience they would have to say no. They would have to say no. Because if they didn't say no, then certainly they wouldn't have to bring forward a motion like this today.

Clearly they find themselves in a position today where they are so desperate, so void of any new ideas, so void of

any constructive critical suggestions, that the only thing they can do is waste the time of this Assembly to bring forward this kind of personal attack upon the Minister of Health, and to call into question the very integrity of what this democratic process is all about.

And where are the members opposite who even brought forward the motion? I tell the people of Saskatchewan that they have left the Assembly . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I would like to remind the member who's speaking that according to *Beauchesne*, paragraph 316, members who are speaking are not to refer to the presence or absence of members.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to have been able to participate in this motion. I'm only disappointed that the members of the Assembly had to be put through this particular exercise today, wasting the time of the public and wasting the dollars of the taxpayer, when it could have been spent more effectively dealing with the constructive and critical and important issues that face this particular province. Certainly the motion is worthy of nothing else except being defeated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Engel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I listened to the sanctimonious member from Rosemont carry on in this Assembly in a tirade that is despicable and hypocritical as I've ever heard in my life, he prompted me to take part in this debate today. He prompted me to take part. He can stand up in this Assembly and talk about two members that are out of the House when more than 35 of his colleagues aren't sitting in their seats. Mr. Chairman, I was waiting for you. I challenged you and chided you to call him to order, and you didn't bother. He covered every range and topic that wasn't related to this motion. You let him go and you let him go and you let him go.

Well I want to tell you, we've got a motion before this Assembly. We're not here to debate headlines, Mr. Chairman. We're not here to debate headlines. We're here to get some answers. My colleagues have raised issues in this House and not one of them have been answered. For two weeks we've debated in this House and what did we get? What did we get? A bunch of garbage. Sanctimonious speeches by the member from Rosemont who puts on his halo and stands there and says who isn't in the House.

Well I want to tell you, Mr. Chairman, that member maybe can look for headlines. We want some answers. We want some answers from the people that run this government. We see a government here that's governing by desperation, that announces the last dying breath. In their dying breath, after they've governed four years, they start making some announcements of things they should have done for four years — announce six CAT scans, when they didn't build any and buy any for four years. You call that a government by desperation. They govern by desperation because they are announcing things that they should have done while they should have been governing.

The Health minister here says he stand up and he's embarrassed. Well he's got reason to be embarrassed. He's got reason to be embarrassed because he isn't worth a buck. The answers you gave us over the last two years aren't worth a dollar. He stands up and talks about kids in school that he taught when he was in grade 4. Was that where you learned to stick out your tongue? I've never, since 1971, witnessed anything quite that despicable — ever, ever. And he has the guts to stand in this House and say he's embarrassed.

Now all of a sudden he's embarrassed. Well, he should be. He should be because I wish, along with the member from Rosemont, that the people of Saskatchewan could sit in this House. Well I've got news for you, Mr. Rosemont. I've got news for you because most of your constituents are in this House. Most of your constituents see your despicable actions. They see your big majority covering up and standing up and trying to say, we're not here to get headlines. Oh, no.

Well I'll tell you, my colleagues don't get headlines. They don't get headlines. They haven't been in court. My colleagues haven't been in court. Name one since 1971 that's been hauled before the courts of this land . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I do believe that the debate in this House is getting a little bit out of hand and is certainly away from the topic being discussed. And I must add at this point in time that members from both sides of the House are guilty. And I'm giving fair warning now to the speaker who is now speaking and any future speakers — any future speakers — that I will rule very, very strictly for members on both sides of the House. Let's get back to the debate.

Mr. Engel: — Well that's very nice, and I respect your ruling, very sarcastically, because I listened to the sanctimonious member from Rosemont not being called to order when I chided you. I chided you to call him to order.

Mr. Chairman: — Is the member challenging the ruling of the chairman?

An Hon. Member: — No.

Mr. Chairman: — Then please carry on.

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Chairman, I said I will respect your ruling and I will talk about why that minister is worth a dollar.

The member from Rosemont, a minister of this cabinet and a minister of the government, chided us and said we were seeking headlines. I'm responding to that chide and saying that this Bill, this motion before us, isn't to spend a dollar to look for a headline. Because my colleagues, since 1971, have never gotten the front page headlines like your colleagues have — like your colleagues have. Show me one since 1971, and I can show you lots since 1982.

You're the one that raised it, Mr. Rosemont. You're the sanctimonious one that raised it. And you said you want

to talk about headline hunters. Well I want to tell you, we're here to get some answers. And we're saying that the Minister of Health better get down to business and start answering some questions. And I'd like to ask the member from Rosemont: where is the minister or former minister of Highways? I haven't seen him in here for three weeks. I don't know where he is. And I could list 35, if you want me to, right now, that aren't in their seats. But I'm not going to.

(1545)

I'm going to tell the Minister of Health that I wanted an answer on integrated facilities in Lafleche, in Coronach, in Gravelbourg — didn't get an answer. He's not even on the five-year list, and they were on the list before you formed office, before you formed the government. They would have been built. They would have been built. The rural hospitals in Saskatchewan are in a position of financial ruin with this government, and this government isn't doing anything about it. They haven't done anything about it.

We raised the issue of dental care in our rural schools. The Minister of Health said everything is fine, there's no problem out there. Well I want to tell you there's a big problem out there. There are cut-backs in local nurses in the health region. I got a letter from the Minister of Health explaining away a situation that your own candidate for nomination in my constituency raised with me.

An Hon. Member: — The next MLA.

Mr. Engel: — I passed . . . He didn't win the nomination, big dummy. He didn't even win the nomination.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order. Order. I would ask the member to please not use that kind of language in this House. Now please carry on.

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Minister, the member for . . . that is Acting House Leader, makes it very difficult to use the kind of words that are parliamentary. He makes it very difficult for me. He makes it very, very difficult. I can't be sanctimonious like the member for Rosemont was. I don't have a green halo. I don't have a halo.

But I want to tell the Minister of Health that the last time we had a food bank in Assiniboia was when we had a Tory government in the '30s. We now have a food bank. We are a great nation of health delivery in our country, and in Assiniboia we have now a . . . proud, proud to say that we have a food bank. Thanks to your health programs. Thanks to the programs that you are doing. I am saying to you that this is an issue. This is an issue, and the issue is important. Is this minister going to answer some questions, or is he worth the dollar that we say he should have?

I think we've made our position very clear. We've made it loud and clear. The position our caucus raised here, that the Minister of Social Services, the sanctimonious member that stood up in this House from Rosemont and said that we were degrading the House and embarrassing them . . . But we raised the issue of liquor advertising. His minister didn't talk about the health effects of our young

people being enticed to use alcohol. He could sanctimoniously stand up in this House and defend the Minister of Health, that for two weeks never said one word against liquor advertising, wouldn't respond to liquor advertising. But the sanctimonious member from Rosemont can say that his minister's done a wonderful job. Well he maybe agrees with liquor advertising and the good it does our young people.

I want to tell you that after the next election there won't be liquor advertising. I can tell you there won't be liquor advertising, and there won't be pressures on our young people. You are governing as a desperate government. The desperation has let to announcements; the announcements are being accepted by the people of Saskatchewan as just so much hog-wash. They don't believe you any more, and that's why we moved that he only gets one buck. There's another 20 of them that shouldn't get as much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Meagher: — Mr. Chairman, the comments from the members opposite and the performance today in the House here prompt me to make a few comments on this motion.

It's a motion with respect to the Minister of Health, and I'm really sitting back here wondering what is the tactic of the opposition. Why would they pick the department that is the most successful department of this government? The department that . . . Why would they introduce this motion, this unhealthy motion, on Health?

It seems quite apparent to me, Mr. Chairman, that while it's quite widely known that they have nothing but contempt for our judicial system — they demonstrate that from time to time — they have nothing but contempt for our parliamentary process. That's quite evident as well.

What really concerns me, Mr. Chairman, as a member of the legislature, is that they're demonstrating some contempt here for the taxpayers as well. We are here to do the business of the people of Saskatchewan. It costs a great deal of money to run this Assembly.

I can recall, Mr. Chairman, when I was first elected to this Assembly in 1982, I was very impressed and very thrilled with the privilege of serving in this legislature for my constituents. In fact in my maiden speech, if you recall, I referred to this as a "cathedral of democracy."

Well, colleagues, if this is a cathedral of democracy, the performance of the opposition today . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. As I said earlier on, I will not tolerate any longer, debates by members relating to each other's performance or behaviour or any such issue.

Let's get on with the motion which states, and let me read it again so all members are clear:

That the salary of the Minister of Health be reduced to \$1.

That is the issue before the House. That is the topic being

debated. Please stick to that.

Mr. Meagher: — Thank you. Thank, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to stick to that motion. That motion, more than any other performance in the past several weeks, has demonstrated that the opposition are not only irresponsible, they're absolutely contemptuous to the taxpayers of this province. They obviously haven't done their homework.

Their tactic appears to be, ask an unanswerable, stupid question, and when the minister is unable to respond, as is the case when the question is unanswerable, simply repeat it over and over again to delay and obstruct the business of this House. They've done that now for several days.

They put forward questions that they know an intelligent answer cannot be given, and simply repeat it. When their tactic begins to not pay dividends for them — and I'm sure that they are convinced that the public are beginning to see that this thing is not looking very good for them — they then introduce this kind of a motion, to reduce the salary of the minister to \$1.

I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that as a member of the legislature who, when elected, considered it an honour and a privilege to serve, I can tell you that I am not impressed with this kind of a performance. This motion is designed not to deal with the issues of health, but to try to create the impression that the opposition is not being given the privileges that should be extended to them. They are not convincing the public; they're not convincing other members of the legislature.

The motion is, in my view, an obvious waste of our time here in this House, and it should be defeated. And that if the opposition in this legislature took their responsibilities seriously, they would get on with the business of dealing with estimates, ask intelligent questions, put forward the questions they feel they should, that their constituents are asking them to do, and let the taxpayers of this province have a break for a change — quit demonstrating the contempt that they have, not only for the parliament of this country, but for the taxpayers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank you for recognizing me, and I too feel it's my privilege to stand in this House today and speak on this motion.

I would like to first start off, Mr. Chairman, by saying that such a blatant attack on our Minister of Health is not only towards the Minister of Health but is towards the whole Health department, all the officials that the minister has working diligently, and especially over the last four years.

I want to say, Mr. Chairman, that in my riding I didn't take health issues lightly, and neither did my minister. In my riding of Cut Knife-Lloydminster the Minister of Health has earned every bit of the buck that he gets as a member of this legislature. Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Health has put three hospitals in my riding — three hospitals that have been promised for years and years by the members of the opposition, but just political ploys. Mr. Chairman,

in four years my Minister of Health has delivered to my constituents much-needed facilities.

I want to indicate to you that my people have appreciated that. My people have appreciated the fact that they're going to have fine facilities to go for their treatments. And I want to thank the minister's officials for working with my local hospital boards out in my riding. I think it's just fantastic how they got along and how they've agreed to the types of facilities that they're now building and have built.

I also want to thank the Minister of Health for a nursing home that was delivered to Lloydminster. Now a nursing home has been built, and this is under hard work from the minister — very hard work. And they say he's only worth a buck. I cannot believe it. And they holler from across the floor when we speak of the fine things that our Health minister has done in this province. I also have another nursing home scheduled to be built by our Health minister. He's just doing a fantastic job, and Cut Knife will eventually have a nursing home. And these are various projects that our Health minister has done. And I cannot stand in this . . . I cannot sit in this Assembly to let such blatant attacks take place.

I would also like to congratulate the minister on his various programs for the safety of this province by bringing through to the schools and to the awareness of the public, through ad campaigns around Christmas and various heavily travelled festive times of the year, and bringing the awareness of the effects alcohol and driving can have. And by that it has proven — statistically it's been proven — that it's been working. And they talk about, he's not worth more than a buck. I find it very, very hard to understand how they can stand in this House and speak and mislead the public of this province.

The public know what's going on. I mean, they drive by the hospitals; they use the hospitals; they use the nursing homes. We don't have the moratorium on nursing homes. We don't have moratoriums on hospital facilities any longer in this province; it's been lifted. It's been lifted, Mr. Chairman, by our Health minister. And for that I would like to congratulate him. I would like to congratulate the Minister of Health and his officials.

And I would like the members opposite now, if they wouldn't mind, is to leave this motion and to get on with the business of the House so that we can get to finish the work of the province, and get back to our ridings and do the work that we've been elected to do.

So with that, Mr. Minister, I certainly will not be supporting such a blatant motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Caswell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First of all, strange as this may appear, I like this motion. And I like this motion because it will greatly help me in Saskatoon Westmount when my constituents know that the NDP are so irresponsible, so unrepentant, so incapable of learning, that they would actually personally attack the Minister of Health who preserved the private St. Paul's Hospital from being taken over by a government

bureaucracy who would . . . The Minister of Health who expanded University Hospital, the Minister of Health who is helping to expand St. Paul's Hospital, this is the Minister of Health that the NDP government wants to discredit personally. And I think this is actually — although it is a waste of our time — is actually extremely helpful.

(1600)

Of course, we will defeat it, but I want to thank them for showing their true colours, that they are not the least bit interested in health care. They are not interested in my constituent who phoned yesterday who, I could tell from his voice, was in extreme pain and was telling me that his doctor had ordered a bone scan for him in a week and that he will have to wait three months. Those kind of things don't matter to them. They are not interested in the personal suffering of people who have to wait for three months for a serious scan, for something that may preserve his life a little longer, and it's a race against time because necessary hospital expansion, necessary equipment, was not there. And they ridicule the idea of six CAT scans. Where were they when they needed them?

North Dakota, which is not exactly a thriving metropolis, has two or three times more of this kind of equipment than we have — a tiny state. You were so busy . . . The NDP were so busy making people afraid that the PC government would take away health care, they weren't interested in looking after health care . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Excuse me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always have difficulty talking while someone else is talking, at least while I try to maintain a certain level of civility. But the member from Quill Lakes' comment was so absolutely priceless . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order, order. We are not talking about any member's comments, particularly the one from Quill Lakes since he's not in the debate at the time. Please keep your remarks to the motion.

Mrs. Caswell: — It's always a temptation to get to their level . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And I would. When I think about the number of people in my constituency who have phoned me and are so concerned about long waiting lists, and we know that the only way to keep down the long waiting list is to have nursing homes . . . That's why we have Frank Eliason being built. That's why we just spent our time opening Circle Drive Alliance Nursing Home which, I might add, the NDP candidate from Westmount voted against while an alderman — voted against Circle Drive high-rise senior residence. So they are not concerned about the nursing homes that are needed, so that the hospitals with senior patients being there who need a nursing home instead of a hospital bed . . . They're not concerned about solutions. And this is what the people of Saskatchewan have to realize. If you want to vote . . . We have a Department of Health and a Minister of Health that is concerned about solutions.

And so this is why, in one day, after opening a cancer research clinic at University Hospital, he rushes over to the other side of Saskatoon and opens the Circle Drive Alliance Nursing Home, where two NDP aldermen voted against that excellent, fine senior citizens' high-rise

where they will receive wonderful treatment.

And then we go on several months before and we opened up Frank Eliason in Fairview, another nursing home. And just a few blocks from my house is a new Saskatoon Convalescent Home. When I campaigned in 1982 and the old Saskatoon convalescent home, the people were so crowded in that home that they lacked privacy, that it was difficult for them to look after themselves without people seeing . . . without having their privacy invaded. The halls were crowded; it was a fire trap. It had been there for many, many years. Certainly it had been built by love but it needed to be preserved by hard economics and bucks. And now we have a brand-new Saskatoon Convalescent Home, three floors, good quality care, plenty of room, all the high standards. It's right there on Idylwyld, and if you ever dare have . . . You know, if you want to waste your time driving through Saskatoon, while you won't be welcomed politically, you can see it right there on Idylwyld and 31st.

And so there is concrete examples of what this Minister of Health and this government has done. And it's that Minister of Health who's been the Minister of Health since we got elected in 1982 who's presided all over this. So we go from Saskatoon Convalescent Home to the west side of my riding, to the east side of my riding to St. Paul's Hospital, just across from me, although the nuns live in my area, where there's a big, huge sign and expansion going on, where they're so happy to see that we gave them money, not for paper work, not for bureaucrat, but for health care staff — for nurses and nurse orderlies and nurse's aids. And they were so happy to see that announcement, when the Minister of Health said that there will be more money, not for empire building in the Department of Health, but for staff.

And he was not playing a political game but he decided what health means is to have nurses in the hospitals, to have adequate staff to give that kind of care, not to create empire building in Regina.

And then we go on where many of my constituents, including my husband, work at University Hospital. And you go from University Hospital to the university buildings and there's a huge hole there, and it wasn't there two days ago or two weeks ago, and they keep on working and working to build the new cancer clinic. And you look up and there's more building to the top of University Hospital. And that's the kind of concrete examples of health care that the Minister of Health has provided in one city, in one area of Saskatoon.

I'm not going to talk about what they've done in all other areas. But when I think about health care, I think of that man who phoned me yesterday and who needs a bone scan in a race with time, with a serious health problem. And he has to have a waiting list. And if we had been doing the kinds of things . . . If the government had been doing the kinds of things that we were trying to do in the last four years that man would not be in the situation it is today.

I think of two couples, both of them dying of cancer, and they wouldn't mind me saying so because they have reconciled to that, and I was telling them after I visited

them that I was going to open . . . going to be there to attend the opening of the cancer clinic and how happy they were that although it would not help them that it would help someone else.

So when we think of politics, we don't think of headlines. We think of those people in our constituency who needed the help and it wasn't there and we're going to make sure it's for the next person. And for this reason, I reject the asinine, wasteful, ridiculous, personal motion of the NDP motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Young: — Mr. Chairman, just a few very short points on this motion. I'm not going to repeat the things that were said by the member for Saskatoon Westmount, and I'm not going to get into the fact again that there was \$100 million for staff just very shortly. I'll stick to Saskatoon. There are other members from other constituencies who can speak as to what this Minister of Health has done in their areas and why this motion should be rejected by this Assembly.

But I'd like to point out that our government is allocating \$3.5 million to reduce the waiting lists in the Saskatoon hospitals and that's over and above the \$100 million that was talked about earlier by the member from Saskatoon Westmount.

I'd like to point out as well, Mr. Chairman, another good reason why this motion should be rejected in the Assembly this afternoon is the fact that, as pointed out, this is the Minister of Health we have had from day one from when we took over from the NDP. He, together with Walter Podiluk, his deputy, and the other good officials in our Department of Health, have taken us from an eighth-place standing in Canada on health care spending to where we sit today being the highest per capita spenders on health care in Canada. And certainly we, as legislators, can't run the day-to-day operations of health care. We can provide the professionals with what they need to operate the system in Saskatchewan, Mr. Chairman, and that is dollars. And we certainly have fulfilled that obligation and done all we could do, and I must commend the distribution of health care by the officials, the health care officials. It has certainly been the best that one could imagine.

I would suggest, Mr. Minister, that looking at Saskatoon specifically, and for the Saskatoon members here in this House, the reason that this motion should be rejected by the Assembly, Mr. Minister: if we look at University Hospital expansion, \$30.4 million; 300 new permanent jobs will be created; eight new operating theatres; 105 new hospital beds; new CAT scanners as mentioned earlier. We have the City Hospital. It will become a brand-new hospital, 510 beds. New permanent jobs will result from that as well, Mr. Minister. The cancer clinic which I think that our government can — and this particular minister can — take considerable credit for it, \$16.1 million project; a new 80,000 square foot building to replace the existing 30,000 square foot building; new processing labs, treatment rooms; 20 treatment and examination rooms; new research and administration areas. And I think the credit must go to this government

and the Minister of Health, and I will certainly not be supporting the ridiculous motion that's now before this House, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weiman: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not rise this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, to defend the record of the Minister of Health. The record will speak for itself; has spoken for itself. Neither will I stand to applaud the Minister of Health's duties this past four years. Again, I state that the record has spoken for itself and the people of Saskatchewan recognize his laudable record for it.

My fellow colleagues have made certain references to that record, and to say that it was an exaggeration would be totally incorrect. If anything, it's a minuscule applause for the minister for the terrific job he has been doing. And don't for one moment believe that the people of Saskatchewan do not appreciate his efforts and the record that we have put forward this last four years.

However, I do want to speak just on a couple of points, Mr. Chairman. I have found it disturbing, particularly so in these last two weeks and within my four years of serving as a member of the legislature, to have heard the schizophrenic — and I do say schizophrenic — logic of the members of the opposition. And I will change that terminology a little later on.

On one hand, we have them saying in the House and in the public domain that the projects that the Minister of Health has put forward, and the record of this government for the last four years, are imaginary projects. They've used it constantly. I would invite those members to come with me to Saskatoon, as my fellow colleagues have indicated previously, and drive down 22nd Street to look at the imaginary project on 22nd Street and Fairlight, the level 3, level 4 care nursing home, 238 beds, the first of its kind, the largest in the province — the uniqueness of that nursing home, because it is all-encompassing and comprehensive, a project that never was thought of, let alone acted upon before, in the history of this province. And I would invite those members to come with me to Saskatoon and drive down 22nd Street.

(1615)

I would invite the members to drive down College Drive and look at those imaginary cranes that the Leader of the Opposition said were lacking in the city of Saskatoon; to look at those imaginary cranes that the past minister of Health said were imaginary in the city of Saskatoon; to see the addition on top of the University Hospital. I would invite the members also to come with me to Saskatoon and drive down Avenue P and 20th to the St. Paul's project. The NDP have been on record of striking fear into the hearts of the Grey Nuns with their attitude towards the hospital here in Regina and towards their attitude to the hospital in Saskatoon, that being St. Paul's Hospital. I would ask the members to drive with me anywhere in Saskatoon, or follow with my colleagues through the city of Regina, or through any town, village, or hamlet in Saskatchewan, to look at the imaginary, proposed projects.

Also they have been on record many, many times saying the complete opposite: that these projects are desperately needed; where are they? A complete contradiction, and yet they would have the public of Saskatchewan believe that they can speak out of both sides of their mouths at the same time.

But the one that cuts at the heart of the public and patient care in this province is to suggest that it is just a political ploy, that it is just politically motivated.

You see, what they're suggesting to the public of this province is, up till 1982 health care in Saskatchewan came to a standstill; up till 1982, there was no need for additional health care. And we've heard of the moratorium in the level 3, level 4, care homes. It came to a standstill. They would have the people of the province believe that up till 1982 additions to hospitals were not needed, so they didn't build any. They were suggesting that up until 1982 additional nursing staff was not needed.

The truth of the matter is, and the public well recognizes this, that those things did not come to a halt in '82. Those matters were pressing on April the 25th, '82; April the 24th, '82; 1981, 1980, 1979, and back — but they did nothing about it.

So therefore, when we took power from that inaction, when we took power from that group that said they cared about health care in this province, and we started building those projects because we recognized the need, because there was a tremendous amount of catch-up for the neglect from '75, '76, '77 on, they can't find a counter-argument other than standing up in their seats and saying, one, those are imaginary projects; two, it's a political ploy.

You have to wonder where their hearts are in concern for the general well-being and health care of the public of this province. As I stated earlier, I called it schizophrenic logic. What the public are seeing today in every riding in this province is not schizophrenic logic but schizophrenic panic, because the people of Saskatchewan have finally recognized and understood that old saying of the wolf in lamb's clothing. They've understood what really is underneath the hide of those members opposite. And what is underneath the hide and what is lacking underneath that hide is a heart. They don't care about health care. They will try to use medi-scare as they did in '82, as they did in '78.

But I believe that if anyone in my city, because obviously the members of the opposition won't drive with me down those streets because to them those are imaginary projects — but if any citizen in the city of Saskatoon drives with me they will see that those are real projects and they will be thankful for it, that a government finally determined that health care was non-existent in this province and did something about it.

Another point I wish to bring up. There are times in this legislature, and particularly when I have to talk to my constituents one on one, or with my students as today, who came to the legislature, and there are times when I'm visiting with those people, that I am embarrassed. And I

am not embarrassed because of my colleagues on this side of the House. I am embarrassed that I, in all good nature, defend the actions of the members of the opposition.

An Hon. Member: — We never asked you to.

Mr. Weiman: — The member from North East says they never asked me to, which also shows me that the intellectual capability of that member, because you should be asking me to. Because my public who talks to me are saying, what are those people doing down there?

I don't have to go on at length. I do not have to go on at length at the types of things and shenanigans and antics that have gone on in this . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. We're once again starting to stray from the topic. Please get back to the topic.

Mr. Weiman: — I apologize, Mr. Chairman. I thought that I was on topic but I take your ruling. I believe that I am defending the minister, which arose out of the estimates. And as we know, Health estimates are wide ranging when you come to topic number one, general administration. And therefore I am willing, Mr. Chairman — I do apologize to you.

You're doing a terrific job in a job that is very difficult at times to do. But I do apologize and I do wish to tie this into the Health estimates and the derogatory comments that were made in the motion towards the Minister of Health who has done a terrific job for this province.

But what have I heard during the estimates, the estimates of Health, that impinge on the character of our Minister of Health? I have heard utterances in this House, Mr. Chairman, and the public has heard those utterances from the member from Regina Centre, that are both foul and dehumanizing. Now I will talk again about those estimates and the proceedings that have transpired during those estimates that impinge on the character of my minister.

What I am really seeing, and the public of Saskatchewan is seeing, is the complete — the complete — unprofessionalism in this Legislative Assembly. And for that I am ashamed. And I am ashamed for member of the opposition for having put me in that position.

I am convinced that the motion directed at the minister of Health, Mr. Chairman, has been brought about not because of a concern of health issues; definitely has not been brought about because of a lack of answers, for I have heard for the last two weeks the minister giving answers to the same questions numerous times.

But I will suggest that it wasn't motivated by that, Mr. Chairman. I will suggest that what we have seen, as I have indicated, an unprofessional attitude in that the members of the opposition were so convinced that there would be an early April election that they'd only completed their homework up until that early April election, and since that time have been floundering and using this time to scramble, to make themselves look like legitimate legislators — a fact that any effort will not fulfil — and that

they do not have any legitimate opposition, parliamentary procedures, to bring forward to this House to enhance and flow through the business of this House so that business of this House can carry on

It is an absolute waste, an absolute waste of the taxpayers' money. It is a complete example of unprofessionalism on the part of Assembly persons here. And if anyone should apologize for their actions, it should definitely not be the Minister of Health, but the members opposite.

Lastly, if in all fairness I can state that the members opposite do have a minimal concern for health, it is this: what we have witnessed in the last two weeks, what we have witnessed in the last two weeks in this legislature and borne out by the public response that I've received in my constituency over the last two weeks, is that members opposite, in terms of health, are dreadfully concerned regarding their malady. For they suffer — and it's been witnessed and borne out in this House — for they suffer from a case of terminal stupidity.

And what they would have the public of Saskatchewan is to suffer from the same disease, but the public of Saskatchewan is not buying their prescription. Mr. Chairman, I directly and completely oppose the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, the remarks by the usually silent back-benches of the government side of the House have compelled me to rise and say a few words in response and in support of this motion.

I have heard several members opposite, who don't even know what their cabinet is doing from day to day, rise and address everything that they could except the issue in this resolution. Now isn't that interesting, and doesn't that tell you something? Having stood and made their speeches in this House, none of them have addressed the question here, that being of a minister — and it could be any other minister . . .

It's a question of the policy of this government and the attitude of this government towards this legislature, and through this, to the people of Saskatchewan, and that is not to provide information that the taxpayers of this province who pay their taxes ought to have and be able to get. That is the issue, Mr. Chairman. And I am interested in seeing that none of those members addressed it and it is clear that the reason that they have not addressed it is because they are just as embarrassed by it as I think some of their constituents are.

We have here a situation for two weeks — for two whole weeks — where we have been considering the estimates of the biggest-spending department in the government — the biggest-spending department in the government. And the minister in charge has refused to answer substantial and direct questions regarding those expenditures. That is what we are talking about here.

Now the member from Westmount stood and said something about irresponsibility. And I ask: what could be more irresponsible than the refusal by any government of any stripe to answer questions put in the House? It's not

just these estimates, Mr. Chairman; this is the history of this government for four years.

It has been raised in this House on several occasions — the matter of orders in council, which not us individually have ordered over those four years, but which this Legislative Assembly has ordered this cabinet to provide. And two years later those answers have yet to be tabled in this House. So this is not an isolated case of refusing to provide information. It has finally culminated in the way that this minister has highlighted this strategy of the government — of stonewalling, and not letting the people know the things that they have every right in the world to know.

The members from Saskatoon obviously are very easy to impress, those who have spoken. They are very easy to impress, if they can convince themselves that this government has done such a good job that they can be proud of an 8,000 waiting list to get into Saskatoon hospitals. I did not hear any one of them address that issue as they spoke on this resolution. And I'm asking, how come? Because they know that their constituents, as the people of Saskatchewan know, are disappointed in a performance which would cause as severe a situation as 88,000 people on a waiting list . . .

An Hon. Member: — 8,800.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Is it 8,800 people? . . . 8,800 on a waiting list in the city of Saskatoon. That is the record of this government. That is why the minister refuses to answer questions, and the refusal to answer those questions, Mr. Chairman, are the issue here.

(1630)

You know, I understand that two years ago there was a motion just like this one put in this House, a motion directed at the minister in charge of the crop insurance, the member from Arm River. The same arguments were made by the government opposite. I've read the *Hansard*. Exactly the same arguments were made. They rejected the motion, and lo and behold, two years later the Premier remembers the motion and he says, yes it was right. The point that the opposition made was a good point. And he removed that minister from the cabinet.

How chameleon-like can these people get? How chameleon-like can these people get? You know, Mr. Member from Weyburn, that's an animal that changes its colours according to its political need. I mean, they're usually . . . The other term, member from Weyburn, is called Tory.

Now when they were in opposition, they moved similar kinds of motions. You won't recall that, Mr. Chairman, because you weren't here. But it seems to me how the attitude of some politicians change when they're on the opposition side, and then when they're on this government side. Somehow they can argue now that this motion is out of order. It's a perfectly acceptable procedural move by any opposition, to make a point. And we're making the point. We are hoping that with this motion we can jolt this minister and this government as a whole into some reality — the reality that they have to

deal with the issues; the reality that they cannot go on indefinitely ignoring all of those issues that face the people of this province, which they have the right to expect this government to deal with.

And if we can with this motion make this government and this minister face some of those realities and some of those issues, then we will have achieved a great deal.

We have raised the issues of health in these estimates, Mr. Chairman. Day after day we have raised the issues in the field of health that people have raised with us over the past months. It's the government and the minister who have refused to address them, by stonewalling. When we ask questions about the position of the government on established program funding, the minister refuses to answer. When we ask questions about the reduction of nurses in the dental care plan, the minister refuses to answer. When I asked the other day, questions about the minister's advisory committee on alcohol, drug abuse, and youth, he refused to answer, even though he has had in his hands the report from that committee which was presented to him on February 28th.

Now surely, Mr. Chairman, having gone for two weeks without once addressing the issues — and that is by the government — refusing to answer the question, the point has to be raised that it's time this government changed its stance. Oh, the member from Rosemont stood in his usual way and he said that we have been here for a month and that we have been on these estimates for two weeks and nothing has been accomplished. Well I want to remind the member for Rosemont and the government that we have been here for a month, and the throne speech and the budget announced some very major legislation, and we have yet to see it tabled in this House.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. We are not discussing the throne speech or the budget, and I would ask the member to get back to the topic.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I want to talk about legislation as it affects Health, and some of the legislation that was referred to in the Speech from the Throne and is referred to in the budget, affects Health.

Hospitals have been hard done by, by insurance companies who have increased liability insurance to such a level that it was previously unbelievable that it could happen. It was announced in the throne speech and I believe the budget — or was it the budget only? — that this government would have a proposal to deal with that question, even though for the last year and even now hospitals have got to pay those bills. Because the premiums are arriving on the administrator's desk and they've got to pay, with 300 and 400 per cent increases in liability insurance premiums. So the government does the political reaction. It announces that they're going to do something, and to this day there is yet anything to be in this House tabled as a proposal, or anything to be tabled in this House as a Bill.

I suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that the reason there is such silence on the issues by the government, and the refusal to answer any questions, is because this government got caught in their own trap. They got caught

in their own trap. They presented a budget in this House, including estimates for the Department of Health which they never intended to pass. It was never intended to see the light of day. It was presented here with the theory and with the thought that they were going to call an election right after that budget, and for some strange reason they got cold feet and they didn't call it. Maybe I say too strongly, strange reason, because I suppose, with the mentality of a Conservative government, when you know that you're going to get defeated, you hang on as long as you can.

Well they might hang on, Mr. Chairman, and the Minister of Health may sit here for as many days as he likes and refuse to answer questions, but as has been said before, they can run as hard and as long as they can, but they can't hide. At some point in time there is a day of reckoning faced by any government anywhere, and that's during an election. And that is going to come whether this government calls it or whether they wait and it automatically gets called because of the provisions of the constitution. They can run, but they can't hide.

And yes, maybe last year estimates in Health did not take as long as this year. The fact of the matter is, as I checked *Hansard* the other day, the minister would stand up and give answers last year. You will remember that, Mr. Chairman, because you were here. I ask: what has changed?

An Hon. Member: — Election time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — That's right. As the member from Shaunavon says, we are now on the eve of an election, so the government now feels, boy, we better not provide any answers because surely in some way they may cause some embarrassment.

The only thing that has changed is the fact that we're nearing an election, Mr. Chairman, and I say to the minister and to any other minister whose estimates will be coming up, that is not a good enough reason to hide from the public information that it is theirs. That's the issue in this debate, and that's the issue in this resolution.

Over the last year there have been situations in hospitals that some people have claimed were dangerous because of shortage of staff. We have had nurses who have felt the need to organize petitions and to demonstrate in front of the legislature. We have 8,800 people on a waiting list waiting to get into a hospital bed in Saskatoon. That's why the minister refuses to answer the questions, Mr. Chairman, because he does not have the kind of answers that he believes, or his Premier, believes, are going to get them any votes.

You know, it is interesting that they called the Health estimates first. They call them first because they know that when they start announcing — and the minister should listen to this, because the hospitals are talking about it — when they start announcing the results of the negotiations that they have had with hospitals on the enrichment program, there are going to be no hospitals who are going to be satisfied. Because in that enrichment program, we are finding out positions are not being approved only for nursing care — bedside nursing care — they're being

approved for maintenance and housekeeping and dietary. And the minister does not want that to become public, and so he does not want to provide the answers. And they called his estimates, thinking that they were going to end in a day and somehow those questions would never be raised. But they're being raised, and they will be raised again.

Mr. Chairman, the issue is why the government refuses to answer questions. This motion is a way to highlight that, and, indeed, if it can be passed, it couldn't be no more justice than to do it on a minister who has tried for so long and so hard not to answer those questions.

And any of the back-benchers and private members of the government side, if they had their political head on correctly today and wanted to save their political hide, would support this motion. They would support this motion, because they can stand up and give the speeches that some research person in their caucus has written. But nobody will believe what they say because the people out there feel it and they know what the problems that are there.

Mr. Birkbeck: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some comments that I want to make with regards to the motion that was introduced by the NDP in opposition wherein it at least attempts to reduce the minister's salary to \$1. I want to make it clear, Mr. Chairman, to you and to the members of the House, what in fact this motion is really all about.

It's not just about reducing the Minister of Health's salary to \$1. In fact, what I see in that motion, Mr. Chairman, is a question of credibility within the members of the opposition. It's a credibility question, seriously, Mr. Chairman. When the members of the opposition are so short of material to work in this parliamentary system as to have to introduce such a motion, one clearly understands that there is a lack of credibility within the NDP opposition, Mr. Chairman.

So I want to make some comments that will prove that particular case which they themselves have laid out in their motion, reducing the Minister of Health's salary to \$1. They have made that out. One of our members, and I want to refer to the member for Regina North East, when he made reference to our members on this side of the House, that our so-called back-benchers . . . Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, let me clear one thing up. On the government side of the House, we have no back-benchers. They're all front line; they're all first-class. And it's been proven here today, Mr. Chairman.

The member for Regina North East said, very clearly — it's on the record — that this government's back-benchers were not prepared to stand up and defend the Minister of Health, they were not prepared to get up and speak on his motion. Well, Mr. Chairman, again, that's what this motion is all about — the credibility of the members in the NDP opposition, and now in particular, the credibility of the member for Regina North East. He said that, and it's not true, Mr. Chairman. It's not true. And I tell the people watching, it's not true.

I'm going to give the member for Regina North East a little account. Maybe you weren't in the House when our members were speaking. I looked back here and I took note of who was speaking. I saw the member for Saskatoon Eastview get up. He spoke. He spoke in the House.

Now I tell you, Mr. Chairman, the member for Regina North East made the comment that members on this side of the House did not get up to speak on this motion. And I'm not going to let an untruth like that go by. Do you understand that, Mr. Member? I'm not going to let it go by.

The member for Saskatoon Eastview clearly stood in this House to defend the minister and to speak on that motion. The member for Regina Westmount got up and gave a very good speech defending the minister and opposing this motion. The member for Cut Knife-Lloydminster, he was up. He got up and spoke as well, and he gave a good speech. The member for Saskatoon Fairview and the member for P.A. — all of those members, Mr. Chairman, were on their feet.

That's what we're dealing with. We're dealing with the question of credibility in the NDP. The member for Shaunavon, I might add, Mr. Chairman, comes into that whole question of credibility as well. It wasn't long ago, a month or so ago, that he was in the paper. Oh, the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg said that they don't get headlines. Well, the member for Shaunavon was getting a few because the Minister of Finance was putting him on the front page because he challenged him. He challenged him to resign his seat, and the member — the member that's responsible for Finance — said he would put his seat on the line. But the member for Shaunavon wasn't prepared to do so to back up statements he made.

Well I won't say what that is, but I'll tell you what it sure isn't — he was not telling the truth. Again a member of the NDP in opposition, the member for Shaunavon, the whole question of credibility brought into this legislature. The Minister of Finance did that to him.

(1645)

That member for Shaunavon, before I get off of him, he's always shouting across the floor here about all of those nurses out there in front of the legislature demonstrating. I suppose I need to remind the members of the opposition that there were a great deal of ambulances out there that were demonstrating. You bet — the Saskatchewan Road Ambulance Association. They were out there, lights on and sirens. That's when the NDP were in government, Mr. Chairman. That's when they were in government. But those boys over here now in NDP opposition have the nerve to get up and make — these chicks across the floor — they make a lot of noises across the floor. Mr. Chairman, clearly they're into animals and birds. I don't understand it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, what did the Minister of Health do when we became government, and the member for Indian Head-Wolsley became the Minister of Health? What did he do, Mr. Chairman? He took the opportunity that he had to give me a responsibility as his Legislative Secretary at that time to solve that ambulance problem.

He said, look, Mr. Member from Moosomin, I don't want to see ambulances ever again demonstrating in front of the legislature — not ever again — and I'm charging you with the responsibility of going out there, talking to the people in the industry, and putting together a program.

Well if the NDP want to get up and criticize the ambulance program in this province, that's fine for them. But, Mr. Chairman, I tell you, because of the Minister of Health — whose salary they want to reduce to \$1 — this province has one of the best ambulance programs anywhere in North America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Birkbeck: — Now, Mr. Chairman, I realize it's difficult for you. I realize it's difficult for the Chair in such a motion. It's only one sentence — reducing the minister's salary to \$1 — and how do you confine the debate to such a simple and certainly unnecessary motion? It's very difficult. It's very difficult, Mr. Chairman.

We see the member for Regina Centre, who has been on the news clucking, he's been in these Chambers doing that. He looks like he's prepared to do it again right now, Mr. Chairman. And I don't think that that's suitable to this House. The member from Regina North East got up, and again I'm talking about the credibility, and he got into the chameleons and changing colours and things. Not long ago the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg was getting into the crows and the cawing stuff. And I don't understand it, Mr. Chairman

And I'm going to tell you, Mr. Chairman, I believe that I'm a pretty good person to talk about this. I have been here since 1975. I didn't just get in the door. So I have watched. And I'm going to tell the members in NDP opposition, I had two terms in opposition. Now I had two terms in opposition, and I'm now in a term in the government, so I know what it's like to be in the opposition.

Now we have, of course, the member for Quill Lakes. He's starting to make noises. They haven't put a name to what kind of noise that will relate to. I don't know which animal that relates to, but the member for Quill Lakes, Mr. Chairman, is doing that right now while I'm trying to speak to this motion that the NDP have put before this House. I'm just trying to address the motion, and the member for Quill Lakes is interrupting; he's laughing, making noises, and I don't believe it's acceptable. That's what's happening.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the nuts and bolts of what's happening in here, and they're all out of nuts and bolts across in the NDP opposition — more nuts than bolts — but Mr. Chairman, what's bothering them the most, the very most, is that 85 per cent of the people of this province approve of the programs delivered by this Minister of Health and by this government, under the leadership of the member for Estevan. That's what's bothering them.

This used to be an NDP issue, so they thought. But they lost it, Mr. Chairman. They lost it when they lost government in 1982 — April 26th — and it slipped further and further and further away from them. And the member

for Quill Lakes has maybe slipped the farthest away. He's as far as he can get away from the issue. So they've lost a very crucial pillar, if you like, to the NDP party. They've lost it because that old scare tactic, trying to scare the seniors in our nursing homes, that if we got into power, we'd take away health care as it was known.

What they have been able to see and witness in this province, Mr. Chairman, is that under the leadership of the Premier of this province, and under the good administration of our Minister of Health, whose salary they want to reduce to \$1, we have put the budget of the Department of Health up to \$1 billion, more than ever under an NDP administration in 11 years. More. So how do you condemn a Minister of Health and a government who's put more money into health care for the people of this province than any other political party, certainly more than the NDP did in 11 years.

It's pretty interesting how they can sit there in opposition and tell us all of the things that we need to build for the people of Saskatchewan. When they had 11 years in office, Mr. Chairman, and never did one thing — moratoriums on nursing homes. What a shame, Mr. Chairman. When there were people wanting to be in a special care home, needing to be in a special care home, what did they do? They said, we're not going to build any more, we're going to buy potash mines, and we're going to blow \$600 million into uranium. That's what they're going to do. Sure, that was a wonderful idea.

Well, I want to tell you, and I sure wish the member for Shaunavon was here, but it doesn't matter; it's going to go on record. Just before we took government — just before — the member for Shaunavon was the minister responsible for special care homes. And we had never had special care homes built in my riding, Mr. Chairman. And let me tell you, Mr. Chairman, what did that member do? Prior to an election he's out in my riding and they're looking for a candidate. Well, in fact, they even had a candidate search committee. They put one together, literally did. They put an ad in the paper and a list of the names — a candidate search committee. This has to do with the credibility of the NDP, Mr. Chairman. It has to do with what we did in health, what we're doing in health right now, what they failed to do in 11 years. It has to do with that.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I would like to draw to the attention of the member from Moosomin that he is treading on a very thin line in trying to relate what he's saying to the motion before the House. I'd just like to bring that to his attention.

Mr. Birkbeck: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I need to be brought to attention from time to time, because I won't deny that the members in the opposition get me fairly concerned sometimes when they start these kinds of ridiculous tactics.

We're talking about the motion that reduces the Minister of Health's salary to \$1. That was introduced by the NDP. Well I'm saying I support the Minister of Health and what he's done in that department. And what I'm going to do is prove to you why. I can only prove to you why he's good and they were bad when I tell you what the NDP were

doing when they were in government, when they had the opportunity to be good for the people of this province.

Well, what did they do? The member for Shaunavon went out there into my riding, Whitewood — that's in my riding, yes, sir, right on the Trans-Canada — and because they couldn't get the guy to run that they wanted to, they said, well then you're not getting a nursing home; but if you would run for us, we'll build one, we'll make a promise. I think that's shameful. They brought politics directly into the health field, politics directly into the health field. That motion today is bringing politics directly into the health field. We're not trying to do that on this side of the House. We've been busy delivering health programs. We've been delivering, building, co-operating, consulting — all of the things a good administration should do.

Go on back to my riding, what's the difference? Why in the first budget, the first Conservative budget that we had, we got ourselves a nursing home and we got it in Whitewood.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Birkbeck: — You bet we did. If that wasn't good enough, what happened in the next Conservative budget? We got another nursing home in Moosomin, right down to Wawota. And there, that's something the NDP couldn't deliver.

Why my goodness sakes they wanted to reduce his salary to \$1. Well if they're going to reduce his salary to \$1, they should make the former minister of Health, under the NDP administration, pay back to the people of Saskatchewan a couple of billion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Birkbeck: — Well what else, Mr. Chairman, has this hon. member for Indian Head-Wolseley, our Minister of Health, done for the people? And I won't be any less than candid about it. Certainly he's done it with the people's money, the taxpayers' dollars, but it's a question of priorities, of redistribution of the money that government takes in.

Why, I think, Mr. Chairman, when you spend a third of this whole government's budget, a whole third on health care, Mr. Chairman, isn't that enough? Is it somewhere close, Mr. Chairman? That tells you that everything else, of course, has to be something less than the priority. If health care is a priority, taking a third of our budget, it makes some kind of sense that we're not going to be able to do a lot of other things in a lot of other areas.

The member for Pelly, of course, now he's busy now, he's busy chirping away. That's interesting because, as I said, I spent two terms in opposition, and all the time I was over there, the member for Pelly was a back-bencher and he never said a thing. He was like those statues down in South Dakota there. That's what he was like. All of a sudden now I've discovered at least his mouth can move, so I've got that much information from the member for Pelly.

So anyway, Mr. Chairman, it's clear: this government has a priority. It has a number of priorities, and certainly one of them is health care. And it's proven by sticking a third of the budget into health care, and I'm proud of it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, there are other matters that need to be discussed that shore up the reason why we'll defeat this motion today. We'll defeat it and we'll support our Minister of Health, you bet we will. And we'll do it because he has taken a problem . . .

Yes, the member for Shaunavon — and I wish he were here again, Mr. Chairman. I'm not saying he isn't; I'm just saying that I wish he were here. I wish that he were here, because I'd want him to hear this. He cries away about those nurses out on the steps. And it's a good thing, I guess, that he's just crying away about them in here. I hope to goodness he never gets too close to them, Mr. Chairman. I'd be concerned then — I'd be concerned then.

But there's \$100 million that this Minister of Health has allocated to staffing positions for special care homes and hospitals — \$100 million, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Birkbeck: — I believe that's a significant contribution. And that adds on, you know, adds on to that third of our funding that goes to health care. The NDP can't beat that. They run out of questions here. They have no questions for the question period. They have nothing to discuss in this Assembly, so they introduce this slanderous, ridiculous motion to reduce our Minister of Health's salary by \$1.

I tell you, Mr. Chairman, that in my time in this legislature, I have never seen such a pitiful, disgusting performance by a group of individuals as I have from the NDP in opposition. Never, never.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Birkbeck: — And again I say that candidly, because I sat over there longer than I've sat over here. So I knew how we performed when we were over there.

Now the member for Regina Centre, you know, he's strutting his feathers, and I hope he doesn't get into his clucking again. I'll tell you, Mr. Chairman, the members in the NDP opposition will understand that we must have done something right when we were in opposition. And I know we did. We took our places when we were in opposition.

Yes, we criticized the government from time to time, but I recall on numerous occasions when this Minister of Health, whom they're trying to condemn today, and myself and others in opposition stood and we took our places on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and we offered solutions and suggestions to the government of the day. We did that. And I guess, Mr. Chairman, that's why we're today government. We moved ourselves right from opposition; we walked ourselves right through the then Liberal opposition and moved right into this side of the House as government.

Now, you know, I shouldn't be giving away those kinds of secrets because the NDP opposition may discover that that might be a good tactic. If they'd get up in the House and offer some real good solutions to the problems, you know, that are before the people of Saskatchewan, as opposed to introducing such a single-minded motion, if I may say so, Mr. Chairman . . . What are they doing with that motion? I'll tell you what they're doing: the same thing they've been doing since this session began. They're on a witch hunt. They're muck-raking. They're into that daily. You know, and that's when they're not into animals and birds.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I don't believe it's parliamentary. I don't believe it makes any sense. I know that the people out there watching me right now understand what I'm saying, that they don't want their hard-earned dollars spent on a group of members, a small group of members in the NDP opposition, to be making these kinds of absolutely ridiculous, slanderous comments, day after day after day. It's lowered the whole stature of this legislature.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I want to move into one other topic. I want to move into one other topic, Mr. Chairman, and it's a serious one. It's back to that credibility question. And again I wish that the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg was here. I really wish he was here because, you know, he goes ahead and he sends out . . . I have a copy of a letter that was written to him, and you know what it says:

I am prompted (and I quote, Mr. Chairman) to write you regarding the letter you have sent out to churches in connection with the beer/wine ads which are now being shown on Saskatchewan T.V. stations.

Mr. Chairman, can you understand . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. It being 5 o'clock, I do now recess the House until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.