

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the member for Arm River, I would like to introduce to you and to the House, a group of students from Schell School in Holdfast, Saskatchewan. There are 20 grade 11 and 12 students. They are accompanied by their principal, Mr. Ken Johns, and also, Mr. Bill Stetzinko, and bus driver, Ken Ball. I would like to welcome these students to the Chamber today. I hope that you enjoy the question period and the activity here in the Chamber, and I look forward to meeting with this group following question period for a brief discussion and some refreshment. I'd ask all members to welcome these students.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you, and through you and to everyone in the house here today, the first of two groups I'll be introducing today — 120 students you see here now who are attending the Interchange of Canadian Studies group from all over Canada. This week these grade 11 students from the 10 provinces and the two territories, and their supervisors, have come to Regina to be hosted by the Regina students and educators. They are taking part in the Interchange on Canadian Studies.

The Interchange on Canadian Studies, Mr. Speaker, is a national organization which provides opportunities for young Canadians to meet and to hear prominent speakers and to share ideas and experience on matters of significance to Canada through student conferences and travel exchange. It's a wonderful opportunity for them. This week they are talking about the disappearing 49th parallel, with the focus on free trade.

Mr. Speaker, accompanying these 120 students this afternoon are Jim Hudson, Richard Kusiak, Elizabeth Dawson, Richard Martin, Luc Filion, and Dale Flikel. Please, Mr. Speaker, and the members here, let's welcome these students from the 10 provinces and the two territories.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I too would join with my colleague from Regina Wascana in welcoming these students from all over Canada, the provinces and our two territories, and hope that their visit is an enjoyable one and that their conference is a fruitful one.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Minister, as well I would like to introduce Kevin Doherty who is sitting in the Speaker's gallery. Kevin is the outgoing president of the University of Saskatchewan students' union. I hope that your exams went well, Kevin. And I must say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members of the legislature, that during Kevin's term as president I found him a very articulate

young man. He never failed to make his point, on behalf of students, in meetings with me. But I must say, as well, he made them in a very reasoned and sensible way, and I would congratulate him. And I can say to you and all members of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, that the students were well served, the students in the University of Saskatchewan were well served, under his presidency at the students' union. I would ask all members to welcome him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition I would like to joining with the members opposite in welcoming the students to Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan, in many ways, has been the pioneer in many areas — in health care and also in education. And I hope that your trip to Saskatchewan, your visit here, will be an educational one and that you can take this back to the two territories and the other provinces and hopefully inspire the people in your own provinces in furthering the goals of education.

I, too, want to join with the Minister of Education in welcoming Kevin here today and hope that you have a very bright future here in Saskatchewan and that the opportunities will be open to you in education and in other fields.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Privatization of Natural Gas Holdings of SPC

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. my question is to the minister in charge of SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation), the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Deputy Premier, is it correct that yesterday's announced sale, or the day before's announced sale by SPC of the natural gas reserves amounts to a sale of a 15-year natural gas supply at roughly on-third of the market value, today's market value, namely, at a cost of \$325 million when the market value is at a billion dollars. Will you confirm that to be the case, and if so, how do you justify that, Mr. Deputy Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. The fact is the reserves that were sold by SaskPower to Saskoil were sold at fair market value of \$325 million and that fair market value is supported on both sides, Mr. Speaker, by fairness letters from outside, independent financial advisers and consultants, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Minister, we have been advised by the federal Department of Energy and Mines that the price of natural gas at the Alberta border is \$1.93 per thousand cubic feet. The value of the 510 billion cubic feet is \$984 million, or almost \$1 billion, not the 325 million for

which you sold the SPC reserves. How do you explain those figures?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Let me start, Mr. Speaker, by saying that there will have to be somewhere between 6 and 800 wells drilled before we can get it out of the ground. I mean, it . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Gas at the consumer, where it goes into the house where you turn on the stove and turn on the furnace, has a different value, Mr. Speaker, than gas in the ground in undeveloped reserves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I will have a further new question to the minister, to the Deputy Premier. I think we all understand that the value of natural gas in the ground is different than the value of natural gas at the consumer level. I am quoting a figure from the federal Department of Energy and Mines which quotes that: "the price of natural gas at the Alberta border in its raw state is \$1.93 per 1,000 cubic feet" which, at 510 billion cubic feet sold by SPC, means a value of \$1 billion for which you only got \$325 million.

I ask the minister again: are those figures by the federal department correct or not correct? If they're not correct, will the minister please table the fairness letter so we can see that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I can't nor do I intend to speak for the federal department. I don't know how they make their calculation or what it's based on.

I do know, Mr. Speaker, that based on the fairness letter, and the consultants of Coles, Nikiforuk, Pennell Associated Ltd., that the fairness of this deal is supported by their analysis and their professional reputation. I don't remember the names of the people who did the fairness analysis for Saskoil.

But, Mr. Speaker, this deal is supported by fairness letters on both sides of the deal by outside, independent financial consultants — \$325 million for these undeveloped reserves, Mr. Speaker, that they want to sit dormant and deplete themselves through leakage so that they will be of no value to anyone down the road, Mr. Speaker, so that they will . . .

An Hon. Member: — They've been there for a million years.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Well, he says they've been there for a million years. he wouldn't believe they were there; they wouldn't do anything to encourage people to search for gas in Saskatchewan.

And now, Mr. Speaker, that we do have a developed gas industry in Saskatchewan, there is a leakage problem.

When you drill a hole here in porous material, it can sneak over here in that material, Mr. Speaker, and that's called leakage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Deputy Premier, I agree with you; there's a leakage problem, and the leakage problem is with you and your government and all the money that you've given away.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Look, Mr. Deputy Premier, this is not a figure that I pulled out of the air; this is a figure which a responsible agency of government has given us. if you dispute that figure, I ask you and the Premier of this province to table those fairness letters and to table those independent consultant reports because I say to you, Mr. Deputy Premier, that you have given away, at one-third of the value, \$1 billion of natural gas reserves, and that's unjustifiable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I will check with the officials at Power to see if those letters can be tabled. I don't anticipate any problem about tabling the letters. I don't see any problem, but I'll check.

Let me make the observation, though, Mr. Speaker, that when we tabled all of the information that they asked for relative to the Weyerhaeuser deal, they then fell asleep; they then fell asleep. You didn't hear any more empirical, supported by the documents, information from those folks. All you heard was the rhetorical garbage that you continued to hear until today when my friend and colleague, the minister of privatization, picked up a \$32 million . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order.

Privatization of Sask Utilities

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to either the Deputy Premier or the minister in charge of privatization. May I just say very briefly that if those consultants' papers are documented and they justify and can be justified on the basis that you say so, fair enough. I make the accusation and I want to see those statements as you've indicated.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier, however, deals with the larger policy of privatization. We were told on October, 1986 by your Premier, and subsequently by the minister of privatization that, "We have no intention of selling SaskTel now or in the future. The company is not for sale and will not be sold." This refers to SaskTel.

There was a statement about a month ago saying that SaskPower was not up for sale either. The reality is that portions of SaskTel have been privatized, and now we see portions of SaskPower being privatized. I'm asking the Deputy Premier, who do we believe here? Is SaskPower

up for sale, or is it not up for sale? Yes or no, please.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Speaker, the reserve is not the utility. The reserve is an undeveloped resource. By selling the reserve, Mr. Speaker, we hope to develop the resource, or at least to have the Saskatchewan-based private sector oil and gas company develop the resource. That, Mr. Speaker, will generate revenue for the province through royalties. It will generate jobs through the drilling of 6 or 800 wells over the next five years. It will, Mr. Speaker, have a net effect of having a \$30 million enhancement to the bottom line of SaskPower.

Those are very positive numbers, Mr. Speaker, and all of it supported, Mr. Speaker, by fairness letters from outside, independent financial advisers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Deputy Premier, and I'd ask the Deputy Premier to listen carefully to the question to be able to give us a clear answer on this.

First of all, \$325 million dollars today might prove to be a very bad deal if we're paying a billion dollars tomorrow from Ontario to buy our natural gas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — But that's not the question. My question to you, Mr. Deputy Premier, is this. Several weeks ago your minister of privatization assured the people of Saskatchewan, in effect, that there would be a fence around SaskPower and SaskTel, that they weren't to be privatized. In reality, by the sell-off of the natural gas reserves, in reality of what's happening to SaskTel, that seem to be a blatant untruth, that there is no protection around SaskPower and SaskTel.

I want you to tell this House clearly, as clearly as you can, that SaskPower and SaskTel are not on the chopping block. Is that the case or not?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, if it weren't for the initiatives of this government since 1982, we may well have been looking to Ontario for natural gas. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they haven't been very successful in finding reserves to develop in Ontario either. But since 1982 . . . And maybe if we went down there and helped them design some policies to encourage exploration and development, they might be more successful. However, I doubt that because the exports tell me that the geology of Ontario doesn't lend itself to that.

However, Mr. Speaker, the utility and the reserve . . . I can remember back — I don't know what year it was — when members opposite invented this thing called Saskoil and chased all the private sector in the oil patch out of the province. At that time, Mr. Speaker, they took reserves owned by SaskPower and gave them to Saskoil. So what are they talking about, disposing of reserves, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have one last final new

question to the Deputy Premier. I suspect that it's rather in vain hope, but I'll put it to the Deputy Premier as clearly as I can again.

I ask you, Mr. Deputy Premier: on behalf of your government, who do we believe? The minister of privatization would have the public believe that SaskPower, SaskTel and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) are not up for sale. On the other hand, the actions of your government by this natural gas give-away and by the attacks on SaskTel go the other way, that it is for sale. I ask you: will you tell this House now that the minister of privatization is incorrect or, in the alternative, that there will be no more give-aways for SaskPower and SaskTel in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, there have been no give-aways. We at SaskPower . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, ho, ho, you know. Mr. Speaker, they get real sensitive about this when some of our successes come home to haunt them, like the Weyerhaeuser success that my colleague's going to talk about later today, and like the success that you will see the disposition of this gas reserve come home to haunt you one more time.

When we drill 600 wells . . . 800 wells over the next four or five years, Mr. Speaker, that's as compared to two or three wells, gas wells in the whole province 1981, the last year that that administration was looking after the store here, Mr. Speaker. We are a long, long way from the dark days of the NDP in the energy sector, and we're going to continue to develop our resource sector, Mr. Speaker. And we think this one is a good deal for SaskPower, for Saskoil, and for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Privatization of Education

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister of privatization, or the Minister of Public Participation. Mr. Minister, you seem to be quite willing to tell the Canadian Manufacturers' Association a lot more about your privatization agenda than you are willing to tell the public or this legislature.

Mr. Minister, you are quoted in the Saturday Star-Phoenix as saying that we will not privatize the vast majority of education in this province. Mr. Minister, my question to you is this: what parts of education are you prepared to privatize?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's correct; I have a number of speaking engagements around the province at various occasions, and from time to time I do put out certain things that may be candidates for a public participation, for discussion, and for people to give us their input as to what they think of these candidates.

I did mention with the manufacturers' association that possibly there might be some public participation in the liquor boards, certain aspects of some of the functions of land titles, and I did say there could be some candidates of education.

At this point in time I want to assure the people that, as the Minister of Education has on many occasions, that the delivery of the school system is certainly not a candidate for that. We do have some private schools, as you well know, Mr. Speaker — private schools that have been in this province for some time — and I believe the critic would support that they deliver a good quality of education.

But I don't want you to be standing up here and trying to mislead the public or to scare them in any way, shape, or form, that there's some great plot to privatize education. There can be some aspects of clerical functions, things of this nature, in various . . . (inaudible) . . . that could be candidates for public participation. I think it's only right that those type of things should be put forward for a complete public suggestion and discussion.

Mr. Rolfes: — Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I hear your denials and I hear all that rhetoric, but we heard that same thing about SaskTel and SaskPower, and now we see the action of your government.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is this: you said that health care would not be privatized, and yet you've privatized the dental care program. Mr. Minister, who are we to believe? Are we to believe you or are we to believe the Deputy Premier on this issue of privatization?

I ask you again, Mr. Minister: what parts of education are you planning on privatizing, what parts of education? You said the vast majority of education would not be privatized. That means that you are planning certain parts of education to be privatized. I ask you again, come clean with the people of Saskatchewan; tell us now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Tell us now. What is your agenda, and what parts are you planning to privatize?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that just illustrates exactly the point of the opposition. Either they don't understand or they choose not to listen to what is being said. I have said all along that there are certain aspects of various functions of government that are under scrutiny for public participation — in fact, most of the things.

There are some areas that will not be touched, such as the delivery of health care. But certainly the member opposite — and I heard the Leader of the Opposition — try to mislead. If they listen and look back at the statements that I made regarding the utilities, the utility functions of SaskTel and SaskPower, I indicated that those were not candidates.

But I did say, at the same time, take for example many of the functions of SaskPower, and the minister will tell you the same thing, that the underground . . . the rural gas delivery has been done by the private sector since its inception. The private line installation, the fibre optics, so many aspects of these things have been done by the private sector and perhaps will continue to be.

Mr. Rolfes: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we're not misleading the people on this side of the House. It's you and your other ministers that are misleading the people of this House. Mr. Minister, you go in one part of the province and tell the people one thing, and the deputy minister goes to another part and tells them something else.

I'm asking you again, Mr. Minister: Mr. Minister, you were the one that was referring to private schools. I'm asking you right now: is it your plan to underfund the universities and our post-secondary education and parts of our university? Is that your secret agenda, and is that why our students aren't able to get into some of our programs in our post-secondary education because you plan to privatize parts of those schools? Is that your plan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

Privatization Policy — General

Ms. Atkinson: — My question is to the minister of privatization. Now, Mr. Minister, your privatization ideology is beginning to come clear to the people of Saskatchewan. In 1985, you privatized Saskoil; our deficit went up, and our taxes went up. In 1986, you privatized PAPCO (Prince Albert Pulp Company); our deficit went up, and our taxes went up. In 1987, you privatized the school-based children's dental program; our deficit went up, and our taxes went up.

And now, Mr. Minister, in 1988, you've privatized SaskCOMP, Sask Minerals, parts of SaskTel and parts of SaskPower. Our deficit is at \$3.7 billion, and our taxes have gone up.

My question is this: won't you admit, Mr. Minister, that your ideological approach is total lunacy and that it will not lead to further tax decreases and a further decrease in the deficit? Will you admit that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, the comments of the critic opposite just again reinforce the complete misunderstanding when she says this is some type of ideologically driven exercise. If it's ideologically driven, then it's ideologically driven in New Zealand and in China and in France and in Russia. And if you look all around the world, you'll see governments of various political stripes looking at this type of public participation.

And she's criticizing Weyerhaeuser, Mr. Speaker. Later on today I think I have some very interesting news to share with the people of Saskatchewan regarding the Weyerhaeuser transaction that they were so critical of.

I heard them today with the SaskPower sale to Saskoil — exactly the same rhetoric that they said about Weyerhaeuser. And in a few moments, Mr. Speaker, I think you'll find out a completely different story about the

Weyerhaeuser transaction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Probably the strongest public participation action of this type in north America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — A new question to the minister of privatization. Mr. Minister, you claim that your PC privatizations won't cost jobs and won't cut services. You're wrong on both counts, and let's take a look at your record. You privatized Saskoil, and 25 per cent of the labour force was gone. You privatized the parks, and jobs were lost and services cut. You privatized the highways operations; jobs cut and services gone. People can't drive down the highways. You privatized the school-based children's dental program; hundreds of jobs lost and a valuable service lost to the people of Saskatchewan.

My question to you is simply this: when will you stop your attack on the jobs and services of the people of this province, and why don't you stop this new economic fad of privatization which absolutely makes no sense to the people of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is complete and utter nonsense. I was at Weyerhaeuser three weeks ago myself. I say about 600 people working there, building the paper plant. Now if that isn't job creation, I don't know what it is. I know when the paper plant is in place there'll be 150 brand-new jobs — a half a million dollars coming into Prince Albert in wages.

Let me tell you, the 800 wells that are going to be drilled, that Saskoil from this transaction . . . Well there's going to be a few guys working to drill those wells. Now that's job creation.

And she talks about 28 jobs in Saskoil. When I see 600 new jobs building a paper plant because of a privatization transaction, and I hear SaskPower is going to drill 600 to 800 wells . . .

An Hon. Member: — Saskoil.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Saskoil, let me tell you, to me that's diversification, that's development, and that's job creation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — New question to the minister of privatization. How is the sale of PAPCO to Weyerhaeuser of Tacoma, Washington, public participation for Saskatchewan residents? How is that public participation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement that I'll be sharing with the House in a few moments. I think if the critic would just wait a

couple of minutes, I will certainly indicate to her of what.

An Hon. Member: — Give us a little tip.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, I guess. I could give you a little bit of an idea . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well I think she asks, how did the sale of PAPCO to Weyerhaeuser Canada indicate some public participation. Well I'll tell you what kind of public participation. I had the good fortune today to go with the Premier of this province to Prince Albert to a hotel just full of people, all smiling, all happy, and we received a cheque, a cheque for \$30.5 million, benefit to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — And that's public participation because that money can be used to build hospitals and schools and all the things that the people want — roads, parks, and so on — and I believe that's public participation, that's building, that's diversification, and that's what we stand for in . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — A new question to the minister of privatization.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. It's difficult to hear the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you claim that your PC privatization strategy means public . . . or means ownership for Saskatchewan people, but that's not true, and let's look at the record. Saskatchewan people used to own the SaskPower coal reserves but you privatized that to Manalta Coal of Alberta. Saskatchewan people used to have a significant share in SED Systems in Saskatoon but you privatized that to a company in Ontario — 70 jobs lost — and then we bought back the bricks and mortar for 10 million. Saskatchewan people used to own Sask Minerals but you privatized that.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. The hon. member, while she has a preamble, she's raising a great deal of information in those preambles which is inviting a very long question, and I ask her to get to her question.

Ms. Atkinson: — In view of the fact that Saskatchewan people used to own Saskatchewan Minerals which is now owned by companies in Ontario and Quebec; in view of the fact that Saskatchewan people used to own a pulp paper mill that is now owned by a company in Tacoma, Washington — Weyerhaeuser; in view of the fact that Saskatchewan assets have gone . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I'm going to give the member for Saskatoon Nutana an opportunity now to simply put her question.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, in view of all of those facts in relationship to privatization in this province, will you stop selling the assets of Saskatchewan people? Will you stop giving those assets away, Mr. Minister? Will you stop your privatization strategy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — No, Mr. Speaker, we will not stop any privatization initiative for public participation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — We will continue on with developing and building. And I see the Leader of the Opposition, he doesn't share the opinion of the critic. He is on record as saying he supports it. The last leader of the opposition, the Hon. Allan Blakeney, said, many of these things, their time is over as Crowns; it is time to look at different types of delivery.

We will continue to do that, and when we can see profits of \$30.5 million coming in over a 20-month period, and another 33 million to come in the not too distant future, you bet your like we'll continue that type of action on this side of the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Payment from Weyerhaeuser to Government of Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, I've taken the liberty to deliver the text of my statement to the critic and to the leader of Liberal Party.

So, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to announce to my legislative colleagues and the people of Saskatchewan that the Saskatchewan division of Weyerhaeuser Canada Ltd. today presented a cheque for \$30.5 million to the Government of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this payment is in addition to the 236 million debenture which will come into effect once the paper mill is operation later this year.

the sale of PAPCO to Weyerhaeuser two years ago marked a major public participation initiative in our province. Under the terms of the sale, Weyerhaeuser's profits at the Prince Albert operation were to be returned to Saskatchewan taxpayers. From the time of the sale to the end of 1987 — that's a 20-month period, Mr. Speaker — the province has earned \$63.5 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, that represents 63 . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that represents 63.5 million to Saskatchewan taxpayers, compared to a loss of 26 million over the 20-month period preceding the sale.

Today's payment of 30.5 million represents the first installment. The remainder will be paid from the future cash flows.

And the good news continues, Mr. Speaker. At an investment of 250 million, Weyerhaeuser has build a world-class paper mill which will be operational later this summer.

As of March 16, 1988, there were 692 men and women employed at the paper mill construction site. Eighty per cent of them are Saskatchewan residents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, those are jobs for Saskatchewan men and women.

As well, Mr. Speaker, 80 per cent of materials for the construction of the new paper mill will have been delivered by Saskatchewan suppliers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — The spin-off of this new investment has provided Saskatchewan people, business, and industry with new jobs, investment, and economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, when complete, the new paper mill will create over 150 permanent jobs for Saskatchewan men and women. These positions will inject 500,000 of monthly wages directly into the city of Prince Albert that will stimulate growth and development in the local economy. Job creation through new investment, Mr. Speaker — that is public participation.

In coming to Saskatchewan, Weyerhaeuser has shown itself as an excellent corporate citizen that is firmly committed to our province, making donations to the city of Prince Albert, the Big River nursing home, the Prince Albert United Way, the Prince Albert Raiders hockey scholarship fund, and funding a pre-school service for its employees. Weyerhaeuser has shown its strong dedication to the city of Prince Albert, its employees, and the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, today all members of the legislature were presented with a Saskatchewan-grown white spruce seedling, compliments of Weyerhaeuser Canada, Saskatchewan Division. Like this seedling, Mr. Speaker, the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill and paper plant in Prince Albert promised future growth and benefits for all Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the sale of PAPCO to Weyerhaeuser in 1986 used public assets to create new investment and jobs. In two years Weyerhaeuser has successfully turned a pulp mill losing \$91,000 per day into a booming, profitable operation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, new investment, employment, growth, new technology, new markets and

new revenues are all part of public participation initiatives and represent what Weyerhaeuser has brought to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, today's announcement affirms the commitment that Weyerhaeuser has to Saskatchewan people and the development of our economy. And more than that, Mr. Speaker, it is a shining example of what can be accomplished in Saskatchewan through public participation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few minutes to respond to the minister's comments. I note he indicated that Weyerhaeuser had taken two years to turn that business around. Well I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, that they had a little help with the industry as a whole in pulp and paper prices. And if you don't understand that, then I think you'd want to take a little closer look at what's been going on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — What the minister as well failed to mention is that the people of this province are going to be building 32 kilometres of roads as part of that agreement every year for the next 20 years . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. Lautermilch: — And in case over the din and the roar from the other side I wasn't heard, I'd want to repeat that the people of this province are going to be building 32 kilometres of roads for 20 years for that particular corporation that's going to cost us millions of dollars. I would want to suggest as well that the minister knows full well it was sold for probably over \$100 million less than what it was worth.

And I'd want to also say that, consistent with the way this government has run Crown Corporations since 1982 — I will admit that PAPCO had some problems and was losing some money under the hands of this administration; that's not unlike any Crown corporation you've had your fingers on as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — What I want to tell you, Mr. Minister, and I speak for the people of this province, that in 1980 and '81 that mill made millions of dollars that were returned directly to the hands of the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — And I'm not convinced that we can say the same for this deal that you've cut and what the results of it are. I say what you've done today is you've confirmed that it's a bad deal for the people of the province, and the industry considers you to be a joke for the kind of deal you cut to sell the mill. And you can't deny that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — When you unload an asset for over a hundred million dollars less than what it's worth, how can you consider it a bad deal? And you stand up here and chirp about getting a turn of \$30 million dollars, not even a third of how much you sold it for less than what it should have been sold for.

And there are some questions that you haven't answered as well, Mr. Minister. I'd like to know what PAPCO's total profits were in 1987, because you haven't told us, and we would like to have known what PAPCO made. We on this side of the House know that pulp and paper was up 25 per cent last year, and that every major pulp and paper producer in the North American continent made record profits. So it's nothing new and it's not a surprise.

And we'd like to know why you sold the assets when the pulp and paper prices were depressed — and the whole industry's profits were depressed — why didn't you wait until you could have made a reasonable price for the sale of the assets. I said before that in '87 the pulp and paper prices increased by 25 per cent, and this year they're expected to rise further, so I would expect we could see yet more profits from that . . . from Weyerhaeuser.

But what I ask you, Mr. Minister, is: how much are the profits, and who got them? Did the people of this province get 100 per cent of the return on the profits, because you never made that clear today, Mr. Minister. And I say to you that the people of this province deserve the profits from that particular corporation. And if your idea of public participation is to give away in this kind of a deal over a quarter of a billion dollar's worth of assets, well I say to you that you've had a problem in prince Albert selling that, and I would suggest it will continue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Minister, the spokesman for Weyerhaeuser, Mr. Gainer, has admitted in a news . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm sure the hon. member has a great deal he could say about the ministerial statement; however, I think I have given him sufficient time — more than the minister had — and I would ask him to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, in concluding, I would just want to say that Weyerhaeuser knows they were fortunate to buy the mill under the conditions that they purchased it for. I don't believe that the majority of the people of this province believe that

And there are two questions that this minister never answered today: what were the total profits in 1987, how much were the profits; and who got it?

(1445)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 5 — An Act to declare a Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured in the Course of their Employment

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to declare a Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured in the Course of their Employment.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill ordered to be referred to the Standing Committee on Non-Controversial Bills.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ROYAL ASSENT TO BILLS

At 2:46 p.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bill:

Bill No. 2 — An Act respecting the Use of the French and English Languages in Saskatchewan / Projet de loi No 2 — Loi relative a L'usage du francais et de l'anglais en Saskatchewan

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:48 p.m.

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Government Inaction in Solving Problems Faced by Saskatchewan Families

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks I will be moving a motion to condemn this PC Government of Saskatchewan for, among other things, a betrayal of Saskatchewan families by virtue of its attacks on medicare.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to condemn this Premier and this government in the strongest possible terms that are parliamentary, because never has there been a more appropriate time to condemn this government on their medicare record than after last Friday's attacks on the sick and those who need medication.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that last Friday morning a Saskatchewan family came into this Legislative Assembly seeking help from their government with respect to their medication expenses. And they were attacked, by no accident, or no mistake, in very calculated and deliberate terms, by the premier of this province, and equated with criminals. Here was a family who needed \$130 worth of medication: some, a prescription for the wife who had whiplash as a result of an accident, some of the prescriptions for a 10-year old daughter who is allergic to sunlight and was missing school — in fact missing exams. They came seeking help from the government. And did they find it? No.

What did the Premier do? Not only did he avoid offering this young family his own assistance, but he ignored their personal need. And he launched into an attack on this family, and others like them, and equated Saskatchewan people who need prescription drugs with pushers and sellers of drugs out on the street. And, Mr. Speaker, this is nothing other than a fundamental attack on medicare and a frontal attack on the people of Saskatchewan who are sick and need medication.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Koenker: — For the Premier of this province to speak to the people of the province, and I quote, to say — you listen to this: half the drug problem, half the drug problem addressed today in the city of Regina is free prescription drugs.

That is just outrageous, Mr. Speaker, to say that half of the drug problem in Regina, or in this province, has to do with the prescription drug program. Where does the Premier think that he can equate people who need drugs with drug peddlers and the like?

This thinking, Mr. Speaker, is the thinking of moral Neanderthal — a moral Neanderthal, not the premier of the province. And I say, when we get this kind of thinking from that Premier of this province, we don't have medicare, but we have "mediscare" — a Premier who wants to scare the people of Saskatchewan, a Premier who reads an article in the newspaper about a drug bust by the Regina police. And what does he do when presented with a family who legitimately needs prescription drugs? He scares the people of the province; he scares people into believing that the problem with the drug plan is that people are abusing it to peddle drugs on the street. Well that's total nonsense.

The same Premier, after having given one and a half to two billion dollars' worth of royalty breaks to the oil companies during his first term of government, comes back to the people of Saskatchewan in his second term and says: we can't afford a health care system; we can't afford prescription drugs for everyone. And he tries to scare people — that's medicare.

He latches on to public concern about AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) by telling the people of the province that the whole health care system is in danger of collapse and could fall victim to this wild epidemic, again to scare people. That's not medicare, that's not medicare from the Premier of Saskatchewan, that's medicare — scare people about the ability to control costs of health care; scare the public about the monumental imminent collapse of the health care system. Scare the public at every opportunity, but don't care about what's happening to individual Saskatchewan families like the one who came into this Legislative Assembly last Friday afternoon. Don't care about what's happening to the woman who has cancer and has to wait five months for diagnostic treatment — a constituent of mine — and then after she's diagnosed as needing surgery that's urgent for her life, has to wait five more weeks for that surgery. Don't care about those kind of people, just scare the public.

And so what we are really seeing, Mr. Speaker, from this Premier and the government opposite, is the privatization of health care, the privatization of health care by pushing the provision of medical services and their expense back on to the backs of individual Saskatchewan families and households. And this is in complete keeping with this government's credo or creed which is namely *laissez-faire capitalism*, rugged individualism.

Fundamentally, there is no public responsibility or public morality from the members opposite. That's all been

abrogated and abandoned to the individual. People can take care of themselves, whether they're sick or whether they're healthy, whether they're rich or whether they're poor. Their health, says this Premier, is dependent on their own circumstances; it's their own private concern, not the government's. That's the foundation underlying all the cut-backs that we've seen this past year — the privatization of public health care.

And what are the operative principles of privatization, this attack on the medicare system? There are two fundamental principles, both very simple. The first principle of privatization is that your health care is predicated on your health. Your health care is predicated on your health. As long as you're healthy, you're okay. You're okay because you don't need medical attention, but God help you if you get sick. Yes, God help you, because this Premier and this government sure won't help you. You're on your own.

And so when you see someone like the Shepherd family, who can't afford prescription drugs, come into this Assembly and ask for assistance from their government, or you see my constituent contact me because of her wait to get diagnostic treatment and then another five-weeks wait to get surgery for urgent cancer, people begin to whisper to themselves, there but for the grace of God go I, because this Premier and this government certainly won't help them.

And really, Mr. Speaker, what is more frightening, when we stop to think about it, than the proposition that our health care is fundamentally predicated on our being healthy. That's Neanderthal morality, the morality of this premier and of this government; it's the selfish ethic of the strong; it's the PC ethic.

And the second principle of medicare or privatization of medicare says that it's not simply that you've got to be healthy, but you've also got to be wealthy as well. The second principle of privatization is very similar to the first, and that is that your health care is really predicated on your wealth. You have money, you've got health care — or should we say that with a little bit of qualification — you've got all the health care that money can buy.

But if you don't have money, you'd better not get sick, and you'd better not get into an accident, and you'd better not have any hereditary disease or health problems, because you won't be able to afford them, the medication for these problems, or the hospital and health services, or to go out of province to avoid waiting lists. And there are now 11,000 people waiting in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, that's not medicare. That's an attack on medicare. That's medicare. That's the privatization of health care. It's the selfish ethic of the strong, and it abandons people to their own resources if they have them.

Illness or accident or heredity, Mr. Speaker, is no respecter of person, of individual person. Any one of us, at any time, anywhere, might need medical care for reasons totally beyond our control, and that medical care should not be dependent on our ability to pay for it out of our own pockets.

(1500)

And I say the kind of thinking which says that that is the case, which privatizes medical care and sickness and relegates health care to the ability to pay, is characteristic of this government opposite. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that New Democrats stand fundamentally opposed to this approach to health care; they say that there is a better way than the privatization of health care by foisting it on the backs of individual families.

There is a higher morality than that of the Neanderthals, than that of the Premier of this province, than the selfish ethic of the strong surviving, and that way is medicare, the way that the people of this province have known for the last 25 or 26 years, until it's been under attack the last year and a half. That way is medicare, universally funded, universally accessible, a way which says we share our collective responsibility in the provision of health care to and for one another, a way that insists that we are our brother and our sisters' keepers.

And for this Premier, and for this PC government opposite to attack the sick and those who need medication and to scare the public and to privatize health care is unforgivable political sin. And I think it's high time for the Saskatchewan people to go on the attack against this PC government and to let them know that they are as good as gone, that they are dust, that they have committed the unforgivable political sin in attacking medicare . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Koenker: — . . . and that the Saskatchewan people will, ever under any circumstances re-elect them to govern the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Mr. Speaker, I want to share just very briefly, in conclusion, a story garnered from personal experience in going door to door during the recent by-elections in Elphinstone and Eastview.

I went up to a door and met a man of about 55 year of age who wanted me to know about the importance of the medicare system to him personally. So concerned was he that I understand his predicament and his past year's battle with cancer that he led me through the back door, through the kitchen and into the living room, and showed me a little table, a TV tray, where he had arrayed 25 to 30 plastic vials where his medication was kept.

As he showed me his medication and talked about his circumstances, he related the story of going to get a prescription for himself and standing in line behind a very elderly gentleman of about 75 years of age who, when he presented his prescription and learned that it cost \$15, looked into his own wallet to find out that there was only \$10. The elderly gentleman was wheezing and coughing, about to collapse; he told the druggist that he didn't have the extra \$5 and turned to leave. and this gentleman who related this story said that he then went into his own pocket and paid the extra \$5 for that elderly gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I say that story is a condemnation of every member opposite in this government. And so I would like to move, seconded by Kim Trew, that this — by the member for Regina North:

That this Assembly condemn the Government of Saskatchewan for its failure to resolve the farm debt crisis facing thousands of Saskatchewan farm families, and its betrayal of Saskatchewan families by its attacks on medicare, its underfunding of education services for Saskatchewan young people, and its unfair tax increases.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to second this motion condemning the government for failing Saskatchewan people in these times of desperation.

Farm debt, Mr. Speaker, is well over double what it was in 1982 when the government opposite took office. It now totals nearly \$7 billion. This affects tens of thousands of Saskatchewan farm families who face this debt crisis daily.

For the least unfortunate, the farm debt crisis simply means that farm management decisions are dictated by cash flow or, put another way, dictated by their lack of cash flow, and they can't afford many of the inputs they need to run their farm effectively and to manage their farm in a manner that they can maximize production and maximize profits. For the more unfortunate farmers, the government simply has nothing at all to offer. Nothing. No solution, no ideas, and certainly no hope.

The two central issues, Mr. Speaker, facing our farming community are low commodity prices and high debt, as I've just outlined. In the recent budget, neither of these concerns are addressed. There's nothing in the budget for Saskatchewan agriculture, nothing for rural communities, and nothing for Saskatchewan families. Instead of showing understanding for our farmers during their difficult times, the PC government has betrayed them, cut their services, and aggravated the farm debt which has more than doubled under their stewardship.

Let's review the previous commitment to Saskatchewan farm families. This government has a cut in the budget of the Department of Agriculture of 25 per cent; it's eliminated the property improvement grant; it slashed the farm fuel rebate from 21 cents to nine cents per gallon; it's phased out the land purchase program; it's phasing out all provincial funding for agriculture fairs and exhibitions. That funding has very long standing throughout rural Saskatchewan, and many, many people are very upset with that particular cut.

It's been cancelling travel grants and clinic operation grants for veterinarians, and it's cancelling grants to the University of Saskatchewan for feed testing and soil testing. Instead of devising a good, common sense agricultural strategy, this government continues to advance harmful and foolhardy practices.

Rural people really want to know why there's no increase at all for revenue sharing for rural municipalities, yet again; and the Highway's budget is nothing more than a cruel joke. They boast about the \$110 million being spent on highways — maintenance and upgrading — and they fail to tell the people of Saskatchewan, to come clean and say that is less than the last budget that was presented to this legislature before they took office, and it's now six years later and they're still spending less.

And the facts, Mr. Speaker, speak far louder than words. Despite all the grand rhetoric about these millions of dollars spent on highways, the hard truth, according to the Minister of Highways, is there's 85 kilometres fewer roads being repaired this year than there was last year.

The school-based dental services for rural families was eliminated last year, and it's not even mentioned this year.

But perhaps the biggest betrayal of all is the government having broken faith with Saskatchewan farm families when they unexpectedly — and, I might say, unfairly — changed the rules of the farm production loan program. Nearly 58,000 farm families have been double-crossed, double-crossed by this PC government, when they changed the rules in mid-stream. They found that the government's 1985 promise of "hassle-free cash" was nothing more than a hollow promise, and it certainly now adds to the growing list of broken promises.

It was an opportunity for the PC government to show some understanding and common sense in keeping farm families on their land, and they didn't do it. They offered, instead, farmers an extended 10-year repayment plan, but at a higher interest rate — nine and three-quarters per cent instead of the 6 per cent — and the only way farmers would qualify for it, Mr. Speaker, is if they signed over all of their personal assets so that the first claim on all of this property, including personal assets, goes to the government.

Farmers were caught over a barrel. Many of them had simply no choice but to sign the agreement and hope for better times, hope for change in government, hope for some new ideas and some solutions so they can get on with doing what they do best — that putting the crop in the ground and husbanding that crop right through to harvest, being amongst the best farmers in the world. That's what Saskatchewan farmers are; that's what they want an opportunity to do.

Saskatchewan farmers no longer wonder why the Premier and his caucus suffer from a huge credibility gap. They found out that the PC government believes in double standards. This government has demanded the last collateral that farmers have on the face of the earth, plus all their future interests. But it doesn't ask a penny in security from the wealthy or from large corporations or from its political friends.

Alberta millionaire Peter Pocklington gets a gift of \$22 million from this government, and 10 million of that is a pure gift — 10 million is a pure gift. the Weyerhaeuser corporation can skip payments on its quarter of a billion,

or \$248 million loan, any year it doesn't make a profit.

It's simply, Mr. Speaker, a question of priorities, simply priorities. Saskatchewan farm families are in a crisis today, a financial and an economic crisis and a mounting debt crisis. And all this government's come up with are vague ideas — equity financing they call it — which brings back nothing more than tenant farmers and absentee landlords. That's really some commitment.

In the throne speech we learned that, and I quote, "farm debt is of crisis proportions." Then it went on to say, and again I quote:

... people in Saskatchewan have learned to live with adversity. The tough times come and the tough times pass ...

Some comfort, Mr. Speaker, some comfort.

This PC government has offered farm families no help and no ideas, no solutions, and certainly no hope. It's turned its back on them, and that is a shame.

Saskatchewan farm families, Mr. Speaker, expected more. The government instead has delivered a farm debt that has more than doubled in their six years. As I've mentioned, no solutions, no ideas, and no hope.

The Conservative attacks on medicare, as mentioned by the member for Saskatoon Sutherland just previously, are seen through daily. We see things like the prescription drug plan changes; loss of school-based children's dental plan; 15,000 people on the waiting lists for hospital surgery between Saskatoon and Regina; we continue to suffer cuts in education services offered at all levels; and massive tax increases.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to second this motion condemning the government for its failures in these important areas to the people of Saskatchewan. This government is clearly turning its back on Saskatchewan farmers. It has totally failed to resolve the farm debt crisis. It offers no ideas, no solution, and no hope. It has betrayed Saskatchewan families by attacking medicare and underfunding education services, and it has delivered massive tax increases, so that if you have an income of \$25,000, you pay \$1,500 more today than you did six years ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a great honour for me to second this motion condemning this callous and careless and uncaring, bankrupt government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Martin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really enjoy being up here today after the announcement by the Minister of Public Participation on the \$30.5 million from Weyerhaeuser. Mr. Speaker, over the next 20 months we're going to have something like \$60 million from Weyerhaeuser.

Weyerhaeuser — I should remind the people again out in television that this was a plant in Prince Albert that was losing \$91,000 a day. And the opposition, the NDP, said

we would never . . . you could never make it work. The reason of course they opposed it, because they didn't have the smarts to put the deal together.

(1515)

The Minister of Health — and I congratulate him on that — when he was the minister in charge of government Forest Products, put the deal together to sell PAPCO to the Weyerhaeuser corporation of Canada, who have offices in Kamloops and other parts around the country. And so it's a pleasure for me to congratulate them on that announcement today.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and to condemn the NDP for introducing such a time-wasting and foolish resolution.

For 10 long years, NDP years, they betrayed the farmers of this province. For 10 long years the NDP neglected our health care system. And in the last, since 1982, Mr. Speaker, this government has increased health spending 63 per cent. Today we spend \$1.2 billion a year on health, and it may be the largest per capita in the country. If it isn't, it's second only to Alberta. The people of this province are well served by the health care system.

I've had the pleasure in the last few weeks to attend the opening of many dental clinics around the province, Mr. Speaker, and it's a real pleasure to go to these because often, Mr. Speaker, they're held in, say, the Legion hall or the local hall. The other day I was out at Wawota — talked to some of the people at Wawota for the opening of the dental clinic out there.

The dentist is coming up from Carlyle and will service the community of Wawota for their dental needs. And he's not just servicing the children — he is indeed servicing the children, a professional dentist servicing the children, free dental care of course for the children — but he also will service all the people of the community. The elderly people, the senior citizens, and the farmers, and everybody in the area now have a dentist at their disposal in Wawota. That is progress, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, instead of servicing . . . instead of providing dental care in the rural areas to, say, 160,000 students, that is young people, we're now servicing probably . . . well in the neighbourhood of a million people will have access to dental care throughout this province as a result of this initiative. So rather than look after 160,000 youngsters who go to school, the entire population will have access to a dentist, will be within miles of dentist. That's progress, Mr. Speaker.

We made a commitment to rural people of this province to provide dental care to them, Mr. Speaker, and indeed we're doing it. Every day, every week, we're opening more and more dental clinics around this province — Cut Knife, Wawota, all over the province, something like 30.

So the people of this province know that dentists will be available to them in rural Saskatchewan, not just in the cities that the members of the opposition are concerned about. They don't care about the people of the rural, and

history points that out.

Mr. Speaker, those in opposition have the nerve, such utter contempt, to the people of Saskatchewan that they've introduced a self-serving and sanctimonious resolution that we're debating here today. The arrogance of the NDP, Mr. Speaker, knows no bounds.

But don't make no mistake about it, the people of this province are on to them and have been for quite a few years. For 10 years Saskatchewan's NDP administration looked on farmers as tenants like they do in other socialist states. The land bank was the order of the day, state ownership of farms took priority over the family farm. The family of crown corporations was honoured by the NDP while the family farm was neglected.

And when double-digit inflation hit in the late 1970s and part of 1982, the NDP administration sat back and let Saskatchewan farmers sink into debt. And we're suffering that today, Mr. Speaker. All you have to do is look at the other side of the assembly, there are virtually no rural members in the NDP opposition caucus, and for good reason. The farmers in the rural communities know who supports them and in turn they support our Premier because they know that he's a man that goes to bat for them, whether it be internationally, nationally or locally, and has proven that for the last few years.

The farmers of Saskatchewan rejected the NDP in two elections and they will do so in the future, my friends, they will do so in the future. The Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative government has earned the trust of farmers because of our solid commitment to agriculture.

And we will see that today, Mr. Speaker, when the results of the Manitoba election come in, how the farmers of rural Manitoba feel about the NDP, because the NDP, whether in Manitoba, whether in Alberta, whether in B.C. or kingdom-come, are all the same. No new ideas. It's the same old story, the same old socialist ideas that everybody in the world is throwing out. And by the way, when the NDP are thrown out of Manitoba today, that'll be the last socialist state in North American and good riddance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Martin: — Our Premier and agriculture minister has shown great leadership in protecting farmers in these difficult times and they know it. Our Premier has been at the forefront of backing farmers all the way. Every budget since 1982 has contained effective measures, protective measures, for our farming community; to strengthen our farming sector and current budget, for example, contains such pro-farm measures as \$30 million for agricultural development fund, extended repayment option for the production loan program, and maintenance of the farm oil royalty rebate program. As I said, Mr. Speaker, this government is vigorously defending farmer on all fronts.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk for a moment about the health care. The respected Justice Emmett Hall in a report on medicare stated that when the NDP were in office here in Saskatchewan, the NDP allowed Saskatchewan's health

care to become the third worst in Canada. Respected Justice Emmett Hall in his report said that the NDP government, through the '70s into the early '80s, allowed Saskatchewan's health care to become the third worst in Canada. Health care suffered under the NDP despite their sanctimonious statements.

Mr. Speaker, health care in the NDP years were years of neglect and the people of this province know it. In this legislature in the opposition are two members who once served as NDP health members. I remind them of their shameful conduct, their shameful neglect of the health care system. I remind those opposite that it was the NDP that refused to take off extra billing on health care. I remind the NDP that it was they, who put a freeze on nursing home construction in this province. The NDP put a moratorium on nursing home construction in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, it's been the privilege and the responsibility of this government to create in the neighbourhood of 12 to 1,500 new special care home beds throughout this province. And the people living in those homes, the elderly people of this province, know who has done the work for them.

And I think of my constituency, Regina Wascana, when I go out and ride my bike through this park, and I ride right by the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre. I'm reminded of a story that an elderly farmer once told me just a few years ago when he used to come and visit his wife who then was in the Wascana home care centre, which when I was a boy growing up in this area was a reform school. The NDP turned it into a nursing home. And he drove up there one day to visit his invalid wife in the Wascana home care, the small little building that it was then, and he sat there in his truck waiting for his wife to come out and he looked across the field and he saw the Tommy Douglas building that . . . I mean it's a magnificent building, but he thought to himself, this is what the NDP stand for. The NDP stand for building buildings of a . . . magnificent buildings for their employees, the people they put into positions, and they neglect the sick as you sat out by the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we will be opening the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre, a \$65 million project in this province, one of the finest rehabilitation institutes in North America. And I hope that the NDP will be there, particularly the members from Regina, would be there with me and the Minister of Health and the premier when we take great joy for accepting the responsibility of looking after the people in this province who need rehabilitation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we built a health care system that is a model of excellence. We can take pride in the fact that this government has increased health spending by a record 68 per cent in the last six years. We are equally proud of the fact that since a Progressive Conservative government came into office, Saskatchewan's health care budget is at its highest in history.

As an aside, I remind the Assembly that in a speech to the Canadian Hospital Association, the leader of the Opposition, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Time has expired.

Mr. Koskie: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member that just spoke indicated that speaking and addressing this vital concern was a waste of time. And having listened to him for 10 minutes, I can assure you that he did waste our time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Koskie: — In this province here, I say, Mr. Speaker, there is a major crisis facing Saskatchewan, not on one front alone, as I indicated the other day, but on two fronts.

And the first front, the crisis in agriculture, as I indicated, in their own report they indicate that we're losing farmer after farmer in rural Saskatchewan, and we're depleting our young farmers. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that evidence indicates that this government has absolutely refused to address this crisis in agriculture.

And I look in the *Star-Phoenix*, and I see an article indicating what's going on throughout this province. "This farm family's dream is sadly over." And in the picture on the report there is a young couple with four young children. Their dream is over; their farm is gone. And this government sits by idly as they give off money to the oil companies and allow our farmers to go bankrupt.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated last day that in this province the farmers of Saskatchewan have a debt of over \$6 billion. We indicated that the chartered banks is about 1.6 billion — this is the end of '86; federal government, 1.5 billion; provincial government, 1.5; credit union, 0.9 billion; and others, 4 billion.

This is a staggering debt that has been laid on the backs of the farmers of Saskatchewan and this government stands idly by and indicates that it can no longer address the problem because the problem is too big for its treasury.

Well I'll tell you, it wasn't too big a problem when it came to feeding Peter Pocklington \$22 million. It wasn't too big a problem when it comes to the Pioneer Trust bail-out. They had lost of money then. It wasn't too big a problem when they gave \$1.7 billion to the oil companies from '82 to '86. They had lots of money. But when it comes to protecting family farms, this government says, it's too big a problem.

And worst of all, they won't even go to their friend, Brian Mulroney, the Prime Minister, and ask him to participate in a program of restructuring the debt, saving the family farms, saving a generation of young farmers. As a wheat pool representative said the other day, unless some drastic action is taken immediately, what we're going to do is to lose many of our young farmers, and as a consequence we're going to be set back for 10 to 15 years with very few young farmers.

And the statistics indicate that the number of young farmers have drastically decreased on the farms from 1981 to '86, those under 35 years of age. Those were the new generation farmers. And this government has stood by idly and refused to assist the debt crisis. But what is worse, Mr. Speaker, when you take a look at the management of this province, you see that not only the farmers are not getting help, you see that this government

is attacking ordinary people across this province.

Because of its fiscal mismanagement, this province now has accumulative debt of \$11.8 billion dollars. Just the Consolidated Fund alone is \$3.7 billion. And the service of debt is \$330 million, that's almost \$1 million a day just the to service debt. And I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that represents a tax on the people of Saskatchewan — those are taxes.

When this government took the credit card of the people of Saskatchewan and racked up millions of dollars, billions of dollars of debt, they did it to elect themselves but not to correct the problems facing society.

And today, besides having this massive debt of \$3.7 billion, \$11.8 billion, they stand up in this legislature and to say to the people of this Saskatchewan: we are doing such a good job; Weyerhaeuser made a flock of money; everything is growing in Saskatchewan; privatization is working. Well it's working, it's working in reverse, because the people of Saskatchewan are getting nothing and the big corporations are taking the golden egg.

(1530)

But take a look at not only this massive debt that they've placed on this generation and future generations, just take a look at the direct taxes that people are paying at the present time. In the last two years, they increased the flat tax, they increased the E&H tax, they increased the gas tax.

Last year alone, in the budget brought down by this government, \$265 million of extra tax. And this year, that wasn't enough. They said, we pour it to them again. And to the ordinary citizens and the business community of Saskatchewan, the small-business man and the working man and the farmer, they said, we'll get more tax out of them. And this year they increased the flat tax again — \$51 million. And they increased the tobacco tax — \$70 million added on to the tax bill of ordinary Saskatchewan people. In two years the cumulative increase in taxes was \$330 million laid on the backs of ordinary Saskatchewan people — tax increases.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, that when we take a look at our income tax, we have a dual income tax. We have the ordinary income tax we pay, and then in their tax reform they laid on a flat tax. So we have virtually two income taxes. And today, when we compare our personal income tax in this province with the rest of Canada, we find at 35,000 we have the second highest income tax rate in all of Canada. So we're going to become number one. Another budget and I'll tell you, we'll be number one. We'll be the highest personal income tax in Canada.

But they have already attained a number one. We are now the . . . have the highest per capita debt in all of Canada. Quite an achievement. Quite an achievement by this government — to take us from virtually the lowest per capita debt when they took over, with \$140 million surplus and 11 balanced budgets. They have placed on the burdens of this province \$11.8 billion — the highest per capita debt in all of Canada.

An Hon. Member: — Not true.

Mr. Koskie: — It is true. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, contrast that with what they did for their friends. They have some friends, but they're very few. While they have a couple . . . They have corporations, and while they're placing an increased tax burden on the people of Saskatchewan, they decided that they would cut the corporate income tax from 17 to 15 per cent. That cost them about \$8 million — a cut of \$8 million.

No money for the farmers, they say, but they could accordingly turn over and give to the corporations an actual cut in the income tax.

And then the other aspect, they said that we had a few more friends out there. We got, oh, the oil companies, and we got some of the potash companies, and what we can decide here in this budget, what we will do is also give them a resource royalty decrease — a resource royalty decrease at a time when they can't give drugs to our seniors. When they took away the dental program from our young people, they say to the corporations, we're going to give you a tax cut. At a time when they can't help the farmers, they say, we'll give a cut in the corporate income tax and to the royalties.

The total amount of tax cut this year in this budget was over \$30 million to the big corporations — \$30 million cut, and they say to the young children, we can't supply . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I must inform the member that his time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

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

Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the Assembly to introduce our guests in your gallery and in the west gallery.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather. It is my pleasure to introduce the other half of the students from across Canada and the two territories. Earlier today I introduced 120; I understand there's 109 here right now, and they are with Allan Christiansen, who is a teacher at Luther, and one of the many teachers involved in this program, the Interchange on Canadian Studies.

And just to reiterate what I said before, these are grade 11 students who are here from the 10 provinces and the two territories; they are here taking part in the interchange of Canadian studies. The theme for this interchange, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the disappearing 49th, or the focus on the free trade debate.

And I notice they've had their tour, I believe. The other group had an opportunity to meet with several members to talk about ideas in this province, and I'll have the pleasure, along with the Minister of Environment, to meet these students, I suppose in 15 or 20 minutes or so, to talk

about some of the issues. So, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather, would the members please welcome our students from across the country and the two territories.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to also welcome the students here today on behalf of the official opposition of the province of Saskatchewan, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

I had the opportunity to speak with some of the students earlier on, and I would like to welcome, in particular, one of the students here, a Miss Battiste, who comes from my home town of Pictou, Nova Scotia. Actually she's from Lyons' Brook, which is a well-known suburb of Pictou, Nova Scotia. And I'd like to welcome Miss Battiste and all the other students here to Saskatchewan. I hope they enjoy their stay here. I hope they find their stay informative, educational and fun. And welcome to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Government Inaction in Solving Problems Faced by Saskatchewan Families (continued)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to stand here today to debate this motion presented by the member from Saskatoon Sutherland. I trust that our guests will enjoy the proceedings as we debate here this afternoon. I also trust that the . . . or ask that the Saskatchewan people take very special care and listen intently as we discuss this motion, because the motion that is presented here today is talking about, in the opposition's word, failure.

They've been discussing, supposedly, many failures by this government. They talk about failure in agriculture and in addressing the challenge of the farm debt problem. They say there's failure in the medicare policy and failure in education.

And as I speak this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to point out to the people of this province some of the failures that the members opposite had when they were a government — and that is specifically why they are sitting on the opposition benches at this time — and also let them know what this government has done for this province and for the people of this province.

Let us make a quick list of some of the most profound failures these issues have ever experienced in the history of any province in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I assert that the land bank was a colossal failure in its phoney attempt to deal with farm debt. And it doesn't matter where you go in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will find many farmers and many people who became very annoyed when the land bank system came into being and complained for many years about the ploy that was by the government in order to gain their support and respect.

It is evident to all that the policy of no protection from exorbitant interest rates was a failure of the first

magnitude in a pretence of concern for farm families. It is clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the failure of the members opposite regarding this policy area continues to this day.

What have we heard so far in addressing the farm debt issue? What policies have been put forward that would be specific, that would indeed reach out to the needs of the farm families of this province?

Mr. Speaker, I haven't really heard anything positive. They have failed consistently, repeatedly, and without hesitation they have failed to provide one suggestion, one suggestion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one hint, even one allusion to a policy in agriculture.

And I have to relate to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a story that one of my constituents told me recently. This constituent happened to be viewing some of the proceedings when he was in the city, and was very disturbed and very annoyed with the way the Leader of the Opposition carried on in this House.

He said he was really concerned, he was really concerned, Mr. Speaker, because he believes that what the opposition is doing is setting up the farm families of this province for another land bank. Farm families in my constituency, when I'm out talking to farmers they're saying, what are you doing about the land bank? Are you going to let it continue to simmer there so that down the road we may face it again? This person thinks — and I say with some justification — he thinks that the opposition are hoping that the farm debt situation gets worse and worse.

And you wonder why would he think that. He thinks that with all of their talk about the banks while their own leader is out foreclosing on farm families, that the opposition will then come forward and say, aha! now they're ready for it, they're ready for another land bank.

Mr. Speaker, this government is not interested in owning land. This government is interested in putting the land back in the hands of the farmers and the individuals . . . of the individual farm families of this province whom we feel can have better managed the resource of farming in this province.

We have also witnessed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a deeply dangerous failure. It is the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to disown the land bank; to say, even come out and openly say that the land bank will never again be part of Saskatchewan policy under any government.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has brought out the fact that they say we have failed in the area of medicare and health services in this province. Let me just say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from 1982 to 1987 this province has seen an increase from \$750 million to \$1.29 billion in health care spending — a substantial increase — some 67, 63 or 67 per cent increase in health care spending in this province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

I would invite the members opposite to come out and see what has transpired in the constituency of Moosomin; come out to the community of Whitewood and area where they were asking, for a number of years, for a

nursing home — or the community of Wawota — two communities that have nursing homes today.

And I realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that even though we have spent a lot of dollars in the area of health care, even though we have spent a lot of dollars in building nursing homes, we are aware on this side of the House that there is still a great need for more spending. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you that this government will continue to reach out to meet the needs of the people of this province as the dollars are available. We will continue to put health care as a priority.

I find it very interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people within this city, even members opposite representing constituencies in the city of Regina, would be able to drive around Regina, or maybe go visit a friend or someone in the hospital that they know, be able to drive up to the Regina general or the Regina Pasqua hospitals and say to the people of this province that the Conservative government has not spent any money on medicare, has not spent any money on health in this province. Regina General, the Pasqua, Wascana Rehab Centre — three locations that have seen substantial funding increases in spending by this government.

Now why would we spend money just to build a building? We're spending it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we believe the people of this province need the facilities, to reach out to meet their needs, their needs in health care.

As well, not only did we receive spending and increases in health care spending in our constituency in the area of home care and care home construction, but I find, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I drive down Parliament Avenue, just before you get on the Lewvan Expressway, what do we have sitting to our left? A brand-new expansion to the Santa Maria nursing home. Drive down Victoria Avenue. What do we see on Victoria Avenue? An expansion to the Lutheran care home there for seniors.

(1545)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I suggest that those aren't dollars being wasted; those are dollars being well spent, because people and seniors across this province expect this government to reach out and help them in their time of need.

But I've also found, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are many, many seniors in this province, as well, who aren't expecting the government just to do everything for them. Many people in my constituency have said, you know, I've gone through the '30s; my family went through the '30s; we knew what it was to struggle; we knew what it was to not have two nickels to rub together; we appreciate the fact that this government cares and that this government is willing to build the facilities and put the dollars into health care spending so that we can enjoy a healthy life.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we can see in the area of education the dollars spent in education, the construction of new schools across our province, the enhancement of schools, the increase in curriculum, the increases in

spending for teachers' salaries and new facilities to reach out to the needs of the teenagers and young people across this province.

One other area I would like to come back to, Mr. Speaker, just before I sit down and conclude my remarks. An area that I meant to bring up today regarding health care spending was the assertion by the opposition, when they were in government, and the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, Mr. Speaker, when he was Health minister — the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, when he was Health minister . . . the members opposite talked about a waiting list when they were . . . pardon me, Saskatoon South. The members opposite talked about, when they were questioned about a waiting list, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is interesting that the member from Moosomin raised today the question of health care spending in Santa Maria senior citizens' home.

I have a little story to relate to the member from Moosomin. I met last night with two employees of Santa Maria Nursing Home, and they were telling me that this government, in making the addition to Santa Maria, had some choices that they had to make, and the choices were between spending money on two silk trees — two silk trees — trees which are not real but which are made of silk and which cost \$6,000 each — \$12,000 for fake, silk trees.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the employees at Santa Maria asked for a Lowry lift — a lift to help elderly patients out of their beds so that they could take them for baths and they could take them out and put them in wheelchairs — they were told there's not enough money coming from the government — \$12,000 for silk trees at Santa Maria, but no lifts to help elderly patients. That's the kind of priorities that the members opposite put in health care.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't want to speak about health care today. Other members have done it on this side of the House and are doing an admirable job. I'd like to speak, though, a little bit about agriculture.

This government has consistently said they are the saviours of the family farm; they are the saviours of farm families; they are the ones who are going to solve the crisis in agriculture.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have been saying this since April of 1982, and they said it in April of 1983, and they said it again in April of 1984, and they said it in April 1985, and in 1986 and in 1987. And here it is April 1988, and are the problems in agriculture facing the farm families, facing rural Saskatchewan solved? The answer to that is evident, by their own admission; the answer to that is evident, by their own admission; the answer to that is no. The problems of agriculture are not solved and they have not been dealt with, they have not been dealt with, despite the rhetoric of the government

opposite.

You know, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and for farmers in Saskatchewan that eating has been pretty poor, Mr. Deputy Speaker; it's been pretty poor indeed.

But let's just take a look. What are some of the problems? Well for all of Saskatchewan, urban and rural, one of the major problems is farm depopulation. Because as farmers and farm families, and as people who live in rural Saskatchewan leave, that means that rural Saskatchewan is worse off, and we here who live in the urban areas become worse off.

Have the Conservatives dealt with the problem of farm depopulation, of rural depopulation? The answer to that is no. As my colleague from Quill Lake so ably pointed out, 1,000 farm families a year, 1,000 farm families a year leave the farm to drift who knows where — some into the cities, some out of the province, some out of the country. A thousand farm families under the PC government of this province have left. They have not dealt with the depopulation of rural Saskatchewan. There was a problem that they could have done something to try to solve; there was a problem that they failed to deal with.

But let's look at another problem facing Saskatchewan — all of Saskatchewan and all of the people of Saskatchewan — and that's the farm debt problem. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that problem is not only a problem of farm families; that is a problem of all families in Saskatchewan, because it is destroying the very social fabric of this province. It is ripping apart the heritage, tradition, and history of this province. It is the problem, the key problem, which faces the economic movers and shakers and policy makers of this province, and they have failed to deal with it.

Far from failing to help alleviate the problem of farm debt, they have added to the problem. Farm debt in agriculture in this province has gone from \$3 billion to over \$6 billion — over double. That problem has doubled under this government.

Have they dealt with the problem? They have dealt with it. They have dealt with it by doubling the problem. They have dealt with it by doubling the problem; for example, by adding \$1 billion of farm debt onto the backs of farmers through their foolhardy production loan program — a program which promised hassle-free cash for farmers, and now which is promising farmers nothing more than the chance of losing the family farm.

Did they deal with the question of farm debt? Yes, they did. They didn't solve the problem; they added to it, and the proof of the pudding is in the eating. They did nothing to deal with that problem except add more problems to the backs of family farmers in Saskatchewan.

Did they deal with the problem of the cost-price squeeze, Mr. Deputy Speaker? That was a problem that was around in 1982, and it was around in 1983 and '84 and up until today, and they had an opportunity to deal with that problem. They had an opportunity given to them twice by the people of Saskatchewan. They were mandated to deal with that problem which is adding to the farm debt, which

is adding to rural depopulation. They were given the opportunity to deal with that problem, and they failed to do so.

The same can be said of generational transfer and the problems of passing the farm from one generation to the next generation. Did they come up with any kind of solution to deal with that problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And the answer to that is no. Now that's not quite right. They came up with the farm financing equity scheme, a hare-brained scheme rejected by farmers throughout Saskatchewan, a scheme which does nothing to solve the problems of intergenerational transfer, which has been rejected by farmers, as I've said. They had the opportunity, and they squandered that opportunity over the last six years.

We are faced with a drought in this province. Farmers in the south part of the province are faced with a drought. Have they come up with an emergency relief program? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they haven't even dealt with the problems that are facing them immediately.

But what could they have done? The member for Moosomin says, well you raise the problems, but you're negative. I want to tell them, I want to tell the government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the things they could have done.

They could have pushed on a national level for a national parity pricing program which would have guaranteed farmers the cost of production, plus guaranteed them a fair rate of return. And we saw the spectacle in the House the other day, they member from Yorkton getting up and talking about agriculture. But not once did he mention support for the concept of parity pricing — something which would have guaranteed farmers a long-term solution to the farm debt problem, along-term solution to the cash flow problem on the farms. And that's the long-term solution.

In the short term, and in terms of measures which this government could have done, there were a number of things they could have done. They could have introduced a moratorium on farm foreclosures. They could have gone to the banks and the credit unions and the agricultural credit corporation, the FCC (Farm Credit Corporation), and they could have said: There will be no more farm foreclosures in this province until we've got the long-term solution in place; we will place a moratorium on farm foreclosures so that not one more farm family in this province leaves the land. They could have done that; they had the opportunity, and they didn't do it.

They could have said, we're going to place a moratorium on farm debt for those farmers who are facing financial difficulty, for those farmers who are near the point of being foreclosed and being pushed off the land. They could have said: we want you to give them a breathing space; we don't want you to charge them any principal and we don't want you to charge them any interest; we want to put a moratorium on there until we've got the long-term solution in place, so that farmers can be provided with a guaranteed cash flow and so that farmers can get out from under the debt load which is crushing the

life-blood out of agriculture here in Saskatchewan. They had the opportunity to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker; they failed to do so.

Six squandered years, six squandered years. The problems are there. Everyone knows the problems — they're as plain as the nose on all our faces and they have failed to deal with them. They have failed to solve those problems and that, Mr. Speaker, that is the proof of the pudding. They can talk all they want about protecting the family farm, but when faced with realistic solutions when faced with alternatives, which may challenge, which may challenge some of the notions . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Time has expired.

Mr. Gleim — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to be able to stand here and debate this motion.

I just listened to the member from Quill Lakes saying there's no money for farmers. He should be the last person to say there's no money for farmers. It wasn't that government over there that helped when the interest rates were 23 and 24 per cent, it was this government right here. And they have the gall to stand up, there's no money for farmers, and we didn't help the farmers.

It was that opposition across the way, when they were in power for 11 years, they lost 10,000 farmers in the good times and they're talking about times when the economic times are a little tough — 10,000 farmers in the good times. That's pretty hard to swallow.

The member from Rosemont stands up and speaks about agriculture. The first thing on his mind was moratoriums. I guess they know all about moratoriums.

An Hon. Member: — Nursing homes.

Mr. Gleim — Nursing homes. They were the ones that put the moratoriums on, it wasn't this government here.

If they want to talk about agriculture, they should maybe do a little studying.

An Hon. Member: — Homework.

Mr. Gleim — . . . homework, or whatever you want to call it, before they get up and talk about it.

The member from Rosemont can speak from his chair and thinks that he knows about agriculture. I just hope he don't come down in the south-west and talk about the drought down there, that's there right now and give an example or has a solution, because he never said one thing about a solution. I never heard him say one thing we should be doing for a solution . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Moratorium is right. That's all I heard was moratorium. You can leave now.

Saskatchewan farmers, they won't be fooled by your political tricks and the opposition across the way. The NDP has introduced a motion in this Assembly that is nothing more than a cheap political manoeuvre to score points at the expense of the farmers — at the expense of these farmers over here, there is none across the way.

The motion before us is a crass and a brazen move to use serious problems for farmers to gain political support. It is an insult to all the farmers and they will not be fooled by this motion. No, they won't be fooled.

All one has to do is look at the record of the NDP when they were in office. How did they treat the farmers? Do you remember? I remind this assembly, that it was the NDP who forced the land bank on farmers, state control on family farm. It was not this government, it was the NDP.

(1600)

In the early 1980s, prior to 1982, when farmers were faced with double digit inflation, when family farms were going under because of inflation, what was the response of the NDP here in Saskatchewan? Let me remind the Assembly what the NDP attitude was — probably still is — the NDP government of the day, including the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, has said there was nothing could be done; it was a federal matter.

The NDP opposed interest rate protection plans for farmers. That is why in 1982 overwhelming majority of rural Saskatchewan threw them out of the office — threw them right out of the office. The NDP years were years of neglect for the Saskatchewan farmers.

I say, Mr. Speaker, let us compare that to the record of protection programs for farmers that has been introduced since 1982. The Saskatchewan conservative government knows how important the family farm is to our province. We know that farming is a traditional mainstay of our economy. When the Saskatchewan farmers suffer, we all suffer; when Saskatchewan farmers succeed, we all benefit.

International grain wars, protectionism, high input costs — these factors all hurt our farmers. These factors have meant depressed prices and income. Nobody has recognized that more than our Premier who happens to serve as government agricultural minister. The Premier has faced problems in agricultural with common sense, vision and leadership. Our Premier has done that to protect our farmers. Saskatchewan's Premier has fought for farmers on international level where the biggest problems originate. On the national level, the Premier of our province has fought to ensure agriculture remains the forefront of federal agenda.

Most important here in our own province, our Premier and the Conservative government has backed Saskatchewan farmers with many protective measures to help them weather the debt crisis.

With advice from the farming community, this government has introduced the production loan program, which has provided over \$1 billion in low interest rates to the farmers, a program which the opposition has criticized. It was not a program they put into effect; it was this government here that put it into effect; it was this government here that put it into effect. We extended it for one year on a three-year basis, then we extended it to 10 years. There's nothing on that form says, as the member from Rosemont tried to

indicate, that it was . . . they had to take it for 10 years. There's nothing on there said they had to take it for 10 years, and as the record shows right now, most of them stayed with the three-year term and the ones that couldn't handle it went to the 10-year term. And they appreciate it. That was an option.

The natural gas distribution program, which lowers energy costs of rural Saskatchewan, is another program. The livestock industry initiatives like cash advances, which provides \$189 million in operating money to farmers, that is a program that has helped the livestock industry in our province. It's an industry that we never had before. It's an industry that has grown from 12 per cent of our animals staying in the province and being fed out, to 55 per cent of this day. That is something I think the farmers and the agricultural sector really appreciates. And they stand up and talk about, we're not doing anything for farmers.

I remind the members of the Assembly that it was Saskatchewan's Premier who led the way in bringing two major deficiency payments for western Canada from the federal government — another program criticized by the opposition, used political politics in it. I'll tell you what, that was \$2 billion that was brought here to western Canada. That's \$2 billion we wouldn't have had if we'd have left it up to the opposition — \$2 billion they keep criticizing that farmers didn't need . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Right on. Farmers will never forget that, as the farmers will continue to programs to assist the family farm.

As a government we have reaffirmed our commitment to protect the family farm and extend counselling assistance for program by continuing farm land security board and by establish extended repayment option for the production loan, as I was saying.

Two more programs, the counselling assistance program, which the people across the way laugh about. I noticed the member from away north laughed when I talked about the deficiency payment. I don't think he probably even realized what it meant and what it meant to the people from the South and from southern south of him where he lives.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan farm community knows that this government which took leadership in addressing the farm problems financing, we sponsored a two-day symposium. A series of public meetings was held across the province. they were meetings that we went out and showed that we listened. The farmers in the agricultural sector, the business people appreciated that. It was something that we went out, we went and asked.

We didn't go out and do it something like the opposition did. They went out, they never asked me, they never asked anybody in here whether we wanted the land bank. Do you remember? They never asked anybody. They said, this is good for you; this is how we're going to do it. Right. And that's just how it went.

That is one of the biggest things that we got when we were out on our financing tour. A lot of them maybe didn't understand it, but they did appreciate that we were out

there listening, that they could ask questions, meet on one to one, or whatever they wanted to do. We took this time on our own initiative to go out and listen, and that is something they did appreciate.

Farmers will not take this . . . (inaudible) . . . that the NDP opposed all farm protection programs the Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative government initiated. In November and December, when we were out on our tour, people kept coming to us and saying, this has never ever happened before, that people come out and asked us. They came out and told us. We went out there and asked. That is the difference between this side and that side.

We all know, for all of us know how little the NDP did for farmers in the years gone by. We all know their lack of policies for farmers. I want to bring to the attention of this Assembly an article from the Regina *Leader-Post*. It deals with the lack of NDP farm policy.

Jim Knisley is the agricultural reporter for the *Leader-Post*, and with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to quote what he wrote. The article reads as follows:

Saskatchewan NDP leader said provincial Conservatives are employing a hands-off approach to agriculture.

Hands-off approach . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. The time has expired.

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 4 — Effects of Changes in Health Care Services

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks, I will be moving a motion that:

. . . condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for undermining Saskatchewan health care services by altering the prescription drug program, abolishing the school-based children's dental plan, and by allowing hospital waiting lists to reach alarming levels.

Mr. Speaker, last year was the 25th anniversary of medicare, and it should have been — it should have been, Mr. Speaker — a year of celebration for medicare. But instead what we saw was a year of destruction of our health care programs — destruction of our prescription drug program and destruction of our dental program, as well as other health care services. We saw a drastic deterioration of the health care system, and hospital waiting lists reaching unprecedented levels — all in the 25th anniversary of medicare in Saskatchewan.

The people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, built our medicare system, and they're proud of it. They were leaders in North America and in Canada with our medicare system, and it's one of their proudest achievements.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Simard: — It took the courage of Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd and Allan Blakeney, working with the people of this province, to build and expand medical care in Saskatchewan; but it took the short-sightedness of the PC Party and the PC government to attack medicare and undermine our health care programs in the province.

The people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, believe that they have a right, they have a right, Mr. Speaker, to good, accessible, universal medical services. And that is the way we believe in Saskatchewan society and, I would suggest, even in Canadian society. And that's a basic socialist principle, a good socialist principle, that medicare would be available to everyone, that you wouldn't be entitled to health care on the basis of what income you have, as we are now seeing in the prescription drug program.

We wish . . . As a socialist principle, it's a principle whereby we can improve the quality of life of every man, woman, and child in this province by providing them with universal, comprehensive, accessible medical services. However, right-wing extremists, Mr. Speaker, would prefer to see our medical care system privatized or diminished, and they prefer to see corporations getting huge tax breaks, instead of ordinary men and women. And ordinary men and women are made to pay for those huge tax breaks and for a deterioration in public services.

And that's what we're seeing in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing extremist policies that are destroying our medicare system, and policies that are moving our medicare system to the point where it will be available to those who can afford it, something like what we have in the United States right now.

And I should point out that in the United States the cost of medical care is substantially higher per capita than it is in Saskatchewan, and there's many, many, many thousands of people, tens of thousands of people in the United States who are not receiving medical attention, notwithstanding the fact that it's costing more per capita. And that's the right-wing agenda, Mr. Speaker, and that's the way we're seeing this government move.

The PC Party talks about deterrent fees, the need to impose deterrent fees, another aspect of the privatization of the health care system.

And let's just take a look at the free trade agreement which is another movement on behalf of the PC Party. The free trade agreement has a provision in it that allows for the privatization of the administration of hospitals and nursing homes. It allows for, I should say, free trade in the management of the hospital administration and nursing homes. And that is what the PC government is supporting, Mr. Speaker. And I suggest that that opens the door to American corporations coming in and managing our hospitals and our nursing homes.

The dental plan is an example of the privatization policies of this government. The movement from our school-based dental plan to private dentists is a privatization of a highly successful, high quality dental plan that we had in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The government was hoping to save money on the dental plan inasmuch as they were hoping that school children would not use the plan. And I must admit that they have been met with some success because I am told that the utilization of the dental plan is about 30 per cent what it should be, when prior to the privatization of the dental plan, we had a much higher utilization. In fact, in Saskatchewan there was something like 20 per cent more utilization of our Saskatchewan plan than other plans across Canada.

(1615)

The privatization of the dental plan is going to cost us substantially more in the end. It's going to cost us more because children are not seeing dentists or dental therapists now, and somewhere down the line they'll get cavities and then we'll have to pay for that treatment whereas it could have been prevented.

The dental plan is an excellent example, an excellent example of preventive medicine, Mr. Speaker, an example of preventive medicine that has been destroyed by this government because they have made it very difficult for school children to access the dental plan and utilization has fallen off substantially.

Saskatchewan men and women know, Mr. Speaker, that health is an essential aspect of the quality of our lives, that it's fundamental to our lives and it's essential to maintain active, productive and independent lives. And Saskatchewan people want health care to be adequately funded and they've spoken loudly and clearly in that regard.

And this vision is not a not a new vision. This vision of universal, comprehensive, accessible medical care is not a new vision. It was the vision of Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd and Allan Blakeney, and the vision of Saskatchewan men and women, and it is the vision of men and women in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker. People still want comprehensive, universal, accessible medical care, and it's the vision of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker.

However, the government members are trying to spread the myth that medical care is too expensive. They're telling the people of Saskatchewan it costs too much, notwithstanding the fact that privatized medical care in the United States costs more, they're telling us our public plan costs too much.

Well let's just talk a bit about the myth of spiralling health care costs. The PC government has shifted many of its programs and expenditures out of other government departments and into the Department of Health, Mr. Speaker. In the budget, they've shifted spending out of some departments into the department of Health.

Some examples are: continuing care, expenditures which used to be funded through Social Services; the minister's salary, which used to be funded through Executive Council; and routine support services, which used to be funded through Supply and Services. And these transferred items now amount to more than about 240

million per year. And these items have been transferred into Health, Mr. Speaker, to attempt to pad the Health budget and make the claim that health cost are spiralling.

But when we make a straightforward, fair and accurate comparison, we see that Health expenditures counted for 26 per cent of the total government expenditures in the final three years of the New Democratic administration, and in the past three years of PC administration it is approximately the same. So there has been virtually no increase by this government in its percentage of the total budget with respect to Health expenditures when you make a fair and accurate comparison, Mr. Speaker, between what was being spent before and what is being spent now.

So this myth of the spiralling costs of health care is being perpetrated by the government deliberately, so it can justify privatization of the drug program, privatization of the dental program, privatization of the management of nursing homes and hospitals, and who knows what other aspects of privatization they will engage in health care in the next year or two.

But first of all, they want to attempt to convince the people of Saskatchewan that health care costs too much. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been speaking to the people of Saskatchewan over the last few weeks in travelling the province and meeting with them. And they are telling me that they believe they have a right to high quality, accessible medical services, and they believe the government has an obligation to fund it.

This cut-back in health care services in the prescription drug plan, the long hospital waiting list, the lack of funding for the administration of hospitals, is causing considerable amount of grief to the seniors in our province, Mr. Speaker. And I speak to them every day — people who have paid taxes all their lives, many of whom have been involved in the war, many of whom have raised families in this society and have built Saskatchewan up and fought for medicare.

And now they want to get into a hospital, Mr. Speaker, and they're looking at a six-month wait, a nine-month wait, a year wait, and they're not getting medical attention — people in my constituency, two gentlemen that I spoke to, with blood clots in their legs, who stand to possibly have their entire leg amputated if it's not caught in time. One of them has now got into the hospital; the other one has still been waiting since I last spoke to him, since last December. And not only do they stand to get their legs cut off; if this condition persists, it could be life threatening. Waiting since last December, Mr. Speaker, to get into the hospital, and still not in.

And these people have spent their life building Saskatchewan and paying taxes. And I say that's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, and something has to be done about that. And it's time that the government took a hard look at long hospital waiting lists and did something about it. So families in the province, Mr. Speaker, are feeling abandoned by this government. In time of need when they're sick, they're feeling abandoned.

And let's look . . . the government talks about, well, it costs too much money, you know, we just don't have this money; where are we going to pull this money from? Well I ask you, Mr. Speaker, where did they pull \$1 billion from for a political project on the Premier's back doorstep? Where did they pull that \$1 billion from, Mr. Speaker? Where do they pull \$20 million a year on self-serving advertising — \$30,000 on an SPC advertisement. How many hospital beds could have been kept open? At something like 300 or \$400 a day for a hospital bed, 30 minutes of Mr. George Hill to get involved in self-serving advertising on TV for some \$30,000.

Let's just talk about where the money is going and what this government's priorities are, Mr. Speaker — \$84 million a year on empty office space, \$34,000 a day. Let's talk about how many hospital beds could be maintained, Mr. Speaker, with the \$34,000 a day on empty office space. Let's talk about that, and see where this government's priorities are — some 23 million to the Saskoil sell-off and another 22 million in gifts to millionaire, Peter Pocklington, one of their Tory friends from Alberta, Mr. Speaker. And this from a government that promised to reduce income taxes by some 10 per cent.

And the rest of us, Mr. Speaker, the rest of us are made to pay for these give-aways. We pay in cut-backs to services, like the prescription drug plan and the dental plan. We pay in long hospital waiting lists. We pay in flat tax, an increase in this unprecedented Tory flat tax. We pay gasoline tax at the pump when they, people of Saskatchewan, were promised that never in the history again would there be a gas tax in this province as long as there was a PC government. Well so much for their promises, Mr. Speaker. We've paid in utility rate increases of some 47 per cent in the last six years.

It's the people of this province that are paying for this mismanagement and this incompetence and these give-aways. It's the people that are paying. And they're not only paying in unprecedented tax increases, they're paying in drastic cuts in services.

Our seniors are paying when they cannot get into the hospital to get the medical attention that they need, Mr. Speaker. Our seniors are paying. People are paying when they can't afford to get prescription drugs, Mr. Speaker. People pay for that.

And the dental program. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about that a little bit more. The studies done on the dental program indicated that it was the best of its kind in North America. It was a highly accessible program, and it was a high quality program. And in order to implement their agenda to decimate the dental program, they had to fire some 400 dental workers, Mr. Speaker.

Four hundred dental workers lost their jobs, and I understand that very few of them have been re-employed. The most recent figures I got, which were some time in March, I believe, there were only 50 that had received employment. And out of that, only about half of them had permanent and full-time employment; the rest were only

part time.

So I ask you, what are the rest of the dental therapists and dental workers doing? Well I know that one of them was told by the member from Shaunavon that she should go on welfare — a farm woman who was supplementing farm income by being a dental therapist — and she was told by a PC member when she phoned him and asked him what she should do, to go on welfare. To go on welfare, Mr. Speaker.

And that's how this government stands up for the people of Saskatchewan. That's how this government stands up for Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker. That's what they believe in as far Saskatchewan families are concerned. That became so evident in their decimation of the dental plan, and putting over 400 dental workers out of work — exactly what they felt about Saskatchewan families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Simard: — And so the Premier admitted his mistake, Mr. Speaker. He said there would be a new, exciting rural plan. Well it hasn't come yet, Mr. Speaker; we're still waiting for this new, exciting rural plan. Over 300 communities were being served by the school-based dental clinics, and I understand only a fraction of those communities have dental services now. And perhaps we can look at that in a little more detail.

Let me give you the dental plan update, Mr. Speaker. In the constituency of Arm River — the community locations before the decimation of the dental plan — there were 12 community locations being served. Now in Arm River there are only 2; Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, there were 9 being served before the decimation of the dental plan, now there is only 1 being served; Athabasca, there was 1 and now there's zero; Bengough-Milestone, there were 15 communities being served and now there's only 1; Canora, there were 9 communities being served and now there's only 2; Cut Knife-Lloydminster, 11 communities were being served and now there are 2 only being served; Estevan — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I'm down a line here; the printing is pretty close — Cut Knife-Lloydminster, there were 10 being served and now there's only one.

(1630)

In Estevan there were 7 locations being served and now only 1 is being served; Humboldt, 8 were being served and now only 2 locations; Indian Head, 12 community locations by dental therapists, after, 4; Kelsey-Tisdale, 9 before, after, 3; Kelvington-Wadena, 9 before, after, 3; Kindersley, 7 before, after, 2; Kinistino, 16 before, after, zero; Last Mountain-Touchwood, 14 before, after 9; Maple Creek, 8 before, after, 1; Meadow Lake, 8 before, after, 3; Melfort, 6 before, after 1; Melville, 9 before, after 2; Moosomin, 8 before after 3; Morse, 6 before, after zero; Nipawin, 8 before, after 1; Pelly, 4 before, after 1; Prince Albert-Duck Lake, 3 before, after 1; Qu'Appelle-Lumsden, 10 before, after 1; Quill Lakes, 11 before, after 3; Redberry, 10 before, after 1; Rosetown-Elrose, 8 before, after 1; Rosthern, 11 before, after 3; Saltcoats, 9 before, after 2; Shaunavon, 9 before, after 1; Shellbrook-Torch River, 9 before, after 1;

Souris-Cannington, 11 before, after 3; Thunder Creek, 10 before, after zero; Turtleford, 10 before, after 5; Weyburn, 5 before, after 1; Wilkie, 8 before after 3; community locations, before 330, after 71. And that's as up to date as we can get, Mr. Speaker, at this time.

With the prescription drug changes, Mr. Speaker, we have seen a situation developing in Saskatchewan where families are having to make a decision between putting groceries on their table or buying prescription drugs.

An Hon. Member: — That's a bunch of nonsense.

Ms. Simard: — And someone over there says that that's a bunch of nonsense. Someone over there says that's a bunch of nonsense.

Well, we say an example in this legislature last Friday of a family who chose to buy groceries instead of prescription drugs. And they can continue saying that's a bunch of nonsense, but let me tell you, there are many hundreds and hundreds of people out there who know otherwise and who resent the fact that every time we raise this and try to bring it to your attention, that you say it's a bunch of nonsense, because they are insulted by those comments, because they know it's not nonsense.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Simard: — And if you want a little political advice over there, you'd better start taking their concerns seriously.

The PC Party has talked about rising drug costs, Mr. Speaker, the PC Party's talked about rising drug costs, and this is creating problems. Let's just take a look at rising drug cost, and let's talk about the drug patent legislation that this government, the PC government, approved and was involved in spearheading to the extent that they wrote a written approval, as I understand, to Brian Mulroney.

The increases in drug prices — this is an article coming out of the *Winnipeg Free Press* on January 22, 1988: "Increases in drug prices outstrip rise in consumer price index." Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? "Some manufacturers (and I'm quoting from the article) are trying to impose price increases before the price review board comes into effect." It has to do with the drug patent legislation that is going to be coming into effect. There is some provision in there for prices of drugs to be reviewed. Well the manufacturers, I am told, are rushing to increase their prices before this drug price review goes into effect. And we don't know exactly what the percentage of increase is, but it's been substantial.

And we said in this House that this is the sort of thing that was going to happen, that there would be substantial increase in drug prices as a result of the drug patent legislation. And it's happened, Mr. Speaker — it's happened. And we're paying for that, and our seniors are paying for that, and our sick people are paying for that. And that government supported that initiative — they supported that initiative; that's what they stood for.

I think that it's very — it's pretty hard for them to start

complaining about rising drug prices when they supported an initiative that would result in rising drug prices, Mr. Speaker.

The drug plan, incidentally, has been slashed some \$26 million since 1986. The new PC drug plan has created substantial hardship to the people of Saskatchewan and, as I've said, we see it every single day. But there's been nothing in the budget, there's been no movement on the part of this government to attempt to rectify the hardships that are occurring as a result of the new PC drug plan.

If I can just give you some more evidence or facts that indicate the sort of problems that people are facing, and I'm quoting now from a letter written by a family physician here in Regina to a paper called *Pulse*:

A moderately severe asthmatic patient's average cost for the usual drug regime is approximately \$150 a month. That is \$150 a month for one asthmatic person in a family. Because asthma is a disease that tends to run in families, some families will have more than one affected member.

That gives you an example of what people are paying for drugs, Mr. Speaker.

The doctor goes on to talk about the cost of oral contraceptives and the fact that many women are having difficulty, from poor families, paying for oral contraceptives. And she goes on to say: we already face a crisis in unplanned pregnancy; pricing birth control beyond the reach of low-income women is a sure and certain formula to make things worse.

As a backdrop to the issue of how changes in Saskatchewan's drug plan affects women's health, the most telling figure is the fact that one in four people in this province live in poverty. The 1985 Statistic Canada low-income cut-off for a single individual is 810 a month. Seventy per cent of minimum wage earners are women, earning approximately \$756 a month on minimum wage. Even without dependants, a woman on minimum wage lives significantly below the poverty line. Add children to this, Mr. Speaker, and it's clear that extra money for medication is beyond the reach of many of the working poor. They must choose between food or medicine for their children or food. For anyone to suggest otherwise shows just how profoundly out of touch they are with the realities faced by low-income people on a fixed budget. The drug plan changes are causing great personal hardship to thousands of Saskatchewan people.

As this is written by a physician, Mr. Speaker, who sees these people every day, and yet they have the audacity to shout across that floor and tell us that it's not true.

Hospital waiting lists in this province, Mr. Speaker, have reached unprecedented levels — unprecedented levels — and I believe it was around 10,000 patients at the end of February of 1988 in Saskatoon alone — in Saskatoon alone.

We've seen summer bed closures, and I understand that the City Hospital is going to have to close another 35 beds, or so we've been informed. I also understand that

the new wing that was opened in Saskatoon is not yet functioning, and we don't know where the money's going to come from. The paint is still drying, I guess, so we've heard.

The waiting lists, the hospital waiting lists in this province are absolutely intolerable and unacceptable and this government has to start moving to clear up these hospital waiting lists. I have spoken to a doctor in town who has to make decisions on a daily basis as to what case is more life-threatening and who is more likely to have serious problems, if not life-threatening problems, if he doesn't operate. He's having to juggle individuals every day.

And so we have people . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and it may be his job. The member from Wascana says, that's his job. It may be his job, but the fact of the matter is, is that the waiting lists are so long that there are people waiting for urgent surgery from last December. And it may be his job, but you're making it very difficult for him because you're not funding health care adequately, and you're not taking these problems seriously.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Simard: — And the member from Wascana may not take these problems seriously, but I hope that if ever has to go into the hospital for some urgent surgery that he'll bear in mind this discussion here today in the House.

And so what does the government do? What about specialists in this province, Mr. Speaker? We have seen . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please.

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have seen specialists leave from the Plains Health Centre as a result of a freeze on the funding to the university education portion of the hospital.

An Hon. Member: — It should have happened years ago.

Ms. Simard: — We saw a number of specialists leave — and the member over there from Saskatoon says it should have happened years ago. I can't believe the insensitivity, the arrogance, and the absolute incompetence of the members opposite — it should have happened a long time ago.

An Hon. Member: — Was it the member from Mayfair who said that?

Ms. Simard: — Yes, it was the member from Mayfair who said that — that it should have happened a long time ago. So you know, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the government is doing to address this problem with respect to specialists in the province of Saskatchewan.

I expect in estimates to have some answers on that question, because we've seen a situation Saskatchewan where people are waiting for months and months and months to get in to see an ophthalmologist. We have seen specialists leave the province as a result of cut-backs to the plains Hospital. And we are in the situation in Saskatchewan where we have drastic need for

more specialists in the province, and we're having difficulty getting them to come here. I suggest that this government's attitude towards health care isn't encouraging physicians and specialists to come to Saskatchewan.

The government has said, Mr. Speaker, that they are increasing the health care budget by some 5.6 per cent. The truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, it's only 3.5 per cent since last year, but if you look over the last two years and use the figures from '86, you see that it's only 2.4 per cent over those two years — not what they would choose the public to believe — at a time when inflation in Saskatchewan is at something like 5 to 6 per cent. At a time when inflation is that high, they aren't even matching inflation, Mr. Speaker, and that's their commitment to the families of this province, to the sick and the elderly. It's some commitment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to move the motion, seconded by the member from Saskatoon South. And I move the motion.

That this Assembly condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for undermining Saskatchewan health care services by altering the prescription drug program, abolishing the school-based children's dental plan, and by allowing hospital waiting lists to reach alarming levels.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

(1645)

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I take a great deal of pleasure this afternoon to participate in this debate, particularly, Mr. Speaker, being a former minister of Health. And a number of accusations that have been made opposite, I will — in the little time that I have, and on another occasion, Mr. Speaker — prove to the members opposite and to the public of Saskatchewan that they were much better off under our administration than they are under the present administration.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite say that they have a commitment and a dedication to the four pillars of medicare, the four pillars as they are outlined and understood by many people here in Canada. Those four pillars, for the edification of the members opposite, are: accessibility, comprehensibility, universality, and publicly funded.

Mr. Speaker, those four principles have been accepted not only here in Saskatchewan but in many other provinces in Canada. And until 1982 it was pretty well accepted that no one dared undermine those four pillars of medicare. And the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, in the 1982 election, the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, made guarantees and promises that they would not erode those four pillars of medicare.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have seen time and time again . . . and as the member from Regina Lakeview, as she moved this motion, indicated very clearly, three basic moves by this government: the eroding of the prescription drug program, virtually the destruction of it; the abolishment of

the children's dental program, Mr. Speaker, the best preventative dental program in all of North America — I will prove that again by a study that was done about 10 years ago, a little over 10 years ago; and thirdly, Mr. Speaker, by the scandalous hospital waiting lists that we have in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the member from . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, could you draw the member to order, please.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite says that I approved of waiting lists. I want to say to the members opposite, when I was the minister of Health in 1979 to 1982, the waiting lists in this province were about one-quarter of what they are today — about one-quarter. And not in the wildest imagination did I ever expect that we would have 15,000 people on the waiting lists in Saskatoon and Regina. Not in the wildest dreams could I have imagined that.

Mr. Speaker, when I said that we must have a short waiting list, I simply meant that you can't have your hospitals standing empty. Of course not. But no one, no one ever expected that a government would allow the waiting list in the city of Saskatchewan to get up to over 11,000 people. And, Mr. Speaker, a spokesman for the Conservative Party in 1980 said this: "Birkmaier critical of patient cut-back during summer." This was in 1980, Mr. Speaker, when I was the minister of Health. I want to read that again: "Birkmaier critical of patient cut-back during summer."

Now let me, for everybody's edification: do you know how many people were on the waiting list at City Hospital? One hundred and sixty-two persons in July; 227 in August. Today we have well over 3,000 people on the waiting list at City Hospital. And where is Alderwoman Birkmaier today? Is she critical today of this government? No, Mr. Speaker. Hospital waiting lists at City Hospital have gone up 13 times what they were when I was the minister of Health, and not one word from Alderwoman Donna Birkmaier — not one word.

If it was critical, Mr. Speaker, that hospital beds couldn't close in the summer of 1980 with 227 people on the waiting list, how important is it, Mr. Speaker, that we have additional funds today when we have over 3,000 people on the waiting list in city Hospital? Where are the alderpeople. Where is alderman Cherneskey, a well-known Tory supporter? Where is he, on the waiting list in Saskatoon? Not one word, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, medicare and hospitalization has been under attack by this government ever since 1982. But we have really seen the true colour of this government right after the 1986 election when they attacked the prescription drug program, they abolished the children's dental program, and they simply did not fund adequately the hospitals in this province.

And consequently, Mr. Speaker, we have not just the NDP being critical of the government opposite. Let me read some headlines for you; "Health cuts hurt patients." It was a doctor saying this. Provincial health cuts wound the patients who are waiting for care, say doctors from Saskatoon's three hospitals. But the government says

applying more money isn't the cure.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on. Cancer patients, who in 1978, in 1978 used to wait about over a month, says Barry Gilliland, president of the City Hospital medical staff. They could be waiting two months, rather than one, and eventually someone's going to die if health services are continually trimmed to balance hospital budgets and beds are closed. That's what the doctor said about the government opposite.

That's one, Mr. Speaker. Let me continue. Here's another. The Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan is taking great strides at destroying our medicare system, which was the envy of the world. We didn't say that, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your continued efforts in preventing the Premier and his cabinet minister from eroding the health care system to a point from which it will never recover. That was written by R.A. Brady, chairman of public relations committee of the chiropractors' associations of this province. That was his comment. Those were not our comments, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me say again, here's another. Health plans will die without cuts, says McLeod.

And the members opposite say that they support medicare, they support hospitalization. I say to the members opposite, there is nothing better than the actions. Your rhetoric isn't going to buy the people of this province any longer; you've got to show more by your actions.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on. Woman waited 13 months for surgery. Thirteen months for surgery, and the members opposite say that they are providing a first-class hospital and medicare system in this province. What a farce, Mr. Speaker. What a farce. Thirteen months.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on. Waiting lists at hospitals blamed on lack of funds. And that's not us saying it; doctors saying that. Bed closures crux of problem. Who says that? Dr. Barry Maber.

And I haven't got time, Mr. Speaker, to go into detail as to what he has to say. Here's another one: nearly everything wrong with PC's hospital policy. Now Health minister, George McLeod, however, doesn't seem to see any great problem with the situation in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to draw your attention to the member who has twice now in the last two minutes crossed the rules of this legislature in terms of using members' names and he did it just now.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, if I breach the rules of this House, I apologize to you and to the members opposite. It certainly was not my intention. If I did, I apologize.

In my exuberance for the defence of our health care system, Mr. Speaker, sometimes I forgot. Mr. Speaker, somebody's got to come to the defence of the people of Saskatchewan, it certainly isn't the members opposite.

Because when you have people waiting 13 months or 14 months — 13 or 14 months, Mr. Speaker, waiting to get into hospitals or are getting elective surgery, someone has got to stand up. And if it isn't the member from Rosthern — and I know, he feels rather touchy and sensitive about this situation, but I'll tell you, there are a lot of the people from Rosthern who are waiting and are on the waiting list trying to get into the three hospitals in Saskatoon.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I was going to raise a point of order, but I won't. I'll just point it out that wishing to adjourn debate and moving to adjourn debate are two different things. I move this House do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on: 10,000 people on the waiting list and what does the Minister of health say? The Minister of Health says hospital waiting lists, not a serious problem. That, Mr. Speaker, is the sensitivity of the present Minister of Health. And, Mr. Speaker, he had the audacity to condemn me when the hospital waiting lists in this province were one-quarter — one-quarter of the numbers that he has allowed at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, let's go to some other evidence — the hypocrisy of the people opposite, the lack of integrity, Mr. Speaker, the lack of integrity of people opposite. What did they say, Mr. Speaker, what did they say, Mr. Speaker, when they're running for office . . . when they were running for office? Gordon Currie campaigned. He said, we will eliminate dispensing fees on all drugs prescribed for senior citizens — we will eliminate all dispensing fees.

Mr. Speaker, what did the member from Morse have to say? The member from Morse says, expand drug plan to include all prescription drugs; provide adequate funding to hospitals to allow them to operate at normal levels year-round. That was a commitment from the member of Morse.

Mr. Speaker, oh here's one, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, one very familiar to you, sir. What will we do? We will improve and revitalize health care by expanding the drug plan. Mr. Minister, the member from Kindersley must have copied it from the same article. He also said that we would expand the drug plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have one — a guarantee — a guarantee in this one . . . really, Mr. Speaker. This is from the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden, and he says, the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan will abolish the unfair deterrent fees for prescription drugs.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan and the people of Canada have a right to ask the people, the politicians, to be honest with them. If they make a promise, at least try and carry it out.

And we have heard time and time again, before the 1986 election, that they would not tamper with health care; they would not privatize health care. And what did we see immediately after? They did exactly the opposite. Is it any wonder that people have no more faith in politicians? We have at least, Mr. Speaker, should make an attempt to carry out the promises that we have made.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lost more that I wish to say on this particular topic, and I wish to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.