

June 14, 1988

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, 46 grade 4 and 5 students from Palliser Heights School in Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, they've already completed a tour of the building, and following question period today I look forward to having pictures with the students and sharing some drinks and the opportunity to answer questions.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming these students to the Chamber here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to, Mr. Speaker, introduce to you, and to the other members of the Assembly here today, 25 grade 7 and 8 students from Benson School in the constituency of Regina Rosemont. The students have been on a tour of the building. They're accompanied by Dr. Ochitwa and Mr. Thompson, who's doing the chaperoning. I'll be meeting with them for pictures at 2:30 and then after for refreshments in the members' dining hall.

I take particular interest in welcoming this group. Dr. Ochitwa is my wife's boss, and so I want all members of the Assembly to give them a particularly warm welcome.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to the Assembly a group of 58 grade 9 students from Assiniboia High School. They are seated in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker. They've had the opportunity to tour the building and I've had the privilege of meeting with them earlier today. They are accompanied by Mr. John Bumbac, Mr. Tim Nickel, Mr. Jim Stangel, and Ms. Sharon Uteck.

I hope that the students and their teachers are enjoying their visit to the legislature, Mr. Speaker. I hope they've found it to be a useful experience. I hope they will enjoy question period, and I would invite all hon. members to help me welcome them to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to introduce some students here who are with us, 25 of them in the east gallery, grade 5 students from Henry Braun School in Regina, in the constituency of Regina North East. They are here to visit during question period, and I'm going to meet with them for pictures and some drinks and questions later on in room 218. They're accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Ready; by their principal Mr. Wilson, and others: Mrs. Green, Mrs. Nolte, and Mr. Buchanan.

I would like to ask all of the members of the House to join with me in extending a warm welcome to these students who are with us here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce two gentlemen to you from the community of Moosomin, seated in the west gallery, two individuals who have really given of their time to work with the handicapped. Mr. Jack Ewasiuk, he's manager of the Pipestone handicapped centre, and Mr. Gary Beckett, chairman of the Pipestone Kin-Ability board. Both of these gentlemen have really given themselves to working and providing service in the centre of Moosomin. I'm looking forward to meeting with them and members from the SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres) this afternoon.

Would you join me in welcoming them to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Privatization of Canada Post

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Minister of Rural Affairs, I'd like to address my question to the Premier. My question, Mr. Premier, is that I see in today's press that Canada Post intends to go ahead with its plans to privatize all 5,221 rural post offices by 1996, and that's not good news for the people of small town Saskatchewan.

A week ago your minister met with Canada Post officials and came away happy. In fact, I quote, he said:

If they do what they say they are going to do, postal service should even improve more in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Premier, I ask you: was your minister sold a bill of goods, or is your government selling the people of Saskatchewan a bill of goods?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I have not received information from the minister with respect to the recent announcement, so I'll take notice and respond to the individual.

Mr. Lautermilch: — New question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, surely you're aware of the negotiations between the federal government, Postes Canada, and your minister. Surely you're aware of the effect of the closure of 5,221 rural post offices and the privatization of those post offices. I ask you, Mr. Premier: will you undertake to instruct your minister to inform Postes Canada that the government and the people of Saskatchewan are opposed to the closure and the privatization of rural post offices in our province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I can say that our minister's position with respect to protecting rural service has been very clear. And our government and the people of Saskatchewan support service in rural Saskatchewan, and we will encourage more and more service as opposed to less service. So the hon. member can rest assured that we will carry that message, and have carried it in the past.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Supplementary, Mr. Premier. I'd like to know what method you'll be using to carry this message to Canada Post. And I would like to know if you commit yourself to telling Brian Mulroney that his plans to privatize the small post offices in rural Saskatchewan are totally and unequivocally unacceptable to the Government of Saskatchewan and to the people of Saskatchewan. I ask you again, Mr. Premier: when and where will you carry this message?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, we get many opportunities to carry the message to our counterparts, interprovincially and federally. And you just raised the point that the minister had been meeting with the federal officials, so that clearly explains that we do that on a regular basis and will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lautermilch: — In light of the fact . . . supplementary. In light of the fact that the government has indicated their intention to privatize or close 5,221 post offices, I ask you, Mr. Premier: do you believe that your minister is being effective in his negotiations with the federal government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I can say that the ministers in this government have been very effective in negotiating with the federal government, and they have provided a great deal of money.

The members opposite smile because they know, as a result of deficiency payments and as a result of drought payments and as a result of stabilization payments and changes to investment, changes to western energy policy, there have been tremendous advantages to rural Saskatchewan here and rural western Canada, so our negotiations have been very successful.

I will also point out that he combines the whole thought of closure with privatization. He knows that we are encouraging more and more public participation and privatization, and in many, many cases it will provide, as he knows and as he sees in Prince Albert, 200 new jobs — not less jobs, new jobs, with complete new paper mill as a result of the private sector investing.

So I am going to say, Mr. Speaker, that we will encourage the development of rural Saskatchewan and support it very much, and we're making that message very clear in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lautermilch: — New question, Mr. Premier.

Privatization in Saskatchewan has consistently shown a loss of jobs in areas where you've delved into that particular venture. And I want to suggest to you that in . . . the privatization of the rural post offices in Saskatchewan will cause a decline in services, a decline in jobs.

And I want to ask you, on behalf of the people who work in that industry and on behalf of the small towns: are you willing to accept \$4.50 an hour wages over the \$12-plus that the postal people are paid in those rural towns?

You're doing all you can, Mr. Premier, to destroy small town Saskatchewan. You have done nothing to revitalize it. I want to know if you'll review your policies and if you will unequivocally oppose privatization and closures of rural post offices in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, we know that there's hardly an NDP represented in rural Canada any place . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And we know that. And those that are speak loudly from their seat and often even when we don't request it.

Mr. Speaker, we have defended and will continue to defend the growth of rural Saskatchewan towns and communities with rural gas, with individual line service, with irrigation, with deficiency payments, with all kinds of programs that will provide it. And we now see that the hon. member is more concerned about the wage levels of some individuals — some individuals — as he's concerned about rural living, Mr. Speaker.

That's why the NDP . . . the NDP have always come back to the . . . union leader will represent rural Saskatchewan. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, until they learn that the union leader does not represent rural Saskatchewan, they will be isolated to one or two seats across western Canada at the best of times.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Seizure of Assets by ACS

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's another example of how the Premier is helping rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, and it concerns the Ag Credit Corporation's seizing of irrigation equipment belonging to one Harley Forsberg. Mr. Forsberg has been in arrears for some three years, yet you wait until June and he's got his crop in and he's got all of his input costs into his land before ACS walks in and takes off the equipment. Why let him go through all that expense just to now ensure that he's not going to be able to reap a crop?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that the hon. member should recognize, and I believe that he knows that this case is before the courts, and the sheriff can move in when the sheriff sees fit. And it's been five years, Mr. Speaker, where the individual has been in arrears in terms of payments and before the courts. And he knows that that's the case. And I don't control, I don't control when

the sheriff wants to come in and seize various kinds of equipment. And that's exactly been the case. And while it's before the courts, the hon. member knows that we don't discuss it in great detail in the legislature.

Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Premier, Mr. Speaker, a new question. Mr. Forsberg guaranteed a loan to his son. They were in trouble; they offered to give the irrigation equipment back. ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) said no, because they wanted more; they wanted the land as well. As I understand it, your new Bill 37 is supposed to give protection of sorts to this type of situation.

And I ask you, Mr. Premier: in light of your new Bill and all that you say it's going to do to help Saskatchewan farmers, why are you now seizing property and not waiting until after you put the Bill through?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we know who's been holding up the legislature, and it hasn't been this side of the House.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I will say to the hon. member that this case is before the courts, and he knows that it's five years in arrears, and he knows when the court process finally takes in effect that the sheriff can make certain moves, and they have. And it is not my responsibility, nor is it under my control, to dictate when that will happen.

Now obviously when we pass this legislation, then we will allow people to make changes and protect the home quarter. And still, at some point in time, Mr. Speaker, there has to be reasonable payments made to somebody because you can't go on indefinitely without making payments. And if you're something like five years in arrears, then the public and the taxpayer says, well at least make some contribution so that we know that there is reasonable good faith over time, and making it significant enough so that in fact we know that the farmer is serious.

It's before the courts, and I can't add any more detail than that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Upshall: — Supplementary . . . or a new question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, the reason that we're, as you say, holding up the Bill is that we allow time for people out in rural Saskatchewan to absorb an omnibus Bill like that, where you never let them have time, and now they're finally having to see through this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Premier, once again this points out the real problem, and that's your government's inability to realize that the problem in rural Saskatchewan is debt, and you don't know how to handle it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Instead, you're putting another Saskatchewan farmer off the land.

Mr. Premier, you have no answers. Your band-aid solutions aren't working. There are many solutions offered by people around this province to restructure and

solve the debt problem. My question to you is: why don't you respond?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say that we have responded every year we were in government, and we certainly responded prior to us forming government, and we offered many more programs that were a lot better than the NDP's land bank. They still haven't got anything else to offer.

We have many programs that have provided literally billions of dollars of cash. And as you travel Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, or western Canada, farmers all over the place will say, it's been the best Conservative government federally and the best Conservative government provincially that we've seen at any time in the history of the country to provide cash, Mr. Speaker, into the hands of farmers as the result of suggestions that they make. If there's drought problems, if there's grasshopper problems, if there's debt, if there's high interest, we were there with programs that the NDP just wouldn't come up with.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the latest major poll which was the election in Manitoba where the NDP got wiped right off the map because they were offering the same sorts of things. Nobody believed them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Presentation of Legislation and Orders for Return

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I want to direct a question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, who has stood in this House under a number of questions and has refused to answer them, and has avoided them and simply tries to make a ranting speech about issues that are totally not relevant to the questions that are being asked.

Now, Mr. Premier, you made some comment about holding up legislation in the House. I want to point out to you that on this order paper in this Legislative Assembly there are over 10 Bills which have been on the order paper for over two weeks and are yet not printed. Now that is an atrocious mismanagement of the procedures of this House, Mr. Speaker, on the part of you and your government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — You have had over 45 Bills that have been introduced into this House in the last two or three weeks, even though the House's sittings now nearly are over — 60 days, 60 days. Now, Mr. Premier, the purpose of this House is for the government to be accountable and to provide information to questions which are being asked. On April . . .

An Hon. Member: — Ask your question.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — If the Premier will listen, I might give him the answer, rather than interrupting.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Premier, if you will listen, on April 28 I asked your House Leader a question about the status of certain information about orders for return which were ordered over eight months ago. At that time your House Leader said, and I quote:

I'll check into it and provide the answer for the member . . .

Today, almost 8 months later, there has not been an answer, and 7 weeks since I asked that question, we still have not got an answer. Will you, Mr. Premier, exercise your responsibility as the leader of that government and commit to this House that those answers will be provided today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — At least, Mr. Speaker, at least the House Leaders are talking now, and perhaps since we've started to communicate we can move toward getting some of this legislation through in a speedier fashion.

The member talks about the orders for return that have been ordered for 8 months and haven't yet been tabled. He said that question has never been answered. In fact, we spent some time in this House doing similar orders this year, Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, a few weeks ago, at which time I explained, Mr. Speaker, that we had some difficulty in going back through the archives, etc., because the way the orders were worded last time. We've got a little smarter, Mr. Speaker, and we've changed the wording for the returns this year so that, you know, we'll get that done.

And as it relates to the legislation, Mr. Speaker, this year was a little different in that we had the Supreme Court ruling that followed by our Bill 2, so that we didn't have to table everything in both languages. And the, Mr. Speaker, members opposite are putting all kinds of pressure on. They want to see what the legislative calendar is, and so . . . I can't . . .

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I haven't heard such a lame-duck explanation of incompetency for a long time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — The facts are that the orders for return were ordered eight months ago. Similar questions asked in Public Accounts Committee, the departments, three of them, provided the answer in less than three weeks.

The only thing happening here is that the government has those answers. It's sitting on them because it's attempting to hide the information from the public of Saskatchewan under after the session, and I ask the House Leader now, since the Premier ducks the question when he finds that he's embarrassed, will he make a commitment to provide those orders of return to this legislature today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a minute about lame ducks. If you've ever seen a lame duck, Mr. Speaker, there's a whole . . . what do you call . . . a gaggle of ducks, or gaggle of geese, or whatever they are, Mr. Speaker, those people, those people sitting over there, squawking and crying for the tabling of *Public Accounts*. They're tabled.

How many questions? Not one question on *Public Accounts*. You can give them . . . throw open a filing cabinet. They couldn't function as an opposition in any event. Mr. Speaker, the auditor's report is tabled. Not one question. Give them all the information there is in government. They're totally ineffective as an opposition, Mr. Speaker, totally ineffective as an opposition.

We've got a drought going on out there. We've got all kinds of programs that we're delivering out there. And they sit here, squawking, squawking about some order for return that they . . . that is the most compelling issue of the day today, Mr. Speaker. I simply can't believe this.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary. I think that in front of the children in the gallery today, for that kind of a performance, the Premier should be embarrassed about his House Leader today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now without a preamble, so that it doesn't confuse the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a very straightforward question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. House Leader, put aside the rhetoric and tell this legislature and the people of Saskatchewan that you will table those orders for return which you have had sitting in your office for months, so that the public can know how you and your government have spent their taxpayers' money. Will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the returns, I will table them the minute that I have them ready. Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the returns, I will table them the minute that I have them ready, or at first opportunity once . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I thought so. Thank you.

Just an observation, Mr. Speaker. I remember these people asking, always asking for more information, table this, table that, file the *Public Accounts* and the auditor's report, Weyerhaeuser deal — they haven't figured that one out yet; at least they haven't asked any questions on that one either, Mr. Speaker. The specific question as it relates to orders for return, I'll table them the minute that I have them ready, Mr. Speaker.

Kaolin Processing at Wood Mountain

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Investment and Trade or the Minister of Finance, whichever is more appropriate. It has to do with the Ekaton resource development company which is seeking to establish a kaolin plant and operation at Wood

Mountain. The minister will know that a critical issue is one relating to the flow-through shares question. In the last federal budget, this product, kaolin, was designated as qualifying for the advantages of flow-through shares, but it's apparently on the agenda of the Minister of Finance federally to remove that particular provision in the process of federal tax reform, that is, eliminating this flow-through share ability.

And I wonder if the minister could advise me what the position of the Government of Saskatchewan is on that issue, and will the Government of Saskatchewan argue for the retention of flow-through share advantages, at least in so far as it relates to the kaolin operation at Wood Mountain that we hope to see established there?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, the government has taken the position with regard to the flow-through shares that not only specifically with regard to the kaolin project but the small mining companies and the small oil and gas companies that would be affected. We have taken the position, for the smaller companies, we would like to see the flow-through shares continued.

Having said that, the national government, I gather, is having some internal reviews as to the effect, and I'm not sure whether I can be optimistic that there will be some minor modifications which will at least deal with the smaller companies.

Mr. Goodale: — I wonder if the minister would be prepared to provide us with some more detail on the position being taken by the Saskatchewan government and, in particular, what sort of lobbying effort is the Saskatchewan government launching with respect to the federal government to change their mind on this question so we can protect the advantages for companies like Ekaton and the development they want at Wood Mountain.

Could the minister give us the details of Saskatchewan's position, and when does he expect the federal position to be clear, because the uncertainty is a very debilitating thing?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, we have lobbied, and I have lobbied the last couple of Finance minister meeting, for example. I think it fair to say that the strongest positions were taken by both Saskatchewan and Alberta in favour of at least some retention. Having said that, the federal government has a view that some of the modifications that it is proposing will at least alleviate the problem and in some cases solve the problem for the smaller resource companies.

We are doing an analysis as is the federal government as to whether the modifications that they are considering will in fact alleviate or eliminate the problem. That's not completed. That's the best advice I can give the hon. member, except to say that we have taken the position, and again in fairness, as has the province of Alberta, that we want the benefits to the small resource companies and we've made that position rather strongly to the federal Minister of Finance.

The Year Ahead

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, another one of your many blueprints for taking education in 21st century has been severely criticized by LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents), by the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and by professors at the university.

Mr. Minister, one of their criticisms has been on your suggestion that committees should be formed to improve the efficiency of school boards and to control their spending.

Mr. Minister, my question to you is this: why do you think that you have the right to interfere in the autonomous workings of the school boards? And also, these advisers that you are recommending, are they the same advisers that have advised the Minister of Finance in creating a \$3.9 billion deficit?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, it's my view that all school boards and school board trustees, their administrative officers, want to be as efficient as possible in administering public funds for education across this province. What we would want to do there is (a) respect their autonomy, but at the same time try and be helpful to them.

And for example, Mr. Speaker, we have raised with them the fact that across Saskatchewan administrative costs per student range from \$50 to \$408. Now there may be very good reasons why administration costs range as high as \$408 per student in some school boards, as opposed to \$50 in others. There may be very good reasons. But I think all school boards would want to know what the school board is doing that can do it for \$50, because there may be something there, some useful idea that they might be able to use.

Our whole approach here, Mr. Speaker, is to be helpful and useful to school boards, and improve efficiency to whatever degree we all can, working together.

Mr. Rolfes: — Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the same report, Mr. Minister, you are recommending that, or at least suggesting that we should go back to standardized testing, the STF, the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), and LEADS, and many other professional educators have told you they don't want standardized testing. Are you going to take a leaf out of, or a page out of your colleague's methods of dealing with the people of Saskatchewan, as he dealt with the urban people, and unilaterally impose standardized testing after everyone has told you this is a backwards step and they don't want standardized exams.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The hon. member might characterize standardized tests as backwards; some others would characterize it as a bureaucratic invasion of the class-room. My view is that standardized testing is only one part of a very complex area of student evaluation and student assessment.

And I have no fixed position on this question of standardized testing. But I view it as important enough that we ought to investigate it and be open-minded about investigating it. And that's exactly what I've asked my officials to do, and they have struck a committee with the teachers' federation and with trustees across this province to examine that question and other questions, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Federal-Provincial Foreign Language Education Initiatives for Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to advise in the legislature today that the Government of Saskatchewan and the federal government have concluded an important funding agreement. Under the terms of the agreement the federal government has agreed to assume most of the cost of translating statutes pursuant to our own Bill 2.

This agreement also enables the province to undertake a number of important education initiatives, and I am pleased to outline these to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the legislature today.

First, the federal government has agreed to assist with the costs of providing some form of management and control to minority language schools. This is to enable the province to deal with the judgement of the Court of Queen's Bench with respect to French language schools. The agreement also provides financial support to help develop curriculum materials and other facilities that may be needed.

Second, the agreement provides for additional French immersion and core French in our schools, Mr. Speaker.

Third, the agreement contains a funding package for the reconstruction of College Mathieu in Gravelbourg.

Fourth, a language institute will be established in Saskatchewan to serve western Canada. The institute will develop and offer training programs in 20 languages of cultural and economic significance to western Canada.

Finally, we will be building on our distance education initiative in a very major way, Mr. Speaker, to offer more language training, more institute courses, and more university courses to more people in more places in our province of Saskatchewan than ever before, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this agreement is good news for all of the citizens of Saskatchewan. It will enable us to make educational opportunities available in a way that was previously beyond our reach. And it will enable us to cope with our legal and constitutional responsibilities without penalizing our own taxpayers.

Because so many groups, organizations and institutions have a vital interest in this agreement, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave of the Assembly to defer further details until we're able to consult with each group. And I expect further information will be available over the next 24 hours, or even perhaps sooner, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome this announcement by the Minister of Education. Let me say to the minister opposite that we have this trend of the federal government providing more and more funds in the field of education and post-secondary education is a welcome trend. This did not start in the '80s. It started back in the '70s under another federal government and another provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that . . . the minister has not provided us with the details of the agreement so we don't know exactly in what direction it is going to go and how much funds the provincial government is going to be putting into it. And as he indicated, he may not have those details.

But I would welcome from the minister, as soon as he has the details, if he would make those available to us on this side of the House. We welcome anything, Mr. Speaker, that will strengthen the multicultural aspect of our province. I hear a lessening of that in this statement made by the minister; I hope that that is not true.

Although we are a bilingual country, the significance of Saskatchewan is that we are a multicultural society, and that must be strengthened. And I hope that the agreement that the provincial government has signed with the federal government will do that and will not put all of its emphasis on bilingualism, which of course is good, but it does not meet the demands of the needs here in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, we welcome the news. We hope that the funding is adequate to do an adequate job; that our students not only in the elementary schools but in our high schools and at the university will have sufficient funds to pursue all of the languages, all of the languages that they wish to take, and that includes the native languages, the Ukrainian language, the German language, and the French language as well, and that we have programs and adequate equipment, Mr. Minister, which I've indicated in estimates, that many of our schools had to . . . programs they had to do away with because of inadequate funding. In many of our school system . . . in many of our school systems, Mr. Minister, because of inadequate funding, many of those language programs were cancelled. This will only undo the harm that the provincial government did in its last budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we welcome the news. I hope the minister will make those details available to us. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this isn't a ploy just before the federal election and that it will be defended by adequate funds so that we can have good programs and our children are able to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care

Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to bring this motion before the Assembly, and at the end of my remarks I will be moving the following, moved by myself, seconded by the member from Rosthern:

That this Assembly commend the Government of Saskatchewan on the creation of the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care, and generally, for the insight and the pragmatic and responsible approach this government has shown in meeting the challenges of providing quality health care for Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, with only 16 minutes to speak on the motion, much must remain unsaid. But let me try to cover at least one broad area in my remarks today. First, I will address a need for the commission in the historical context that we are proceeding in.

Mr. Speaker, the need for this commission arises because of changing times. It arises because of new demographic facts, new technologies, new attitudes, and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, new diseases.

Let us just look at one of these new demographic trends, the trend of an ageing population. As the population ages, Mr. Speaker, there is increasing need for nursing homes, home care, and indeed all kinds of health care. This is a fact. And what context do we find ourselves in? Well we find ourselves in a situation where past governments refused to accept the facts, where governments refused to build nursing homes, where governments saw a cost crisis and decided to fight that crisis on the backs of the elderly. The member for Saskatoon South is well aware of what I'm talking about, and I take him to task for the hypocrisy that he has demonstrated in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the members across the floor also like to talk about waiting lists. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that this government takes the problem of waiting lists seriously, while the opposition has said that waiting lists were a sign of efficiency. We have committed significant extra funding and we expect the commission to look closely at the problem of waiting lists and to come up with some permanent solutions.

This government does not believe that making people wait for surgery is a member of efficiency. It is true that there are waiting lists, and we are concerned and we are doing everything we can to reduce them. More funding, Mr. Speaker, new hospitals, discussions with hospital boards to find new solutions. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is working.

The opposition has stated publicly that there is a serious problem with health care costs, and they have tried everything from moratoriums on nursing homes to creating waiting lists on surgery to address the problem.

Mr. Speaker, these nattering nabobs, these nattering nabobs of negativism have no new ideas, no solutions, and they offer nothing. And they have never been honest with the people when the crunch came.

Mr. Speaker, I feel good about the health commission, and I've had an opportunity as I travelled around the province for the last 18 months, and more specifically while I've been the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, to talk with people in the rural areas, primarily in the rural areas, as to what new ideas we might have in terms of solving some of the problems that we have in health today.

And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the people out there, the people in the rural areas and indeed in the urban areas have some good ideas that they want to share with the government; they want to share with the people who have an opportunity to put those ideas into place.

The commission, Mr. Speaker, will give every citizen of the province the opportunity to contribute their ideas and concerns, their knowledge and their experience. It will provide us with a basis for a blueprint for health care into the next century.

The commission will address questions of prevention and cure, of priority and costs of new technology and new challenges, like AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). I will address the needs for our total system . . . it will address the needs for our total system from physical fitness to nuclear medicine. It will address our life-styles.

And, Mr. Speaker, at this point I'd like to compliment the Minister of Health on the quality of the commission that has been appointed to look into the serious problem of health care around the province.

The head of the commission will be Dr. Bob Murray of Saskatoon; he will be the chairman for the commission. He is a well-known ophthalmologist and former dean of college at the University of Saskatchewan. He is an academic, Mr. Speaker, and will bring his academic credentials to the quality of this commission.

Walter Podiluk, the former deputy minister of Saskatchewan Health, will assume duties as executive director of the commission. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like just to take a minute to make a comment and tell the member from Regina Lakeview how disappointed I was just a few days ago when she personally attacked the credibility of Walter Podiluk in this House.

Mr. Podiluk is a former director of education for Catholic schools in Saskatoon. He was on the board of directors for a Saskatoon hospital, St. Paul's Hospital. He has served the Government of Saskatchewan well as the deputy minister of Social Services and also as the deputy minister of Health.

(1445)

I thought it was appalling, Mr. Speaker, that a member of the opposition, the member from Regina Lakeview, would attack the credibility of this individual. And I must say that I have received numerous phone calls from individuals in Regina, and also letters from Saskatoon about the comments made by that member. I am still waiting for that member to stand up and apologize to Mr. Podiluk for the unfortunate remarks she made about him.

Other members of the commission are equally well qualified, Mr. Speaker. Morris Anderson of Regina, executive director of development, and former president of Luther College. Berva Farr, a registered nurse, executive director of the Santa Maria Senior Citizens Home in Regina, and executive of Saskatchewan Health-Care Association.

Sylvia Fedoruk, chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, known for her work in cancer research. There may be, perhaps, no one else in Canada who is as well informed on nuclear medicine as Dr. Sylvia Fedoruk is. A Ph.D in nuclear physics, Miss Fedoruk has devoted much of her life to the development of nuclear medicine in this province, and people throughout the world have benefitted from her work.

Maureen Kurtz of Tisdale, a former public health nurse, is another member; Bishop Blaise Morand of Prince Albert, member of the social communications committee of the Canadian Catholic council of bishops and of the Saskatchewan Order of merit on the selection committee; and Ernie Moen, a Cabri farmer, past president of the Saskatchewan Health-Care Association and known for his active community involvement. In my travels in recent days around the province, I've had numerous comments from people in the rural areas about the quality of the health care commission. I wish them well.

Mr. Speaker, quality health care in Saskatchewan is our top social priority. The need to maintain excellence in service and to responsibly manage our delivery system must be managed harmoniously to produce maximum long-term benefit for the people of this province.

The people of Saskatchewan face a number of urgent issues in the health care delivery. Some of these issues are driven by increased use of the health care system; others are driven by changing demographic and population trends; while still others are driven by rapidly rising costs. The shaping of our health care system to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people into the 21st century and beyond, represents our major financial and service delivery challenge for the future. Change is necessary if we are to continue delivering quality health care services which are both affordable and relevant to the needs of all.

Government policy cannot be determined in isolation. It must reflect the will of the people, their needs, and their aspirations. It must incorporate the social and economic realities of our environment, and it must effectively utilize professional expertise in knowledge, in design, and in implementation.

The Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care will investigate a full range of issues impacting on the quality, availability, accessibility, and cost of health care services, with particular consideration of the differences between rural and urban Saskatchewan.

It will, two, identify and prioritize emerging and long-term issues affecting health care delivery.

Number three, it will recommend policy options to the government on ways to improve health care delivery and

efficiency on the system, while maintaining quality and accessibility of service. It will manage to future health care delivery needs including funding and servicing, education, technology, and training requirements.

The terms of the reference for the Commission on Directions in Health Care will have responsibility to inquire into and report on the future health care requirements of the residents of Saskatchewan, an appropriate means by which these requirements may be met including, but not limited to, the following areas: institutional treatment and support services such as hospital, special care homes, ambulance, and home services, and drugs; community health services such as public health services, mental health services, and health promotions; the impact of social factors on the needs, delivery, and cost of health care, such as demographic trends, changing life-styles, and consumer expectations; the supply, education, and qualifications roles in distribution of health care professionals and paraprofessionals; the nature and distribution of health care facilities and services; the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of new technology in diagnosis and in treatment; the organization and delivery of health care services with emphasis on the equality of access and cost-effectiveness; the communication of health information, illness prevention, and the education of the public in personal health matters; the assurance of quality of all aspects of health care; the utilization of health care services, and the funding process for health care services.

In conducting the inquiry, the commission will also receive briefs, both written and oral, from individuals and organizations; will organize and conduct public hearings in such places as the commission believes necessary to allow the public a reasonable opportunity to present their views, and may seek such other advice as is deemed necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I invite every person in Saskatchewan to put forward new ideas to the commission. I invite them to join with their neighbours and put forward the solutions they would like to see. I ask them not to listen to the Leader of the Opposition, to withhold their ideas until they get such direct personal benefit as possibly ever being re-elected, because I say that every time one of us contributes to the health care system, all of us benefit, even the members opposite.

This task force will provide us with a vision of the strongest and most enduring health care system on the continent. It will be an historic effort, and an effort that all can take part in, will come away with great pride.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Rosthern:

That this Assembly commend the Government of Saskatchewan on the creation of the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care, and generally, for the insight and the pragmatic and responsible approach this government has shown in meeting the challenge of providing quality health care for Saskatchewan residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour for me to rise in the Assembly this afternoon to second this motion on this historic subject.

The Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care I believe represents a significant opportunity for the people of the province to participate . . . perhaps it should be better said, to preside over the further establishment of a fully modern and sensitive health care system.

Let me say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I do not think that this should be a partisan issue. To me it seemed that it is far too important an issue to become a matter of rancorous debate among political parties. Rather, it is an opportunity for us to work together in harmony and co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that there is room for co-operation in such a fundamental issue and subject, and I sincerely ask the opposition to put away, to put away the bitterness, the rancour, the ill feeling that may still be around after the last two election defeats, and rather think about the good of the province. And, Mr. Speaker, I've going to revert back to my true form and my true personality here, and so today I do not intend to bash the NDP for their errors past, present, and over the weekend. I would instead like to discuss why this commission is a real opportunity, and in fact will be marked as an important event in the history of this province.

We have today many, many challenges in our health care system. And those challenges are indeed diverse. And I know that some members across the floor have specialized interests in some of these challenges, and hopefully they will bring their expertise, their concerns, and their knowledge to this commission.

I think, for example, from the member from Saskatoon University and the concern that he has about farm chemicals and the implications for health. Bring them forward, I say. Bring them forward and let the commission deal with them.

There are also members on this side who have direct and personal experience from the health care system. And I think of my friend and colleague from Kinistino who has this great interest and concern on the eye bank and the work that he is doing with it. And I think certainly that as members of the legislature, we can have a direct and an important and significant impact on this task force as it goes around the province. And I would ask all members to participate, to fully participate.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we will gain insight from those who deal with the challenge of alcohol and drug abuse, especially among our youth. We will hear from all the professional organizations and the non-profit groups, like the cancer society, as an example.

We'll be able to gather all of these people together

through the offices of the commission, and we will have the most complete picture of our health care system that has ever been put together. And we will benefit dramatically from the energy and the vision of our people. Innovative ideas will be put forward, tested, and recommended.

I think of one example, Mr. Speaker, of the possibility of greater uses of nurses in the system. Now I'm not fully cognizant about the implications of the idea, but I can see two immediate results. Accessibility to health care would be broadened, and costs would be reduced.

But there are those who feel that this might not be such a great idea. To them I say, bring your ideas forward. That's what this exercise is all about. Bring them forward and you will be heard.

There are important considerations we can learn from the technicians and laboratory people. Perhaps there are ways that equipment can be used more intensively, or perhaps that they can be delivered so that we have faster results, more rapid results with less cost pressure. Perhaps the role of midwives should be looked at as it has in other provinces. Certainly we need to explore ways to maximize the use of our rural hospitals, to encourage doctors to staff them and people to use them. And already I've heard suggestions to ensure that more of the medical students that we graduate will remain in our province.

So the field is just a very vast one, and one that holds out, I believe, a great deal of promise for us all. And that is why I sincerely invite the NDP to put forward their proposals for improving the health care system. I say to them, the problem is larger than any one of us. Let us co-operate.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that there is already an indication that they're willing to co-operate when the announcement of the task force was made just a few days ago by the Minister of Health. Immediately some of them jumped up and began to criticize the good offices of some of the members of that commission. They recognized the error of their ways. I understand that they already have apologized to those members, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that that certainly is an indication perhaps of better things to come.

Because I feel, Mr. Speaker, that surely they must have something to offer more than just to say, spend more money. And on that point I also invite them to say exactly how much more should be spent, where should it be spent. It seems that the member from Saskatoon South has abandoned his support of waiting lists and closing nursing homes. So where should we be spending, and how much?

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's all very well and good to say, spend more, but do they mean spend more on cancer research, more on diabetes, more on sudden infant death syndrome, more on AIDS, more on new hospitals, more on new nursing homes, more on home care, more on alcoholism and drug abuse, more on renal disease, asthma, tuberculosis, trauma centres, obstetrics, hearing aids, heart disease and so on. The problems, the realm of possibilities, Mr. Speaker, are simply countless. Surely it

is easy to simply say, spend more.

(1500)

But what are your priorities, what are your priorities, and how much more will we spend, and where? And the fact is that this commission, Mr. Speaker, this commission will give the people of Saskatchewan an opportunity to address those questions. And that, Mr. Speaker, I ask you: is that really a bad thing? Because, Mr. Speaker, ultimately, our goal must be to ensure everyone has access to excellent care in all areas. And that will not be accomplished simply by spending more money, by throwing more money at the problems.

So in seconding this motion, Mr. Speaker, let me repeat my heartfelt invitation to the NDP and to every person in this province to get involved in this commission. Think about the important questions and put forward your suggestions. And as the Leader of the Opposition indicated on the weekend, this government will listen to good ideas, and this government will implement them.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure, and I'm very proud to second the motion by my hon. colleague from Regina Wascana.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised at the last member who was speaking thinks that this should not be a partisan debate and wants to keep politics out of it. I'm not surprised, Mr. Speaker, because the PC government in Saskatchewan is responsible for the health care crisis that we're facing in Saskatchewan today, and if they can avoid having themselves connected with the health care crisis, and if they can avoid any partisan debate on the matter, then that is what they would choose to do. I'm not surprised he's made that statement, Mr. Speaker.

This government has systematically dismantled medicare as we know it today, Mr. Speaker. They destroyed the prescription drug plan, which was an excellent preventative health care plan in Saskatchewan — a plan that helped people to maintain a level of health so they didn't require further assistance from a doctor. Simply by taking drugs, it could prevent hospitalization and further doctor visits.

But they've made it impossible for people — not for everyone, but for many people in Saskatchewan — to acquire prescription drugs, simply because people can't afford the 100 per cent up-front cost. They destroyed the prescription drug plan. Now they want a task force to solve the problem for them.

Well we could have told them, Mr. Speaker, when they came out with that policy, that all they had to do was maintain the prescription drug plan instead of destroying it and then trying to find a way or an excuse out of their bad policies.

They destroyed the dental plan in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the school-based children's dental plan, by removing access as far as children are concerned. It's much more inaccessible than what it was before.

The children's school-based dental plan was one of the best preventative health measures in this province, in North America. It was a world-wide known plan and was considered one of the best of its kind. They destroyed it, Mr. Speaker. The Tory government destroyed it.

And now what do they do? They set up a task force to tell them that either they did the right thing or that there's some other way of delivering dental services, like perhaps a public administered dental plan based in schools.

They cut back some \$18.5 million in the Health budget in 1987-88. No wonder we have hospital waiting lists that are unprecedented, that never existed at these levels in Saskatchewan before. No wonder, Mr. Speaker, we have such long hospital waiting lists — people waiting for urgent surgery, surgery they need now; people waiting for cancer treatment. In one case, one woman I know has had to wait three months for radial therapy with respect to breast cancer — totally unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

They're responsible for it because of their underfunding of the health care system and their cut-backs. And now they've set up a task force to tell them what they should or shouldn't have done, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — They talk about health care being too costly, and that's the PC rhetoric that we see — constant discussion about the cost of health care being too costly.

Well last week I brought a number of statistics and evidence before this House that shows that that is simply a myth that the Tories want to perpetrate so that they can justify further cut-backs in the health care system, because . . .

An Hon. Member: — Because they're philosophical.

Ms. Simard: — That's right, because of their philosophical bent, which is to privatize health care and to reduce its universality and accessibility.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — They are attacking the very foundation of medicare as set out in the Hall commission report and as established in this province many years ago by Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd, and Allan Blakeney.

Nowhere, Mr. Speaker, has the PC betrayal of Saskatchewan been more evident than in their attacks on health care — nowhere, Mr. Speaker. And it was a tragic irony that they picked 1987, the 25th anniversary of medicare, to attack the corner-stones of medicare: comprehensiveness — comprehensive programs available to the people of Saskatchewan; universality — medicare that applies right across this province equally to everybody; accessibility — accessibility that allows access to medical care services, comprehensive medical care services by every man, woman, and child in this province; and public administration, whereby medical care is administered by the public, by the province, as opposed to private corporations coming in and

administering our hospitals, for example, or as opposed to the imposition of deterrent fees which reduces access to health care, Mr. Speaker.

That's what this government has been up to over the last two years — slowly and methodically dismantling and destroying medicare. And now what do they want to do? They want to send up a task force to tell them what they should or shouldn't be doing. Well, Mr. Speaker, I say that that's absolutely hypocritical on their part, totally and absolutely hypocritical. And they don't want this to be a partisan debate because they know, they know that as far as the partisan politics are concerned, that they don't have one single shred of credibility with respect to health care. And now they're hoping that by setting up a task force, they can salvage some of this problem with respect to their credibility.

And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, every single person on that side of the House, including the member from Regina Wascana who spoke on this debate, and anyone else who was involved in making these decisions and implementing these heartless and cruel policies, should be ashamed of themselves in the way that they have hurt Saskatchewan people. And they, Mr. Speaker, bear a very heavy burden that rests on their shoulders for these insane and cruel policies of firing people and underfunding health care so that people can't get their needed surgery. Every single one of them, Mr. Speaker, is saddled with the knowledge and the responsibility of those decisions.

Earlier last week we indicated, Mr. Speaker, that while their Tory rhetoric is continuing with respect to spiralling health care costs, that there is a number of things that they are doing that does not support attempting to make the health care system more efficient and less costly. And this just shows you what hypocrites these people are.

For example, the Tory government supported the drug patent legislation out of Ottawa. What has that done? It's raised the costs of drugs at an unprecedented rate in Canada. And they say they're trying to control costs? They say they're trying to control costs, Mr. Speaker. Well I suggest to you that that's simply hypocritical on their part.

They've cut back in preventative programs like the prescription drug and the dental care program. They've cut back on those programs. And they say they're trying to save costs, Mr. Speaker? We know that preventative programs like prescription drug, like the dental plan, actually reduce costs over a long-term period, so if the PC government legitimately wanted to reduce the costs of health care over the long term, they would have improved those programs, Mr. Speaker, not dismantled them and emasculated them.

So it's clear from their actions, Mr. Speaker, that they aren't interested in keeping down the costs of health care, that what they want to do is get the public thinking it's too costly so they can go about privatizing the health care system and making further cut-backs to health.

And let's look at their free trade, the support for the free trade agreement in Ottawa. That's going to allow for American companies to come in and administer our hospitals, Mr. Speaker. And it's going to allow for

American companies to come in and administer our nursing homes, Mr. Speaker. And is that going to reduce the cost? No, because the evidence and the statistics show that the cost of administration of hospitals in the United States is substantially higher than what it is in Canada, Mr. Speaker, because of their privatized system. Their supporting the free trade agreement is to go along with increased administration costs with respect to hospitals and nursing homes. So how can they come to this House and tell the public of Saskatchewan that they're trying to reduce health care costs, Mr. Speaker? I suggest that that is very hypocritical.

The evidence shows that this province, Mr. Speaker, has been — vis-a-vis the rest of the provinces — in Saskatchewan has been paying less and less respect to health care. In fact, with respect to the national average, they're at something like the third lowest in the provinces with respect to public contribution vis-a-vis the national average . . . the third lowest in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And yet they say that the costs of health care are getting out of hand, Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to enter the debate at this time because there's no doubt about it that the importance . . . of the importance of health care in this particular province. And I find it interesting to listen to the member from Regina Lakeview carry on, as we've heard her on several occasions in this House, talking about some of the changes that have been taking place over the last couple of years.

It always amuses me somewhat that the NDP get the blinders on and can't face reality about the fact that the economy has not been all that good in this province in the last couple of years. But they like to talk as if there are barrels and barrels of money that can be dipped into and simply carry out all of these programs like we have in the past.

I would assure the members opposite that this government is very committed to first-rate health care in this province, and we're spending a good substantial amount of money more at the present time that your government ever was. And there's no doubt about it that we are having to look at different changes in the way that we deliver services.

We get a lot of opposition from the other side with regard to the formation of the health commission, and I would simply point out to members opposite that this is not the first time in the history of this province that a commission has been set up to study a particular topic, and certainly health care is a very, very important topic.

I think, if you consider going back to the year 1944, that it was a former premier of the province, Tommy Douglas, who set up a task force to look at health services within the province, and that was a model that was used throughout the '40s, the '50s, and probably on into the '60s.

But times are changing and I know that the members opposite find it difficult to accept change. But times are changing. I certainly support very strongly the commission that is being set up because it is time for us to review the services that are being provided in this particular province. We can't carry on as we always have in the past.

I give you one good example, is the prescriptive drug plan. When you consider what it was costing when that program was first brought in, and take a look at what it was costing for 1987 where it had gone, I think, from in the neighbourhood of 18 million or \$16 million up to some \$85 million, how long would it be, how long would it be before we didn't have any type of program at all?

And people that I talked to have indicated that they do not mind paying a bit of money in so far as the drug plan is concerned, if it means that they are going to have some assurance in the future that there will be a plan.

(1515)

So I think we have to take a look at reality when we see some of these programs that are increasing in the costs from year to year. So there's nothing wrong with taking a look at old programs. Certainly we're very proud of programs that have been set up, not only in the last six years but programs that were set up by the previous administration.

But at the same time we have to consider that times are changing. When there's lots of money available, it's easy to provide all kinds of programs. The school-based dental program was another good example of there having to be changes. We have many people indicating today that the problem with drug and alcohol abuse is a very, very growing problem, and I'm proud of some of the things that have been done in this province in the last months with regard to the moneys that are being spent in this particular area.

There's no doubt about it that the facility that was just opened at Whitespruce, Mr. Speaker, is a first in Canada. It means now that young people from this particular province no longer have to go south of the border to receive treatment in this particular area. And I think that's good for the province. It's certainly good for our young people, in that they can now receive their treatment here in Saskatchewan and at the same time carry on their educational programs.

Going back to the setting up of the commission then, I think when we consider the membership on that particular commission, that we have very highly respected people from throughout the province and from a variety of backgrounds. These people are going to be involved in, over the next few months, listening to people from all over the province, from all walks of life, receiving submissions as to suggestions that should be . . . the direction in which the health system should be going over the next few years.

It's unfortunate that the member from Regina Lakeview chooses to use scare tactics in talking about possibility of

Americans coming in and setting up private systems and all of the rest of this. There's certainly no indication that that is going to be the case; and it's unfortunate that she uses these tactics.

The commission is something that is very essential at this particular time so that we do get a sampling then from the people at large throughout the province. The recommendations that are going to be made here can be used, certainly, for providing the format for the service that is going to be provided throughout the province for the next few years as we move into the 1990s and beyond, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I commend this government for the leadership and the vision that it has shown in moving in this particular direction. And it seems odd that it was fine for the opposition to have set up a task force back in 1944 to look at the needs of the future of health care in the province, but not really a good idea for this government to do it. So it's really strange that it's okay for one but not for the others.

I would as well point out that the expenditures that we have seen on health care in this particular province have increased dramatically over the last few years. The members opposite know full well that we are spending now, I think one out of every three dollars is being provided for health care within the province. That's a pretty hefty sum of money, considering the population that we have in Saskatchewan and the services that we are providing.

We feel that our system in Saskatchewan is still the best in Canada, and we will certainly be doing all that we can to improve on our health care system.

I know that they talk an awful lot about the long waiting lists that exist in our hospitals in Saskatoon, and I know that is a concern, and I have many calls, certainly, in that regard.

But at the same time we recognize the fact that the waiting lists have not just started; you people had waiting lists back in your time. Granted, they weren't maybe as long, but I guess at the same time you have to consider . . . well you have to stop and consider some of the reasons why they're there. We . . . You know, when you go back about . . . when you go back 10 years, you had a lot more services being provided in our smaller rural hospitals than you have today. More and more of these people want to come into Saskatoon.

You've got a much higher number of specialists in the city of Saskatoon, and as a result, we not only have people coming from Saskatoon and the surrounding area but we're serving the northern two-thirds of the province. And in fact if you were to take a look at the people that are on those waiting lists, you would find that a good number of them are not only from the northern two-thirds of the province but they also come from southern Saskatchewan. So we're attracting them there because of the services that we have.

As well, if you were also to consider the new technology and the new equipment that we have in the hospitals in

Saskatoon, there's good reason why people are coming in there for treatment.

It's unfortunate that the lists are there . . . the lines are there. We have been spending more and more money to try and take care of those long waiting lists, and we hope that with some of the changes that are taking place this summer, because of fewer beds being closed down for the summer — and that's certainly something that isn't new, that beds are closed — but fewer of them will be shut down for the summer, with some of the new day surgery units that have been opened up in the last while, that these will also help to alleviate the problem.

But it's not something that there is a quick solution to; it's something that takes a lot of time. But a lot of money is being spent when you consider that the total budget for Health in the 1988-89 budget is 1.2 billion of dollars, and that's an increase of 68 per cent since 1982. So that's a pretty healthy increase and, I think, a pretty heavy commitment by the Government of Saskatchewan to health care for its residents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the present health care budget then is, as I say, one of the largest in the country as far as on a per capita basis. There's no doubt about it that the expenditures are not only for hospitals, but we can see that over the last few years that there has been increased funding for ambulance services. There's been a lot of increase, as I indicated, to combat the drug and alcohol problems that we have. We've also got increased expenditures as far as nursing home construction.

And it's unfortunate back in the late '70s, and on into 1981, when the revenue in this province was considerably higher, and the previous administration would place a moratorium on the construction of nursing home beds, because that's something that this government has had to try and play catch up then, ever since they came into power. So you've got to consider, as well, the legacy that you left from the five-year moratorium that you placed on hospital . . . or on nursing home construction.

You also have to consider the amount of expansion that has taken place in the major hospitals . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, from the outset I want to say that I have no intentions of supporting the recommendations put forward by the members opposite in commending the government for its responsible health care programs because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt, if anybody looks at this in a rational and logical point of view, you couldn't support it. This government, Mr. Speaker, had it given the priority to health as it should have, we wouldn't have needed the royal commission. There is no need for a commission.

And I want to say to the member for Mayfair — and by the way, I want to congratulate him for the first time since he's been elected that he's stood in this House and has defended, or has spoken about health care; that at least is commendable; he's getting a start — but Mr. Speaker, for

him to say that he is concerned about the waiting lists and said that there were waiting lists before when we were the government — it is true that there were; but he isn't fair with the people of Saskatchewan when he doesn't indicate that the waiting lists are four times what they were in 1982.

A little while ago the people in Saskatoon and our three major hospitals had 11,000 on the waiting list. People, for the first time, had to wait in line for chemotherapy at Saskatoon, for the first time in the history of this province. How can you commend the government for that kind of irresponsible policies and programs and priorities for health care?

I want to say to the member from Mayfair, it's time that you stand up for the people of this province and make some positive recommendations to your government on health care. Mr. Member, you are being dishonest with the people of Saskatchewan when you say that the Health budget has increased by 68 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — All of you people did, all you people did in your untruthful way of doing things is to transfer programs from other departments, \$250 million worth of programs from other departments into the Department of Health, and then you say that the health budget has increased by an astronomical amount. That is being dishonest; that is being untruthful with the people of this province, and that is why, Mr. Minister, the member for Mayfair, that is why people can't believe you.

Mr. Minister, my concern is not with the members of the commission; my concern is with the terms of reference, that everything is on the table; the four principles of medicare are on the table — that concerns me. The privatization of health care is on the table, and as I pointed out last night in this House, you people are following exactly what is happening in the United Kingdom where Margaret Thatcher, being advised by Madsen Pirie, who you brought in to this province, is also saying that health care should be privatized.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to point out exactly where these people are coming from, the members opposite. I want to quote from an article which says: Medicare too sacred to question, is it? And this was written by a former member on that side, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know her well, Gay Caswell.

And this is what Gay Caswell says about medicare and where you people are coming from and where you stand on medicare. She says: Nothing I have experienced . . . She says she was in the hospital, and she says:

Nothing that I have since experienced has relieved my anxiety that the inevitable results of the present welfare state, in particular medicare, will destroy the freedom of the individual and greatly inhibit the original purpose of the healing art.

She says very clearly that she opposes medicare, she opposes the principles of medicare and, Mr. Speaker, I'll bet my last bottom dollar that many members opposite

are exactly say the same this as Gay Caswell is saying. And they're hoping that the commission will recommend that the four principles of medicare are not sacred, that those four principles ought to be re-examined — the principles of accessibility, of comprehensibility, and the universality, and publicly funded.

Mr. Speaker, Gay Caswell goes on to say this:

But somewhere along the way, medicare became so sacred that no editor or politician would even suggest that compulsory medicare insurance implemented by the state as a monopoly might not be the best way to deliver health care.

The last thing I want to quote from her is this:

Why (she asks the question) Why do we need medicare insurance that is compulsory and a government monopoly?

I think Gay Caswell speaks well for the people opposite. This is what they want; that's what the Minister of Finance wants; that's what the Minister of Health wants. They want the commission to recommend that we should re-examine the principles of medicare. And I say to the Minister of Finance, we have had two royal commissions by Emmett Hall, in the '60s and in the '80s, to examine the principles of medicare and hospitalization, and the people of Canada have said a resounding yes, those things are sacred, and if you touch them, you do it at your peril.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say, the Minister of Health again clearly indicates, clearly indicates that he does not support universality in medicare. He says, "Health plans will die without cuts." In the article he goes on to say, "The province can't afford open-ended programs." Open-ended, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is simply another word for universality. He says, we can't have open-ended programs any more, so it will chop about 60 million from its dental and prescription drug plans, fire about 330 staff, and change or eliminate some coverage, he said. Now he didn't fire 330; he fired over 400.

But the point I want to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this: these people are not committed to the principles of medicare and hospitalization. They want to get rid of it, and they want to privatize it. That's why they did not limit, or exclude from the commission, the four principles of medicare. That is why they've done it.

And, Mr. Speaker, the minister says we can't have universal programs. We can't afford them. And the member from Mayfair said, well the economy has been bad in the last few years. Well in large part, Mr. Speaker, we are now in the position of long waiting lists where people have to wait for surgery in our hospitals. They've got to wait for chemotherapy at the cancer clinics, where people can't afford drugs and have to choose between foot and drugs, where people can't get the dental programs that they were accustomed to in the past. We have that, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite used the wrong priorities. They can have universal programs in the production loan program so that cabinet ministers on the opposite side who have farms can qualify

for a subsidy; so the Premier, who in 1986-87 was paid over \$100,000 from the public purse; so he can qualify for a subsidized loan.

(1530)

But, Mr. Speaker, they don't have enough money to commit to health care, so that our people have to wait. It is a shame, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And is it any wonder that some people start questioning hospitalization and medicare when these people allow the waiting lists in our hospitals to get to 15,000 in Saskatoon and Regina? Is it any wonder that people start questioning the principles of those programs?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of my speech today I want to move the following amendment:

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

condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for its continuing attacks on medicare and important health care services, its refusal to correct its harmful health care policies, and its attempt to distract public attention from its attack on medicare.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move that amendment now, but I will continue to say to the members opposite . . . I will say to the members opposite, you must give . . . if you're committed to the principles of medicare, you've got to give health and hospitalization the priority that it deserves.

The economy, Mr. Speaker, has nothing to do with it. We had lots of money for the oil companies. In fact we gave up about \$1.7 billion from 1982 to 1986 when oil was the highest in the province — the highest. We're giving about 300 million a year now which could be given for health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the money; we have the money. It needs the commitment from this government to make sure that our health programs are well funded, and we need universality in our health care programs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The member from Saskatoon South, in his remarks, very clearly and specifically before wrapping up, said that he would . . . he is moving the amendment. He then went on to read that amendment. He used the words, "I move that amendment now, and will conclude my remarks."

Very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that amendment that he moved is on the record, and I would ask that you accept it and deal with it accordingly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: — Your point of order is not well taken because the member said he was moving the amendment, he never announced a seconder, his 10 minute elapsed. I now recognize the member for Morse.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to address a few remarks on this point to the Assembly here today from a couple of perspectives.

I want to deal with it from the first perspective of having come from a part of the province where we have had this kind of medical care probably longer than any other part of the province, and I can appreciate the involvement that the community, the doctors, the medical staff, and the people in that community have had over the years and their contributions to it.

Now we are dealing here with a number of things that I think need to be addressed. I want to indicate that some of this side of the House have indicated to me that we need to have a commission set up that deals with providing some inputs into the direction that health care should take in the future.

Now if we want to continually do as we have done in the past, we will never allow ourselves the freedom to be innovative and creative and have some discretion and discernment in dealing with aspects of health care that are always available and new ones always coming in.

I want to say to the Assembly here today that I believe that we in health care have done a lot to further the kinds of things that are necessary for increased health care in the communities. I just want to indicate to you some of the things that have been done in the area of the province that I come from. And I know these are probably not significant to some of the members, but they are to me and to the people who live in the communities that I represent and those areas in the south-west.

We had a number of comments made that we had not done anything in the health care side, that we were limiting our vision and we were limiting the amount of potential that we had. And I would disagree with that, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of things that have been done that I want to point out.

First of all, we have changed a direction and improved the opportunities in small rural hospitals to have people who have lived in these communities all of their lives have an opportunity to stay involved in their community by having level 4 care facilities established in those small communities. I want to point out a number of these, Mr. Speaker, and one of those is the Herbert Nursing Home, which was built in 1960 or thereabouts, had need for a lot of renovations in 1982. And together with the minister of Social Services at that time, we put together replacement beds of 19 and added a couple more to enhance the opportunity for the nursing staff to facilitate the needs and the requirements of level 4 care people in that home.

And I believe that that added to the community; it added to the comforts and the needs of those people who were in the home. I've had a special relationship with that home. My grandmother lives in that home, and so I've been aware of the needs and the concerns of people in that community.

Another area that comes to my mind is the hospital at a

small town called Vanguard. They have had a hospital there for quite some time. They've been in a condition where they need repairs, and the Department of Health has facilitated that opportunity, and I think that's greatly appreciated.

I want to include, also, some of those areas that just neighbour my seat, and one of them is the integrated facility at Mankota. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there we have had an opportunity to see how a hospital and a level 4 care facility can move together to provide some of the benefits that can accrue when nursing staff, doctors, and the people in the community work together. It also places into some positive perspective the attitude that the community is a community to deliver all of the health services in that area.

It's rather difficult, Mr. Speaker, for people in communities that have grown up in these communities to be delegated or relegated to areas hundreds of miles away, to have their families split up. There are a lot of people who have had their husbands or their spouse had to go to a nursing home which is hundreds of miles away. That extended care that is able to be given by members of the family is not able to be done. And we have taken and put that into one unit, and I believe that as we go through time, that's going to become more and more evident as the way to go in the small communities.

There's a new hospital been built at Gull Lake, Saskatchewan, just right on the outside edge of my seat. It's going to assist and facilitate the people that are in that community.

I'm going to mention one that is going to be built in this fall and through next winter, and that's the Cabri integrated facility. There's some history here, Mr. Speaker, I think, that has to be identified and has to be pointed out. The one thing that is extremely important, one of the members of the board, who is a member of the commission that was established just in this past week by the Minister of Health, was a member of the Cabri Hospital board. His name is Ernie Moen, and he's been in a health care concern for a long time, and one of the things that he tried to do in the early '70s when he was the reeve of the municipality down there, is he wanted to have a health care facility that would accommodate seniors in his community.

And through the '70s he worked on it and worked on it and was never able to reach that goal or accomplish that opportunity to have the seniors looked after in a town of 650 people. It was always denied them. And when we started talking about an integrated facility in that community, that's when he really got excited about how to put this all together. He has worked through the time when the member from Saskatoon South was the minister of Health and dealt with the moratorium on dealing with the care for level 4 patients. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that those kinds of people will never, ever forget how they impeded the progress on developing health care.

We have, Mr. Speaker, continually had to deal with some of the problems that arose because of the backlog on facility planning in the province of Saskatchewan. We have had to deal with it.

I want to touch on one more item that deals with dental care. And we've had people on the opposition side raise this on a number of occasions. The town of Shaunavon has two dentists today; in fact, yesterday they opened the dental offices in Shaunavon — two dentists. Now there's some history in this, Mr. Speaker. They did not have dental service from the time that the program was introduced for child dental services in the school till yesterday. They do not have services in the town of Shaunavon till yesterday. Now they have two dentists there. You know why he left? Because the volume of service was not extensive enough, when the dental program for the children came in, to provide dental services to the community.

Now that's an erosion of service. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, he's providing services in dental care to the towns of Ponteix and to Eastend, having satellite offices. Now that, Mr. Speaker, is clearly something that we in the south-west have wanted for a long time, and we were not able to get it. But yesterday was a historic day in the town of Shaunavon for having that happen. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to see communities like that developing all over the province, where they can initiate that kind of response. And I believe that that's positive.

Now one of those . . . that's a couple that came down to the town of Shaunavon, and they are going to be an added benefit to that community which was not there before.

I want to also indicate, Mr. Speaker, that we have had in areas where we have long distances to travel, and many people . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Time has expired.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to enter into this debate, and when I look at the blues for today, I note with interest, Mr. Speaker, that the motion before us is a complimentary motion where the government has chosen to pat itself on the back for its health care task force and its insight on the pragmatic and responsible delivery of health care. Now, Mr. Speaker, that statement in itself is a joke if it wasn't so ridiculous.

And I listened very carefully to the member from Morse, who made not a single reference to the health care task force, because I contend, Mr. speaker, that not even the member from Morse, not even he believes the gobbledegook that is included in this motion here. He understands that the health care task force is a political smoke-screen, and he cannot stand and speak in pride about the health care record of the Government of Saskatchewan today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — And consequently, Mr. Speaker, I am moving, I will be moving, at the conclusion of my remarks an amendment to this motion that will be seconded by the member from Saskatoon South, to change all the words after the word "Assembly" . . . be deleted and replace . . . and the following substituted therefor:

condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for its continued attack on medicare and important health care services, its refusal to correct its harmful health care policies, and its attempt to distract public attention from its attack on medicare.

(1545)

And I'm moving the amendment, Mr. Speaker, because I firmly believe that that is what this health care task force is all about. It's a political smoke-screen to try and distract public attention from the fact that this government has been literally devastating the security of health care in the province of Saskatchewan since it came to office, and particularly since July 1 of last year.

Mr. Speaker, this health care task force is an attempt to provide a political smoke-screen to deflect the record and also to deflect any pressure, as much as this government can possibly manage, brought by the people of Saskatchewan to remedy what it has done and to improve the health care system.

Why, Mr. Speaker? Because on July 1 of last year, on the anniversary of the introduction of the first medicare program in Canada here in the province of Saskatchewan, the most beautiful gift that the people of Saskatchewan have ever given to Canada . . . And how did our PC government in Saskatchewan decide to celebrate the 25th anniversary of medicare? How did we decide to celebrate it in Saskatchewan? By piratizing health care, by eliminating the children's dental care program, and by introducing their devastating changes to the prescription drug plan in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Now I can understand, Mr. Speaker, I can understand why this government does not want its health care record looked at by the people of Saskatchewan because they are angry. They're angry about the privatization of the children's dental care program which took preventative, preventative care, dental care for children in 338 communities in this province. Preventative health care that was, as a matter fact, less expensive per child every year because kids in Saskatchewan were growing up with good teeth — growing up with good teeth because they were involved in a high quality program that was offered by high quality employees of the Government of Saskatchewan.

And how did we celebrate the 25th anniversary? They said, no more children's dental care program; we're going to privatize it. We're going to transfer it to the private sector. We're going to lay off 400 dental care workers and we're going to save a half a million dollars. And by the minister's own words in this Legislative Assembly, nine months later he admitted the participation in that dental care program is only 40 per cent. And I say, shame; what a way to celebrate the 25th anniversary of medicare in the province of Saskatchewan.

And then, Mr. Speaker, then to compound the problem

on this exact same day, on July 1, the 25th anniversary of medicare, we got the changes, the amendments of the prescription drug plan for the people of Saskatchewan because the Premier of Saskatchewan said, we can't afford this prescription drug plan; it's being abused. And I ask, Mr. Speaker, who's abusing it? Who's abusing this program? Is it the doctors? We didn't see the Premier trotting around saying to the doctors, oh, you're abusing the prescription drug program; you're going to have to stop that. No. So are we to conclude, Mr. Speaker, that all across the province of Saskatchewan, in the mind of the Premier of Saskatchewan and the Minister of Health, that there are renegade senior citizens that are breaking into doctors' offices and stealing prescription pads and writing out their own prescriptions and dashing down to the pharmacists and getting them filled out and taking drugs and getting hooked? Is that what we're to assume?

You know, one of the most shameful acts since I've sat in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, took place just across the floor, when the Premier of Saskatchewan stood in his place and made an analogy. He made an analogy between the use of, he said, free prescription drugs and criminal activity — between the use of medicine and criminal activity. What a shameful act by the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Premier of a government who has said, we can't have any more of this socialized medicine.

You know, that's an old-fashioned idea; we've got to have new, improved, piratized medicine. We've got to change this prescription drug plan because you know, Mr. Speaker, up until July 1 of last year, the 25th anniversary of medicare — up until June 30 of last year — there was this strange ritual that the people of Saskatchewan would go through. They'd get sick, they'd go to their doctor, they'd get a prescription they'd go to . . . they'd take \$3.95 or less, they'd go to their pharmacist, they'd get their medicine, they'd go home and take it, and they'd get better. What a strange notion — what a strange notion.

We can't have any more of this socialized medicine. We can't have Saskatchewan people running around, getting sick, going to the doctor, getting a prescription, taking \$3.95 or less, going to the pharmacist, getting their medicine, going home and taking it and getting better. We can't have that. We've got to have a new, improved way. We've got to have the piratized medicine that this government has introduced on July 1.

And so we have in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker, we have in Saskatchewan today a new ritual, the ritual of piratized medicine. And how does it work? It starts the same, Mr. Speaker. You get sick, you go to the doctor, you get your prescription, and then you go to the bank. That's what happens. Or worse yet, Mr. Speaker, you wait until the end of the month; or worst of all, because of the piratization of the prescription drug plan in the province of Saskatchewan, people go without.

Is there any one of us, is there any one of us in this Assembly who has not had the personal experience some time in the last 11 and a half months of being in a drug store and seeing a young mother or a senior citizen walk up to the counter and put down their prescription and hear how much it costs and turn around and walk away?

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that that is not the kind of health care, that is not the kind of security that people in Saskatchewan have come to know and to love and to be proud of in the province of Saskatchewan. The attack of this government opposite on the security of health care, the delivery of accessible, high quality health care in the province of Saskatchewan is devastating. And that's what this motion is all about, when they're trying to create a health care task force to create a smoke-screen.

That's what it's all about. It's because they don't want to talk about and they don't want to defend their records on accessible children's dental care program, and because they don't want to talk about and they don't want to defend their record on the prescription drug plan because, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they know that their record is indefensible, indefensible.

And so what is the response? The Minister of health says, you know, the response is then we're going to do two things to fix this up. We're going to give you all a plastic health card.

Now I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but people have not been clamouring to me and saying, you know, what this health care system needs is a plastic health card. I haven't heard that.

But that's the most creative notion that we've had from the Minister of Health so far. That and to create a health care task force to create a political smoke-screen for their record.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by moving that all the words after the word "Assembly" in this motion be deleted, and the following substituted therefor:

condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for its continuing attacks on medicare and important health care services, its refusal to correct its harmful health care policies, and its attempt to distract public attention from its attack on medicare.

And that's seconded by the member from Saskatoon South.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. I'm afraid that the seconder is indeed not acceptable because he has already spoken. The debate continues.

Mr. Hagel: — Point of order. Mr. Speaker, there are a whole lot of folks clamouring on this side to second that motion. The member from Prince Albert agreed to second the motion, the amendment.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. It is true that the hon. member did make an error by naming the member for Saskatoon South as a seconder. However, I will accept the seconder which he now named. The debate continues.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me this afternoon to introduce to you some students and their teachers and chaperons from Mortlach, Saskatchewan. They are sitting in your gallery. There are some 20 grade 7 students who are visiting the legislature this afternoon. They have with them their teachers. Erwin Engel and Rodney Jahnke, and chaperons Wendy Brandon and Donna Young.

I hope that the students have enjoyed the half hour in question period; that you've learned something about the democratic system which we all love so dearly. I'll be happy to meet with you afterwards for pictures and drinks and also to discuss what you've seen in the Chamber today, and hope that I can answer the questions most adequately.

So I would like all members of the legislature to please join with me in welcoming the grade 7 students from Mortlach.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MOTION UNDER RULE 16 (continued)

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like an opportunity to perhaps wrap up this debate and say a few things with regards to this commission that has been appointed. I think that the selection of the commission, Mr. Speaker, is in fact an important thing that the selection has in fact been done by very prominent people in this province. And I think it's very important that prominent people are the ones that are chosen and selected, as the Minister of Health has in fact done with regards to this commission.

In particular, Dr. Bob Murray who is, I think, by anybody's standards — no one could accuse Dr. Bob Murray of being anything but his own man. And that particular individual, former dean of the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan — I've met him on several occasions, socially and otherwise — and I believe this individual will bring to the commission a wider sense of the health care question that we in this province, and people around the western world, must come to grips with.

Sir Morris Anderson who is the past president of Luther College in Regina, again his own man, his own individual.

You have Syl Fedoruk who is the current chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan. Syl Fedoruk, for anyone that does not know Syl Fedoruk, Syl Fedoruk has distinguished herself over a long period of time in the academic field. She is now the chancellor of the university. She has done a tremendous amount of work in nuclear medicine and cancer research and is, I think, held in high regard by anyone who has crossed her path.

Bishop Blaise Morand. Now I think that he will bring to this commission, Mr. Speaker, that sense of . . . a wider

sense, not just from the church, but from the various parishioners that he would come in contact with — has come in contact with, many, many, many occasions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ernie Moen, who perhaps more than anyone else in this province has experienced, knows, understands both the meaning, the function, the requirements of very small hospitals in this province. Ernie Moen is from Cabri. For those that are not familiar with the geography of the province, Cabri is in fact a very, very small town. And Ernie Moen will bring to the commission, in my judgement and in my view, the dimension of health care in rural Saskatchewan into the future.

And that's an issue, Mr. Speaker, that we must all attempt to deal with. It's not something that is simply a political issue from one party to the other party. The issue is far larger than that, Mr. Speaker. And the people of rural Saskatchewan don't see that issue as purely a political issue between one party or the other. They see it as an issue that deserves attention, an issue that deserves study, an issue that deserves people, particularly rural people, applying their imagination to maintaining and improving the level of health care.

Then you have Berva Farr, a registered nurse, who is also the present executive director of Santa Maria Senior Citizens Home in Regina, and that brings to the commission, Mr. Speaker, the other issue, which is the wide issue of . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Time has elapsed.

(1600)

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 7 — Changes in Canada Post Affecting Towns and Villages

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to put this motion before the House today. And I would want to indicate that I think it's especially appropriate that this motion be debated in the legislature, in light of the fact that the Premier had no answers for the people of Saskatchewan regarding rural post office closures this afternoon on question period.

And the motion, Mr. Speaker, that I intend to move today is as follows:

That this Assembly communicate to the Parliament of Canada that it sees the closure or privatization of small post offices across Canada as seriously undermining the economic and social well-being of rural communities, placing hardships on seniors and physically disabled citizens, and threatening thousands of rural jobs, many of them currently held by women; and further, that this Assembly urge that rural post offices continue to be federally owned and operated institutions maintaining a permanent presence in Canadian towns and villages.

I want to say that I was disappointed with the Premier's response and I was disappointed that he wasn't in tune

with what his minister has been doing with negotiations regarding maintaining our rural post offices in Saskatchewan.

We on this side of the House have been consistently asking this Premier and his cabinet and his caucus to develop a strategy, or at least work towards a strategy, or at least understand that there is a need for a strategy to repopulate rural Saskatchewan.

By tearing the heart out of small Saskatchewan communities, you don't attract people to those communities. The hub in the centre of our rural towns in Saskatchewan has been, and will continue to be, the post office where farmers in the area and small-business people can go and get that service. And I think it's disappointing, Mr. Speaker, that this government sits idly by while the federal government contemplates the removal of 5,221 rural post offices in Saskatchewan by 1996.

It makes me wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether this government has any feelings for the texture of rural Saskatchewan. They pay lip-service to viability of rural towns. But what happens when they enact legislation, or when they negotiate with their federal counterparts, their friends in Ottawa, the Mulroney PC government?

The reality is really quite the opposite. Every decision that this government makes is based on dollars and cents and based on profit and loss. When it comes to services to people, it's dollars and cents. Not so when they're governing and when they're budgeting, unfortunately. But when it comes to services provided to rural Saskatchewan, it's a matter of economics.

And I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if that's the reason — if the reason is that they want to fill the pockets of the Peter Pocklington at the expense of rural Saskatchewan and small town Saskatchewan. And I'm wondering as well, Mr. Speaker, if that's the reason you see this government sit quietly by while bulk fuel dealers are going bankrupt, and while small grocery stores are going bankrupt, car dealerships are going bankrupt, implement dealerships are going bankrupt.

And what has this government said, what has this government said to the small-business people in rural Saskatchewan regarding the financial difficulties they're in? Not one single word, Mr. Speaker, have you heard from the lips of any cabinet or any back-bencher on that side of the House.

And when it comes to keeping those rural towns viable, there isn't one person in rural Saskatchewan that will tell you he doesn't want his post office, and that that post office doesn't keep that community tied together. But what do you hear from the minister? He comes out of a meeting with Canada Post and he says if they do what they say they're going to do, postal service should even improve in rural Saskatchewan.

Well I ask that minister what commitment he's got from his federal counterparts. You know, there was a time when the federal government understood that even if it cost money to supply postal service to rural

Saskatchewan and rural Manitoba and rural Alberta that it was a commitment to the people of Canada; it was a commitment that would tie our country together because they understood that people in rural Saskatchewan deserve the same kind of service that they do in urban Saskatchewan or in metropolitan Toronto.

And this government comes out with a half-baked plan — we're not even sure what it is — but a half-baked plan to destroy 5,221 post offices in our province.

And today in question period we asked the Premier time and time again: have you told Brian Mulroney, the Prime Minister of this country, and his government that we in Saskatchewan won't accept the closure of any more post offices? Or did that Premier get up and say to the Prime Minister that we're not going to accept the privatization of what's left of what remaining post offices we have? We didn't get that commitment from this Premier.

And I want to say that the people of rural Saskatchewan understand that this Premier is in a shell. He's not looking at what's going on around him, and he's no longer talking to the people of this province. And that's why you get these kinds of answers in the legislature when he's questioned on these important issues as he was today.

And has this Premier given any thought to the dollar, the payroll that will be lost to Saskatchewan — federal tax dollars that were directed to Saskatchewan to deliver postal service. Has he given any thought to the money that would be revolving in those communities where the postmaster would walk over to the general store and buy his groceries on a Friday afternoon or a Saturday? Has he given any thought to where that money is going?

I say to you that this Premier and this cabinet and members on that side of the House have no vision. They don't understand what's been happening in this province since they've been in government. And I would suggest this is just another example of PC incompetence that we've had thrust upon us in this province since 1982.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think we all know that with the closure of rural post offices, we all know and understand that that will mean lost services to those communities. And there are those in rural Saskatchewan in those small communities, that live in nursing homes, and who are unable to, for physical impairment, travel to other communities or to other areas to get that postal service that they require. And has this government given any thought to that? Has the minister responsible given any thought to that when he was down talking to his friends in Ottawa, and when he came back and indicated that if they do what they say they'll do, postal service will improve.

Every single form of privatization in this province has meant lost revenues to the province, it's meant lost service to this province, and it's meant a betrayal of the people of this province.

And I want to say, whether it's a provincial form of privatization or whether it's done by their federal counterparts, their buddies in Ottawa, the end results are the same, Mr. Speaker — lost services, lost revenue, and

increasingly lost hope for the people of this province.

I look at what might happen if this government goes ahead with its decision to privatize STC, the bus service, the provincial bus service in this province. Is there any kind of a plan that will guarantee the right of people in rural Saskatchewan, the right to travel to a larger centre, or the right to travel to their dentist, or the right to travel to their doctor if they have to? If privatization of STC goes through, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it will be a direct parallel to what we see with the closure and the privatization of post offices in Saskatchewan.

This government clearly isn't thinking about the people any longer. They're thinking about the survival of their own political fortunes. They're thinking about their own philosophical, political agenda, and that being to destroy everything that the people of this province ever owned, or the people of this country ever owned, whether it be resource or whether it be services that we built.

And you can go down the list from bus service to telephone service to power service to postal service. All of these things, Mr. Speaker, are based on this government's philosophy that the people should own nothing and based on the philosophy that those that do own should be friends of the PC Party, the members on that side of the House. Because that's what privatization has meant, and that's what privatization will continue to mean under this government — never based on need of the service, never based on the economics of the corporation or of the service, only based on this government's philosophical beliefs.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad commentary that a service that was promised to the people of western Canada and to rural Saskatchewan will be thrust to the side over the wants and the needs of one political party, and that being the PC Party that governs Saskatchewan today.

And it's more than services to people, Mr. Speaker — it's the future of families and the future of jobs in the province. I've mentioned before that a number of people who are employed in the delivery of the postal service in Saskatchewan have made decent living and would continue to make a decent living, many of them subsidizing their farm incomes and keeping their farm operations viable. And if those opportunities are lost for those people, yet how many more bankruptcies, how many more farm bankruptcies are we to experience in Saskatchewan?

Enough that a small town would lose the service of their post office, but to compound that, to lose one of their neighbours and one of their friends, and many of them have spent decades working in the post offices in those rural towns, but to lost another neighbour because this government has decided to privatize yet another service.

And I think we all know what's been happening to rural Saskatchewan in the 1980s. And I'll agree that there was some of that before the 1980s, that to keep the rural areas viable has been a difficult chore and will continue to be a difficult chore for any government. But that doesn't exclude this government of their responsibility. The

Premier and his cabinet and his back-benchers have a serious responsibility in the people of rural Saskatchewan.

And as I travelled throughout Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan a week and a half or so ago when our caucus members were on a tour reviewing the drought conditions in rural Saskatchewan, and when I looked at the change in towns like Gravelbourg, a town that I grew up some 12 miles or 15 miles away from, and when I look at the change to that town and the number of businesses that have gone under, and when I have the town council or the mayor of the community indicate that their population is decreasing, it tells me that this government hasn't done enough.

And when I go to a town like Shaunavon and I see the changes in that town from 10 years ago, it tells me the government is abrogating its responsibility to keep those towns viable. And why then, why then, Mr. Speaker, would this government agree to allow the federal government, without a peep, without a sound, would allow the federal government to make such wide sweeping changes to those little towns, such as removing their post offices?

Would there be any noise if it were a Liberal or New Democrat government in Ottawa, from this Premier? If the philosophical beliefs, or the political parties weren't one in the same — PC in Regina, PC in Ottawa — would there be some noise from this government?

(1615)

There would be a hue and cry across this province, I say, Mr. Speaker, second to none. I would suggest to you that the cabinet and the Premier would be on a road show to Ottawa and they'd be lobbying the cabinet and lobbying the Prime Minister and they'd be out talking to the town councils in areas where they stand the risk of losing their post offices. But what in this case?

The Premier gets on the phone in the middle night and cries for a deficiency payment. And what do we get in return? We got our deficiency payment, granted. But now what we get is we get . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You never got a billion dollars in Saskatchewan. The member from Rosthern has got his numbers crossed again and he knows it.

But what did we get in return? We got a commitment from the Premier of this province to say, okay, Mr. Prime Minister, close down the rural post offices; I mean, we owe you, we owe you a big one, and we won't harass you, we won't hassle you; we'll let you close them down one by one and we'll let you kill off our small towns. That's what's happened, Mr. Speaker. And that's why this government is conspicuously silent on this issue, and that's why the people of rural Saskatchewan stand to lose their post offices.

I made reference to the texture of rural Saskatchewan. And I go through those small towns and I see the elevators gone because of variable rates. And where was this government? They're amalgamating their services, the elevator companies are, another thorn for many of those

small towns, elevators disappearing, farmers hauling their grain to other points, Small Town, Saskatchewan dying. And where is this government?

I look at what's been happening to hotels in rural Saskatchewan and the hoteliers and the problems they're having making a living right now. And where is this government? Introduces a Bill before this legislature, Bill 50, an Act to deal with the sale and consumption of alcohol in the province, and are there any commitments in statute — commitments that the people of . . . the hoteliers of this province were asking for? No, it's all in regulation. It's all cards dealt to the minister in charge to shuffle around the cabinet table. And every one of these cards have no face on them, and the people that deal in that industry have no idea what's coming, but this government marches blindly ahead, ramming through that particular piece of legislation as they've done every other.

And I want to draw another parallel to the closure of the hotels . . . of the post offices and the privatization of post offices in rural Saskatchewan. And that particular piece of legislation that we're dealing with is allowing store hours to be deregulated in this province, which is another nail in the coffin of rural towns.

Mr. Speaker, the business people in rural Saskatchewan are well aware of the fact that they can't compete with uncontrolled store hours any more than they can handle the loss of their post offices. But it's just one little chunk on top of another that you're piling on, one stone on top of another, until the small towns can't carry the burden of that weight, Mr. Speaker.

Rural Saskatchewan . . . rural-urban Saskatchewan feels betrayed by this government. And I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that they've got good reason to feel betrayed by this government.

Mr. Speaker, in the initial stages of my remarks I indicated that what this government should be striving for and striving to attain was the repopulation of rural Saskatchewan, and by that repopulation, I mean having some active, some useful, some meaningful industry in the small towns that will employ people and attract people to those small towns.

And they talk about economic diversification, which hasn't happened, and they have all the catch words, and they have all the phrases, and they have all the little remarks to make, but when it comes to actual implementation of a program that is going to be a positive benefit, there's nothing there.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the people in this province are feeling betrayed. They no longer have the faith in this Premier and in this cabinet that they once had. And it didn't take long, Mr. Speaker, for that trust to disappear.

And if this government is really serious about maintaining power in this province, I would suggest that it have a very close look at the by-elections in Saskatoon Eastview, now represented by a New Democrat. And I would suggest that they have a close look at Regina Elphinstone, or as the member from Cut Knife-Lloyd refers to it, elephant

stone. But I want to say that they should be taking a very close look. Mr. Speaker, at what's happened in those ridings when they're making their decision to sit quietly by while the federal government destroys this post office system that we have built in our province.

People in this province understand clearly that the federal government made some commitments to the people of Saskatchewan and western Canada when we joined confederation. And part of that, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, was the maintenance of proper mail service and mail delivery in the rural parts of the province.

And we on this side of the House understand that there are some small towns that you just simply can't deliver the service to and make money, because maybe the volume is too high, or maybe the distance from a main drop-off point is too far. But are they second class citizens in small town rural Saskatchewan?

An Hon. Member: — Not in our mind.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Not in the minds of the people on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, but I fear they are to the members on that side of the House, or they would be up defending the right of those people in rural Saskatchewan to have a first-class system of postal service.

And it's not only the people that live in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They've been supported in their fight to maintain postal service by the United Church Women, who passed a resolution; by SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities); by SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association); the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women; and 60 municipal councils in this province — a petition, Mr. Speaker, of 250,000 people.

What more does this government need? And what more does Mulroney need? What more does the Prime Minister of this country need to understand that the people in Saskatchewan won't accept the dismantling of that program?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — How many groups — SARM, SUMA, the United Church Women, the action committee for the status of women, a 250,000-person petition? Is this Premier so blind, as clearly the prime minister of this province is, are these two men so blind that the only thing that they can see is maintaining power — which they can't do by not listening, because the people aren't going to accept it.

This Prime Minister has a mandate until next spring, at which time he's going to have to go to the people of Saskatchewan to ask them whether or whether not they support the changes to the postal system in this province. And the Premier has got a little bit of a reprieve. He doesn't have to go to the people till 1991.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province have long memories, and they're not going to forget the dismantling of the school-based dental

program. They're not going to forget what you've done to the drug prescription plan. They're not going to forget the fact that you've given away just about every publicly-owned resource that there was in this province. They're not going to forget that the utility rates have increased by 50 per cent since 1982. They're not going to forget that there's a three-point-some billion dollar deficit in this province. They're not going to forget that there's an \$11 billion total provincial debt that's been mainly created by the incompetence and the ineptness of this PC government.

And I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier of this province may think that he's got until 1991 and people will forget all the hurt and all the inaction, but I say to you the people of Saskatchewan are wise to him, they don't trust him, and he'll know that. And clearly, Elphinstone and Eastview were indicators that that's the case.

And I challenge any member on that side if they don't think that's the case, and if you want to test in rural Saskatchewan of how the people of Saskatchewan feel, move out the member from Kindersley and let's have a by-election, or move out the member from Thunder Creek, or move out the member from Meadow Lake — and that's the one I'd like to test in Meadow Lake — or try the one in Saltcoats. Because I tell you the people in Saskatchewan are waiting for an opportunity to tell you that they're dissatisfied, they're disgusted, they've had enough, and they want a change in government.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province have turned a deaf ear to the people of Saskatchewan. A letter from the Archdiocese of Regina tells the Premier of this province that they're not satisfied with the federal government's moves. What more do they need? I mean do the people in Saskatchewan, of rural Saskatchewan, have to come and march on the steps of the legislature with baseball bats in their hand in order to knock some sense into this Premier? He's got to understand that they're not going to allow 5,221 post offices to be torn apart in this province, because they're demanding that service and they demand it only because they deserve it.

And I say to you, members on this side of the House are going to ensure that we'll keep those post offices in their present condition as long as we possibly can, and I want to suggest that our federal counterparts in Ottawa are mounting a battle as well.

This Premier and this government has got to understand that people won't tolerate the cut-backs to essential services like postal service. And I would hope that this Premier will, before 1991, understand that he's got to change the way he's governing this province, and he's got to show some leadership and that he's got to show some real commitment to the people of this province.

And I would suggest that the Premier of this province, who's already alienated just about every group in Saskatchewan, is now working on small town Saskatchewan, and I would say that that's one of the last vestiges of hope he's got, or had. And I would say to you it's no longer there. All for philosophical reasons.

There's money in this country, there's money to be redistributed to deliver postal service to Saskatchewan. And how that has to be done, Mr. Speaker, is by taxing some of the people who have been avoiding tax in this country so that you can deliver postal service, and meaningful tax reform that will shift the tax burden from middle income people to the higher income groups so that we can have these kinds of systems in our province. We've seen them decimate the health care system, we've seen them cut back fundings to the educational system, we've seen teachers laid off . . .

An Hon. Member: — Not true.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Oh, and the Minister of Health says, not true. Prince Albert school unit number . . .

An Hon. Member: — Of Education.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Of Education. Prince Albert school unit no. 56, nine teachers — nine teachers. But he says, oh it's not me, not me, don't point the finger at this government because it's not our fault; no, no, we didn't do that. You can't tell that to the school boards, Mr. Minister, because they know better. You can't tell it to the teachers, Mr. Minister, because they too know better. And you can't tell it to the electorate because it's becoming very clear to them what you've been doing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — The member from Regina indicates that . . .

An Hon. Member: — Rosemont.

Mr. Lautermilch: — . . . from Regina Rosemont indicates that he'd want me to share a little bit about Regina Eastview and what the people in Eastview were saying about this government as I canvassed up there during the by-election.

An Hon. Member: — Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Or in Saskatoon Eastview. And I want to tell you what they were saying up there. They were saying up there that we voted for this government in 1982 — and I'm talking some pretty elaborate homes and some high income people who would say to me, I've never voted New Democrat in my life; I've always been a Tory, but I never saw a Saskatchewan Tory government until I elected them in 1982, and boy, do I wish I could have that vote over again.

(1630)

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — What they're saying is that the dental plan affects them as well. What they're saying is that the drug prescription plan affects them. What they're saying is the deficit is affecting them and is going to affect them. What they're saying is the flat tax is a betrayal after you told them you were going to reduce personal income tax by 10 per cent. What they're saying is the Premier of this province can't be trusted. What they're saying is they

want a New Democrat government. They want some sanity back in government in Saskatchewan, and they want it as soon as they can get it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — I want to quote from an article in the *Star-Phoenix*, April 26. And it says in the editorial section

It is their current political masters who have invested this silly proposition that basic services to sparsely populated areas can be financially self-sustaining. They can't. Canada's geography guaranteed that at the time of confederation. And those who took to the rural areas through their circumstances would be recognized in perpetuity by having it an accepted fact that the cost of making them part of this country, with at least some services, would be shared coast to coast.

Now so much for fairness to rural Saskatchewan. Where was the Premier? Where was the Premier? Surely the Premier would understand that federal government has a responsibility to deliver postal service to this province in a fashion that's fair and equitable and affordable.

But why the privatization? Is this another set-up for a patronage plum for friends of the party? And, Mr. Speaker, I ask you: are the members of the federal Tory party and of the provincial Tory party going to go through Saskatchewan town by town by town and do a litmus test on every business person to decide who gets it?

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it's the same scenario we're going to see with the privatization or the franchising of the liquor stores. It's the same system, it's the same people, and it's the same kind of corruption.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that if you were to privatize, if this federal government were to privatize the post offices, and if the people could have a guarantee that they would have adequate services, and if the people could have a guarantee that they would have the same kind of costs incurred, and if they were to have a guarantee of a commitment to fairness for everybody to have a chance at getting one of those post office franchises, you may have a chance to sell it.

And they feel the same about the liquor stores and the privatization of the liquor stores. If everyone had a fair and an open and an honest chance at owning one of those, and if there wasn't fear that this government would have it so full of patronage and corruption and kickbacks, then you may have a chance to sell privatization of liquor stores as well as privatization of the post offices.

But, Mr. Speaker, the people know the PC Party and they know this government and they know Mulroney's government and they know the federal PC Party. And they know the litany of graft, and they know the list of cabinet ministers that the Prime Minister of this country has either had to fire or remove from his cabinet or ask to resign. And my colleagues says, eight, or is it nine? One would be too many, Mr. Speaker, but I believe it is nine. But people understand what this party is about, and they understand that it's built on patronage, and they understand that there

no longer is a system of fair and open tendering, and that includes the government in Saskatchewan and the government in Ottawa.

And they fear what this government, this federal government may do in terms of privatization of the post offices. We in Saskatchewan are not used to that kind of government, Mr. Speaker. We in Saskatchewan are used to a government that delivered a fair system of tendering, delivered an honest government and delivered a government that cared about the people.

But if this form of privatization that seems to be supported by the Premier of this province is just yet another example of that, I say, Mr. Speaker, the Premier won't be able to sell it and nor will the Prime Minister.

I've talked about rural Saskatchewan and what's been happening and how the small towns have been dying and the fact that this government has showed no leadership. I've talked about the small businesses going bankrupt in rural Saskatchewan without any assistance from this Premier and from this cabinet and this government. And I've talked about the fact that they feel betrayed. People who were once loyal to this party feel betrayed. Residents of Saskatchewan who at one time were non-political feel betrayed, and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this will be a short-lived government, federally, because of it. And I would suggest as well that the Premier of this province is well on his way to his demise because of those same things.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — No concern for the people, no concern for their communities. I would suggest that this government has lost its self-respect, or it would be out there fighting for the people of Saskatchewan, which it clearly isn't going to.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I would want to move, seconded by the member from Regina North:

That this Assembly communicate to the Parliament of Canada that it sees the privatization of small post offices across Canada as seriously undermining the economic and social well-being of rural communities, placing hardship on seniors and physically disabled citizens and threatening thousands of rural jobs, many of those jobs currently held by women; and further, that this Assembly urge the rural post office continue to be federally owned and operated institutions maintaining a permanent presence in Canadian towns and villages.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, after some discussion with the House Leader and the opposition, I ask for leave of the House to revert at this juncture in this debate to government orders so that we may present second reading of Bill No. 86, a Bill respecting the registered nursing profession in the province.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before . . .

We're prepared to grant leave, of course, under the circumstances, but I want to make sure that it's clear, because the member opposite didn't quite complete it — I'm not being critical, but the leave is being requested for the second reading of this Bill, and then we will revert back to private members.

Leave granted.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 86 — An Act respecting Registered Nurses

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to all members of the House for granting leave. I want to draw to the members' attention that there are a number of representatives of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association in the gallery, and they were here as a result of some information that they had that this Bill would go forward today. And so I thank all members for their co-operation in that regard, because some of them have come from some distance.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to explain these amendments to The Registered Nurses Act, 1978, which deal with a variety of matters intended to provide better protection for the public and to allow nurses to regulate their affairs in an effective manner.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association has been fully consulted about these amendments. I believe . . . They may say that's an understatement, but I believe that they would agree certainly that they have been fully consulted, and there have been long and sometimes arduous discussions between us as we developed this legislation. And I might say that I believe very strongly that the SRNA wholly endorses them as necessary improvements in the practice of nursing in our province.

One of the major changes to the existing Act is the deletion of reference to certified nursing assistants. Nursing assistants, through another Act soon to be considered here in the legislature, Mr. speaker, will soon be allowed to regulated the activities of their own profession.

Under the existing nurses' Act, it is not mandatory that nurses be registered in order to practise nursing. By enforcing registration, these amendments will ensure that the public receives the services of only qualified nurses.

As a further protection, use of the title "nurse" will now be restricted to registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses.

To enable mandatory registration to be implemented, a definition of the practice of nursing has been incorporated into this Act. As a protection for other health occupations, exclusions from the practice of nursing have also been included. This will ensure that other health occupations and those providing basic personal care are allowed to perform the services for which they were trained. That is, these occupations will not be seen to be practising nursing and therefore will not be subject to

prosecution.

An amendment to the Act will also allow for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint up to two public representatives to the council of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association. Public involvement in regulating the profession will be an asset to the association, Mr. Speaker.

The concept of graduate nurse will be included in the new Act. This will allow those nurses who are recent graduates, but are awaiting the results of their national nursing exams, to practise in the interim with a four-month, temporary licence.

Some amendments to the existing discipline provisions have been made as well, Mr. Speaker. Under the existing Act, a person who lays a complaint against a nurse need not be informed as to the outcome of their complaint. The association will now be required to inform the public complainant as to what action was taken on their complaint.

An additional amendment will allow a nurse who was found guilty of incompetence or misconduct by the association's discipline committee to appeal the decision to council or to the courts. In the present Act, the council, as opposed to the discipline committee, made the discipline decision, and therefore an appeal to council was not possible. This new amendment is seen to offer a more fair and less costly option to the nurse and to the association.

A nurse who has been expelled from the profession will be allowed to apply to council for reinstatement at a future time under a new provision of this Act. If the nurse is refused reinstatement, she or he may appeal the decision to the courts. The revised process will provide fair justice to the nurse while still ensuring protection of the public.

As a further protection, employers will be required to report to the association the dismissal of nurses for reasons of misconduct or incompetence.

Mr. Speaker, additional amendments have also been made to elaborate on and clarify various regulatory processes carried out by the association.

Mr. Speaker, I would just ask all members that I believe we should all join with the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association in welcoming these amendments.

And I want to say a couple of words now, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the process — I made some early reference to it — the process of consultation that goes on in developing this kind of professional legislation.

And I want to say, as I said to the SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association) at their convention, that I believe that the professional way with which their association and the members of the association in various locations around the province approached the development of this legislation could only be called excellent, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to say that to them, but I think also to the House and to all members of the

House, that they handled that in an extremely professional manner, and it's appropriate to mention that in a circumstance where we're dealing with their professional legislation.

And I want to say to their past president Jean Mahoney, who is here in the gallery today, to their present president Barb Ellemers, and I'm not sure if Barb is here, but if she isn't . . . but certainly Jean Mahoney and their executive director Jane Knox, who worked very hard on the development of this legislation — Jane is in the gallery today — that I have, and I know my colleagues have, appreciated their professional approach to the development of this. And I believe, as I believe they do, that this legislation will augur well for the practice of nursing in our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, with that I would ask all members of the Assembly and all sides of the House to support these progressive amendments to The Registered Nurses Act, and I am very pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 86 at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

(1645)

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask leave to make a brief introduction.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Brockelbank: — I want to thank the members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make a brief introduction of students that are here today, and especially the member for Lakeview who is following in debate.

The group of students today, Mr. Speaker, are from St. Mary's School in Saskatoon. They're located in the Speaker's gallery. There are nine of them, and I understand they're grade 7 students. I'll be meeting with them later for pictures and answer any questions they may have with regard to the function of the Assembly here.

They are from the constituency of Riversdale, and the member for Riversdale is unfortunately not able to be with us today and he asked me to make the introduction on his behalf to you, Mr. Speaker, and to members of the Assembly, and to ask you to join me in welcoming these students from St. Mary's School.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleague from Westmount to pay special tribute to Mr. Rutten and Mr. Jelinski, who are former colleagues of mine, particularly Mr. Jelinski and I work together in our church pretty well every Sunday, and I want to extend a hearty welcome here.

I hope you people enjoy your stay here in Regina, and my understanding is you will be here tomorrow. I hope you also enjoy the ceremonies here tomorrow, and I ask all members to join with me in welcoming, not only Mr. Rutten and Mr. Jelinski, but also the students from St. Mary's School. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 86 (continued)

Ms. Simard: — The New Democratic Party opposition, Mr. Speaker, is very pleased to give the government leave to deal with this legislation today because of the fact that the legislation is very important for nurses, because of its mandatory retirement provisions, the fact it protects the name "nurse," for example, and we know that it's important to the nursing profession.

I, however, would like to make a comment that ordinarily what is done on Tuesday is private members' business, and the business that was arranged for today was also private members' business. I am aware that the SRNA was advised that this legislation would be coming forward; however, there was arrangement for private members' business today, Mr. Speaker, and the SRNA of course was not advised that the Bill would not be coming forward.

And I think that's another example, along with the fact that the Bill that we're dealing with is still not in printed form, Mr. Speaker — it's still not in printed form — and that's an example of the way this House is being run during this session.

The Minister of health suggests, Mr. Speaker, that I should be nice just once. But if these little administrative things, or rather they're not that little, were looked after by the government, we wouldn't be in this situation on such a constant basis.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — But nevertheless, notwithstanding these problems, we are very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to give leave to deal with this Bill now, not only because it's important to nurses but because out of deep respect for the hard work that nurses have been doing in this province of Saskatchewan over the last few decades, and particularly in the last two or three years since they've been working under very difficult conditions due to government cut-backs.

I too would like to say that I was most impressed by the way that the nursing profession was handling these amendments. I've had a lot of discussions with the SRNA, with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, as well with certified nursing assistants, and I've been very impressed by the forthright and thorough way in which the nurses have been dealing with putting this legislation together, so I join the minister in his comments in that regard.

I want to also say that most of yesterday and some of today I have been speaking with these groups that I referred to in my earlier comments, Mr. Speaker, and there are some

concerns that were raised to me by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses that were not carried over into this legislation, and I wish to just point out some of those concerns now, as many as I can before 5 o'clock. And I believe that there is also a possibility that some of these could be corrected through House amendments.

I will put some of these concerns on record and ask the minister to consult with the SRNA to see whether or not it's possible for some of these things could be corrected in House amendments, Mr. Speaker.

The first one that I have on the list is with regard to Section 15(1)(a) . . . no, pardon me, 15(2)(a) on page 7 of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and 15 . . . it deals with the reference to moral character, and there may be other places where this occurs, but it talks about prescribing the qualification standard and tests of competency in moral character for the registration of nurses.

Now I have checked with The Medical Profession Act and some other professional Acts, and the word that we ordinarily use is "good" character as opposed to "moral" character. And the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses have pointed this out, and indicated that "moral" tends to mean concerned with rules of morality, virtuousness and not . . . we're getting into the religious area, as opposed to good character, which means having the right qualities, satisfactory and adequate.

And my discussions with the SRNA indicated that they would not be opposed to such an amendment. They did preface all my discussions with the fact that they would want to get together with other officials with the SRNA to confirm that. But I think if the minister spoke to the SRNA, he would determine that that House amendment would probably be in order. And I believe it makes it a little more fair because the word "moral" is not ordinarily used in profession legislation, or it certainly wasn't in the legislation I looked at.

Another concern that we talked about today was section 30(4) of the . . . 30 sub 4, of the new . . . of the proposed Act, and that has to do with evidence that is tendered at a discipline committee hearing. And the . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. It sounds very much to me like the hon. member is in fact studying the Bill clause by clause, which is more appropriate in Committee of the Whole. And while she certainly has every right to make general comments regarding the Bill, I don't think it is acceptable to refer to clauses and go through the Bill in that manner.

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just referring to the section so the minister would know exactly what section I was talking about, but I will speak in general terms then.

The general concern in this regard is that the rules of . . . when a discipline committee is holding an inquiry, they are not bound by the rules of evidence. And we suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when you're talking about taking somebody's licence away to practise their profession, to deny them the right to earn a living, that the discipline committee should be bound by the rules of evidence that ordinarily apply to a court of law. In a case like this the

rules of evidence are very important. It's important that the principles of natural justice are not encroached upon.

Now I believe that that House amendment should be brought forward to make that perfectly clear, and I hope that the minister will consult with the SRNA to determine whether it's possible to present that House amendment.

Another point that was brought to my attention is the fact that the legislation allows for fines to be imposed on nurses — fines to be imposed on nurses, Mr. Speaker. And the suggestion that was made to me was that this was not appropriate in the nursing profession that fines be levied. The provision with respect to fines goes on and talks about assessing costs against a nurse, and that if the nurse doesn't pay the fine or the cost, the suspension, for example, continues.

Nurses are not in the same financial position that chartered accountants may be, or that doctors may be, for example, Mr. Speaker, or that lawyers may be. It is very difficult for a nurse to come up with the money to pay a fine, for example, or even to pay the costs. And if their suspension continues until this fine is indeed paid, it just compiles one problem upon another, Mr. Speaker.

So we would like the government to take a look at that provision and reconsider deleting the fine portion as SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) has expressed concern to me, about the cost portion as well. I understand that there are reasons for leaving that in from the point of view of the SRNA, but I think if the minister speaks to them before this Bill goes into Committee of the Whole, we may be able to come forward with a House amendment to eliminate the fine aspect of that section because it really serves very little purpose, and certainly is not viewed favourably by the nursing profession.

Those were three of the areas where I felt that there was some consensus as a result of my discussions, Mr. Speaker. There were other concerns brought to my attention which I will deal with when it gets to Committee of the Whole, and I see no reason why this Bill couldn't go into Committee of the Whole this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, being near 5 o'clock I move this House do now adjourn.

An Hon. Member: — No, no. From five until seven.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure whether the member opposite is correct. This is a day in which we sit in the afternoon and 7 o'clock till 10 o'clock in the evening. I think he has moved adjournment. I don't think that was the intent. Certainly that was not the intent of the arrangements between the House Leader and I. If that is now, then that is a complete change, at a time when we should be sitting extended hours, and I would like the member to correct it, whether he's adjourning or not.

Mr. Speaker: — I'll allow the hon. member to respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not fully aware of some of the arrangements that had been made between our Minister of Health and the House Leader of the opposition, and I will retract my motion. I will call it 5 o'clock and wish everyone a happy supper.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.