

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Clerk: — Mr. Koskie, from the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills, presents the 13th report of the said committee, which is as follows:

Your committee has duly examined the undermentioned petition for a private Bill and finds that the provisions of rules 56, 57, and 60 have been fully complied with — Of Orest Olekshy, Phillip Eriksson, and Dennis Pehach, of the city of Saskatoon, in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Melville, that the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Police Investigation of Cabinet Minister

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address a question to the Premier. As you indicated previously, Mr. Premier, that you would indeed provide to the Assembly a full status report into the allegations of investigation into the Deputy Premier. You indicated that a week ago last Monday, I believe. I was wondering whether you're in a position at this time to give us a full status report vis-à-vis those allegations.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice made a statement publicly to the media not that long ago — I believe about 1 o'clock or 1:30 — and he was advised that the Regina City Police have completed their inquiries into a complaint made against the Hon. Eric Berntson, and the complaint was without foundation. He made that clear, and he went on to add a few more observations that the details of the inquiry were given to the Crown prosecutors today, and the prosecutors have agreed with the conclusion of the police that no charges were warranted.

And since the charges were not warranted, it would not be appropriate for the minister or for me to discuss the details of the inquiry. To do so would be inappropriate violation of the Berntson family's right to privacy, as it would any other case of this nature.

So I can report that the complaints were without foundation, as described by the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Koskie: — Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Premier can advise the House, now that the investigation has been completed as he indicated, can he advise: when did the formal police investigation into the allegations begin, and when in fact did they officially conclude?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — No, I can't provide that information, and I'm not so sure why the hon. member would need to know. There has been a full inquiry by the police, and that inquiry was brought to the Justice officials. They have agreed with the police that the complaint was without foundation, and nothing needs to be said more about it.

In respect for justice, and respect for the family, the Berntson family, I believe that it's fair that we do leave it just at that.

Mr. Koskie: — Well, one final supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I think it's significant to know when the investigation and when, in fact, the decision that there was no grounds, in fact, for any action whatsoever, when that investigation was, in fact, completed, because I think it was incumbent upon the Premier to come to the House at the earliest possible time in order to advise the House, as he indicated he would. And that's the basis of asking when the investigations commenced and when the investigation, in fact, was completed.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, as I have just advised the hon. member, the inquiry was complete today, and the minister announced that the complaint was without foundation. So it finished today, and it started several weeks ago. The minister made the statement today that the police have completed their inquiries into the complaint, and the complaint is without foundation. What else can I add to that? I mean, he made the statement today and the police have made their statement, and they provided the information to the Justice officials and they have said it is without foundation.

Open Letter from Provincial Ombudsman

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the Minister of Social Services. And my question to the minister deals with the rather extraordinary open letter he has received from the provincial Ombudsman.

Mr. Minister, the Ombudsman has been forced to issue a public challenge to you because you have refused to respond or even acknowledge the serious problems that he has uncovered in your department. And so I ask you, Mr. Minister: will you not acknowledge that there are some serious problems in your department? And will you now agree to an independent review of the changes that you introduced to the welfare system in 1984, changes which the Ombudsman and many others, including church groups, say have created increased hardship for some of the poorest people in our province?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, this is the same question which the member opposite asked approximately perhaps this time last week. At that time I provided an answer to the member opposite, and the answer would be the same today as it was last week, and that is that the welfare reform system in the province of Saskatchewan was in dire need of overhauling and reforming for a long period of time.

The members opposite, when they were in government, chose to let the system run without any kind of leadership and reform, and everybody in the province knew that reform was justified; we have implemented that particular reform. It's something which the people of Saskatchewan know should have happened a long time ago. We have taken the action. I have absolutely no intention of deviating from that track which we established some time ago. Welfare reform is necessary, it is well received, and we will continue in that direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, the issue here is not the issue of welfare reform. The issue here is the policies of the minister and his department which, apparently, by many people, in the minds of a lot of people, some very notable ones as well as the Ombudsman, have created hardship and have caused some problems which I shall ask as supplementaries later.

But my supplementary to the minister, who did not answer my first question: Mr. Minister, will you not acknowledge that there are some problems in your department which have been brought to light by the Ombudsman, and will you not agree here today to bring about a review, an independent review, into those problems and into the changes, so that it can be looked into to determine what the problems are, and what solutions should be brought about to cure them?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday to the media in response to the letter which the Ombudsman has made public, if I thought that a public review was justified, then as a responsible minister that is something that I would certainly agree with. I don't happen to think that a public review is justified. I think that the taxpayers want their money spent prudently, and I believe that the taxpayer believes that welfare reform is something which was long overdue and that they are pleased that this government has initiated it.

And if the member wants to continue asking me questions about welfare reform, I have some statistics here that he will be most interested in which will indicate once again how desperately overdue welfare reform was in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I want to say to the minister something about, and ask him something about, specific cases which the Ombudsman brings to light in his open letter. The Ombudsman reports that his office and even the police have received a number of complaints from recently separated women on social assistance. That's documented by the Ombudsman. These women have reported being watched by persons unknown to them, sitting in parked cars outside their residences and the like, and in a number of cases these unknown persons have turned out to be employees of your department, Mr. Minister. Can you explain why your department has the homes of these female welfare recipients under surveillance?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know particularly what case the member opposite is referring to. But I want the member opposite to know that this whole matter of

fraud and abuse in the welfare system is something that this government takes very, very seriously, and it is something that the taxpayers want to be taken very seriously. They want to see education and training and job preparation and direct job experiences provided for welfare clients, and we are doing that on a magnitude never done before.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker — at the same time — they want whatever abuse, whatever fraud is in the welfare system to be rooted out, and any responsible government would do that. And if you don't think, if the member opposite does not think, that that needs to be done, then he is sadly mistaken.

And I would draw to the attention of the member opposite an article in the Prince Albert newspaper recently which talked about a welfare client — which talked about a welfare client who in fact had not reported income to the Department of Social Services and, according to the newspaper article, was vacationing in Venezuela — vacationing in Venezuela, Mr. Speaker.

Because of the actions of our professional staff, this matter was under investigation for some time, and I understand that fraud charges have been laid, Mr. Speaker. Now that is exactly why, that is exactly why it is important that the members who work for the Department of Social Services, that our fraud investigation unit do the kinds of things that need to be done appropriately on behalf of the taxpayer and on behalf of everyone in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I really find it amusing that the minister feels that he has to rant and rave in order to answer a straightforward question. Mr. Minister, after your speech you failed to answer the question. My supplementary, again, is: why, Mr. Minister, do you feel it necessary to have your department provide a surveillance of homes of female welfare recipients to the extent of having people sit in cars across the street and spy on them. Do you feel that that is justified to frighten these individuals with that kind of tactic on the part of your department, which is the part of your government's policy?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, I simply cannot believe the line of questioning from the member opposite. Is he saying that a government, is he saying that a Department of Social Services, is he saying that this minister should not be concerned about abuse and fraud which may exist in the welfare system? If that's what he is saying, he is sadly mistaken, Mr. Speaker.

I want to report to you, and to the member opposite, some statistics which would bear out the fact that what we are doing is very responsible, and what he is suggesting is irresponsible.

An Hon. Member: — Answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — And I'm answering the question of the member opposite.

In the month of March, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the mandatory cheque pick-up which this government introduced — which should have been done years ago by the members opposite, but they did not — in the month of March the value of the unclaimed cheques which were not picked up by people on the welfare rolls totalled over \$85,000. And if you extrapolate that to the entire case-load over an entire year, you're talking about something in the order of \$4 million that would not have been spent.

I think that kind of thing that we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what should be done by a responsible government, and I certainly stand by our policies of welfare reform.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister would be well served if he would concern himself about the well-being of families who are finding themselves in these difficult situations, and he should remind himself that we don't live in a fascist state here in this province.

Mr. Minister, the Ombudsman's open letter brings to light another case involving your department's so-called fraud squad, which you have referred to. He reports that a pregnant woman, in ill health, was recently arrested and incarcerated on fraud charges, but when she appeared in court, the charges were stayed for lack of evidence. Can the minister explain how that happened? And further, Mr. Minister, can you explain how that is treating people fairly or with even a semblance of human dignity?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that the Department of Social Services did not lay charges. The Department of Social Services provides information and evidence to the police if they believe that there is a fraud situation that has ensued. It is then in the purview of the police to determine whether or not an investigation should take place.

And if the member opposite is questioning whether or not the police should, in fact, be investigating matters of fraud, then I think he's on the wrong course. Whether or not the police should have actually investigated this particular case is a matter that I know nothing about. But I do know that when my department receives information that they believe should be passed on to the police because it does have implications regarding fraud, then certainly my department is doing the right thing in passing that information on to the police.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary on this question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the police do not lay charges unless your department brings to them what they think is evidence to bring about some need in the minds of the police to lay the charges. So don't put it on the police, Mr. Minister.

I'm asking you: how can you justify this kind of action on the part of your officials in your department on a woman who found herself in this kind of a situation, and then it

was proven that there was no evidence at all? How can you say that this is fair, and how can you say that this is treating this individual who represents, I might add, many, in a human and a dignified way?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, this matter is clearly in the realm of police responsibility. The Department of Social Services provides information to the police, if they believe that the police should have that information. The police then determine whether or not there is sufficient information to arrest an individual or to lay charges. That's entirely in the domain of the police force. That has nothing to do with the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, since you took office, the number of people who have become dependent on welfare in this province has reached record levels. I think that says something about your policies. You say you have brought in what you pretend to be welfare reform — which turns out to be a witch-hunt. You say that, in spite of the fact that church groups, welfare rights organizations, schools of social work, and many others, in spite of the fact that they say that a review is necessary, you say a review, you will have nothing to do with. Surely, Mr. Minister, that is wrong. How can you continue to pursue your arrogant fashion and your arrogant fashion and refuse to acknowledge the fact that a review is necessary of your policies and your programs to determine what is wrong with the system.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, we now know very clearly where the member from Regina North East and all of the NDP opposition members stand on welfare reform. If ever it was clear, Mr. Speaker, it is clear today. They are opposed to welfare reform. They do not want to see welfare clients have to come and occasionally pick up their cheques. They don't want to see welfare clients have to go through education and training and job preparation to better themselves.

Their approach to welfare was a very simple approach: hand out a cheque, turn your back, and walk away. That's not responsible. That's not what this government believes in. That's not what the people of Saskatchewan believe in. Welfare reform is working; we're very proud of it, and we're staying on the track.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — A question to the Minister of Social Services, and it has to do with, by way of background, Mr. Speaker, the real facts on what has happened with payments out of the Saskatchewan assistance plan, or welfare.

The minister will know that there are now 20,000 more people on welfare than when he became minister. In his own estimates, which we're dealing with as soon as we get to them, Mr. Speaker, the amount he is estimating to be spent on welfare is \$190 million. That's 90 million more than when he took over per year. I would say to you, Mr. Minister . . . How do you explain that your welfare reform is working when there are 20,000 more people on welfare than when you started your reform? How is your reform working so well when you have 20,000 more people collecting welfare than when you were given the job to cut down the number of people on welfare?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, consider the inconsistency of the member opposite. Here he is complaining about the number of people on welfare rolls; at the same time he's opposed to the Gainers plant in North Battleford which will create jobs. He's opposed to the paper-mill in Prince Albert which will create jobs. He's opposed to the Rafferty project which will create jobs. He's opposed to the upgrader and the ammonia plant here in Regina which will create jobs. At the same time he refuses to admit that welfare rolls have dropped in the past year; at the same time he refuses to admit that it was necessary to mount significant measures to combat fraud and abuse; at the same time he refuses to support our efforts to educate and to train thousands of people on social assistance. How inconsistent can the member opposite be?

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Supplementary to the minister, and it has to do with the Ombudsman report, another radical and crazy, along with the doctors who are being labelled by this government as being radical and crazy. There's getting to be small minority in this province who are not radical and crazy — about 50 . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. The member rose on a supplementary. If you have a supplementary, I'll take it, otherwise we'll move on to the next person.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — I just wanted to ask the minister, in his dealing with the Ombudsman, in light of a case which a person had his social assistance postponed for a week because he was an hour late for an appointment — this is documented by the Ombudsman. The reason that he was late for the appointment, and deducted a week, was because he was going for a job interview. I wonder, Mr. Minister, is this part of your welfare reform system to get people onto the employment rolls?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have come to not always accept that what the members opposite say is entirely a fact, nor their quotations. If the member was really concerned about this particular case, I wish that he would bring it to my attention, and we certainly would be willing to look into a situation where a particular person, a member of the public, has not been appropriately dealt with by the Department of Social Services. We want to see everyone dealt with fairly and justly and reasonably. I think the public deserves that, and certainly I want to ensure that that happens, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — A new question to the minister. It's interesting, Mr. Minister, that you don't believe the report of the Ombudsman. There are many people in the province who have high respect for Mr. Tickell and his work over the past number of years in solving their problems. And I find in appalling that . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. The member is making statements rather than asking questions. If you have a question, we'd be pleased to take your question.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's a little difficult to ask a question without putting a sentence in front of it, but I will try to do that. Mr. Minister, in his open letter the Ombudsman has this to say about your attacks on the findings of his annual report, and findings, I might add,

that suggest you have a number of serious problems in your department. And I quote from the report, Mr. Speaker:

I can only construe your approach as either a device to avoid responding to the 'real' issues or an attempt to shoot the messenger because you do not like the message.

Mr. Minister, if you refuse to launch the kind of independent review which the Ombudsman calls for, how in the world do you expect the people of the province to have any confidence in you or your government's ability to deal with problems when you're saying the Ombudsman is not credible and that he's somehow lying or misleading the people of the province — which is what you're implying.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is off on the wrong track altogether. First of all, if he has had much consultation with the public, he will know that there is broad, broad support for welfare reform in the province of Saskatchewan.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I have today . . . Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite would be so kind as to be quiet, I would respond to the question.

I have today responded publicly by way of letter printed in the *Leader-Post* to the Ombudsman's report, and I would simply quote a comment that I made in the newspaper.

Of the 320 complaints concerning Social Services that the Ombudsman received in 1985, (that meant that) less than one-half of one per cent of the clients in the Department of Social Services had any particular complaint. By far the majority of those were not serious enough for the Ombudsman to investigate.

In fact, if I remember the numbers correctly, of the ones that were actually communicated to the department senior officials there were only five that were, in fact, substantiated. So if I might just quote the last statement of my letter in response to the member's question, it goes as follows:

But when the message tends to condemn a program of such importance and responsibility as welfare reform, when the message is based on miniscule and not particularly meaningful statistics, when the message hangs upon a handful of unsubstantiated claims, then it's time to doubt the credibility of the message itself.

The public has a way of discovering the real truth about welfare reform, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Final supplementary to the Premier. I wonder, Mr. Premier, if you share the view of the Ombudsman that has been expressed here today that the findings in the report are unsubstantiated. Do you share that view of the Ombudsman and his report to the legislature, that the cases that he brings forward and the work that he does on behalf of the people of the province

are not credible and that the cases are unsubstantiated?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I can say that I concur with the minister that if you have less than one-half of 1 per cent as the basis for allegations against a department, it's a very insignificant number. So if it's one-half of 1 per cent, and it's five people that he's basing the entire case on, then it's not entirely reasonable to expect an entire welfare reform package to be reviewed in the event that we're going to have less than one-half of 1 per cent to be the basis for the review. So I believe that the minister has made a reasonable case, and the public would agree with him.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — A question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, do you not agree that people, like many church groups in Saskatchewan who have had something to say about this — the school of social work, welfare rights organization, and the Ombudsman, all of whom have had the same claim to make about the problems that exist with your minister's policy — do you not agree that those people are worth listening to, and that maybe that they have a point, and that someone should look at what they are saying and consider instituting an independent review so that what they are saying can be looked into?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, I consult with every organization in Saskatchewan, or most of the organizations, including church groups, to provide the best policies that we can with respect to welfare and agriculture and employment and new economic opportunities, training, education, health care, and so forth. And as a result of the co-operative nature of our government dealing with all groups in society, whether there's a co-op or whether it's business, or whether it's farmers, whether it's neighbouring governments, whether it's the federal government, and indeed the U.S. government — when it comes to projects, the nature of listening and co-operating with others is a corner-stone of our administration, and it's led to some very positive initiatives.

Reform has been one of them, not only welfare reform, but reform in Crown corporations, reform in taxation, reform in many measures with respect to government. Welfare reform in the province of Saskatchewan is overdue and it's popular and it receives widespread support from people in the church that I go to, people in the church that the hon. member goes to, people that are involved in all kinds of groups. Okay? So I listen to people all across the province, and I bring the best information together. We design the welfare reform, we design tax reform, we design agriculture reform, Crown corporation reforms, because we're listening. The problem, Mr. Speaker, obviously, is that the previous administration did not listen, and the people of Saskatchewan turfed them right out on their ear because they wouldn't respond. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, they are now saying, well me too; me too; me too. Well I suppose it's a little bit late, but it takes you a while to learn the fact, and it may take you a few years yet.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Multi-year Crop Disaster Assistance Program

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to make a statement with respect to crop insurance and a multi-year disaster mechanism for Saskatchewan and Canada. I have sent a copy across to my hon. colleague, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg.

The multi-year crop disasters that occurred in the province in the '80s had a devastating effect on the incomes of farmers affected by these crop losses. The provincial economy as a whole suffered as well. Although the crop insurance program was sound and well-accepted and could handle normal crop losses, it became apparent that this program did not adequately address the effects of a multi-year disaster. As a result, Mr. Speaker, I proposed the national emergency assistance program at the first ministers' conference in November of 1985, last year. This program would deal with emergencies related to multi-year disasters. Discussions have been ongoing since that time with respect to a program that would deal specifically with the need for payments, in addition to that provided through the normal crop insurance coverage, in the event of multi-year disaster mechanisms. Such a program would also do away with the need for emergency assistance and ad hoc programs for crop loss.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, to say that our efforts have been successful. Today I am announcing the addition of a multi-year disaster benefit, to be in addition to the crop insurance program. Agreement in principle has been reached with the federal government and the other western provinces on the implementation and features of this benefit. Under the multi-year disaster benefit, eligible areas are determined by the size of the pay-out in the area, compared to the total premium for the same area. All insured farmers, Mr. Speaker, in an area which had losses of this magnitude in both 1984 and 1985 will now receive an individual increase of 10 per cent to their selected coverage option in 1986. The appropriate coverage adjustment factor will then be applied to this increased coverage. This additional 10 per cent coverage will be based on the 1986-87 Canadian Wheat Board initial price. The new coverage will largely offset the effects of previous years' losses on subsequent levels of protection provided.

Insurance pay-outs, Mr. Speaker, in the designated area will be based on individual's own production. All farmers in the crop insurance program will be eligible for this additional coverage except for those who are now insuring under individual coverage option. Farmers under this option already insure at 80 per cent of their average yields.

The crop insurance program is a sound program that is well respected by farmers in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. In 1985, 75 per cent of all Saskatchewan farmers carried crop insurance. For this reason the multi-year disaster benefit is being tied to crop insurance. All farmers not already in the program are encouraged — and I repeat, encouraged — to apply for crop insurance by April 30th deadline if they want protection in 1986.

An additional important change that I want to discuss are

enhancements being made to the allowances for minimum average yields under crop insurance programs. We made changes last year, Mr. Speaker, and we are announcing changes today. As a result of our experience in 1985, it was obvious that there needed to be an increase in the minimum level below which producers could collect the maximum coverage. In 1986 this level will be increased for all crops at the same time, and it will be feathered to eliminate sharp cut-offs. These changes will recognize the increased harvesting costs associated with low yielding crops, and also the management problems associated with low production harvesting.

In 1985 we did not have the multi-year disaster benefit available. As well, the allowances for minimum yields was considered to be too low. The crop drought assistance program was implemented, Mr. Speaker, to offset the effects of both the 1984 and 1985 droughts on farm incomes. This program paid out more than \$51 million, Mr. Speaker, to 13,000 farmers, to allow them to catch up as a result of the droughts in 1984 and 1985.

When we set up the program, our objective was to offset the losses through several features. Those farmers with crops at less than 100 per cent coverage adjustment have coverage increased to the level of 100 per cent. Crops averaging five bushels per acre or less for hard red spring wheat, and equivalent levels for other crops, were paid out at their full coverage.

As the season progressed, we considered the need for other enhancements, as well. The matter of additional production salvaged through special harvesting methods was included in our deliberations. There appeared to be a need to look specifically at special equipment. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, we gave consideration to providing benefits for payment on acreage harvested with air reels. Further serious consideration by the crop insurance board and the Government of Saskatchewan has resulted in a final decision to exclude payment for air reels.

The payment determined by last year's additional crop drought assistance program benefits does, in fact, meet our objective of providing assistance where major crop losses were suffered. As well, other better management techniques and other equipment — for example, straight headers — can bring about the same result of salvaging additional production.

The importance of crop loss protection through a program such as crop insurance has been amply demonstrated during the past two drought years. With enhancements such as the multi-year disaster benefit and increased allowances for minimum yields, the program will meet the needs of farmers in cases of future back to back disasters. The multi-year disaster benefit is based on sound principles. It represents positive proof of our commitment to maintain a strong agricultural industry, and has been introduced because of this government's desire to work in co-operation with farmers and with other governments towards positive and constructive solutions to the agricultural sector.

Mr. Engel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the minister for the advance copy. But I want to say to the

Premier that when you stand up and you talk about crop insurance, I have yet to hear the minister answer more questions than he raises.

You know, when you start dealing with crop insurance, I wish you would have left it up to your minister of agriculture last year when a constituent of mine was looking after it, because we didn't have that kind of problem. You've created very many problems in crop insurance. And today, in the name of an announcement, he is again raising more questions than he answers.

And the question is this, Mr. Minister: what happened with our \$4.08 coverage? Is that still in place, or have you got a new formula in there where you're going to go back to the initial price that the Canadian Wheat Board announced and 10 per cent on that? Which is it?

The farmers think they bought crop insurance this spring at \$4.08 a bushel. Is that still in place, or is it like you say here: 10 per cent increase on the Canadian Wheat Board initial price, which is down to \$3.15? That's quite a difference, Mr. Minister. I really would like to know what this little package says, because it scares me, it scares me to think that you are trying to cut it off.

The other question that farmers are asking me right across the piece — it's still not clear here today because of continuous crop losses, Mr. Speaker, and from your constituency on south — because of continuous crop losses, are the farmers covered at 75 or 85 per cent, or are they going to start at 100 per cent?

And are the ones that had one crop loss, say there's a second one, are they going — that were in 115 per cent — are they going to have 125 per cent coverage? The 10 per cent option you're talking about here leaves questions unanswered. Why don't you make it plain and straightforward and say what you're going to do with crop insurance?

Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, I've travelled across many constituencies in Saskatchewan. People are asking to hear the NDP's agricultural spokesman talk about and answer questions on crop insurance, and the question they're saying is: what are you going to do with crop insurance? Should we still buy it? And every time you stand up, you create more problems.

Your staff from crop insurance went out to Glenbain to a meeting. Ron Osika went down to Glenbain; he told the farmers, sign this affidavit, fill out this form — you'll get air reel coverage. Now all of a sudden they haven't got air reel coverage. The exception was there; you take it away from them.

You announce in Assiniboia a five-bushel coverage; the first five bushels is yours. What's happened since that time, Mr. Speaker? It's not a five bushel coverage, but it's a five bushel cut-off. The only reason farmers wanted to be paid for, an air reel, is because they got a little bit over five bushels when they harvested carefully. They weren't cutting it off, and they didn't stop harvesting when they got to five bushels an acre and baled the rest. And then they said they wanted a little extra coverage.

Well maybe the Attorney General thinks this is funny, but I want to tell you that there are problems, there are problems out there with the changes these boys have made to crop insurance.

One more commitment I'd like from the minister, the Minister of Agriculture — just one commitment. Will you stick with the contract the farmers signed? Will you leave the game rules in play for the entire game, or are you going to change them in midstream, or are you going to change them after Christmas for what they did last year? I'm telling you, is the coverage \$3.15 a bushel plus 10 per cent, or is it going to be 4.08 a bushel plus 10 per cent? Where are you standing, and what are you saying in this announcement today? You want a grandiose headline by saying you're not making your commitment.

I read it carefully. Your efforts last year, Mr. Premier — if I can have the attention and some peace in this House; if I could have some semblance of order here. I don't know — you don't care when we're talking. But I'm quite concerned that I can make myself heard, Mr. Speaker.

And the question is this. Last year you created total chaos in crop insurance. People across Saskatchewan are very upset with a good program, a program that worked. People across Saskatchewan were asking for some disaster help. They weren't asking to have you meddle and tamper with crop insurance and use crop insurance for political reasons. That's what you did. You tried to make a political implement out of crop insurance.

I want to warn you, Mr. Minister, crop insurance is a vital part of the agricultural economy. We like crop insurance. We built a program that was good, that wasn't interfered with. You start meddling. You've got your sticky fingers into it. You made everybody unhappy. The cattlemen aren't happy; the grain farmers aren't happy; the people that bought special equipment aren't happy. You have gotten everybody confused.

And I'm telling you, call an election on crop insurance, and I'll get out and I'll tell the farmers across Saskatchewan: we'll reinstitute a crop insurance program that they can count on, that they know what's going to be there. When they sign their contract, it'll be good for the whole year. It won't be tampered with.

(1445)

And I want to tell you, farmers asked for air reels because of the changes you made in July. If you want to put a five bushel deductible in there and say that if you get six bushels an acre we'll subtract a bushel, that's great; we like it. But if you want to mess around and say there's a five bushel cut-off, that's what farmers didn't like, because it taught a farmer that it's better to be a little bit slothful. That's what you were putting into a program, and that program is bad news.

The changes you've made today, the changes you've made today do not touch the problems you've created. They still don't answer. It leaves more questions unanswered than you had before you started. Mr. Minister, listen to some advice. Get some people around you that like crop insurance, that believe in the principle

of insurance. And let's implement a program that's going to work, and let's not make it political. Let's not use this as a political hatchet thing where you could help your friends and make some little payments here, and none there; make some adjustments in here, not there.

Eighty adjusters were out in my area at one time this summer. Eighty were working out of Gravelbourg. And after it was all done, Mr. Speaker, those adjustments didn't count. They then went back and measured the bins after all, like they should have done in the first place.

I'm telling you, you messed up crop insurance. Straighten it out, but don't try and make it a political animal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Federal Government Policies Adversely Affecting Saskatchewan

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly today to speak on the motion, a motion which I'll be moving at the conclusion of my remarks:

That this Assembly regrets that the provincial government has failed to stand up for Saskatchewan interests in Ottawa, and that this Assembly urges the provincial government to call on the Government of Canada to: provide a federal deficiency payment to grain farmers; repudiate the proposals of the Nielsen task force report which would be disastrous for Saskatchewan agriculture; abandon its plan to cut back severely on basic funding on medicare and post-secondary education.

I'll be moving that motion at the end of my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say that I invite all members of the Assembly to consider this motion carefully, and to put aside their narrow and partisan view, and to join with us in support of this motion, for it addresses a basic and fundamental issue in Saskatchewan today: the need for the Devine government to stop apologizing for the Mulroney government in Ottawa; the need for our provincial government to begin to stand up for Saskatchewan interests; the need for us to stand up for Saskatchewan.

The Mulroney PC government in Ottawa has been a big disappointment to Saskatchewan people. It began by promising jobs, jobs, jobs, but quickly became known as the PC government of taxes and taxes and more taxes.

It then moved on to betray what Mulroney himself, during the last federal campaign, called a sacred trust — the universality of the basic Canadian social programs. And it attacked directly the senior citizens by its direct assault on old age security pensions by cutting into the de-indexing

of the pensions.

And now this PC government in Ottawa, so heavily dominated by big central Canadian interests from Quebec and Ontario, now the Mulroney government is turning its back on western Canada, betraying Saskatchewan at a time of the worst agricultural crisis our farmers have faced in many years — in fact, some compare it to the great depression — a PC government in Ottawa that is not protecting Saskatchewan interests; that was quick to bail out the banks, to give massive concessions to the oil companies, but refuses to assist the Saskatchewan farmers.

And what does our Premier Grant Devine say? All he can do is to repeat over and over the same words as when he went down to Ottawa first — keep up the good work, Brian. And you know, that's going to come to haunt the Premier of this province. Because yesterday they had another election down in Prince Edward Island, and the Tory premier there tied his fortune to the fortunes of Brian Mulroney. And we know how Jim Lee, the Premier of Prince Edward Island, made out last night.

And I want to say, what does this Premier do, this paper tiger Premier that we have? You know he has defended the Mulroney government's tax increases on ordinary people — working families and farm families. The Premier actually defended Mulroney's plan to, as I said, de-index the seniors' old age pensions. And two weeks ago the Premier got cold feet and he ran away from calling the election. His politics of polling turned into the desperate politics of panic, and he went to eastern Canada with some of his bag men and some of the PC executive to consult the boys in Bay Street.

And our paper tiger Premier likes to talk tough, you know. But he didn't meet with Mulroney when he went down on that trip. No, the Prime Minister was away. Did he even ask for a deficiency payment on grain for farmers? No. Did he even raise a whisper of opposition to the Nielsen task force proposals which would be disastrous for Saskatchewan farmers? No. Did he raise his voice in opposition to the drastic cuts in federal funding for medicare and post-secondary education? The Premier's message to Ottawa was clear and simple and consistent — keep up the good work, Brian.

For the people of Saskatchewan, I say they want real leadership, not just the cheer-leadership of the Premier. They're tired of this here paper tiger Premier who lays down when he goes to Ottawa. They want a provincial government and a leader who will stand up for Saskatchewan.

And so I want to turn, Mr. Speaker, to some of the concrete and specific examples where the Premier of this province should be standing up for the Saskatchewan farmers. We must turn first, of course, to the absolutely critical question, and that is of grain prices. Saskatchewan farmers are the most productive and efficient in the world. They can compete head-on with farmers anywhere in the world. But today they are being forced to compete unfairly with the national treasuries of the United States and the European nations.

The farmers of the United States and Europe are being very heavily subsidized by their respective national treasuries. That has three direct consequences: it drives down the world price of grain; it supports at a high level the incomes of those farmers in the U.S. and Europe; and it spells disaster to Saskatchewan farmers.

Saskatchewan farmers need a federal deficiency payment, Mr. Speaker. They are efficient, they are competitive, but they can't compete with Fort Knox. And that is why the New Democrats have joined with major farm organizations like the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in calling for the federal deficiency payment to grain farmers. But has the Devine government even asked for this? No, they haven't. And if any of the PC members opposite wish to challenge that in this debate, if they wish to rise and assert that the Premier has indeed pushed for a federal deficiency payment, I invite them to table the documents that he has asked on behalf of the farmers. I invite the PC members who plan to enter this debate to speak out honestly on behalf of their constituents, to state very clearly and very directly whether they will join with us in calling on the Mulroney PC government to provide a federal deficiency payment.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, let me turn for a moment to another major issue facing Saskatchewan farmers, rural Saskatchewan, and indeed all Saskatchewan, and that is the proposal of the Nielsen task force report on agriculture, which would be disastrous to Saskatchewan agriculture.

Let us be very clear on the significance of this. It is a massive report prepared under the direction of the Deputy Prime Minister and presented to parliament by him. Its thrust is the Tory policy. But have we heard even one peep of protest from the Devine government, from the Premier, or from the Minister of Agriculture as to the effects that the Nielsen report would have on agriculture? No, we haven't.

In fact, I don't believe that we have heard even one word, one comment from the Devine government vis-à-vis the Nielsen report. And that's truly remarkable but all too typical of this government.

Here we have an absolutely major set of federal PC proposals which would have an enormous impact on Saskatchewan agriculture and the Premier of this province, the Minister of Agriculture, won't even make a comment. All he can do is to grin foolishly and repeat over and over, keep up the good work, Brian.

Let us look at some of the specifics in the Nielsen task force report. Do the members opposite wish to tell their constituents whether or not they agree with the task force's attempt to undermine the Canadian Wheat Board? Do they agree with this comment taken from page 22 of the report? And I quote:

One has to wonder whether an organization such as the Canadian Wheat Board is a liability or an asset. It could become a vehicle to hide mistakes.

Is that the Devine government's view? If not, I say let them rise and speak out against them. Does the government

opposite agree with the recommendations against the western grain transportation subsidy, and against the branch line retention? If not, I say let them rise and speak out clearly in opposition to these proposals.

Does the provincial government agree with the Nielsen proposal for changing crops insurance? Do PC members agree with the recommendations on page 181? And I quote:

The long-term federal objective should be to shift a higher cost share on to producers.

That is clearly the Mulroney PC policy on crop insurance. It is the provincial government's also. Do they oppose that one? Or do they just repeat once again, keep up the good work, Brian?

Does the provincial government agree with the recommendations that the federal farm improvement loans be eliminated? Well let them take their position. And does the provincial government agree with the task force recommendation that the advance payments administered by the wheat board should be eliminated? I ask them to take a clear position as well on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, those PC proposals in the Nielsen task force report constitute the most fundamental policy attack on Saskatchewan agriculture in our history, and yet not a word, not a comment, from the government opposite. Not a word from the Premier; not a word from the Minister of Agriculture here in Saskatchewan. Not a peep or a protest.

And that is why Saskatchewan people have concluded that the Devine government is more interested in laying down for Mulroney than standing up for Saskatchewan. And while this paper tiger Premier is so busy trying to raise the price of fuel paid by farmers and other consumers, and while he may not understand the grace threat posed by the Nielsen proposals, Saskatchewan farmers do understand them and they are opposed to them and they want their provincial government to oppose them as well. But all we hear from the Premier is, keep up the good work, Brian.

Let me turn to another major area of concern, Mr. Speaker, and that's the serious cut-back in established program funding by the Tory government in Ottawa. This poses a very serious threat to medicare and to post-secondary education. And I want to say as with other issues that I have mentioned, and I haven't got time to complete this, but I want to say that the Mulroney government is proposing to cut by 1990-1991 \$2 billion from post-secondary and medicare funding. And here this province, this government, will not stand up, will not say a word against the Mulroney cut-backs.

Mr. Speaker, I have much more that I would like to say, but I want to conclude by moving this motion, seconded by my colleague, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg:

(1500)

That this Assembly regrets that the provincial government has failed to stand up for Saskatchewan interests in Ottawa, and that this Assembly urges the provincial government to call on the Government of Canada to provide a federal deficiency payment to grain farmers; repudiate the proposals of the Nielsen task force report which would be disastrous for Saskatchewan agriculture; abandon its plan to cut back severely on basic federal funding for medicare and post-secondary education.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Engel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and second the motion moved by my colleague from the Quill Lakes.

I should like to concentrate my remarks on two specific issues that were raised in this resolution.

First, the need for firm opposition to the disastrous proposals by the Nielsen task force report on that portion that deals specifically with agriculture, proposals which would truly mean disaster for Saskatchewan farmers; a proposal that is going to have even a more devastating effect on farmers than did the effect that the reduced price of grain had, Mr. Speaker.

And that is why we are joining with Saskatchewan farmers and farm groups across the province calling on the Devine government to vigorously oppose these proposals. Now I've mentioned them in this House before, Mr. Speaker. We've gone through these issues and yet I have to hear one word from the members opposite. Like my colleague from Quill Lakes suggested, why don't they stand up and together oppose this kind of changes to Saskatchewan agriculture?

Yesterday I had the privilege to sit in on a meeting with our leader, Ed Broadbent, and five of the major farm groups in Saskatchewan and these groups spelled out . . . And they represent a broad cross-section, Mr. Speaker. We had the farmers' union on the left and we had the wheat growers on the right, and in between we had the commodity groups there, the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) that represents all the farmers in Saskatchewan.

And these people spoke with one voice loud and clear, saying that we are facing a crisis situation in agriculture. The situation is so serious, unless we lay aside our political biases and unless we get together we're going to see a major effect on our population in rural Saskatchewan worse than the effect was in the '30s — worse than the '30s.

And what have we got coming from the Tory government? We've got a report that the Deputy Prime Minister, Eric Nielsen, commissioned — put up a study group that were his cronies that put together a study. And on the agricultural portion, if the CPR would have written it themselves it wouldn't have as devastating an effect on farming as this one does.

First thing they call for, and the Premier stood up today

and talked about changes to crop insurance. Nielsen's report says, increase the premiums by 20 per cent a year until the federal government gets out of the matching formula that's paying their share of crop insurance; get out of crop insurance and if the farmers want crop insurance let them buy an insurance program that's actuarially sound.

Has the member from Redberry stood up and said he doesn't like it? Has the member from Redberry, on behalf of those constituents, said that he's prepared to fight Nielsen on this one? Not a word. What about the big mouth from Wadena? He takes trips by the chemical companies — paid for by them — and travels around the world. But does he stand up and criticize this right-wing reactionary program? All he can do is talk from his seat and make a lot of noise, Mr. Speaker, but he won't stand up in this House and condemn Eric Nielsen. He won't stand up and condemn the people that are going to pull the rug out from under his operation. He won't say a word about it.

The Nielsen report said that the premiums for crop insurance should be increased by 20 per cent a year until the federal portion is moved right out, and I think that's devastating to crop insurance. It shows you where the Tories are coming from and it shows you why we have the kind of statements like we had today from the Premier.

The second thing that I really take exception to the Nielsen report with, Mr. Speaker, and that is the introduction of variable freight rates. I was pleased yesterday to sit around a table and hear farm groups say that freight rates should be frozen. Farmers cannot afford the increases that the right-wing governments together with the railways are foisting on the farmers — a little bit at a time, a little bit at a time, and more and more. And groups across the piece yesterday said, we demand that the freight rates be frozen, not variable freight rates.

The Nielsen report also says, to make the railways more competitive and to be able to provide a service, we should have some branch line abandonment; let's finally admit that these expensive branch lines aren't doing a service to the agricultural economy; let's abandon them. And I'm saying that that is devastating to the farmers living on lines like Beechy, lines across Saskatchewan that are offering a service. They're saying these branch lines should be abandoned. I say that people in this House should stand up and be counted and tell the people where it's going.

I'm having a lot of competition, Mr. Speaker, but if you don't hear them ... It's coming from right behind me, from the member for Kelvington-Wadena, and his big, loud voice just throws a curve at you when you're trying to think. And I'm sure he doesn't want to hear this. I'm sure the member for Kelvington-Wadena doesn't want to hear this. He doesn't want to hear that his party's commissioned a report that says they're supposed to cancel the grain cash advances. He is saying that they should cancel the grain cash advances. That's why he doesn't want to hear this speech. That's why we have that kind of racket in here.

And the worst one is, end federal farm fuel tax

rebate. Instead of joining with farm commodity groups from across Saskatchewan, and joining with these people and saying that we should take off the federal tax on farm fuel, they are saying to end the fuel rebates that farmers are enjoying and the two bits we're getting back.

These proposals spell bad news for Saskatchewan farmers, bad news for all of Saskatchewan and all of Saskatchewan businesses, because they're going to feel the consequences of branch line abandonment, of variable freight rates, of cancellation of cash advances. And the worst one is the increases in crop insurance premiums. And Saskatchewan people are calling on the Premier to stop laying down for Ottawa and start standing up for Saskatchewan farmers.

And I think that the most serious one, the most serious effect of all, is this tremendous reduction in the price of our grain, the 20 per cent cut — 81 cents a bushel cut on the price of grain.

Avery Sahl from Sask Wheat Pool met with us yesterday and he calculated with Sask Pool's research people that we need a deficiency payment, a support payment of \$2 billion. If the targeted price for United States grain is 6.05 a bushel in Canadian funds, and the average export is 18.5 million tonnes, that makes \$1.34 billion, Mr. Speaker — 1.34 billion. You add the other grains in, it makes a \$2 billion deficiency payment that the Sask Wheat Pool is asking for. And he says we should have an agreement from all parties.

So I challenge members opposite, I challenge the Minister of Finance, to stand up in his seat in spite of the trouble he has at winning his own nomination, to stand up in this House today and say that your party supports these commodity groups that are saying we need a deficiency payment.

Bud Morken from the UGG was there. He said ... And he called it the low price blow that hit Saskatchewan farmers. The consequences, he said, is a \$1.5 billion drop in farm income. He said the buying power of Canadian farmers is the lowest since 1930 and the UGG's calculation of \$3.15 a bushel ... You know how much that makes in 1930 dollars, Mr. Speaker? Eighteen cents a bushel. That's what you're getting for your wheat when you compare it with the buying value of the 1930 dollar — 18 cents a bushel. That's the thanks we can give Brian Mulroney for what we're getting for our grain.

He calls for a summit. He calls for a federal-provincial and farms groups getting together and talking about an offset payment in the tune of \$1.2 billion.

A very interesting paper was presented by Barb Isman and Paul Sim from the Wheat Growers. These people agreed that we need to ask for an offset payment to fill in the short term. On the long term they had a two-pronged approach that I thought was very effective and very good, and they said: to make up the deficit that's created in the farm income by Saskatchewan farmers, we need to have an injection of cash. SARM was there yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and they said they passed a resolution that farmers should be guaranteed at least a minimum of \$40,000. They felt that the \$10 a bushel should be

targeted, that it would be made across the board that farmers would get it. He said we can reduce the cost of chemicals if they would cut all this nonsense advertising. We could save 10 per cent on our chemical costs. But their argument is that farmers are losing \$2 billion a year because of the subsidies by the . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. It is my duty to inform the member his time has elapsed.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to enter into the debate today. I was just listening with some interest to the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg and some of the comments that he made about our Premier and his do-nothing attitude about agriculture.

And before I get into that statement, I would just like to take us all back a ways in history. Although I'm a fairly young individual, Mr. Speaker, I can remember when I started farming in 1970. And of course at that time we had a great program called the LIP program which came along. And I recollect a hearty endorsement by the then newly-elected NDP government of such a program. And I remember going to the elevator with my first crop in 1970 and receiving \$1.28 a bushel for it. And it makes me wonder, Mr. Speaker, how we can get some of the statements about \$3.50 wheat when we were getting \$1.28 in 1970, and 1971, and 1972. And it wasn't till 1973 . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. The members complain when others holler when they're on their feet, and I would ask them to have the same consideration they would expect for themselves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it all goes back to this attitude and this statement that the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg about our Premier and his do-nothing attitude, because it seems awful strange to me, in those three very tough years which we had in the beginning of the '70s, and as you well know as a farmer what we went through in that particular period of time.

And it really makes me wonder how the members of the opposition can stand there and berate our Premier for his do-nothing attitude toward agriculture when we suffered those three devastating years in rural Saskatchewan and there wasn't one single program which came out of that government. There was not one single effort by that government, the former Liberal government in Ottawa, to do anything to solve some of our agricultural programs. And to me, any program which came along and told farmers to summer-fallow twice in two successive years had to be utterly foolish, and I did not hear anything out of that government complaining about such a program.

Anyway, let's get back to the Premier of this province and also our agricultural minister and his do-nothing attitude toward agriculture. We have farmers with a cash flow problem in Saskatchewan, and I think everybody admits that. So we come along with a program called the production loan program. This is probably the most significant farm program that's ever been introduced by

any government in the history of Canada. And the fact that our farmers can get \$25 a cultivated acre at 6 per cent interest — and this works out to an average loan of \$20,000 per farm — to me is pretty significant. And that is a recognition by this government, by our Premier, by our Minister of Agriculture, to say yes, there are problems out there and we are doing our best to attack them.

(1515)

We've heard a lot in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, about the oil companies and about the non-benefits which accrued to the people of Saskatchewan. The fact that one-quarter of all the revenue generated in this province in the last year was from the oil companies, I think is significant. But also the fact that this year farmers in this province, Mr. Speaker, are going to receive 21 cents a gallon — about \$42 million — going out of agricultural producers in this province, and that is a direct result of what this government has done with the oil patch.

And when I think of every farmer in my constituency getting an average of \$650 through this refund program and what difference that's going to make to his input costs in 1986, I think that's fairly significant, and that goes directly in the face of the statements made by the previous speaker.

When I think of our livestock industry and the tremendous ups and downs which occurred all through the '70s, all through the time that the NDP were in government . . . One year the livestock producer is doing fine; the next year the commodity prices drop, and he's down.

Our government, our Minister of Agriculture, spearheaded the \$125 per head cash advance, and I think that's pretty significant because the advance which our grain producers have had for years and years in this country is now available to our livestock producers, and we can take some of the humps and valleys out of the cost of producing livestock to give a guy a little bit of a cushion between that calf crop and when it's sold the following year. And to think that 14,000 agricultural producers in this province have already taken advantage of this, I think speaks for itself as to the acceptance and the goodness of this program.

You combine that with the livestock investment tax credit and think that 7.5 million in tax credits have already been issued to 7,000 producers in this province, and you know, Mr. Speaker, that our Minister of Agriculture has been acting on agricultural issues.

We've also had the question of people in trouble with lending institutions in trouble because of poor commodity prices, in trouble because of drought. And I can remember droughts occurring back in the '70s, Mr. Speaker, and in the early '80s when we faced 22 per cent interest rates, when everyone had an operating loan which they were having a tough time paying back, and nothing was done. There was no representation by the former government to the federal Liberals at that time, no representation at all.

This government has acted. It has brought forward the

counselling and assistance program which has guaranteed operating loans to those producers who have been faced with low commodity prices and drought. And finally, we have had The Farm (Land) Security Act, which has provided a forum of a person's peers to appear before farmers — not bureaucrats, but farmers. So that a fellow that is having difficulty with a lending institution, he'll go talk to people who understand his problem, who will have sympathy with what he's trying to do. And if he can show that he is trying and making an honest effort and is viable, then they will go to bat for him with the courts and with the lending institutions.

I think, Mr. Speaker, of something like our natural gas distribution program. For years and years we were told in this province that we just didn't have enough natural gas for our farmers to have the same benefits that our city dwellers had. And when you think of what's happened with the price of heating oil, what's happened with the price of propane, whether this be grain drying or heating your shop or heating the hog barn, all of these are direct costs to our agricultural producers. And once again it flies directly in the face of the statement made by the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg that our Premier has not done anything to fight for agriculture, has not been innovative, has not brought forward programs. And the fact that we've taken natural gas, gone into this province, found it, developed it, and now brought it to the people of this province in the rural areas, is fairly significant.

Mr. Speaker, in my riding alone there are now 1,300 kilometres of gas line. Every one of the farm producers there that's hooked up is saving easily 50 to 60 per cent of his costs, his heating costs, no matter what he's using it for. And that is a very significant reduction in the cost of production for those agricultural producers. Mr. Speaker, we will not be stopped or intimidated until that natural gas program has been run through this entire province, so that our farm people and our small towns have got exactly the same benefits that other people in this province have enjoyed for years and years.

As far as the Nielsen task force, Mr. Speaker, I have only heard two significant things come out of that. One was something about taking away the farm fuel rebate program, which the member mentioned, and then I hear that it's been extended to 1988. I wonder where he's coming from on that one, because that's in law. And the other one was the Churchill line abandonment. All of a sudden the federal Minister of Transportation comes up with a \$14.5 million upgrading for it, which means that the Churchill port is probably going to double its capacity.

And then I go to rail lines, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is the really significant one — that all through the '70s, when we were faced with this problem of rail line abandonment, in 1979 the then Prime Minister of Canada, the Hon. Joe Clark, had an M.P. who happened to be my M.P., by the name of Doug Neil, step in that summer and do a comprehensive study of rail line abandonment in this province. Doug Neil probably saved more rail lines in the eight months the Clark government was in than the NDP ever did in the 11 years that they were government.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. It is my duty to inform the member his time has elapsed.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today in support of the motion put before us, moved by my colleague from Quill Lakes.

It's quite interesting. The member from Thunder Creek who has just taken his seat, and a well-known farmer in his area, has indicated to this House publicly that he has never read the Nielsen report. And I think that, being a member of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, that he should read that report. He indicates that — and this is his words — that he claims to have heard what was in that report. Well I tell you, what was in that report, to the member for Thunder Creek, is very important to your constituents, and I suggest that you read that report.

The issue before us is clear, simple, and important to the people of Saskatchewan. Why won't the Devine government protect Saskatchewan interests? Why won't the Conservative government oppose forcefully the threats from Ottawa? And why won't the Conservative government in Saskatchewan stand up for Saskatchewan?

I would like to focus and concentrate on one particular aspect of this problem, the federal Conservative government's cut on basic health care funding all across Canada, including here in Saskatchewan.

As all members know, last May the Michael Wilson budget announced the Conservatives' intention to cut back on basic transfer payments to the province by \$2 billion by the year 1990-1991 — by 1990-91 to achieve a \$2 billion a year reduction in these vital payments.

Mr. Speaker, because of the leadership of the CCF and the NDP in this country, because of the leadership of men like Tommy Douglas, all Canadians today have access to medicare and hospitalization. And the federal government carries a major national responsibility to ensure national standards, to ensure universality, to ensure access to all Canadians in poor provinces and in wealthy provinces and also into our regions. And we see in our regions, and especially in the far North where these transfer payments — and you see the reduction of money that's coming is starting to fall on the backs of the poorer regions of our province. And we take a look at where the cuts are being made, and they're being cut drastically.

The \$250,000 cut in the food transportation subsidy — and that is a program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that provided fresh food and vegetables and fresh meat and produce to the citizens up there so that they would be more healthier. But instead, this government has chosen to cut \$250,000 off that program, and they're going to continue to cut.

And I just ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you take a look at what the folks are paying up there now, and what they're going to pay if these cuts keep going until 1991, what it's going to be like.

An Hon. Member: — Who's paying for it?

Mr. Thompson: — Who's paying for it, the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake is saying? Well let me tell you,

the folks up in northern Saskatchewan are paying for it, and they're finding it very hard. They're finding it very hard because in Black Lake today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a litre of milk — and children need milk and all families need milk for good health — costs \$2.23. A dozen eggs up in Black Lake is \$2.45 a dozen.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your home city and in your constituency, you don't pay \$2.45 for a dozen of eggs, you pay \$1.29 for large eggs. And that's what they need. But they're being cut back. And you don't pay \$2.23 for a litre of milk for your family, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Saskatoon you pay \$1.73. But the folks up in the North where this food transportation subsidy was taken off, and they no longer can get the types of food that they need for good health, and on top of that they're paying these enormous prices.

But now the Mulroney Conservative government says, no. They are betraying that responsibility, betraying that sacred trust and are now planning to cut back on those transfer payments by \$2 billion by the year 1991. Well I'm sure that the former minister of Agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who is chattering from his seat, knows full well that he doesn't pay the same price that the folks up in Black Lake are paying, and it costs a lot of money to live up there. Basic health costs are expensive — a lot more than in your constituency, I suggest, of Weyburn.

An Hon. Member: — I'll speak for Weyburn, thank you very much.

Mr. Thompson: — That's right, you speak for Weyburn, and I'll speak for northern Saskatchewan. But when it comes down to cutting up the pie, when it comes to cutting up the pie and providing good health services and food transportation subsidies for my constituency in northern Saskatchewan, let me tell you, the member from Weyburn has had a say into the \$250,000 that were cut back . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. He's the one who sits in cabinet and makes those types of decisions.

The Minister of Health claims to be not informed about the impact of these cuts on Saskatchewan. He claims not to be interested. He claims to trust his good friend, the federal Conservative minister. He's like the Premier who repeats over and over again — keep up the good work, Brian.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's just not good enough where the people of Saskatchewan are concerned about the Conservative cuts to basic health care services. The people of Saskatchewan are opposed to those federal cuts, and they want the provincial government here in Regina to stand up for Saskatchewan, speak out against those federal cuts, to speak out directly and to speak out clearly, for the impact of those federal cuts will be severe in Saskatchewan.

The cuts for health care alone have been estimated by the Canadian Hospital Association — and these are their figures, Mr. Deputy Speaker — federal funding cuts up to \$54 million per year for Saskatchewan health care alone. One just has to realize what that means. It means that basic services are going to be cut. Federal funding cuts

totalling 154 million over the period until 1990-91 for Saskatchewan health care alone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of my constituency and the people of Saskatchewan are opposed to this Conservative plan to cut back federal funding to the provinces for basic health services. They are tired of the Premier's cheer-leading support for every move of Mulroney's.

The people of Saskatchewan want leadership, not more Devine cheer leadership. The people of Saskatchewan want their provincial government to protect Saskatchewan interests. They want a government that will stand up to Mulroney, that will stand up for Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, when you . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you see the types — the massive cuts of up to \$2 billion for the basic education and health, to maintain that in this province, one knows that the citizens and the children, especially of this province, are going to suffer.

(1530)

When you take a look at what's happening in our schools today, we have schools up North where the teacher-pupil ratio is in the 35-student range, and that's just not acceptable. You can go into Stony Rapids and not only find the teacher-pupil ratio at 35 and above, but you see teachers who are now teaching three classes in one room. And they tell me that they just can't do a good job with the students because there are some students that are at a different level than other ones, and when they're cut back in staff — and they are cut back — they're cut back in materials up in them areas. I have teachers and administrators who are telling me that the basic materials that they need to teach the children, they're being cut-back in that.

Stony Rapids is a good example, where they don't even have a maintenance man to look after — and I believe that they have around 30 furnaces in that school up there, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and they don't even have up in that school a maintenance man. They have a maintenance man who may fly in there from Prince Albert to give some instructions, but you have teachers who are actually not just teaching the children in the class-rooms, but are maintaining the furnaces in those class-rooms, and that's a fact.

And I suggest that the member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake take a look into some of these situations, because we live in a province where I believe that we should have equality. We need equality for our citizens; we need equality in health care; we need equality in education; and that's what we should all be working towards. And let me tell you, that's not happening up in Stony Rapids, and it's not happening up . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. It's my duty to remind the member that his time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In rising today I'm reminded of a phrase which the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly told me about a couple of years ago. He said he wished he had a dollar for every time he had a member rise and say: Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to get into this debate — but I guess I'm in that position today.

It wasn't until after lunch today, in fact just after a caucus meeting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had a chance to take look at the motion that was being presented under rule 16, and I'd like to note from that motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first couple of lines. It says:

That this Assembly regrets that the provincial government has failed to stand up for Saskatchewan interests in Ottawa
...

And then it divides up into several segments.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take a look at these first couple of sentences and take issue with that particular statement. Now my colleague from Thunder Creek has already taken issue on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, on behalf of our Premier, who is the Minister of Agriculture, and he has pointed out many of the things the Premier has done for agriculture in Saskatchewan in conjunction with, and not always with the total co-operation of, the federal government.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to standing up in the Assembly or standing up in public and speaking on behalf of this province, our ministers and our MLAs this side of the House are not found wanting. I heard reference today to the member from Redberry. One member who was speaking pointed to the member for Redberry and he said, why doesn't the member of Redberry speak out? Why doesn't he stand up?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to tell you in this Assembly there is not a member more industrious, more conscientious, and more devoted to his constituency than that member from Redberry sitting over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is not atypical of the members on our side of the House, and I'm proud to call the member from Redberry, not only a colleague, but a close friend.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to standing up and speaking up for Saskatchewan on behalf of my department or my constituency, I don't like to think that I have exactly been a shrinking violet either, certainly not on the floor of the Assembly, and certainly not when it comes to constituency matters and dealing with the problems that beset my constituents, many of which were carry-overs and held-overs from the previous administration, I may say.

But as for standing up for Saskatchewan interests in Ottawa, when I took a look at that motion, several things came to my mind very readily. And the first one that came to me was a freshwater fish marketing corporation. Well

in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we didn't like some of the regulations, and we didn't like the way some things were being implemented because they were detrimental to our own producers. So we changed them. We talked to federal officials; I talked to the federal minister and said, we don't like this. This isn't good for Saskatchewan and we want changes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we made those changes.

Turning to another aspect: the North American water-fowl plan — an example of something we've been involved in as a provincial government, and certainly as a department, because we felt it was good for Saskatchewan. It is good for more than Saskatchewan, but primarily that was our interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We've had co-operation from the federal government, our own provincial government, the federal U.S. government, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation on behalf of its 35,000 members, Canadian wildlife service, natural history society, and various other conservation groups too, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As an example, I think, of standing up and speaking out for Saskatchewan and making something come true . . . And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're talking about water-fowl management. But we're talking about a deal that is not only good for the water-fowl of Saskatchewan, but will be good for the farmers of Saskatchewan and good for the conservation groups in Saskatchewan, good for the wildlife federation in Saskatchewan, not to mention the vast infusion of funds that will come about as a result of this program, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That, I think, is another example of speaking out for Saskatchewan.

In the area of parks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've worked with the federal government, the previous government — the previous federal government; we've had discussions with them about grasslands national park, the Webb interpretive centre. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we spoke out for those projects, and when they get stalled because of a government in Ottawa which may be of the same political stripe as us, we don't sit back and say, good job guys; sorry, we can't work it out.

That's not our way. That's not the Conservative way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We go down there, and I have no hesitation of fighting with those people. I don't care what political stripe they are. If it's not good for Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're going to hear about it. And I for one, and I know my colleagues feel the same way, we're not afraid to stand up and speak our minds and speak out on behalf of Saskatchewan.

Turning to another area, forestry — and I know that in Saskatchewan we're generally regarded as being small players in the forest industry. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was at the national forestry congress in Ottawa, they had a panel of ministers on a stage and 500 members — leaders, organizers, professionals, foresters, and government officials — out front asking questions. And the moderator was one Pam Wallin of CTV fame. And her opening question to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was couched in terms such as: well, in Saskatchewan I know you don't have any trees, but . . .

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I took gross exception to a crass remark like that from a Saskatchewan native. And I pointed out to her, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that should she be interested enough to come back and visit her native province, I would personally be delighted to arrange for her a tour of our approximately 20 million acres of productive, commercial forest. It turned out later that the woman did explain to me she was being somewhat facetious because she thought she could spark a trifle controversy. She exceed beyond her wildest dreams, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well we may be small players in the forest industry, but it's Saskatchewan's second-largest manufacturing industry, and it directly creates more than 3,000 jobs. Another 5,000 people are employed in forestry-dependent industries and services. In economic terms, we're talking about \$71 million in annual wages, and these industries generate \$172 million of economic activity in Saskatchewan's economy.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that may sound like small players in the industry, but I believe that we are a very significant part of Saskatchewan's economy in forestry.

With regards to standing up and speaking out for Saskatchewan, I may say that the federal Minister of State for Forestry has visited Saskatchewan twice in the last year. He took part in National Forest Week in Prince Albert, and at that point officials from my department and officials from his department met, and they put together the paperwork as a culmination of some discussions he and I had held. As a result, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're committing to spend some \$28 million on a 50-50 basis, federal-provincial, over the next five years in Saskatchewan, concentrating on such areas as reforestation and silviculture and research.

On the topic of research, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're on the verge of bringing in some very exciting innovations in our forest industry. This year will be the first year where we're going to be planting seedlings, which we think will achieve a 40-year forest. Normally a forest would take some 90 years to grow to commercial value, and if our research is proven accurate — and I believe it will — we will be capable, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Saskatchewan of producing a 40-year forest which has tremendous economic implications for this province.

In addition to that, because we stood up, because we spoke out, and because we told Ottawa of our needs here, I'm pleased to say that we were successful in getting a \$3 million plant, nursery plant, in Big River which, coincidentally, is in my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased to say it's there. It's a beautiful facility, producing an excellent product. We're very happy to see it come about.

On the subject of forestry, as you would be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very recently we successfully concluded some negotiations that means the forestry giant, Weyerhaeuser, will establish a corporate presence in Saskatchewan. And as by way of . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order, please. It's my duty to remind the member that his time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lusney: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm also very pleased to get into this debate today, Mr. Speaker. I want to get into it mainly because of some of the things that some of the members in here are saying. And I want to go to the member for Thunder Creek.

Now he stood up in this House and he talks about how hard it was in 1971, how badly farmers were suffering, and the fact that prices of grain were low, in his opinion, at \$1.50 a bushel.

An Hon. Member: — \$1.28.

Mr. Lusney: — Well, Mr. Speaker, some members say \$1.28. He should remember also that that was the cause of eight years of a Liberal government that made our life pretty miserable in the 1960's, the same as what's happening with this government now in the '80s.

And I can understand why the members opposite want to holler about it. I know why, Mr. Speaker. They don't like to hear some of the facts. They don't want to hear the truth. That's why they holler from their seats. The member from Moosomin is really disturbed about it, and I can understand why. I can understand why.

Mr. Speaker, we only have to go back to either that \$1.28 or \$1.50 a bushel wheat, that the member from Thunder Creek was talking about, and put in perspective the cost that the farmer had then, too. I remember fuel at that time, diesel at 18 cents a gallon. Now I wonder if we can get 18 cents a gallon diesel today when the price of wheat is only \$3 a bushel. With the decrease in the price today, we're going to be looking at \$3.18 at the elevator. And is our fuel 18 cents? Or is it 36? Let it double. Let it double. Can we get diesel at 36 cents a gallon? And I'm not talking a litre, I'm talking a gallon. Can we get it, Mr. Speaker? No. They neglect to mention that. They neglect to mention that.

What they should be talking about is not what happened in 1970 or 1960 or 1950. They should be talking about what is happening now, today. And they should be saying to Ottawa, like they say they have such good rapport with, that they can go there and ask for anything and get it. Well I can say then, to the Minister of Agriculture, today's Premier, he should go to Ottawa and say to Brian Mulroney, or as some of the Americans refer to him as "Muldoney," say to him that we need deficiency payments. We cannot allow our agricultural industry in this province to have to fight with the treasuries of the U.S. or of Europe. They cannot do that, Mr. Speaker. That's what this government should be doing.

But do any of them in this House get up and do that? Does the Premier go to Ottawa and say, we have to have deficiency payments? No, none of them do it. In fact, a lot of them don't even want to get up and talk about it because they know, Mr. Speaker, that agriculture is not going to survive unless we have a government in the province and in Ottawa that is going to look at what the concerns and the problems are and do something about it.

(1545)

They talk about the port of Churchill. They had one little thing, Mr. Speaker. And we can get on the Nielsen task force report, and if one ever looked at that task force report and looked at what is being proposed in it, we see that what that task force report was proposing is that agriculture in this province is going to suffer even more than it is suffering today. They are talking about increasing premiums for crop insurance. They talk about introducing variable freight rates. They talk about forcing rail branch line abandonment and cancel the grain cash advances. They want to undermine the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, and they want to close down — that's in the report — they'd like to close down the port of Churchill. They would like to do all of those things, and they suggest to the government that this is what should be done.

But, Mr. Speaker, the government isn't . . . They're saying, we're not going to do some of that and we are not going to consider that report. And one would wonder why you would bother to have a report like that. Why commission any kind of report if you're not going to look at it or consider it? What they would like to do right now is say, we're just going to put it on the shelf for a while until we think it is possible for us to go ahead with it, and then we're going to implement every one of those items in that report.

But they have to somehow get the heat off themselves, because it was put on them once that report was brought out. There's no question that they felt the heat from it. So they announce a little bit of expenditure at Churchill, and it's long overdue. And it wasn't because this government did anything about it, and it wasn't because the government in Ottawa did anything about it. They did it simply because of public pressure.

And one has to look at organizations like the Hudson Bay Route Association. They worked hard to try and show the people that the port of Churchill is an important port in this province and for Saskatchewan people. It's one of the closest ports for some of our importers of grain, like Poland and the Soviet Union. They would prefer to go to Churchill to pick up their grain, and we should have developed that port a long time ago, to have more capacity where we could fill that port with grain, and these ships can come in through the summer and pick it up.

But no, they kept that port from being developed. That's what Ottawa believed in doing, both the Liberal and the Conservative government — it didn't matter which was in there; they wouldn't listen. But they had organizations like the Hudson Bay Route Association that worked hard and they got some success out of it. And I think, Mr. Speaker, this government is going to realize eventually that people do have a voice and that they will speak out and that they will accomplish some of the things that they think need to be done in this province. They will accomplish that because they are going to work hard for it.

They know that they can't depend on this government to

do it. This government will not do it on their own. They believe in getting rid of everything they could. That's what they would like to do. And they don't want to tell the people what's really going on.

That is the other unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker. They refuse to give information to the people of this province, the taxpayers of the province. They like to keep everything hidden, slide something in every once in a while that the people won't realize is coming, and then they defend it and they say, well we can't do anything about it; it's in already.

This government has proven over the past month that they will not give out any kind of information that will enlighten the public on what's happening in the province. We can go to many areas and we can go at Health estimates that we've just gone through a while ago — the EPF funding.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister could have been straightforward and told the people of this province the federal government is proposing to cut back on the EPF funding, and that will mean that we are going to have some problems in this province. We are going to have some problems regarding keeping the health care system as we know it, keeping it to the level that it is.

But no. Will the minister get out and say that? He tries to defend the federal government in saying, we don't know what it's going to cost us. It's going to be about 9 million this year. But whatever it's going to be next year, we're not even going to talk about that. We'd just like to forget about that. We'll worry about that when next year comes.

He should be telling the people: this is what is being proposed; this is how it's liable to affect our province over the next five years, and we have to do something about that.

But the minister chose the other route. He chose to try to avoid telling the people of Saskatchewan just what is happening. And he continued to do that day after day, and week after week, refusing to give out any kind of information. And every member, or every cabinet member of that government is going to be the same.

And it could be we're going to be here for a long time if that's the way they're going to be dealing with agricultural issues, health issues, or any other issues that we have in this province. We will take the time in here to try and get that information to the public. We will work at it day after day and get out as much information as we can so the public of this province can know exactly what is happening, and that they can decide what kind of action they have to take.

Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to spend that time here. We are prepared to ask the questions. We would only hope that the minister would take the time to answer some of those questions, rather than refusing to do it.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Thunder Creek talked about all the good things that they were doing for farmers. Well it's not only farmers that are suffering; it's business people that are suffering right now. All the people that are

on welfare or on unemployment — they are not finding it easy. Everyone in this province is having difficulties.

Mr. Speaker: — It's my duty to inform the member his time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Petersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to say to the hon. member for Pelly that his sudden interest in the public welfare is most touching. During the 11 years that they the NDP were in power, they talked about doing great things for the public, but I can remember some of the things that they did that they thought were great.

For example, in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, instead of supporting health care, and instead of supporting nursing homes, we built wonderful monuments to the NDP which are now liquor board stores. They came out and opened liquor board stores — 3 to \$400,000 to put up a liquor board store while they had a moratorium on nursing homes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, moneys were available from Ottawa at that time. Cost-sharing arrangements were available. And did they go to Ottawa? No, Mr. Speaker, they did not. They took their dollars, our tax dollars, and they built liquor board stores — and they were proud of it. The then premier came out — a great fanfare, a great parade. And they condemn our government. They condemn the Conservatives. Mr. Speaker, I ask you: the Conservative government has done more for the people of Saskatchewan in dealing with Ottawa than the NDP ever did. And that's just one small example, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Shaunavon likes to speak from his seat, as I've noticed. He cries and whines from his seat. Perhaps that gives us a definition of nine NDP in a basement — you call it a whine cellar.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, and in constituencies all over this province, the Conservative government under Premier Devine has moved to bring money in from Ottawa that the NDP left alone. We brought in thousands and thousands of dollars, and we've worked it out, not through confrontation, Mr. Speaker, but rather through consultation — rather through consultation.

We'll work with the federal government. The NDP believe in grandstanding. They stand up and do chicken-clucking exercises. They stand up and hand socks out. They can't talk to people. The Conservative government works with people. We do not believe in grandstanding.

If you take a look at many of their federal members — and we don't have many in Saskatchewan, but the NDP do have a couple, and one Mr. Nystrom in particular. He's a master at grandstanding, and I'm sure that's where the rest of the little chicken-cluckers here in the province have got their cue from and their grandstanding tactics. He gets up in the House of Commons and he talks about a parity Bill — let's have parity. But he doesn't say parity on what; he just says, let's have parity. And he throws that word out to the public, and nobody knows what it means, and he

causes a furore. And the NDP stand up in this House and yell and scream about parity and how Ottawa should do something.

Our government is talking with Ottawa. We're working programs out on crop insurance that are comprehensive, Mr. Speaker — comprehensive, long-term, and far-reaching.

That same particular grandstanding M.P. gets up on a television station and proceeds to talk about the big, bad chemical companies that are ripping everybody off, and we should do away with patent rights. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's anybody in here that would disagree that patent rights have perhaps become too extensive and allowed chemical companies a monopoly situation. That same member, however, neglects the second part that's involved with chemicals and chemical companies — and that's product-specific registration. He goes on and on about patent laws, but then says product-specific registration is okay. And product-specific registration, Mr. Speaker, is something with indefinitely extends patent rights.

So he speaks out of both sides of his mouth, or either face, depending on which crowd he's talking to. But he grandstands again without understanding the basic concepts involved, and that's because he's been an M.P. for 20-some years and has never lived in the real world. And that's the problem that we have with many of our NDP members in here today. They have never worked in the real world. They have not been part of it. They have never risked their money. They have never gone out and spent an honest day's labour.

Mr. Speaker, those same members sit there and sanctimoniously say, oh we'd go to Ottawa and fight for the farmers. But Mr. Speaker, would they accomplish anything? Has fighting ever accomplished anything? Confrontation tactics look great in the press, and they look great to the people out there that are watching their television sets, but they do not do justice to those same people.

Anybody can pick a fight. Anybody can stand up and say, hey I don't agree with you, and go on and on and on about any particular topic. But it takes a big man, it takes a man of understanding, a person of understanding, it takes women with courage and with integrity and with foresight to sit down and talk about their problems and, in mutual agreement, do what's right for the people. Any fool can stand up and yell and scream, and the NDP are living testimony to that.

But, Mr. Speaker, our government, which is now under criticism by the NDP opposition in this motion today for not having gone to Ottawa, is responsible for working out arrangements with Ottawa in areas like nursing homes, in areas like Sask Housing, where Saskatchewan taxpayers would like to put up fewer dollars and the federal government would pick up more. We're responsible for negotiating upgraders, where the federal government, ourselves, private industry, are partners.

That's consultation, not confrontation. And it's tough to get that message out to the people, but we're doing it, Mr.

Speaker, and the polls show that we're doing it. Consistently we have risen, time and again, on every poll that's been done.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that ties into our agricultural programs, those programs that we've developed, trying to take some long-term, common-sense approaches to the problems that we found in agriculture today. And the federal government, Mr. Speaker, has gone along with us. They've talked to us, and they've agreed that you can't have *ad hoc* programs every year. They've agreed that you can't solve problems that are weather-related, that are long-term problems, by simply every year pouring more money into it, throwing some little programs here, throwing a program there, drawing lines.

And today in a ministerial statement, the Minister of Agriculture got up and talked about crop insurance. And then the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg jumps to his feet, screeches and hollers, demands a bunch of answers to questions which were included in the ministerial statement to do with crop insurance. And that crop insurance agreement has been worked out in conjunction with other provinces and with the federal government.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to demonstrate here by these examples is that our government has been working, and has been consulting, and has tried to move in a direction that has some common thread to it. And it's succeeding, Mr. Speaker.

Our farmers out there today have got money to put their crop in the ground. Implement dealers have got money from the farmers for buying their badly needed parts for their equipment. Seed companies have got money from farmers through us. That helps keep their books balanced; that helps them employ people. Small business in general, Mr. Speaker, is dependent on agriculture across Saskatchewan, and they are experiencing the benefits of our programs. And I have to go back to my own constituency.

(1600)

In 1982, Mr. Speaker, when I was running for office, I could have had my pick of five or six empty buildings on the streets of Wadena or of Foam Lake or of Kelvington. Well today, Mr. Speaker, those buildings are all filled. They have businesses in them. They have businesses in them. And that's something that only come about in the last three or four years. And that's right across the whole province. And that wouldn't have happened if we had a government that wasn't standing up for rural Saskatchewan. That wouldn't have happened if we had a government that was shirking its duty, as the NDP did. That wouldn't have happened if we had a government that believed more in building great big liquor board stores than nursing homes.

Mr. Speaker, those liquor board stores give the lie to the NDP when they talk about how much they cared for people and how much they did for Saskatchewan. They thought more about having great big openings so their premier at that time could come out and say, isn't it wonderful; I'm here, folks; and cut a ribbon in front of a liquor board store. They thought that was wonderful; that

was great.

Three hundred to \$400,000, a moratorium on nursing homes, no assistance for interest rates for farmers like myself who were just starting out — and the NDP say they were doing good things for Saskatchewan. I have to disagree with that. Mr. Speaker, I can't support this motion. It just doesn't make any sense.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about working with the federal government, working with Ottawa, working with other provinces, I think we've led the way, Mr. Speaker. Other provinces are now copying many of the programs that we have brought into being. When you talk about working with Ottawa . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. It's my duty to inform the member his time has elapsed.

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There seems to be no rules whatsoever to this debate, so I suppose I can speak on whatever I choose. Everyone else has. It so happens, though, that I want to spend some time on the Nielsen report. It happens to be a subject of some importance.

What the federal government has been doing is attempting to balance its budget at the expense of the provinces. And it is going to succeed. Particularly . . . There are fewer supine Tory governments around than there used to be. They are getting to be fewer and fewer. With a bit of luck there'll be one left in western Canada and two left in the Maritimes and none in between.

It is high time someone started speaking up for the taxpayers and someone started putting the interest of the provincial governments forward in a forthright fashion.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the Nielsen report and the failure of Conservative governments to take any stance . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. It's my duty to inform the member the allotted time has expired.

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 5 — Hospital Expansion in Saskatoon

Mr. Sandberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to move resolution no. 5:

That this Assembly commends the Minister of Health and the Government of Saskatchewan for initiatives taken to expand hospitals in Saskatoon for the benefit of citizens in Saskatoon and in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, during the 1970s, talk was cheap. Words more often than not replaced actions. Promises were made by the members opposite but they were never kept. The former government had a motto, Mr. Speaker, and that was: never do today what can be put off until tomorrow. They proved that by saying they'd fix the Regina water when it was politically expedient to do so. That's when they were going to do it — when it was politically expedient. And they put lots of things off, that's

what they did.

When this Progressive Conservative government assumed office in 1982, the people of Saskatchewan were made aware of a few shocking facts. The health care system in Saskatchewan was deteriorating. Under the previous administration, cancer treatment services were allowed to deteriorate.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Shaunavon seems to want to talk from his seat. I invite him to do so. He's the one that stands up and crows and crows and crows about members from this side speaking out of turn or from their seats. Now he's demonstrating that. If he wants to get into this debate, let him do it from a standing position instead of sitting from his seat.

Staffing cuts in hospitals had taken place under the NDP. In 1976, as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, they cut 400 nursing positions — they cut, they chopped 400 nursing positions in Saskatchewan. Construction had fallen behind. They put a moratorium on nursing homes, a moratorium on nursing home construction.

Under the NDP, new technology had become a luxury. Mental health therapy was reduced to a skeletal operation. Potash and the family of Crown corporations had taken precedence over the health of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, this was all part of the NDP government's commitment to health care — or non-commitment.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition summed up his party's position quite well when speaking on a radio open line show in 1985. He explained that the Heritage Fund, the so-called Heritage Fund, was used to invest in the NDP family of Crown corporations and projects like Saskatchewan oil, Saskatchewan potash, and uranium mines. And it was not the belief that the money would and should be there in cash to build hospitals or nursing homes. That as on the CFQC open line show on November 7, 1985. That's what the Leader of the Opposition said.

In 1982 the people of Saskatchewan cast away the old and brought in the new, a government with fresh ideas and a desire to serve the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government recognizes the importance of protecting Saskatchewan people. This government is working to ensure Saskatchewan people from all walks of life are receiving the best possible health care. From new-born babies to senior citizens, all are being protected and protected equally through a commitment by the Premier and my colleagues to maintain and improve Saskatchewan's health care system. This government is ensuring we have one of the best health care systems in the world, a system which provides a comprehensive range of services, services spanning both rural and urban areas of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, my government is developing new and innovative responses to the needs of the 1980s and beyond. To tackle these challenges, government is not working alone. We're being supported by all participants within the health care system in Saskatchewan, working

together in a creative and meaningful way, and providing a level of health care unmatched anywhere in Canada. This is being achieved through responsible financial management and through a wide range of innovative programs and initiatives, at a cost which society can afford.

This government, this Progressive Conservative government, intends to ensure that over the next five years residents of Saskatchewan are assured of unequalled health care facility construction and renovation. That is why this government has committed an additional 300 million to the health capital fund. We have laid the necessary foundations and have begun building new hospitals and nursing homes in Saskatoon and throughout this province.

In 1984 we announced a five-year plan to build and replace over 1,500 special care home beds, special care home beds to help our elderly during their latter years. The previous administration, Mr. Speaker, had built only 245 nursing home units in a nine-year period. That averages out to 27 nursing home units per year — another example of too little too late.

And why did the former minister, one Walter Smishek, put a moratorium on nursing homes? This Progressive Conservative government does not believe in placing moratoriums on health care and nursing homes. We have the following excerpt from a secret NDP memo back in those days. January 4, 1976 is the date on the memo. And they're not proud of this but they should hear it again. It's from W. Smishek, chairman of the treasury board, to H. Rolfes, minister of Social Services at that time. And it says, and I quote:

Treasury board is seriously concerned about the level of construction occurring in the special care home sector. The level of activity proposed in the 1976-77 budgetary request would result in a surplus of beds without considering the impact of a home care program. Treasury board deferred a decision on the level of funding to be approved for this activity pending the review of more detailed information on all committed projects. Until such a time as the need for additional beds can be clearly identified and a suitable construction policy defined, a moratorium (a moratorium!) on further commitments should be enforced.

This was written by the former NDP minister, chairman of the treasury board.

They must have known at this time, Mr. Speaker, that the elderly population of Saskatchewan was increasing. They must have known the numbers. They can read numbers. At least, I would think they could. And they decided to put a moratorium on, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan can hardly believe that.

Then, Mr. Speaker, another former member of the NDP administration who is now trying to make a Cinderella come-back, is quoted as saying:

An Hon. Member: — Who's that?

Mr. Sandberg: — Well, he's running in Riversdale against the sitting member. And what does he have to say about level 3 and 4 nursing homes? He says in an article in *Hospital Products and Technology*, dated August/September edition, 1985, and the headlines says, "Building more institutions for the aged is road to disaster . . ." says the former attorney general of the province of Saskatchewan.

Well I want to tell the senior citizens in my constituency of Saskatoon Centre, in fact all the senior citizens of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, that the former attorney general says that building more level 3 and 4 nursing homes is not the route to go. That's not the route to go, says the former attorney general, and he wants to be the Cinderella come-back story. Well, we'll see if he makes a come-back. I'll tell him that the seniors of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan don't believe that he stands for their best interests.

Under the leadership of Premier Devine, Mr. Speaker, this government has built 433 special care home beds in Saskatoon alone, including the creation of a 24 million, 238-bed special care nursing home, the largest in Saskatchewan's history. Unlike the previous NDP administration, this Progressive Conservative government is committed to health care for our seniors who now comprise over 12 per cent of Saskatchewan's population.

As I indicated earlier, in the constituency of Saskatoon Centre it's estimated that there are well over 15 per cent of the constituency. So seniors are important to me as the member for that constituency.

Mr. Speaker, with a PC government senior citizens are benefiting from a fair and equal health care system, one which is building and expanding new hospitals in Saskatoon. As a matter of record, \$202.9 million worth of planned and ongoing hospital construction is taking place in Saskatoon today. St. Paul's and University Hospital are currently being expanded and a new City Hospital will soon be constructed in Saskatoon.

And I'd just like to go through those projects in some detail for the members of the Assembly. University Hospital, Mr. Speaker, is proceeding with a two-storey addition to accommodate approximately 300 medical, surgical beds at an estimated cost of 27.1 million, plus a new 44-bed psychiatric ward at \$2.8 million and internal renovations to the old hospital of 5.3 million. Total grants will exceed \$35 million. The net result will be the addition of 78 new beds at the University Hospital.

And on the way down from Saskatoon on Monday morning I stopped and just drove around that complex. Mr. Speaker, there are three cranes now in process of putting up that new addition and it is indeed a welcome addition to University Hospital and welcomes by the people of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan.

In the City Hospital, Mr. Speaker, which is located in the centre of the Saskatoon Centre constituency, it will proceed with a new 482-bed hospital at a cost in excess of 115 million . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

(1615)

Well I see the member for Regina North East is clucking from his seat again. He is the one who can sit down there and bellow and talk away; has no good suggestions to make. All they can do is detract and preach doom and gloom to the people of Saskatchewan. They have no suggestions for building and expanding, but they can sit in their chairs and talk and cluck like chickens and do all those silly things. That's about the only thing they're good for.

Mr. Speaker, back to City Hospital again. They will proceed, as I mentioned, with a 482-bed hospital at a cost in excess of \$115 million. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 1988. A new psychiatric ward was completed in 1985, and this increases the psychiatric in-patient accommodation from 16 to 25. The existing hospital is being upgraded pending completion of the new hospital. At that time the existing hospital will be demolished. Government grants will be 100 per cent of approved project costs

Then there's St. Paul's Hospital on the west side of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. It has begun construction of a \$52.7 million six-floor addition, including an energy centre, materials management, emergency, out-patient, radiology, and critical care facilities for a final bed count estimated at 442. This increases the bed capacity by 112 from the current level of 330. Government grants will be 52.7 million.

And one final note — the cancer clinic at the University Hospital site. Tenders for a new cancer clinic and research facility were received in February. A contract in the amount of \$13 million has been awarded. The total project cost is expected to exceed \$16 million.

Well, Mr. Speaker, services within our hospitals are being upgraded through new equipment and additional staff also. Presently Saskatchewan has 21 per cent more nursing staff in our hospitals and 36 per cent more hospital beds per capita than the national average. On a nurses per capita basis we currently rank number two in all of Canada.

Even with these impressive figures the Progressive Conservative government of Premier Devine is still making improvements. It is the goal of this government to ensure patients in Saskatchewan hospitals receive the best care and attention. To uphold this commitment, Saskatchewan's Health minister recently announced an additional \$100 million has been allocated to enrich hospital and special care home services.

Patient care will be further improved through increased services, staffing, and equipment. Currently there are 3,400 registered nurses in Saskatchewan hospitals and soon there will be close to 4,000. These measures will benefit people living in Saskatoon and throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP reduced patient-days in hospitals by 5 per cent, causing 400 staff to lose their jobs throughout Saskatchewan hospitals in 1975. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to bettering health

services for Saskatchewan people, and the initiatives continue — establishment of a provincial chiropody or foot care program for seniors; a new pediatric unit to help sick children at the University Hospital in Saskatoon; over \$11 million in grants to organizations in support of handicapped in Saskatoon since 1982 — many of these grants to better the health of handicapped individuals.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, a new \$17 million cancer clinic is being built in Saskatoon — and, Mr. Speaker, 100 per cent financed by the Government of Saskatchewan. A new CT scanner for the people of Saskatoon to be located at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon — and I'm proud that that piece of equipment is going in there. It was announced by the Premier. They're being bought for six Saskatchewan hospitals from Canadian General Electric for \$4.7 million. In exchange for the scanners, General Electric will undertake to market \$4.7 million worth of Saskatchewan products over the next year.

The first three scanners will go to Pasqua Hospital in Regina, to Regina General, and to St. Paul's in Saskatoon. Three other hospitals will each receive a scanner over the next 18 months. So that's indeed good news for the health care system of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have 72 more psychiatric nurses in Saskatchewan since 1982, and the establishment of new legislation to uphold the rights of patients. By working with service organizations, the first eye bank in western Canada has been established right here in Saskatchewan.

Also it was this government that put an end to extra-billing. Where were the NDP? They had 20 years to do it. They didn't do it; this government did it. And, Mr. Speaker, I quote the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's remarks on the Progressive Conservative government ending extra-billing. He said, and I quote, "I congratulate the Conservative government of Saskatchewan for doing so." That was again on the open line show in Saskatoon on November 7, 1985. So even he admits that we did it, and they didn't and wouldn't.

These are just a few examples of how the strong commitment of our government is protecting people from all walks of life in Saskatoon and throughout Saskatchewan. Children, the elderly, and families are all encompassed within this commitment, a commitment growing stronger every day, strengthened by leadership and vision — leadership which is responsive, responsible, and fair to the people of Saskatchewan; vision which is meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow. The leadership and vision of Premier Devine, the Minister of Health, and this Progressive Conservative government of Saskatchewan — leadership that has put action before words.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I again move the resolution:

That this Assembly commends the Minister of Health and the Government of Saskatchewan for initiatives taken to expand hospitals in Saskatoon for the benefit of citizens in Saskatoon and northern Saskatchewan.

Seconded by my colleague, the member for Saskatoon

Eastview.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Young: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to second this motion. I think that this motion is one that all members from Saskatoon can take heart in. We certainly have went a great distance in Saskatoon with the health care facilities since we took office four years ago.

In addition to all the things that have been mentioned earlier by the member from Saskatoon Centre, I would just like to point out and add to the record that there's been an additional 3.5 million, Mr. Speaker, just recently, to reduce the waiting lists in Saskatoon hospitals. This 3.5 million certainly will benefit the families by increasing surgery, day surgery, and the number of in-patients at the University and City Hospitals.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this being over and above the recent \$100 million announced by our Minister of Health, this additional 3.5 is in sharp contrast to the position taken by the NDP when they were in office. And I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, their former minister of Health, Herman Rolfes, who has the gall to be running again in Saskatoon, his idea on waiting lists was as follows: on December 1, 1981, and I quote him, he says:

In order to run an efficient hospital you must have a waiting list.

And that is the contrast in the positions taken by their minister of Health and the positions taken by our Health department, and the Progressive Conservative government, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that we must be commended for our position and certainly one must hold in some doubt the true heart of the NDP as it was in years gone by under their administration. They had run us, Mr. Speaker, to a position of being eighth out of 10 in health care spending per capita in Canada. Yet they had the gall to run elections or attempt to run elections on the health care issue, when they had ran us down to that position in Canada.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, our budgetary expenditures in the amounts of \$1.2 billion, which is 11, \$1,200 for every man, woman and child in Saskatchewan, are the highest that I'm aware of in the world. They're the highest, certainly, in North America. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that our resolve on the health care issue must be commended and we must commend our Minister of Health and our government for the amount of bucks that we have put towards health care systems.

Now certainly this wouldn't have been necessary, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP had kept the health care system up in their 11 years of office, but over their last seven years they let it run down. They put a moratorium, as mentioned earlier by the member from Saskatoon Centre, on nursing home constructions.

And I'd just like to tie that in, Mr. Speaker, what that does to the hospital situation, which is the subject matter of this motion.

About my first year in office we did a tour of both St. Paul's and City Hospitals, and I remember Elmer Schwartz, the director of the City Hospital was telling us what the stacks were in his hospital with respect to geriatric type patients occupying his acute care beds. And at that time he had 15 per cent of his beds in City Hospital occupied by geriatric type patients who had entered the hospital, usually through the emergency doors with an acute problem; they had broken a hip or had come upon some other accident or illness to bring them into the hospital.

The initial cause of their entry into the hospital had been cured, and when it came time to discharge them, Mr. Speaker, because of the NDP moratorium and their total lack of address to the nursing home situations, these poor people had nowhere to go, and they were left basically in the charge of the hospital administrator. He couldn't do anything with them. He couldn't turn them on the street. The nursing homes were full. In oft cases their children had been driven out of the province and they weren't even in the province to look after mom and dad. So what he would have to do was keep these people in an acute care facility. And effectively, Mr. Speaker, this reduced the number of beds in Saskatoon; i.e., their lack of addressing the nursing home shortage caused problems in the acute care hospitals. And I think that if one looks at it that way, Mr. Speaker, one can see very well how their policy of moratoriums on nursing home constructions has had a terrible effect on the hospital bed situation in my city of Saskatoon.

We certainly have, I would think, Mr. Speaker, done everything imaginable. Like our record in agriculture, our record in health is such that no one would believe that any government would have done more for health care than what we have done in our four years in office.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our aggressive nursing home construction policy ramifies in a very direct way on this motion and the number of hospital beds available. I think, Mr. Speaker, that the time will tell in Saskatoon, what people think of the three cranes that the member from Saskatoon Centre noticed when he came in today, that are under construction. There's going to be a whole new City Hospital, and expansion is on the way in St. Paul's.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what was brought out here in our Health estimates — the way the NDP elbowed out the nuns in what was formerly the Grey Nuns' Hospital here in Regina, and what some believe to be their hidden agenda for the St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon. And certainly their lack of funding for hospitals in Saskatoon, I think, would add evidence to the possibility of them attempting to have all hospitals run by the provincial government.

I think — and certainly all of us in Saskatoon know — that St. Paul's Hospital has the best record of providing health care per bucks granted of any hospital in the province. It's hard to compare them with the University Hospital, which has a teaching aspect to it as well. But certainly when compared to other hospitals which are not teaching hospitals, they have certainly done very well with the money they have received to run a hospital.

I want to commend the people in St. Paul's for the program that they have had, and ensure them that under a PC government we won't be attempting to elbow out their administration and replace it with a government administration. Certainly it's doubtful as to what their future would be with an NDP government, but I know that our government respects and values the administration brought to that hospital by the nuns. And certainly if all hospitals could squeeze a dollar as hard as they do in St. Paul's, we would certainly have a lot more for our dollar here in Saskatchewan, out and out.

(1630)

I think, Mr. Speaker, that part of the Progressive Conservative government's commitment to protecting hospitals has been the \$100 million that I had mentioned earlier in my speech to enrich hospitals and special care homes, basically towards staffing. Some of it went towards the six CT scanners mentioned by the member from Saskatoon Centre. But I think that address to the problem, after we had established hospitals as one of our four pillars and had went the 40 miles on them with respect to construction, just goes to show that this government and our Minister of Health has far from left it be and is far from being satisfied with our health system the way it is, and is continually addressing the problems as they arise, both the \$100 million address and the \$3.5 million address that I mentioned when I just started up.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to point out that what we have is a Department of Health and the various hospitals. I imagine that about 85 per cent of the cost of health services goes to wages and salaries. And I would think, Mr. Speaker, that it's our duty to provide the hospitals with funding with as little strings attached as possible and allow the professionals, the hospital administrators and their boards, to decide on just how best that money should be spent. I think that we have an admirable record in that regard and that far be it from us to really decide how the hospitals should be run.

It's our primary job to provide hospitals with funding. I think we have a very commendable job with over \$1 billion in funding on the health care scene in that regard. And I think that all of the administrators in Saskatoon and their administrative staffs must be commended. They're the people at the controls, that make important decisions in health care. And as far as I can see, they have done a very good job. And I think we have done a very good job in providing them with the moneys that will allow them to make those discretionary spendings, Mr. Speaker.

It's been mentioned earlier, the \$17 million cancer clinic that is being built in Saskatoon. This one, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out for the people in Saskatoon and the northern areas, it's 100 per cent financed by the Government of Saskatchewan. And just while I'm on that, Mr. Speaker, I think for other members of the North, it basically goes that from Davidson north, clean up to Uranium City, the Saskatoon hospitals are the hospitals of last resort. When someone gets a very serious problem they wind up usually in one of those hospitals. And the Regina hospitals work from maybe Davidson south.

And accordingly, all of this money that we talk about here

that's being poured into the Saskatoon hospital systems is not specifically for people in Saskatoon. Certainly the people of the North will be making use of the advanced technology and advanced diagnostic equipment and procedures that exist in Saskatoon. Should they find themselves in a grave situation or should they be unfortunate to catch cancer, then they would probably find themselves in the new cancer facility being built in Saskatoon.

So these facilities, Mr. Speaker, have a far reaching range throughout northern Saskatchewan. And certainly they are not just political fodder for us members from Saskatoon, but I believe they are significant to all members of the public in northern Saskatchewan, because some day they may all be using those facilities. And I think that that should always be kept in light when addressing Saskatoon hospital construction.

I believe Dagnone points out that something like 60 per cent of the people who come into his University Hospital are from outside of Saskatoon, from northern Saskatchewan. And when looked at in that regard, Mr. Speaker, that hospital would be of more use to people out of Saskatoon than actually the people right in Saskatoon. And I think that's a statistic that stands behind the point I'm trying to make.

We have the new pediatric intensive care unit for children at the University Hospital, Mr. Speaker. That is something that is new and certainly has been long overdue. I think that, as has been pointed out earlier and which was totally unnoticed by the NDP, we have an ageing population, Mr. Speaker, and the moratorium was a total denial of that fact.

We have taken a number of steps, Mr. Speaker, that will help relieve the loads in hospitals and nursing homes, by our seniors' programs which will go a long ways to try to keep seniors in their own homes as long as possible. Certainly most seniors want to stay there. But if circumstances are such that they need someone to come into their house once or twice a day or once or twice a week to make it possible for them to stay there, our government has went the 40 miles to try to help them to maintain themselves in their home. And that in turn, Mr. Speaker, has helped out the hospital and nursing home situation.

And again, all of these health policies dovetail together and work towards an overall better health care system. And we can't look at one in isolation from the other.

And on that, Mr. Speaker, our grants to improve housing for seniors, there are senior citizens' home improvement grants available to people with incomes less than \$1,500 and up to — or pardon me; \$15,000, Mr. Speaker — and up to \$1,000 to improve their home, to ensure a higher quality of life for seniors.

The income supplement for low income earners has doubled, Mr. Speaker, for couples; and an increase, Mr. Speaker, of 75 per cent for seniors who are singles. And this, Mr. Speaker, is the largest increase ever, and that shines in comparison to the \$5 increase which is all the NDP government can claim over their 11 years in office.

It's certainly a far cry for that and certainly a very worthwhile addressing to the seniors in this province, and something again that will help them stay in their homes, Mr. Speaker, and help take a load off of our nursing homes, and in turn our hospitals, as I've related earlier.

Now certainly, Mr. Speaker, patients will receive better care and attention from our hospitals in light of our \$100 million towards more staffing. The increase at the top is 421 positions, and currently there are 3,400 registered nurses in Saskatchewan hospitals. We have, Mr. Speaker — I'll get into that a little later in my speech — we have the highest, in Saskatchewan, number of beds per capita. And I think that when we look at this, Mr. Speaker, the facts are that we lead Canada, and we have 36 per cent above the Canadian average in number of approved hospital beds per capita.

Certainly we lead Canada as well; we have 21 per cent above the Canadian average in number of general hospital nursing staff per capita. So we can see here, Mr. Speaker, that in general nursing staff we have more than the Canadian average, and certainly in number of beds per population we have more than the Canadian average. And I think that that is something as well, Mr. Speaker, that we must commend our government on, and our Minister of Health on, is keeping up the funding and the beds and the staffing in hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that what we have in Saskatoon is ongoing. You can drive to any of these locations and see what's happening. You can go to St. Paul's and see the construction. You can go to the University Hospital and see three of those big cranes swinging around, doing the construction. Everything is ongoing.

The NDP would like to paint a picture that all of these sorts of proposals of the Devine government are just announcements and that there's nothing to it, but unfortunately none of them come from Saskatoon. But if, perchance, they should get to the city, they will see what is in fact happening up there, and they will realize that these are ongoing construction projects.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, it is a far cry from an announcement and a far cry from anything ever done under the NDP. The only thing that Saskatoon can claim under 11 years of NDP administration is the Sturdy Stone Building — Roy Romanow, 11 years, one building, named after themselves, no less. What we have in Saskatoon just in hospital construction alone, and I'll leave everything else out — just in hospital construction — far outdoes them in four years from what they did in 11 years.

And we look at the St. Paul's Hospital expansion: it's \$52.1 million project, total cost; 100 per cent of the construction costs are paid for by the provincial government; 300 new permanent jobs — new jobs for janitors to nurses; 8 new operating theatres, Mr. Speaker; one ENT room; one ophthalmology room; two ... (inaudible) ... rooms — I'm shot on my pronunciation here; two endoscopy rooms; one orthopedic room; and one laser procedure room, Mr. Speaker; 105 new hospital beds — the first expansion since the hospital was opened

in 1963, Mr. Speaker, together with the new CAT scan X-ray machine, the first for St. Paul's Hospital. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's just one hospital I went through, and it just gets better.

At the cancer clinic, which isn't a hospital, but it's \$16.1 million project, a new 80,000 square foot building to replace the 30,000 square foot existing building; a new high and low energy treatment facility; a low energy accelerator, six Mev (million electron-volts), whatever that means, Mr. Speaker; two high energy accelerators 20 Mev; new processing labs and treatment rooms. A guy's got to have a medical degree, Mr. Speaker, to read what's happening in the treatment rooms, but the figures make sense. A new research and administration areas will all be included in the new cancer clinic, Mr. Speaker. And as I said, it just gets better.

Mr. Speaker, we got university hospital expansion. That one is \$30.4 million, and that's where we find the three cranes in Saskatoon; 140 new permanent jobs; 78 new hospital beds; new teaching and research facilities; and the City Hospital — that's the biggest one of them all, Mr. Speaker — 120 million smackeroos for a brand new hospital; 510 new beds and new permanent jobs.

And when they ask, Mr. Speaker, why you'd build a new hospital when you have an old one — but again a figure I pointed out earlier — 85 per cent of the cost of health care's wages. And that works out to three years operational, Mr. Speaker, would equate to the capital cost of a hospital. And thus, if you say that a hospital has a 30-40 year life expectancy, any efficiencies that can be brought into the hospital system through the design of the hospital — if, in fact, three years of operational budget would equate to the entire construction cost of the project — then any efficiencies that you could work into a new building by design would pay for themselves many times over in the long run of things, in wider hallways, wider doors, or whatever you can work into a hospital for a better design.

And certainly this is long-term planning and good planning for the city of Saskatoon. It's something that I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, would benefit all people in northern Saskatchewan. The University Hospital is our prime research hospital and training hospital, and in that respect it benefits all of Saskatchewan, but primarily northern Saskatchewan will benefit greatly from these three new hospital expansions.

Our nursing home construction program could be described as nothing but aggressive, Mr. Speaker, and that's going to take a load off of the acute care beds and allow more beds to be used by acute care patients. We have the largest nursing home project in the history of Saskatchewan going up, going under construction, in the Fairview constituency. And as mentioned earlier, all over Saskatchewan — Moosomin and Lashburn and on and on and on — there's these nursing homes going up which are going to take the load off of the existing hospitals in Saskatoon and, in the end, provide much better health care under our government than what was provided under the NDP.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, with pleasure I second the

motion of the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few remarks on this motion. And although I think it is clear by the remarks of the two members who have spoken — the mover from Saskatoon Centre and the seconder from Saskatoon Eastview — that what they say clearly cannot be substantiated to any great extent by what the facts really are.

And it's interesting . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There they go again. You get a member of the opposition up, and the majority of 54 members have got to yell and scream and try to get the member to not be able to have his say. If that's the way they want to carry on, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to wait and be quiet until they settle down. And now that they have settled down I will continue with my remarks.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting when one follows a debate and listens to the members opposite that they fail to talk about what the real issues are in health care. Both of the members from Saskatoon talked about leadership and vision. Well let me tell you what this Conservative leadership and vision have brought about in this province.

In the very city of Saskatoon, where the two members are from who have just spoken, this leadership and vision on the part of the Premier and the Minister of Health have brought about 8,800 people on waiting lists waiting to get into a hospital bed. Now I don't know if ever in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker, there have been anywhere waiting lists of this magnitude. And they stand up, and they try to claim what a great job this government has done in four years.

Well I want to say that if 8,800 people, sick people, waiting to get into a hospital bed is a good job, I would most certainly hate to see a bad job. That is not a leadership envision, Mr. Speaker, that is simply four years of neglect; four years of trying to govern by polls; four years of weak leadership resulting in a situation of crisis which now this government is trying to bail itself out of by making all kinds of announcements, in all kinds of fields, to try to recoup some political gains.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a government of failure. The member from Rosemont holds up the annual report of the potash corporation. Well there is a perfect example of the failure of this government. Prior to 1982, Mr. Speaker, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan made a great deal of money and paid to the . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. I think the member would have much difficulty in relating potash to the motion that's before the Assembly, and I'd ask him to get back to the subject.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, potash and revenues from potash contributed a great deal towards funding in the provincial treasury and helped pay for health care

funding and health care programs. And what I'm saying is that prior to 1982 revenue earnings, corporations like the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan made large profits. Those profits were taken in as dividends to the treasury, Mr. Speaker, and that helped to pay for health programs and education and many other kinds of programs that the people of this province appreciated and wished they still had at the quality level that they used to have.

The member from Rosemont holds up the potash corporation which shows once again, in the fourth year in a row, that under this government and its mismanagement that potash corporation has lost money. And instead of having those dividends coming from the potash corporation to help pay for some of the needed services, they have run it into the ground, just like they have run the health care system into the ground and now, prior to an election, try to make all kinds of announcements to try and save their political hide.

Eight thousand eight hundred people on a waiting list in Saskatoon hospitals, Mr. Speaker, is nothing to be proud of. It is nothing to be proud of. It should never have happened. It only happened because they forgot that they had a responsibility for four years as a government, and only realized it on the eve of an election.

We have had four years of neglect, and now they are bearing the fruits. And that's why the Premier again and again and again, when he is on the verge of calling an election, turns around and runs away — because he's afraid to do it, because he knows that the same thing as happened in Prince Edward Island is going to happen here when he finally screws up his courage and calls that election.

One of the important components in health programs . . . If the member from Weyburn will settle down and stop his nattering and chattering, I will continue. He doesn't come in here often, but when he does, he tries to make a lot of noise from his seat, disrupting the proceedings of the House. But if he is prepared to be quiet, I will continue.

Mr. Speaker, one of the very foundations of the health care system across this country is the EPF program — established program funding. Through that program, Mr. Speaker, the federal government made it possible across this country to have a certain standard of health care no matter what province you may be living in at any particular time.

The federal government has now announced, made it very clear to that Minister of Health and that Premier, that they are going to cut back established program funding by over \$2 billion by 1990. And this government has yet to this day to make a statement on it with any kind of strength and determination and to tell the federal government that that's unacceptable.

We are told by the Canadian Hospitals Association that that may lose Saskatchewan in the area of \$153 million, and that minister and that government remain silent because they do not want to tell the federal government that they're wrong. And I tell them, and they should listen, that they should correct the error of their ways.

And if they didn't believe it before, they should believe it now, because they just had a Conservative government in eastern Canada that got defeated defending the federal Conservative government and the Prime Minister, who is Mulroney.

If they persist in this kind of attitude, Mr. Speaker, they are most surely going to be going down the same road when they call the election.

I really believe, Mr. Speaker, that it's totally unacceptable for this government not to take a strong position on what Michael Wilson has said in his budget, on what the Nielsen report says in the task force report as it applies to established program funding. I think it's unacceptable for this government to ignore that and let the federal government continue in its merry way, cutting back this funding for health and post-secondary education in such a massive, massive way.

I want to tell the members who spoke on this resolution that they should also not neglect one other thing. Buildings alone are not good enough. Whether it's a school without teachers or a hospital without adequate staff, if that's the kind of approach that the government takes, that's not good enough. And they only need to look at even comments made by Saskatchewan Medical Association, who have said it very clear last weekend at their annual meeting, and I quote:

Hospital expansion should be curtailed until hospitals have enough money to operate properly.

All over this province, Mr. Speaker, hospitals have had to hire professional fund raisers, they have had to run lotteries, they have had to get revenues from Nevada tickets, because this government has not provided adequate funding. And they want to stand up and boast about that. Well, I'm prepared to let them boast about that. That's a choice that they can make and they're quite capable of making it.

What I'm saying is that the voters of Saskatchewan and the citizens of Saskatchewan will have no part of it. It is not right that the hospitals in this province need to be able to shore up their funding by going through fund raising programs such as Nevada tickets and professional fund raisers and sending letters to people who just leave the hospital, saying, you were just in the hospital; please send us money because the provincial government, although it funds hospitals, hasn't provided us enough. That's what's happening. That's what's gone and happened in our health care field.

Buildings aren't enough. If you're going to build buildings, members of the treasury benches, and not provide adequate staff, as you have not provided, to get the job done in those buildings, you will have failed again as you have failed in the last four years. It has got so bad that every sector in the health care field has now said to the government that they're wrong. Even the Saskatchewan Medical Association has said, and I quote again from their annual meeting:

Doctors should abandon their traditional allegiance to the Progressive Conservative Party

because of the latest dispute with the government.

They have alienated everybody in the health care field because of their neglect. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that will not be soon forgotten.

Now the member stood up and talked about all the additional beds that have been built. Well I want to put on the record a letter which I just received today. It so happens, Mr. Speaker, that the issue that we see in Saskatchewan has gone far afield because even people in Calgary, because that's where this letter came from, know about it. And I got this letter from a young couple in Calgary addressed to the Regina Assessment and Placement Service, with copies to the Premier and copies to myself as well as other people. And let me tell you what that letter says, and I think it tells the story clearly. It says:

I am writing this letter in regard to my father . . .

And I am going to leave out the names because I don't think it will be appropriate to use them.

I am writing this letter in regard to my father who has been . . .

. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, the member from Weyburn yells in somebody else's seat now, Mr. Speaker, not wanting this debate to continue. Obviously he is a little stung by what the facts really are. Now if he wants to continue, if the member from Weyburn and Turtleford want to continue yelling from their seats, that's fine with me. But it doesn't do much for this House nor does it do for their own image very much.

I am writing this letter in regard to my father who has been in the Regina General Hospital since the middle of January this year. (That's a long time, Mr. Speaker.) As you are aware my sister and I both live in Calgary and the only family in Regina is my sister (and I will not mention the name) who is totally blind. (This sister) . . . has had the responsibility of Dad and during the past year has had extreme difficulty looking after him due to his health. Dad has had numerous strokes and in January collapsed at home and the emotional trauma for (the sister) was very extreme.

The family was led to believe that Dad, who is in his 80th year, was a top priority to be placed in the Regina (blank) senior citizens' home when his health stabilized enough to be released from the hospital. There is no way that my Dad could move back home as it is a physical impossibility for (the sister) to give him the care that he requires.

I believe that Dad as a native-born Saskatchewanite and a resident of Regina since 1940 deserves more consideration than the assessment and the placement service is giving. Prior to his recent hospitalization we were told that Dad's level of care was not severe enough to place him in the senior citizen home. Since his stay in the hospital his level of care has been reassessed and we were told admission to the . . . home was imminent.

(My sister) phoned today. She had a call from a Social Services worker (one of the member from Rosemont's people) and was advised that he could not be admitted to the . . . home now as he was bumped off the admittance list and the person who replaced him was more in need and was a local resident.

I don't know what this implies — "that Dad is not a local resident and not in need." It is not that Dad has not had his application in for placement. His initial application early in the 1980s was lost by the assessment and placement service and a new application was submitted in 1985.

Mr. Speaker, that's the nature of the problem that exists there. The Minister of Health will get this because I'm writing him a letter to which I will attach this and ask him to look into it, and I know that he will.

But the point is that sons and daughters in Calgary now looking for a job and found a job in Calgary, even though things are difficult there, should not have to be concerned about their 80-year-old father who's been in a hospital bed since January because he cannot get a bed in a nursing home because of the neglect of this government.

That's the situation that's there. And I could continue on with more, Mr. Speaker, that is attached to this letter which I received this morning, but I don't think the time today will present this.

Mr. Speaker, the arguments that the members make in this debate are arguments that don't hold any water. The fact of the people who have felt the pain out there tells you that the problem is there and all the poll taking and politicking of this government is not helping them, and the people will not forget it.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the motion does not deal with the real issue, I want to move the following amendment, seconded by my colleague, the member from Shaunavon:

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

Regrets that the provincial government's underfunding of hospitals has caused a severe nursing staff shortage; regrets that the current provincial budget contains inadequate funding for hospitals and no funding for hospital construction; and regrets that the provincial government has failed to oppose federal cut-backs to basic health care services.

I so move.

Mr. Speaker: — The debate continues concurrent.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. speaker, I have about 30 seconds to deal with this most important issue. And I must say that I'm surprised. And what an irony that we would be in the Assembly today, a day after the doctors demanded the resignation of the Minister of Health, and

this arrogant government is bragging about how well they're doing in health care — how well they're doing in health care.

And I say to you, Mr. Speaker — and the members can shout from their seats all they want to try to stifle the debate in this Assembly. I say this is an arrogant government that pats themselves on the back at the same time as we have 8,000 people waiting for beds in Saskatoon, the very place that they're bragging about doing a good job.

Now I would say to you that we have a great problem of credibility and for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I have many more things to say about the disaster in health care. We will be doing it in estimates tomorrow, and I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.