

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND
SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Clerk Assistant: — Mr. Gleim, from the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, presents the third report of the said committee which is as follows:

Since the committee's last report on March 23, 1988, your committee held 13 meetings during the second session of the 20th legislature and five meetings after the session adjourned during the week of February 6, 1989.

Your committee completed consideration of the following reports of corporations:

Advanced Technology Training Centre, 1987
Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, 1987
Agricultural Development Corporation of Saskatchewan, 1987
Crown Investment Corporation of Saskatchewan, 1987
Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan, 1987
Saskatchewan Auto Fund, 1987
Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, 1987
Saskatchewan Computer Utility Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Development Fund Corporation
Saskatchewan Development Fund, 1987
Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Government Printing, 1987
Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Minerals Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Power Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, 1987
Saskatchewan Telecommunications, 1987
Saskatchewan Transportation Company, 1987
Saskatchewan Water Corporation, 1987, and
Souris Basin Development Authority, 1987.

Your committee has not completed its review of the following corporations for the 1986-87 year:

New Careers Corporation, and
Saskatchewan Government Insurance Corporation, 1987.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Regina North West:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me particular pleasure today to introduce to you, and through you to other members of the Assembly, 50 grade 8 students from Rosemont Elementary School in the constituency of Regina Rosemont here in Regina. They are seated in the east gallery and are accompanied by their teachers, Ms. Wendy Allison and Mr. Marty Krause.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me particular pleasure to introduce this group because due to an administrative mix-up last year I was unable to meet with the group from Rosemont School, so I'm glad to see that they're back again for a second year. We will be meeting after question period out on the stairs of the legislature for pictures, and after that for drinks and an interesting and informative discussion.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I introduce to you and to the Assembly, some 22 grade 4 students from White City School. White City, perhaps not familiar to members in the Assembly, has one of the most imaginative programs in the province, Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the importance of the Asian peoples and the Asian markets to Saskatchewan, have a very aggressive correspondence and relationship with a school in the People's Republic of China. They are accompanied by their teacher Marjorie Gross, chaperons Mrs. Zytaruk and Mrs. Hill. I would ask all hon. members to join with me, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming the students from White City to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to the other members of the House, a national debating champion. This past week, the week of April 30 to May 7, the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debating Association hosted the Canadian Student Debating Federation national debate seminar.

For a week, students from across Canada dramatically demonstrated the potential of Canadian youth, and not unexpectedly, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan students did well. As a matter of fact, a young man who is a student at Campbell Collegiate, Anshu Prasad, who's up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, in the right-hand side towards the top, took top honours, winning the top national debating award. Mr. Prasad is with us today in your gallery accompanied by Mr. Rolf Pritchard, executive director of the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association, one of the principle organizers of the national event.

Mr. Speaker, would all members please welcome and applaud the efforts of Mr. Prasad and Mr. Pritchard.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning, earlier this morning at 10:30, I had the privilege of meeting with some 22 students from Grandview School in Grandview, Manitoba. And we had some excellent questions from our visitors from Manitoba, and I too would like all members of this Assembly to join with me in greeting these students from Grandview, Manitoba.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tusa: — It's my pleasure also to take this opportunity to introduce some guests from my constituency. In the Speaker's gallery we have 65 students from Lestock School, and I believe the two students on the floor behind the bar are also from Lestock. Are you? Yes, I believe they are; they're included.

These students are composed of students from the town of Lestock and district, and also from the Muskowekwan reserve, which is adjacent to the town of Lestock. They've come here to tour our building, to sit around question period, and also I look forward to meeting with them at 3 o'clock to have a short discussion on today's proceedings.

I ask my colleagues to please welcome these students and their teachers, which I have neglected to inform you their names, but I do so now — Mr. Cuir, Mrs. Woodward, Ms. Lindquist, and Mr. Davies, who also happens to be the mayor of Lestock and who regularly brings students to the Legislative Chambers — and also the bus drivers, Morris Wolfe and Daryl Leonard. Please welcome all these people to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Possible Conflict of Interest with Chairman of SEDCO

Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation. And, Madam Minister, it's now been almost two weeks since your government said it would study whether or not Larry Kyle, the chairman of SEDCO, and his relationship with the Northern Lights game farm was in conflict. Can you tell the House today if you have reached the same conclusion as the rest of the people in the province of Saskatchewan; that is, that Mr. Kyle, operating as a solicitor for the company, which received a SEDCO loan, was in a clear conflict of interest. Can you tell us what steps have been taken to date, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, clearly Mr. Kyle is the chairman of the SEDCO board. Clearly Mr. Kyle, acting as solicitor for a private company, was not in conflict because the matter did not come to the board of SEDCO. And I should point out to the member, only issues of over \$500,000 come to the board level; loan approvals in excess of two and a half million dollars must come to the cabinet board. It's clearly stated in the Act, Mr. Speaker,

that if a matter of which of a member of the board may have an interest, he or she must excuse himself from that meeting.

I will reiterate that the loan to Northern Lights farm was not at the level that it would even come to the board for a decision.

Mr. Anguish: — New question, same minister, Mr. Speaker. I find that incredibly hard to believe, Madam Minister. If there was ever a clear-cut case of conflict of interest, this is one of them.

Your government has clear-cut definitions of conflict of interest for members of the public service. For instance, in your *Conflict of Interest Guide-lines* for public employees, in section E6, it gives some general examples of what would be considered a conflict of interest. And I would like to just quote from that:

where the public employee may influence the decisions of a ministry in respect of a particular company or municipal body which is applying to a ministry for a loan, grant or other advantages, when the public employee has a significant responsibility in the affairs of the applicant . . .

What is your definition of this? If this doesn't fit Mr. Kyle to a T, what is the situation, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, this is a clear example of the tactics of the NDP, the tactics of smear, innuendo. It's the politics of fear, the politics of innuendo, and the politics of hate. Clearly, Mr. Kyle was not in conflict. Clearly, Mr. Kyle — I will repeat — was not in conflict at all. Read our Act, please. Read our Act.

Mr. Kyle, as chairman, representing a firm who may have dealings with SEDCO, is not in conflict. If the matter had come to the board, Mr. Kyle, as required by legislation, would have excused himself from that board meeting. Because the loan was of such a little amount, it doesn't come to the board for approval. The loans officer can approve that amount.

Mr. Anguish: — Madam Minister, new question. We're dealing with public money, and if you call \$220,000 a little amount, you have a different definition of "little amount" than the people in the province of Saskatchewan do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: — I realize that Mr. Kyle does not come under the guide-lines that I quoted from for the Public Service Commission in the province. If he did, then you'd have no choice but to take action, including his termination of services.

What I want to know, Madam Minister, is that if somebody in Mr. Kyle's position was subject to the same stringent rules of conduct, say a mid-level public employee in the province, I'm sure that you would have pounced on the individual as you have in other cases,

because they disagreed with you. But when it works to your advantage, you protect and uphold even though there's a clear conflict of interest. Where is your government's sense of fairness and honesty, Madam Minister, in a conflict of interest like this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the member opposite that the average loan made by SEDCO last year was in the neighbourhood of \$156,000 — \$156,000. The vast majority of the loan approvals didn't even come to the board level because they were not high enough that it was required to go to the board.

I will say again, in defence of Mr. Kyle, Mr. Kyle is an energetic member of Saskatchewan, citizen of Saskatchewan, good lawyer in the city of Regina, very astute lawyer in the city of Regina, and clearly Mr. Kyle, whether you will believe it or not, or you're going to continue this, this smearing campaign of yours, aided and abetted by your leader, I will say again, Mr. Kyle was not in conflict at any time on this matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: — Madam Minister, maybe in your opinion . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. Do you have a supplement or a new question?

Mr. Anguish: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, we're happy that you're proud of this individual and are defending him today here in the legislature.

Can you confirm then, if you won't admit there being a conflict of interest, can you confirm that this is the same Larry Kyle who has been instrumental in putting together the Gigatext scandal that your government is involved in with your unscrupulous friends, and is this the same Larry Kyle who was quoted in the *Montreal Gazette* about the Gigatext scandal. Can you tell us that, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible, Mr. Speaker, for the French language office, members opposite may remember, Mr. Speaker, that several months ago . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Well I don't know if they're interested in hearing the answer, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, several months ago there was a Supreme Court decision that imposed on Saskatchewan the requirement to translate statutes into French. At that time, Mr. Speaker, there was a piece of legislation brought before this House, and I think, as I recall, members opposite in fact supported that piece of legislation.

And at that time, Mr. Speaker, we took the view that it was a very, very costly exercise to simply translate statutes into French, Mr. Speaker, and so we went looking for easy

and inexpensive methods to do this very thing. And we did that, Mr. Speaker, we did that.

And we found a technology, Mr. Speaker, that at least I still have a very high degree of confidence in. And, Mr. Speaker, we conducted all of the normal investigations into the principals who owned this technology and we formed a joint venture, Mr. Speaker. We formed a joint venture between CMB and Nohrlus. Twenty-five per cent of that joint venture was held by CMB, Mr. Speaker, and . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The minister, I'm sure, realizes he's taking quite a long time to answer the question. I'd like to ask him to get to his answer.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, the reason I'm taking some time in answering the question is members . . . I'm not sure who members opposite are going to try and defame next, so I'm trying to get the record straight, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the principals in the Nohrlus organization found themselves some time later in an international lawsuit in Montreal. When that became apparent, Mr. Speaker, the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I've allowed a great deal of time for the minister.

Problems with Gigatext

Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I have to give this minister an opportunity to tell us all about Gigatext, so I'm going to ask him some questions. I had originally intended to go to the minister responsible for SEDCO, but I take it that we are to go to the Deputy Premier for answers to this developing scandal.

Minister, you mentioned that the government, through the Crown Management Board, has a 25 per cent interest in this company, Gigatext, and I want you to confirm that your government put up \$4 million for that 25 per cent interest, and that Mr. Guy Montpetit of Montreal, who's the president of Gigatext and who is currently the subject of the major lawsuit, or one of the actors in the . . . one of the parties in the major lawsuit that you referred to, and University of Manitoba professor, Douglas Young, were given the other 75 per cent interest in Gigatext in exchange for their software technology that they were to bring to the business. And secondly, while you're on your feet, will you confirm that Mr. Montpetit, as president of the company, had sole authority for signing cheques and disbursing payments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, to answer the last question first, whether he was the sole signing authority, that's been indicated to me that that's a fact. As it relates to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, Mr. Speaker I'm not involved in the day-to-day operations of the company, nor would anybody expect me to be.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the \$4 million investment, CMB (Crown Management Board) did spend \$4 million, invest \$4 million in this technology for 25 per cent of the company, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, when it became apparent that there were principals involved in the joint venture that were involved in an international court action in Montreal, this government moved immediately to turn the whole matter here over to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for investigation. That was done, I believe, in October or November of last year. The matter is still the subject of that investigation, Mr. Speaker, and because it's the subject of that investigation, and because, Mr. Speaker, it is a matter before the courts, I think it's . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's not before the courts.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — It's certainly before the courts in Montreal, Mr. Speaker, and that's a court. That's a court, maybe not one that members opposite have respect for, but it is a court. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite frankly not prepared to get into any detail relative . . . that may in fact put in jeopardy the RCMP investigation or the court matter that's going on in Montreal, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — A new question, Mr. Speaker. It's very interesting that this matter has been referred to the RCMP, but it does not absolve this minister of the responsibility of answering questions in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — He has confirmed, I believe, what ought to be a matter of public record, and that is that CMB (Crown Management Board of Saskatchewan) have a 25 per cent interest in the Gigatext company which they purchased for \$4 million. And I would ask him to confirm that the other 75 per cent of the company went to Mr. Montpetit and the University of Manitoba professor, Mr. Young, in exchange for the software technology that they brought to Gigatext. That's the first question.

And while you're on your feet, Minister, will you also confirm that it was Mr. Ken Waschuk, a former aide to the Premier, who initiated the contacts between officials of your government and Mr. Montpetit?

And, thirdly, will you confirm that Mr. Waschuk made these contacts at the urging of Michel Cogger, a Tory senator from Quebec who has himself been linked to the highly questionable practice of receiving some \$110,000 from Mr. Montpetit to lobby for Mr. Montpetit's firms with the Mulroney government? Can you confirm those three things?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I will confirm nothing as it relates to Mr. Ken Waschuk. I have no knowledge of Mr. Ken Waschuk's involvement in any way, shape, or form. Mr. Speaker, I will confirm that we invested \$4 million in this joint venture project for a computer agent translation technology, one that we have, and continue to have, a high degree of confidence in; one where, Mr. Speaker, I believe there is great opportunity beyond the translation of statutes.

As an example, is recently a \$21 million contract for the translation of the frigate manuals, Mr. Speaker, was awarded to a firm in New Brunswick.

There are literally hundreds of millions of dollars worth of translation opportunities in Canada alone, Mr. Speaker, and we saw this, and continue to see it, as an excellent opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Now the minute that this court action in Montreal, that we became aware of that, we moved to protect the investment of the people of Saskatchewan. We moved to protect the investment and, Mr. Speaker, we have 100 per cent control of that company today — 100 per cent control, Mr. Speaker. The shares of the other principals have been put in escrow, put in escrow, Mr. Speaker. And the government, through SEDCO, is keeping the company going, meeting payroll, etc., for an agreed-upon period, Mr. Speaker, that I think ends in June, for the purposes of determining once and for all whether the technology is suffice to do the job; and number two, Mr. Speaker, to see what other applications can come from the technology.

This is an excellent opportunity for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and it's unfortunate that it got unravelled in this court case in Montreal, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — A new question, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. I'll bet it was unfortunate it got unravelled in this lawsuit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — I wasn't clear on your answer, Minister, with respect to Mr. Ken Waschuk. Are you saying that you don't know that he was involved in the initial contact between Mr. Montpetit and this government? And do you know, Minister, that Mr. Montpetit, in this lawsuit in Montreal, claims to have made a loan of some \$150,000 to that same Mr. Waschuk while the two were playing golf here in Regina, and that that money was transferred to a Bermuda company? Do you know that, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, not only have I not read the transcripts of the trial in Montreal, but I once again say, Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of Ken Waschuk in any way, shape, or form making any initial contact with this government and one Guy Montpetit.

Mr. Mitchell: — A new question, Mr. Speaker. I want to address two more questions to the minister in this regard, which he can answer at the same time. In connection with Mr. Waschuk, is the minister aware that Mr. Waschuk was, and I believe is, on the board of directors of the Gigatext company?

But while you're on your feet, answer this question, Minister. Are you aware that Mr. Young, that's Professor Young of the University of Manitoba, who claims to have developed the translation software program that Gigatext is to be using, wrote a memo last October 20, which is in the possession of the RCMP, in which he expressed his concerns about financial error and mismanagement at

Gigatext?

And thirdly, Minister, are you also aware that in that same memo Mr. Young alleges that Mr. Montpetit spoke of spending hundreds of thousands of dollars paying considerations to Saskatchewan people who helped arrange the deal? Are you aware of that?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, to answer the first question: yes, I am aware that Mr. Waschuk is on the board of Gigatext. As it relates to the second question — and my understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that he was asked to serve by the principals of Nohrlus, the joint venture partner, Mr. Speaker.

Now as it relates to the first question, am I aware of the memo from Mr. Douglas Young to whoever it was sent to: yes, I have had that memo, or the contents of that memo, made known to me. And, Mr. Speaker, that's precisely — precisely — one of the reasons that at that time we turned the whole matter over to the RCMP.

Precisely, Mr. Speaker. And the RCMP have been conducting its investigation actively, I understand, since October or November, and I await their conclusion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mitchell: — A new question to the same minister. It's been almost a year since your government helped to set up for this Gigatext company. Can you tell us, Minister, during that year how many Saskatchewan statutes have been translated into French since this company started operations and since you poured \$4 million into its operations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, one of the reasons that we found this technology, if you like, is that we were looking for an easy, inexpensive way to comply with the Supreme Court of Canada ruling that we must translate all of our statutes into French. We got this technology, Mr. Speaker, and it is now being improved and proven, improved and proven.

There is some question, Mr. Speaker, as to whether or not statute law will be received as being appropriate or proper through machine translation, Mr. Speaker. It's a little different than translating Tom Mix for members opposite to read.

And so the answer to the question: it's the opportunity . . . the opportunity for this technology goes well beyond statute translations. The opportunity goes into the hundreds of millions of dollars of all kinds of translation. Today, Mr. Speaker, there are somewhere between 22 and 25 people working at Gigatext here in Regina — 22 to 25 people that otherwise probably wouldn't even be in the province, Mr. Speaker. So the answer to the question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the Deputy Premier. I want to ask him: are you aware that most computer experts . . . most computer experts would have said that the project was doomed to failure from the outset?

For instance, Jaimie Carbonell, director of the Centre of Machine Translation in Pittsburgh, said the technology is 20 years away from doing what this company claims it will do, and that Mr. Montpetit told a court hearing in Montreal that Young fudged the demonstrations of his technology to produce accurate results.

I want to ask you, Mr. Deputy Premier: what minister or ministers approved this deal that blew in excess of \$4 million of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, had that member been around advising Orville Wright in the days of the Silver Dart, we probably wouldn't be flying today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is there are people who do have confidence in the technology, including the Department of National Defence. Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence has awarded a contract, a contract of \$21 million to a similar technology in New Brunswick, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order, order. The minister has been having quite a few interruptions and having difficulty answering. Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — . . . a technology, Mr. Speaker, that isn't as far as advanced as this one. And for those who say that applications of this technology are still 20 years away, they are simply not familiar with how far advanced this new technology is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Koskie: — Further question, new question to the minister. I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, can you confirm that the government not only blew 4 million bucks but have taken over the full operation, are paying as much as \$50,000 a month to run this company which is unable to translate one single statute? Is that not the situation? Haven't we spent over another 300 to \$500,000 on this project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, if the member had been listening about four or five questions ago, I said precisely that. I said that the government moved immediately, the government . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order. The minister's been asked the question, and unfortunately he's being asked several more. Let's give him the opportunity to answer the question he was formally asked.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The government moved immediately to protect its investment, Mr. Speaker, the investment of the people of Saskatchewan, and in fact took 100 per cent control of Gigatext, Mr. Speaker. And in taking 100 per cent control, they have in fact met payroll and day-to-day operation costs, Mr. Speaker, precisely to keep the company alive to see if we can capture the opportunity that this technology presents us,

Mr. Speaker — the opportunity of literally hundreds of millions of dollars of translation services that are being demanded by governments, by private sector, here and abroad, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Waste and Financial Mismanagement of the Provincial Government

The Speaker: — While normally it would be the government's turn for motions under rule 16, since they did not have their motion in on time . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. We will now proceed with the opposition's motion, unless some previous arrangement has been made.

Mr. Shillington: — It would appear, Mr. Speaker, that if we got a new wrist-watch for the member from Melfort, that would go some distance towards solving government mismanagement, because he was 11 minutes late handing in the motion, as I recall it.

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

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to respond on a point of order, please.

The Speaker: — Yes, what is your point of order?

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there are times in the legislature that you go beyond what is strictly adhered to or written down in the rules. And Mr. Speaker, I admit, and I take responsibility on behalf of all of my colleagues for being late. But, Mr. Speaker, I simply raise the point that in the traditions of parliamentary democracy, normally an opposition willing to co-operate might say, Mr. Government, certainly take your turn. This is representative, Mr. Speaker, of an uncooperative opposition and, Mr. Speaker, it goes far beyond this little point. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Clearly, Mr. Speaker, that is not a point of order. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, all that the member, the Deputy House Leader over there, is trying to do is cover up for the fact that this government, after day 46 of this Legislative Assembly, has been so inept and so preoccupied with some other agenda called privatization that it has not even brought forward legislation to be debated in the legislature; so preoccupied that the member opposite doesn't even know when he is to bring in a motion to be debated under rule 16, Mr. Speaker.

Until the government is prepared to provide some leadership and take its responsibilities seriously about making sure that they bring forward the business of the people of Saskatchewan, it is clearly in order that the

member from Regina Centre continue with his motion as he is proposing to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I've listened to the member's point of order and the response from the opposition. As I indicated earlier, first of all it's not a point of order, the issue the member raised. Secondly, the agenda can only be changed with some previous arrangement or leave, which has not been granted; therefore, the motion proceeds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — If I could be as generous as I could, to the member from Melfort, and assume that he meant some of what he said — one can only assume this is a continuation of the problems that you've had, Mr. Acting House Leader, in that you think you can change the rules unilaterally and retroactively. That is what you've been doing.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we're dealing with a question of fiscal mismanagement and waste at a time when the government's displaying that. They have sometimes displayed, and we have sometimes seen, government mismanagement and waste due to this government's greed, due to the greed of their friends.

Today, however, I think we're seeing mismanagement and waste in this session because this government is: (a) blindly tied to a privatization program that the public of Saskatchewan have said they don't want, and we see the session not dealing with the issues that should be dealt with. We see mismanagement in this session on a scale which I have never seen before.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues which should be dealt with. We have a crisis in agriculture. We have a federal government which has imposed a budget which has imposed some very severe burdens on Saskatchewan people. We have some unresolved issues with respect to the national sales tax, as businesses will now have goods which attract taxes under four different scenarios.

Mr. Speaker, all of these issues demand attention. How does this government manage those issues? First of all, it proceeds with an arrogance; and secondly, once it's rebuffed by the public of Saskatchewan, it becomes petulant.

Mr. Speaker, one can find instances of waste and mismanagement in quite a number of different areas of this government, but perhaps foremost among them is the manner in which this session has been managed. This session has been mismanaged. Our government has proceeded upon a tack which the public of Saskatchewan said they don't want. This government has got stubborn, having been defeated . . . having suffered at least a set-back, they then get petulant; insists on proceeding with a unilateral change to the rules, which is without precedent in this House.

The first bit of management we need, Mr. Speaker, is better management of this Legislative Assembly. That

entails a co-operative approach, and it involves this government recapturing some sense of what the public want.

(1445)

I, Mr. Speaker, have visited a fair number of people. You know, I haven't had one person say, gee, I sure hope you deal with those rule changes — haven't had anyone say that. Had a fair number of farmers talk about assistance with respect to the debt on agriculture, have had a fair number of business people ask us what we're going to do with respect to the national sales tax, and so on, but I've had no one impress upon me the importance of dealing with the rule change before anything else is dealt with.

So the first bit of management we need is different and better management with respect to this session. We need this government to recapture some sense of what the public want. They are so woefully out of touch that they will insist on dealing with the rule change when other problems cry out for attention.

Mr. Speaker, this government's mismanagement, now in old age when the government's long in the tooth, seems to stem from stubbornness, from being out of touch, setting its own agenda rather than the agenda which the public of Saskatchewan would have them set. They've become stubborn, arrogant, and out of touch. Thus we see them sticking to the rule change, insisting that it be passed when there's patently more pressing issues.

It wasn't always thus, Mr. Speaker. This government was born in mismanagement, Mr. Speaker. This government began in 1982 . . . indeed the Premier campaigned on the slogan that he could mismanage Saskatchewan and still come out ahead. Well, Mr. Speaker, he's half-right; he's certainly proved he could mismanage Saskatchewan. What he didn't prove was that he could ever come out ahead. He hasn't, of course, come out ahead.

When this government took office, this province had a surplus of a few hundred million dollars and a multi-billion-dollar series of Crown corporations which were largely free of debt — SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation) being one exception to that, but the rest of them were largely free of debt. Those Crown corporations turned over handsome profits to CIC (Crown investments corporation of Saskatchewan), which in turn paid dividends of some 50 or \$100 million a year.

This government took over. We now have a debt on the operating side of around \$4 billion. We have Crown corporations which are now burdened by debt. Virtually every one of the Crown corporations lost money, some of whom had never lost money.

I think it's accurate to say that SaskTel had never lost money until this government took office. SPC had lost money on occasion, but on rare occasions. The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan made very large profits so long as it was managed by competent management, so long as those in office wanted the corporation to succeed. Under the tutelage of these people, virtually every Crown corporation that Saskatchewan owns has lost money. I can think of no exception to that. The only two exceptions

I can think of are Sask Minerals and Saskoil which you've sold, and sold for a fraction of what they're worth.

So we've seen waste and mismanagement, not only in the operation of the Crown corporations but in the privatization of them. This government has privatized and continues to privatize corporations which make money. Those which lose money remain in the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, the most single, serious, and the most single important cause of waste and mismanagement in this government has been patronage. We saw it again today in the form of Gigatext, an operator from Montreal whom I don't know well and won't comment on, but I will comment on his practices.

He comes to Saskatchewan offering considerations of some hundreds of thousands of dollars, and apparently in the Conservative ranks opposite, not among the members of this Assembly, but in those who work directly with them, found some ready takers. He found some people who were prepared to take that money and to ask no questions with respect to this government's participation in the corporation.

What we now have is some individuals who have made a great deal of money. And as I say, none of them . . . there is no evidence of anyone in this House doing that, but certainly people such as Mr. Waschuk, who at the relevant time was on the Premier's staff, accepting large sums of money. What is the taxpayer left with? Well we're one year late on translating the statutes. The member from Souris-Cannington, one could tell by the hesitant and rather sombre way he answered those questions, he knows as well as we do that that technology won't work, that they've sunk \$4 million into a technology which is not here, which is very, very complex.

Translating ideas from one language to another is a very complex task. There are not a whole lot more — particularly when it's statutes — there are not a whole lot more tasks more exacting than the translation from one language to another. Language reflects a culture, different cultures. People think differently and ideas do not translate precisely. It's a very difficult task. It is not one that even with the advanced state of computers now you can ever leave to a computer.

Most computer experts — and a whole lot who aren't computer experts — know that. Computers basically deal with numbers, not with something as subtle and as subjective as a translation of a language. Most all computer experts know that; so do a whole lot of amateurs who are interested in the subject.

You ask how on earth did this government get involved in such a hare-brained proposal. They got involved in the hare-brained proposal because of greed by those who worked for the government, outright patronage, outright corruption, and because this government simply does not ask enough questions, does not thoroughly think something out.

I was amused that the member from Souris-Cannington suggested that had the Wright brothers had his assistance,

or had our assistance, they might not have succeeded. One will recall that the Wright brothers were two business people who spend a long time studying what they were about to do. They spent many years researching it before they tried it. They were careful, thorough people who analysed the problem very carefully. They were not fly-by-night operators who woke up one morning, thought it was a heck of an idea, and tried it. This government's knowledge of history is as weak as its knowledge of economics or the principles of public administration.

Mr. Speaker, this government has been involved in patronage right from the very beginning; from 1982, there's any number of instances of it. The former . . . and one can pick from ranks, one can pick from among the Conservative ranks. In his book written after his incarceration, Colin Thatcher complained of the large number of executive assistants hired at what he described as obscene salaries.

The government began . . . The mismanagement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, really began when this government decided that the public service was an NDP plot. They began by firing large numbers of dedicated public employees who had been public employees, and professional public employees, from the beginning.

Well some of the people that the members opposite have harassed have done fairly well. I recall one member that members opposite decided to send to Prince Albert, went to Prince Albert for a couple of months, but now occupies an honoured position in this Assembly — the member from Regina Victoria.

If the member opposite wants to discuss some of the people you fired and the success that they have made of themselves since, that would make a very interesting speech. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, it would be entirely on point, but if the member from Meadow Lake wants me to discuss what has happened to the people they have fired, most of them, Mr. Speaker, have gone on to make a very considerable success.

One of the people he complains about is a Mr. Doug Archer. Mr. Archer was fired by this government, went on to become mayor of Regina and, I think, a very competent one.

Mr. Speaker, I am nearing the end of the 15 minutes allotted to me. I'm therefore going to move, seconded by the member from Athabasca:

That this Assembly condemns the waste and financial mismanagement of the provincial government which has caused an alarming provincial deficit, an ever increasing tax burden on Saskatchewan families, and a reduction in spending on health, education, and employment programs.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to speak to this motion, the motion of waste and financial mismanagement by the Conservative Government of Saskatchewan.

I want to turn to some of the mismanagement and waste that we see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, up in northern Saskatchewan. And first of all, I want to speak about the situation that we have in Green Lake where the Conservative government has decided to sell the Silver Lake Farm to outsiders, outside of Green Lake.

And I want to put that on the record what type of waste and mismanagement we're really facing there in that farm. On December 9, 1988, I wrote a letter to the Premier, as the Minister of Agriculture and also as the Premier, asking him to intervene and not to privatize or sell the Silver Lake farm. At that time it was decided that the government was going to get rid of the central farm and were going to turn that over to the community of Green Lake. And I had no opposition to that.

But to put the Silver Lake farm out for public tender, this is what I was opposed to. I wrote the Premier on December 9 asking him to reconsider that, and if they were still going to go ahead I asked him if he would consider entering into some arrangements with the community of Green Lake and/or the employees with respect to the Silver Lake farm. Now what I was saying to the Premier was, give the local citizens of Green Lake an opportunity to purchase that farm.

When we take a look at the waste and mismanagement that has taken place there in selling it off to a private entrepreneur, I just want to give you a little bit of history of what has taken place in the Silver Lake farm. This is a large farm, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a large farm with approximately 1,000 head of bred cattle, pure-bred cattle. That is worth a lot of money. And there is acres and acres, there's thousands of acres of land that have been broken up, put into hay so that they can feed these cattle.

Now what I want to point out to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and here's where we get into the waste and the mismanagement and the unfairness of this deal, who created this here Silver Lake farm? Well I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was the workers from Green Lake who were working on that Silver Lake farm who built that farm up to a point where it was.

And there's rumours going around that that farm has been sold for \$3 million. Now if that is the case, I tell you that the citizens of Green Lake are not getting any credit for that. It was the manager of the Silver Lake farm at Green Lake and the individuals who worked on that farm that built the land, that picked the roots and the rocks, put the fences up, and built that herd of cattle up to where it is right now, worth in the neighbourhood of \$3 million.

They did that, and now the farm is at a point where it can make money and it can break even, and your government, sir, has decided in their wisdom that they are going to sell it, not give an opportunity to the workers who are working on the Silver Lake farm, from Green Lake. They should have had first opportunity.

And there's no way that the Conservative government shouldn't have signed a promissory note for them. You had no trouble signing a promissory note for Weyerhaeuser for \$250 million worth of assets. You had

no trouble signing promissory notes to Manalta Coal to take over the coal-mines and the drag-line. You had no trouble with Peter Pocklington signing the promissory notes. And you had no trouble with signing the promissory notes for two Alberta companies that are supposed to come in and build two pulp mills — one in Meadow Lake and one in Hudson Bay. No problem with that.

So I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why could this government not sign the promissory notes and give the workers who built up that Silver Lake farm, the citizens of Green Lake, an opportunity to take over that farm?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Thompson: — Give them the same opportunities that you're giving the big multinationals from Tacoma, Washington, and Edmonton, Alberta, and Whitecourt, Alberta, and Calgary, Alberta. You signed those promissory notes.

And I say to the members opposite, it's about time that we started dealing with the citizens of Saskatchewan and give them an opportunity. They are the ones who did the work; they're the ones who stood up and fought to keep that farm going. And now they're all going to lose their jobs, they're going to lose their future, and this asset that should stay in that Meadow Lake-Green Lake area is going to be gone to some business people in Prince Albert.

I say that's wrong. And I want to go on to say here are some of the comments by the minister of privatization:

As I travel the province (and I'm quoting from the minister of privatization) people are telling me overwhelmingly that the government should not be using taxpayers' money to run those farms.

Well I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I say in all sincerity to the minister of privatization, that it took many, many years to build those farms up to where they are today so that you could put them out on the market and sell them for the type of money that you've got. There was a lot of work went into it, and it's local work, Saskatchewan citizens. And I say . . . and I doubt whether there was people all over this province telling you that you should be out selling those farms. I just don't believe that.

Another statement that the minister has made, and I'm quoting, quoting out of the *Meadow Lake Northwestern Sun* of May 15, 1989, and the minister of privatization, he says:

I don't know why Green Lake should have two farms when other communities only have one.

Well that's the kind of attitude that this government has — I don't see why that they should have two farms because they've already got one. They're both farms that belong to Green Lake. They're both farms that were developed over all these years by individuals who were born and raised in

Green Lake and are still operating these farms.

And the minister of privatization goes around the province saying, well I don't think Green Lake deserves two farms; they only deserve the one farm, so we're not going to give them the opportunity that we give to Weyerhaeuser and Pocklington and Manalta Coal. We're not going to give them the opportunity to purchase that farm.

Then he also . . . he says that the farm is running in debt, and I say that that farm is not running in debt. That farm was built up over many years and there's a lot of sweat equity that went in there from the citizens of Green Lake. And the minister of privatization says, well that farm is going in the hole, and who are we blaming? Workers have become unionized; since then the farms have been costing us a million dollars per year. People have asked to use the land for the benefit of the community.

Now he wants to blame the unions because the individuals who have been working on that farm, some of them for 19 years, they're getting good wages, they have a future, they belong to a union, and the minister says: they're losing a million dollars a year. I doubt if they're losing a million dollars a year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll tell you, they're not losing a million dollars a year.

That Silver Lake farm is at a point now where it's going to start making money. When you take a thousand bred cows, pure-bred cows, and all their calves, let me tell you that is worth a lot of money. And there is over 2,000 acres that were broke, and that was broke and cleared by the sweat of the individuals from Green Lake.

And for the minister to go around and blaming the fact that they're in the union, saying that individuals around this province are saying, oh no, we can't give them an opportunity to own the Silver Lake farm because then they would have two farms in their possession in Green Lake. They already have one, the central farm; we can't give them the Silver Lake farm.

And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a wrong attitude. I'm sure they don't do that in Shellbrook in the community that you come from. They welcome as many farmers as they can get, and that's the way that Saskatchewan gets ahead.

The same is applying in La Loche, in the road between McMurray and La Loche, a main artery that should be put between the two provinces so that we can get the tourists and the economic development that we need between the two provinces, and especially for communities like La Loche in northern Saskatchewan.

So what does this government do? And we found out this morning in Crown corporations, there's no agreement between Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Department of Highways have no agreement with the Department of Highways in Alberta to build that connection. Not a bit. The way that road is being put in right now is through welfare . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The question we have here before us is a motion from the opposition alleging waste and financial mismanagement. And certainly the operations of this government have to be the furthest thing possible from waste and mismanagement. We have to examine the type of government that has been delivered and the circumstances under which this government has operated.

First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us go back and determine what has been the basic industry of Saskatchewan — agriculture. For generations and generations the basic industry has been agriculture. And then under the members of the opposition, but primarily under Premier Thatcher, we diversified into resources.

Now members of the opposition followed along with what Premier Thatcher started in the construction of the potash mines and they reaped the benefit for a short period of time. They shut in our gas and told me, when I was growing up as a little boy, that we had no gas, and they bought gas from Alberta.

While prices of oil were high, the members of the opposition purchased assets such as holes in the ground, interests in packing plants that already existed. They were on a campaign to buy up Saskatchewan at the same time the province of Alberta also benefitted from an oil boom. But what did the province of Alberta do? The province of Alberta diversified the economy of Alberta.

When I grew up in this province, educated under the system that the members opposite set up, they taught me half-truths. They taught me we had no gas; they taught me that we were too small to manufacture. On the contrary, under this government in the past year 40 per cent of the new jobs created were in manufacturing. That is diversification, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of this province, because we cannot rely only on agriculture and digging up resources. We have to compete in a modern world that has valued added.

The members opposite did not diversify this province, and this government took over an economy based on agriculture and the raw, crude productions of resources. And when this government was put into a position of having to diversify this province, the price of agricultural commodities and raw resources dropped off, and now they accuse this government of waste and mismanagement. Even under these circumstances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the population of this province grew to exceed one million people.

I can tell you what examples of waste of mismanagement will do, what a lack of diversification will do. I believe the records will show that the province of Saskatchewan had approximately 941,000 people in 1931. After a socialist government in this province that went on for years and years and years — I was nearly 20 years old until we were rid of that the first time — under that kind of a system the population went down continuously.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, under this government the population has gone up to one million and exceeded that

value. Is the population increasing today? Not very much. Why is it not increasing today? Because the members opposite did not diversify Saskatchewan when they had the opportunity to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The members opposite talk from both sides of their mouth. Yesterday they wanted to co-operate. Today they won't even go to a government motion because the government has filed their document 11 minutes late. It's not crucial to the people of Saskatchewan. It is only an example of the kind of co-operation the members opposite are agreeing to provide to get on with the duty of governing this province and providing for the people what is necessary.

I can give you other examples. You talk about waste and mismanagement. We are where we are today primarily because the members opposite, when the interest rates went to 22 per cent, bought holes in the ground instead of lending money to farmers at a reasonable rate. I was there, Mr. Speaker. I told them not to do that, and they didn't listen to me.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite also increased spending with fictitious figures. An example would be that when inflation was as high as 12 per cent, they increased spending by 17 per cent. And what did they do to cover their real deficit? — they now talk about a deficit — what did they do to cover it? They took dividends from Crown corporations out of profits that didn't exist and they ran up the debt. And now the members opposite will come to you and say, oh no, that's not true; there was no debt.

Not only was there debt, but the debt was in the hands of bankers in New York, Zürich, and eastern Canada. Not one citizen of Saskatchewan had a direct opportunity to lend their own money to their own Crown corporations. This government has issued bonds so that the citizens of Saskatchewan could transfer that debt from foreign countries to their own province.

Yes, there is still debt in those Crown corporations, but it all started because the members opposite took dividends to cover their deficit so that they had no deficit. And I know these things, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I was there. And it's because of these things that I left and came to join this party and this government to provide better government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — But the members opposite could get away with that kind of behaviour because the price of wheat was high, the price of oil was high, the price of potash was high, and they wallowed in the people's money and squandered it. And now we have to pay the price in this province. Now when the prices are low, when we have drought, this government has to clean up the mess.

They alleged Tory times are difficult times. Yes, they are because they're always cleaning up a socialist mess. That's why Tory times are difficult times.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — It is very difficult to govern in this province, to clean up the mess that those members made. I told them not to make that mess. The Leader of the Opposition says he doesn't recall me telling him. That proves he wasn't listening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is where the waste and mismanagement were, and now it comes upon us, the heavy burden of cleaning up that mess.

I can tell you about the mess. Was there a Heritage Fund when this government was elected? Yes, in name only. Sixty per cent of that Heritage Fund was invested in holes in the ground; \$87 million of that, or 8 per cent, was in actual cash — 8 per cent of that billion dollars was in actual cash.

Now members opposite gloated about a Heritage Fund, but would they lend one cent of it to a farmer so that those farmers would not go broke? Not one cent. Instead they advocated inheritance taxes. That was really good for farmers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They advocated and followed and taxed farmers with gift taxes so that if a farmer gave to his son or daughter a quarter of land, they taxed him for giving his land to his children, instead of lending him money so that the children could buy it at a reasonable interest rate.

That was the attitude of that government. Those are examples of waste and mismanagement that we now have to live with in this province. And then on top of all that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have the audacity to say in this motion, a reduction in spending on health, education, and employment programs.

First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a look at this year's budget will tell you that the expenditure on health increased by approximately \$130 million this year. The expenditure on education increased by approximately \$52 million this year. Let us put that in perspective. That is the equivalent of 3 per cent sales tax just on the increase in health and education. Did we raise that sales tax 3 per cent? No, we did not.

(1515)

The problem is that the members opposite built a social system that cannot be maintained by ordinary taxes in ordinary times. It can only be maintained by either borrowing or extreme luck when you have high prices of oil and potash. The members opposite built for us a social system based on the best possible scenario that you could ever get in the economics of Saskatchewan, and in ordinary times it is unsustainable. That is the legacy left to us and this government to try to solve.

This government spent . . . of government spending last year, health took up 32 per cent; education, 19 per cent; social services, 8 per cent. Total expenditure on health, education, and social services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is 69 per cent of the budget — 69 per cent of the budget.

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

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again I want to remind this Assembly of the nature of the motion:

That this Assembly condemns the waste and financial mismanagement of the provincial government which has caused an alarming provincial deficit and ever increasing tax burden on Saskatchewan families and a reduction in spending on health, education, and employment programs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question before the House, I would say to you, is this: is that when those members on that side of the House get up to speak, they have to refute the truth of that statement. Is there anything that is in that statement that is untrue in regards to this government's waste and mismanagement, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And I would submit to you, quite with all due respect, sir, that there is absolutely not one bit of untruth in that statement, unlike the statements of the members opposite who are filled with untruths, innuendoes, and half-truths.

And we have just seen that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have just seen a graphic demonstration of that particular technique exhibited by the member from Melville who, Mr. Speaker, is an example of someone who is living in the 1970s, and who since 1982, memory represents nothing but a black hole of forgetfulness into which evidently he and the other members have tumbled.

They have been the government of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the last eight years. They, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the ones who are responsible for the waste, for the mismanagement, for the deficit, and for those things which now lie on those shoulders. Did the NDP government of the '70s commit sins of one sort or another? Yes, they did; some of them minor. I would submit, however, that you could put all the failures of the government between 1971 and 1982, put them together in a basket, and let me tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all those errors together would not match one week's errors of this government in terms of waste and mismanagement of the taxpayers' dollars of the people of this province — not one, not one week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've seen today an example of that kind of waste and mismanagement. And I want to, before I go into that example, outline for you the notion of what waste and mismanagement consists of. Now most people would think of waste as the expenditures of money in unnecessary projects.

Well we have seen that from day one with this government, and we're talking about the kind of waste of Supercart, a great economic initiative of this government. Supercart International, whose owner, Mr. Bob Silzer, finds himself in the same place that many other Conservatives find themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is, before the courts of this country, before the courts of this country in regards to a case relating to fraud. Seems to be a general Tory habit to end up in court charged with fraud like Mr. Silzer and those who ran the Supercart

International scam.

Or how about those Tories who ran the scam in regards to Joytec, who find themselves before the Security Exchange Commission in British Columbia under investigation of fraud, another economic initiative entered into joint partnership with the Government of Saskatchewan which turned out to be nothing more than a scam to drain the taxpayers' dollars.

Another example of the kind of waste and mismanagement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another example of the kind of waste and mismanagement that these people are known for. Waste, Mr. Speaker. Waste of taxpayers' dollars. And who pays for it? Who pays for it? The workers and the farmers and the small-business people of this province. They pay for it. They pay for that kind of waste.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question of mismanagement is an interesting concept. Mismanagement implies incompetence. Well, Mr. Speaker, we only have to look at today's proceedings to see that this government is the epitome of administrative incompetence when they can't even put their own agenda forward to the Legislative Assembly of this province. We hear the members opposite snivel and whine, snivel and whine, due to the fact that they forgot to bring a motion here today to be debated — their own motion.

Well that's an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of incompetence. And I want to congratulate the member from Melfort for having the kind of courage to stand up and take responsibility. It's that kind of courage that we on this side of the House wish that, for example, the member from Kindersley, the Minister of Justice, would have taken when he went out and did the hatchet job on the Provincial Auditor. At least the member from Melfort's got the guts to stand up and admit it when he makes a mistake.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, mismanagement implies incompetence and an inability to administer programs and the affairs of the government. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this case mismanagement implies more, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it implies more.

In this case it implies corruption because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that government over there, as we have seen today with Gigatext, as we have seen today going back into their first term in regards to the sale of the SGI building; when we look at the kind of Joytec scandal; when we look at the Pioneer Trust scandal; when we look at the Principal scandal; when we look at the Supercart International scandal; when we look at the northern game farm scandal; when we look at the scandals that will be unfolded in this House in the days and weeks and months to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you this. This mismanagement is not ordinary mismanagement. This is the kind of mismanagement that leads to the iron bars of jails clanging shut just as it has done on Tories across the country, and just as it does on Tories who have sat in this House, and I have to go no further than the to raise the

name of Colin Thatcher.

Mr. Speaker, I predict that as events unfold in this legislature and in this province, that we will see that this government is engaged in a kind of mismanagement which is nothing more — nothing more or nothing less — than the deliberate picking of the pockets of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan in order to line their own bank accounts.

Mr. Speaker, we saw in this province not very long ago an example of the kind of morality, the kind of morality, which permeates that side of the House; the kind of morality which would lead a cabinet minister, like the minister from Melville, like that minister from Melville, a cabinet minister who makes \$78,000 a year, and what does he do?

Does he take the money that is given to him by the Legislative Assembly to hire people in his community who are unemployed? No, Mr. Speaker. What does that member do? He pays a company called G-Luck Enterprises, a company which just happens to be owned by his wife, to provide secretarial services for him; and to also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only to provide secretarial services for him, but in fact to pay the mortgage on a building that he and his wife own, that happens to contain not only his law office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but also happens to contain his MLA office.

Now, Mr. Speaker, all of which — all of which — all of which is legal. Mr. Speaker, all of which, within the very meaning of the law, is probably legal.

An Hon. Member: — What are you doing with yours? You can talk to Rosemont on what you're doing with your money.

Mr. Lyons: — And if the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden wants to get up and talk about my office and wants to examine my affairs and my office, he's certainly well to, because, Mr. Speaker, my office reverts back to the Crown after I become an MLA. Does his office, does his assets, and do the assets of the member of Melville revert back to the Crown? You bet your bottom dollar they don't. You bet your bottom dollar that those taxpayer moneys goes to provide the security, the financial security for the member from Melville.

Or, Mr. Speaker, we don't have to look any further than another example — another cabinet minister who is doing the same thing — the member from Indian Head-Wolseley. And, Mr. Speaker, I bring those examples forward because it is that they are perfect examples of the kind of thinking which permeates that government. It's the kind of thinking which leads people like Larry Kyle to fill . . .

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

Mr. Petersen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've been listening with some interest to the previous speakers talk on and on about waste and mismanagement. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say with utmost certainty that when we came to office in 1982 we found waste and mismanagement by the bucket load, second to none.

And I'm often very fond of talking about my own constituency. And if you want to talk about waste and mismanagement, let's talk about the need for nursing homes which, in our budgets, have been built for people, provided services for people. We've increased spending on health, as the member from Melville pointed out. We built nursing homes.

In the previous government's budget there was an item there, whatever line it was, and it said \$350,000 for liquor board stores. No nursing homes, but liquor board stores. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you want to talk about the pot calling the kettle black, I think we have an example of it here today.

Another example we saw earlier today was where we had a requirement to file a motion. So 11 minutes late, 11 minutes, not 11 days, not 11 months, but 11 minutes — count them, count them, 11 minutes — 11 minutes past the time for filing, the motion is finally put in place.

The members of the opposition were asked to provide a little bit of understanding and go along with it and we'd have been on our motions today. Instead they said, no, no, you were 11 minutes late; gotcha. I wonder how they'd feel, Mr. Speaker, if, on making a mortgage payment or meeting a commitment to a financial institution, they came in 11 minutes late and were told: sorry, we're taking your house; we don't want the payment, no, can't do it; no, that isn't one of the rules. Too bad, tough luck; we're going to take your house. They would be the first to stand up and cry foul, foul, misunderstanding, horrible, terrible.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they only are conscientious when it suits them. Sanctimonious is too good a word to describe them. When it suits their purposes, they're holier than thou. When it doesn't, they say, oh, the rules say such and such and so and so, and we have to live by those rules.

They don't want to have Bills debated in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see as in some debate here. And when you talk about mismanagement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have an opposition that states that it is going to be obstructionist and make this province ungovernable, is definitely — definitely — mismanagement instigated by members of the opposition, not by members of the government.

When you take a look at the number of dollars that were spent when members of the opposition went out on strike, it's unreal, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They took their bells and went home, so to speak. They said, no, we don't want to talk about that Bill; we don't want to see things managed properly; we don't want to see orderly business carried on; we don't want to stand in the Assembly and debate the Bill before them at that time. And they walked out, a wildcat strike.

Well I could see it happening at some places. Some of their union bosses, I'm sure, applauded them, and they probably got a bonus for being innovative or something like that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it certainly did not help this province, the fiscal management of this province

to have members opposite wandering around out on the street, kowtowing to Barb Byers and the big union bosses when they should have been in this Assembly speaking on the Bill that was before them.

So you talk about waste, Mr. Deputy Speaker, hundreds of thousands of dollars went down the tubes because members opposite took their bells and went home. And it's another examples of what I heard one person refer to as "Roy's Radicals." Now if that's exactly what they are . . .

(1530)

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. You're making reference to other members in the House. You're not to use members' names.

Mr. Petersen: — Well, we could debate, Mr. Speaker, who Roy may be. It may be Roy . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. A member cannot do indirectly what he cannot do directly, so I'd ask the member to refrain.

Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize if I have offended you or this Assembly in any way.

When we look at the rest of that motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about, you know, the tax burden. Well let's talk about protection for Saskatchewan people and tax benefits. Let's take a look at what we've got.

The province does not tax utilities. Taxpayers save about eleven and a half million on their electric bills and about twenty-one and a half million on their gas bills. That's 33 million annually. I mean, that just shows we have a fair tax policy.

And the poor tax, the NDP poor tax. The member from Melville referred to the inheritance tax as death taxes. Well the members opposite when they were in government charged sales tax on clothing — on clothing for needy people, for people who were on social assistance, for poor people, for widows, for the disadvantaged. They took money out of their pockets and said, well we're going to do that and we don't care about you. And then this big, bad Tory government came into place and did away with the poor tax.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the removal of that tax, over \$47 million a year stay right in taxpayers' pockets — right there, out there where they can use it for whatever they want. But this government does not believe in taxing unfairly, Mr. Deputy Speaker; 47 million for people to spend on clothing or the necessities of life that would have otherwise gone into a tax regime, as it did under the NDP.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do care about low income families, low income people. We've got sales tax credits in place. When they buy something, on their income tax they get a tax credit for it, and we chose that method of doing it. We choose to be up front about it. We don't just stand up and go on with rhetoric and ramble on about what wonderful people we are and put our arms around

someone and say, we care about you and it's okay and we're the defenders of the poor, and all the rest of it.

I mean, just take a look. Premier Blakeney, how many years was he a member of this Legislative Assembly? How many years was he a premier? How many years did he represent Elphinstone? And Lord God, there's still poor people there. Well he must have had some influence and tried to do something in his own riding.

I mean, let's look at my riding. Fred Dewhurst, a Speaker of this Assembly for years and years. Highway 35 was the laugh of the province. We had Fred Dewhurst, we had Neil Byers, and 35 Highway was still the laugh of the province. Well finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can drive up and down on that highway. Even a lowly back-bencher like myself can go to the Minister of Highways and say, sir, we really need a highway here; I mean, it's a main thoroughfare and there's a lot of traffic on it; maybe you'd do something about it. It comes through.

So you would have thought that the Premier of the province — Mr. Blakeney at the time — would have been able to do something for those poor people in Elphinstone, unless maybe he did not want to or care to.

So the NDP, as you see clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, says one thing, puts their arm around people and said, yes, we'll look after you, don't worry about it; we'll we make you feel good about being poor and taxed, and oh, we're the defenders of the poor. They're great at having public meetings and walking out on this Assembly and saying, aren't we good guys; we're fighting the good fight. But the truth is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's only rhetoric, because if they would have been serious, they would have not taxed people a health tax, education tax on clothing. They would have provided a tax regime that would have helped those people.

Well let's take a look at what else happens under the protection and tax benefits. If you look at benefits to farm families, Mr. Deputy Speaker, farmers. Farm machinery and repair parts, tax savings — roughly \$40 million. Livestock investment tax credit, not just to protect but to diversify the province — to diversify, as the member from Melville pointed out earlier. Livestock facilities tax credits to encourage people to invest — ordinary people, people like folks in this room whom members opposite say shouldn't invest in anything and shouldn't partake in anything and shouldn't be part of the province's economic movement.

But you've sit back in here, collect our little salaries or whatever it is, and pontificate upon the problems of the day. But don't take part in the real world. Don't go out there and find out what's happening. Stay under the dome and don't learn anything. Don't participate in business. That way you won't have to comment on it, and you can plead ignorance when somebody questions you about it.

If you're looking for investment in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can find it quite easily. We've provided measures whereby people can buy shares and bonds in Crown corporations and other companies that governments have had interests in right here in the

province. A very reasonably priced bond can be available through SaskTel, SaskPower. We're talking about Sask gas, SaskEnergy. Members opposite say, oh, we don't want to do that; that's awful; that's terrible. We don't want people taking a direct role in how they run this company. We don't want people understanding economics. We don't want people being able to look after themselves, because if they could, then the NDP philosophy falls through, which is that big government is supposed to look after you right from cradle to grave. And I don't agree with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do agree with my government's moves to diversify the province.

I think that when we looked in 1982 when we came to office . . .

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

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my privilege to participate in the debate this afternoon, a motion put forward by the member from Regina Centre which basically condemns the government for waste and financial mismanagement and has wrong priorities in governing this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in listening to the last speaker, I think he has proven the rumour, he has proven the rumour that the member from Kelvington and the member from Melville came about as a result of an archaeological find some years ago. Their thinking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their thinking is so far in the past, is so far in the past, Mr. Speaker, that you really can't identify with it. You really can't identify with it.

The member from Kelvington takes pride in saying that they reduced taxes to individuals by \$33 million. He didn't indicate, however, that the Minister of Finance in this last budget, in his last budget, increased the taxes to individuals by \$145 million — \$145 million — and he takes pride in saying, oh well, we have forgiven taxes of 33 million. Thank you very much. We have just socked you another \$112 million, and the people are supposed to be thankful. That kind of thinking, you know, is just foreign to the people in this province.

The member from Kelvington said, well, big government, he doesn't need big government to take care of him. Well no, I believe that, because the members on the opposite side make sure that they are well taken care of by this government. And the member there — the member there — is no exception. The member there is no exception. Just look at the *Public Accounts*; he is no exception.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the motion that is before us condemns this government. All you need to do is look at the records. What did they inherit in 1982? They inherited a government that had a surplus of 140 million. They had the fastest-growing economy — the fastest-growing economy — in Canada. We had more investment, private investment, coming into this province than they have had in any of the years since they have been government — any of the years. Private investment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the record of this government is atrocious. It is atrocious. And I think it is true, they

couldn't even manage a candy store on the corner; they'd run in the hole. This government has built up a deficit of \$4 billion — 4 billion — just the deficit in their current account. And on that deficit they have paid out in interest alone over \$1 billion — \$1 billion that would have not been necessary had they not been the government.

And the Premier, the Premier of today, said some years ago, oh, this province has so much going for it that you can mismanage it and still come out ahead. Well I'll tell you, this Premier has been noted for many, many sayings and many, many phrases, like: give her snooze, Bruce; or, we are going to bring those children back home again.

An Hon. Member: — Don't say whoa in a mud hole.

Mr. Rolfes: — And don't say whoa in a mud hole. That's right. But I'll tell the member from Regina South that you guys have been in a mud hole for so long that there's no way that you can get yourself out of it. No way.

What we need is new management. We need a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that looks to the future, that is able to manage. And the group opposite have proven themselves that they are not able to do so.

All I ask the members opposite is, look at the latest Provincial Auditor's report. Look at the Provincial Auditor's report. There are simply dozens, dozens of occasions where the Provincial Auditor says that there is misappropriation of funds. He can't find the money. Dental equipment that has been sent over from the Department of Health to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, and we can't find the money.

Today in question period, a question directed to the member from Maple Creek, and she refers to a sum of money of a couple of hundred thousand as that "little bit of money." A couple hundred thousand dollars to farmers mean a lot of money. And if that is the thinking of the members opposite, what's a couple of hundred thousand dollars! Is it any wonder, is it any wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have run this province into the ground. We are now the most heaviest debt per capita of almost any province here in Canada, and our interest rates on the current debt alone is \$380 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that wouldn't be so bad if they hadn't mismanaged the Crown corporations as well. Now the Crown corporations have a debt of about 8 or \$9 billion. That debt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was less than \$3 billion when they took over. We now have an accumulated deficit, an accumulated long-term debt of close to \$13 billion, close to 13 billion.

That \$380 million that we're now paying out in interest because of your waste and your mismanagement and your patronage would come in very handy for education. Maybe those 500 students who were denied entry to university this last year, maybe they would have been able to go to university had you made more moneys available to university.

As the president of the U of S said at convocation the other day, his big regret was that in two years' time from now 850 students would not be graduating because they were

denied access to university, not because they weren't qualified, but because the government simply didn't provide the funds necessary so that the university could admit them to their courses.

That's a sad indictment of this government. SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), Kelsey Institute alone, one out of every five students that applies at Kelsey is only accepted, not because they're not qualified, but because there are no spaces available. This government simply has not made sufficient moneys available.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could understand that, if they were short of money. But it doesn't make any difference. When this government wants to give money to their friends, there's lots of money. Recently when Gormley became unemployed because of the federal election, what happened? The minister of privatization, not only does he hire him, but provides him with a nice office in Saskatoon, and what for? Purely for political purposes. Money for their friends, but no money for the ordinary folk.

The Minister of Education has simply failed. He has failed in convincing his colleagues in cabinet to provide adequately, not only for elementary and secondary schools but also for SIAST and also for the universities.

(1545)

These students, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are no longer in Saskatchewan. They have now moved to other provinces. In February alone, 6,000 people left this province — 6,000 people — because there are no opportunities available in this province. Of that 6,000, I am told about 2,500 of those are young people.

They are now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the province of Alberta, the province of British Columbia, or the province of Ontario. That's where they are, and the vast majority of those young people will not be coming back. They will not be making their contribution here in Saskatchewan. They will be contributing in other provinces.

Why? Because this government, this government has refused to make moneys available for employment. This government has refused to make adequate sums of money available for education so that these students could find an opportunity to improve themselves right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

And for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they stand condemned. They stand condemned in this province. And the people in this province will make a judgement whenever you call the election, and that judgement will find you people either outside of this House, or very few on this side of the House. The people simply will not stand for that. We have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, long line-ups, long waiting lists in Saskatoon hospitals. We have long . . .

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

Mr. McLaren: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've been listening to the opposition members

over the last hour and I can't believe what I'm hearing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, concerning government waste and financial management. And I would have to say that I will take the comments of the Investment (Dealers) Association of Canada over the economic experts of the NDP opposition benches here.

I'd just like to read what the shakers and movers of our financial community are saying about Saskatchewan. Mr. Kniewasser, in the *Leader-Post* of May 19:

Canadian investors are being told Saskatchewan's economy will have the highest growth rate of any province this year — provided crops receive a normal amount of rain.

If we can get an average crop, we'll have an eight and a half per cent increase in GNP (gross national product).

The Investment Dealers Association of Canada on Thursday released a report predicting the province's economy — given normal rains — will grow by 8.5 per cent in 1989.

"And what we're telling the world (Mr. Deputy Speaker), is that Saskatchewan has its affairs in order," Andrew Kniewasser, president of the investment dealers association, told reporters.

Saskatchewan has its affairs in order, coming from the Investment Dealers (Association) of Canada.

Members of the association, serving as a watchdog and think-tank for the investment industry, account for 95 per cent of Canadian investments.

And:

Mr. Kniewasser said it conducted its own research before drawing the positive Saskatchewan scenario which is passed along to investors.

If anybody had to be careful and prudent, you're looking at them (he says).

So here we are with the investment group from across Canada picking Saskatchewan as the leading province in our country for 1989 in economic development. And here we are listening to the opposition about this terrible financial mismanagement that has evidently taken place over the last seven years according to the NDP.

Another, on the economic outlet of Saskatchewan. The economic base in Saskatchewan has diversified steadily in recent years; potash, uranium, and oil and gas contribute significantly to the resource sector. Manufacturing and services account for an expanding share of economic activity. The manufacturing sector accounted for 40 per cent of all new jobs created last year, and the province has achieved tight control of its fiscal position, moving closer to a balanced budget. This was accomplished during two successive years of economic adversity.

Now here's the brains of our country speaking in their

annual reports, and we have to listen to what we've been listening to for the last hour. So I wonder if the people of Saskatchewan can say who is right and who is wrong.

I look back at 1982 when we were told there was a billion dollars in the Heritage Fund. How many dollars did we find in there, fellas? Not very much; not very much. All of it sunk into holes in the prairies, of potash mines which didn't create one extra job for that 8 or \$900 million that was spent.

And they talk about the debt in our Crown corporations. I can remember when I was in charge of the Sask Power Corporation in 1982, and the holier-than-thou group over there saying that there was no debt. Do you know how much debt I found in SaskPower in 1982? One point two billion dollars — \$1.2 billion and you have the audacity to say that there was no debt when you folks were in power.

And we look at the SaskPower — and I can talk from experience — at the rates, the electrical rates and the gas rates that we had to experience in our manufacturing firm in the 1970s, going up by 25 per cent every three months. And then what did they do? They started stripping the money from SaskPower to try and balance their budget. And here was the debt starting to build over in SaskPower. Massive increases in gas and power rates over that period of time. And we see about the tax burdens, the gas tax, a sliding tax that every time there was an increase in oil, the tax automatically went up.

And what did we do? We took the gas tax off, ladies and gentlemen, so that we in the province of Saskatchewan, our residents are still not paying gas tax today. And I would presume that that NDP group across got back in, the sliding gas tax would be right back on again. And they are talking about excessive tax burden on the people of Saskatchewan.

Another item that we had a lot of problem was the estate tax. And that bothered us at our company in Yorkton, the private person that had a company. And we complained to you about the estate tax. So you sent out a group of people around the province, headed by the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, I believe, at the time. And we had a meeting in our plant with that particular group.

And what was the response, Mr. Speaker, that we were given by that member that was in charge of that committee? He said, if you are worried about it why don't you sell out to John Deere? That's all they worried about. Sell out to John Deere. They had no worry about the plant staying in operation. They would have wiped us out with the estate tax that you folks had — \$150,000 exemption, if I remember correctly, on a multimillion operation. Big deal — \$150,000.

We've been listening for months and months about the reduction in health funding. How does 750,000 up to 1.4 billion move into the fact that it's a cut in health care? You've got the wrong kind of calculators over there. I think maybe you should try something different, because it's sure different from the school that I went to. The same with education — massive cuts in education. And where's education gone? It's doubled from what was

there in 1982 — doubled! And that's still considered a cut? I just can't believe it.

We've been hearing, and the member from Saskatoon South just mentioned the massive 6,000 people that left the province in February of this year. I went back about 1971 — a little bit further back than that — 1968, there was 960,000 population in Saskatchewan; 1969, there was 958,000 people; in 1970 it dropped to 941,000 people. Then the NDP got elected, and it dropped to 914,000. That was a 12,000 drop in 1971-72. Then in 1973 it dropped from 914,000 down to 904,000 — a 10,000 drop in 1973. And these are in the good years, 1970, the crops and so on. Then in 1974 we got down into the 800,000 level — 899,000. Then, credit to them, it started to come back.

From 1977 when it was at 977,000 . . . 1982, pardon me, the year that we got elected, 977,000 people. By two years later, by 1984, we hit the million population mark. Never in Saskatchewan's history were we over the million people. And it has climbed in 1985 to 1,008,000; in 1986, to 1,010,000; 1987, to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Time has elapsed.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if there's one comment that I might make in summary on this question, I think it is almost highly irrelevant, whatever it is that the government members might have to say and whatever it is that the opposition members might have to say about waste and mismanagement and how it affects the people of Saskatchewan. The bottom line is how it affects people outside Saskatchewan and what they might have to say about Saskatchewan. Not investment dealers looking at the future, being highly influenced by their Tory connections, but the actual fact of the matter . . . and the fact of the matter is Saskatchewan's credit rating. We have seen Saskatchewan's credit rating drop seven times in seven years. That's the fact of the matter.

And when Saskatchewan people go outside of Saskatchewan to borrow money, the investment dealers and the bond raters look at Saskatchewan and say, look at the waste and mismanagement, look at the deficit. You're going to have to pay more to borrow money now than you ever did in the past. That's the fact of the matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — That is the thing that needs to concern us when we talk about waste and mismanagement and something that the government members need to begin to own up to. Again, whatever we . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 01 — An Act to amend an Act to incorporate St. Margaret's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Biggar

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Mr. Shillington: — I know it's not considered legitimate to ask detailed questions; that's done in the committee. We would however appreciate from the member from Biggar a general explanation as to what this Bill is designed to accomplish. So we ask the general question, not expecting enormous detail, Mr. Member.

(1600)

Mr. Baker: — Mr. Chairman, basically the Bill is designed to change the name of the hospital at Biggar. It's been in process for about three years now, and we finally got it to the committee, and I see nothing wrong with the name change.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 01 — An Act to amend an Act to incorporate St. Margaret's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Biggar

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

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

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 3 — Crisis in Health Care

Ms. Simard: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my comments today, I'm going to be moving a motion:

That this Assembly condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for its arbitrary, unilateral, and harmful cut-backs and changes to health care services, which it has imposed without public consultation, and which are causing a crisis in Saskatchewan's health care system; and further condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for its failure to develop and pursue a long-term strategic plan for the positive improvement of Saskatchewan health care services.

That will be the motion that I will be moving, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my comments, which will be seconded by the member from Regina North.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at what has happened in the past with respect to health care, this province has been a leader in health care for decades. But in the recent years we have seen a series of cut-backs and underfunding in the health care area by the PC government that has resulted in a rapid deterioration of

our health care system. This is evidenced by long hospital waiting lists, by understaffing in our hospitals, cut-backs to prescription drug plan and the dental plan, for example. And these cut-backs have been made, Mr. Speaker, because this government has no real commitment to health care — no real commitment whatsoever. And they do not believe in socialized medicine. They do not believe in socialized medicine.

What we've witnessed in the Legislative Assembly since this session began is a right-wing agenda of privatization of all sorts of services, including our public utilities, notwithstanding the government promised not to privatize public utilities.

Privatization is foremost in their minds. It is their paramount objective in this Legislative Assembly, and because of this ideological bent, because of the fact that they're wild eyed about privatization, Mr. Speaker, and that's the way they feel, this is the reason why they are not committed to socialized medicine. They are not committed to medicare because it does not fit into their philosophy of privatization.

So what has been their response to a crisis in the health care system. What has been their response to the fact that we are running short-staffed in our hospitals? Well we saw a number of cut-backs in '87-88; for example, a cut-back of some \$18 million.

We have seen planners in the Department of Health leave. I'm not sure whether they have a planner in the Department of Health any more, but I have been advised that many of the planners, long-term strategic planners, have left the Department of Health as a result of this government's lack of priority to good health care . . . lack of commitment, rather, to good health care, lack of commitment to a long-term, strategic health care plan in the province of Saskatchewan. They have absolutely no vision whatsoever when it comes to health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

The development of health care has had a long and volatile history, I might say, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes it's been very exciting and very emotional. For 20 years after the CCF came to power in 1949 this economically poor, sparsely populated and isolated prairie province led the way for the whole continent in its development of medical services. The establishment of our medicare system was accomplished despite great odds, despite great odds, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan people can be proud of that system.

We should remind ourselves of some of those accomplishments today. The first union hospital district legislation, 1916; the first municipal doctor legislation, 1919; the first free tuberculosis treatment, 1929; the first province-wide hospital plan introduced by Tommy Douglas and the CCF, 1947; the first province-wide medicare plan implemented by Woodrow Lloyd and the New Democratic Party, 1962.

And finally, during the 1970s, Allan Blakeney and his New Democratic Party government expanded Saskatchewan's medicare system with a number of new programs, including the school-based children's dental

program, the prescription drug plan, Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living, and the Saskatchewan hearing aid plan. That is our history in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — The introduction of medical care insurance meant for patients that all necessary physician services were available to them regardless of their ability to pay. And for doctors it meant treatment decisions could be made on purely medical grounds, Mr. Speaker. So medicare, in effect, removed financial barriers to those seeking services and to those providing the services as well. And this was done with enormous effort and dedication on behalf of thousands of people in the province.

But I must say that the results were enormously gratifying, Mr. Speaker. This province pioneered a system which became a model for the rest of North America. But the events of the last few years have resulted in a serious deterioration of medical care in the province of Saskatchewan, and this has largely been due to the fact that there has been no long-term planning by the Government of Saskatchewan, and *ad hoc* cut-backs, arbitrary cut-backs to health care, and underfunding of our hospital system.

There has been absolutely no vision on the part of the PC government with respect to health care in the province, no long-term strategic planning, and no consultation with the public. When the PC government made cut-backs to the dental plan, there was no consultation with the public, no consultation with the dental workers. There was no consultation about cut-backs to the prescription drug plan. There was no consultation with respect to cut-backs in public health. There was no consultation when they decided to launch on a massive integration of hospitals in Saskatoon.

That's this government's record, Mr. Speaker — cut-backs and underfunding with no consultation with the public and no development of a long-term, strategic plan in the area of health.

And why has the government done this? Why has the government responded to the problems that they're having in health care as a result of their underfunding? Why have they responded in this fashion? Because this government, through its mismanagement and its waste and its patronage, has created a huge deficit in this province that is unprecedented in the history of this province — a deficit that's in the vicinity of \$3.85 billion, I believe, at this time in our history, Mr. Speaker.

And they've created it through mismanaged government funds and through waste and patronage. And now they're saying to the people, because of our waste and mismanagement, you have to pay. You have to pay through increased taxes, and I'm referring to the flat tax, and I'm referring to this rebate on the gas tax that makes it difficult for many people to even claim the rebate. I'm referring to increased taxes throughout the entire system of many, many fees and charges that are levied on people, increases in taxes that are unprecedented in the history of this province.

And how else do people have to pay, Mr. Speaker? They have to pay through cut-backs in their social programs and cut-backs in their health care programs. And we witnessed the member from Melville earlier today talking about how the government couldn't afford the social programs that were developed by the New Democratic government. The government couldn't afford all the social programs and the health care and the education.

We witnessed the member from Melville saying that while this government has \$9 million for a birthday party that nobody wants, and this government has tens of millions for their friend Peter Pocklington and for their friend Weyerhaeuser, and they've got money to blow \$4 million on some sort of questionable enterprise with Gigatext that we heard about today, Mr. Speaker, but the member from Melville and his cohorts on that side of the House continue to say there's no money for health and all our social programs.

We know where their priorities are, Mr. Speaker. We know where their priorities are. Their priorities are with big business and their Tory friends and not with the people. And now after their waste and mismanagement, after their give-aways to big corporations and Tory friends, they're coming back to the people and they're saying: we've got to pay off this deficit; we're going to increase your taxes; we can't afford health care; costs are spiralling out of control so we're going to cut back in the health care area. That's where their priorities lie. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that their priorities are all mixed up.

(1615)

At the same time that they levied a gas tax on the citizens of the province of Saskatchewan, they also levied a flat tax. They cut back on prescription drugs. They cut back on the school-based children's dental plan, and where we used to have 338 dental clinics in rural Saskatchewan, we have some 34 or 35 or . . . I'm not sure exactly how much it is; it may be slightly larger than that, but nevertheless substantially less than what was there before, Mr. Speaker — substantially less.

And I understand as well that a number of these clinics are closing down, that they've created in the past, and that they claim are a testimony to their great policy, that a number of these clinics have actually shut down in the last . . . and I think there's a list of four or five that I have that have disappeared and no longer exist.

The cut-backs on dental plan, to the school-based children's dental plan, the destruction of that school-based children's dental plan has cost rural residents a substantial amount of money, Mr. Speaker — substantial amounts of money. And I've heard about it across the province as I travelled throughout the province in the last few months, about parents having to take their children into the city or into a town where there is a dentist. They have paid for gas; they have paid for meals; in some cases they have paid for overnight because they needed to be there for more than one day for the dental care for their children. And this has cost them money.

So this is an example of how the government is privatizing health care and transferring the cost to individual

citizens, Mr. Speaker, which I will deal with in more detail a little later. As a result of these cut-backs to the dental plan, we saw 400 dental workers, most of whom were women, Mr. Speaker, fired by this government and who remained unemployed for a long period of time.

Many of them had to seek retraining. Many of them left the province and were a part of those statistics of massive out-migration of young people from this province which resulted as a result of Tory policies. Many of those dental workers fall into those statistics, Mr. Speaker. They were forced to leave their homes and they were forced to leave this province because this government wanted to privatize the school-based dental plan, and 400 dental workers meant nothing to them in their privatization agenda and their privatization mania.

But meanwhile, while they're firing some 400 dental workers, they have \$9 million for a birthday party in what may very well be an election year. And they've got high-priced salaries for their former PC candidates and MLAs, Mr. Speaker.

And then we witness cut-backs to the prescription drug plan. Prior to the cut-backs, people paid a dispensing fee and that was it. And then we saw a situation where they were having to pay 100 per cent up-front costs and apply for a rebate. Sometimes it took months to get these rebates. Some people were spending hundreds and hundreds of dollars every month if they were on multiple medication or if a number of their family members had drugs to take. We saw hardship created, hardship suffered by Saskatchewan men, women, and children as a result of their cruel and heartless cut-backs.

And the government paid the political price for that. There was a hue and cry across this province because of the way that they unilaterally and arbitrarily cut back on the prescription drug plan without any consultation with the people who would be affected most by that, the sick and the elderly — without any consultation. Unilaterally slashing a first-class program.

And then in order to rectify . . . They didn't do this — and no one fools themselves into thinking this, Mr. Speaker — out of good will for people who were suffering. They did it to protect their political hide. They came out with a plastic card. And now they're trying to claim that somehow this is a great innovation, and oh, they're really in the forefront in health care. But they neglect to say, Mr. Speaker, that before they put in their cut-backs, this plastic card was not necessary.

And what about the people who are still on the hospital waiting lists? The last time I had an opportunity to count, it was almost 9,000 people, the last time I looked. And the government has no money for people on long hospital waiting lists or for people who need medication, but they have lots of money for Peter Pocklington and their big-business friends.

And we witness cut-backs to public health nurses where the government decided to twin health care regions. And as a result we find public health nurses looking after a region that's twice as large in some cases, with many, many more clients. And we find our public health nurse

supervisors being involved solely in administration as a result of this ridiculous move on behalf of the PC government, involved solely in administration instead of working with the clients and working with the people, which is what they were trained to do, Mr. Speaker. And that all as a result of PC government cut-backs that were made in an arbitrary fashion and as a result of the total lack of any vision or long-term strategic plan on the part of the PC government in the health care area.

And we see mental health getting no government support, Mr. Speaker, virtually no government support. People suffering from mental health might very easily be characterized in this province as the forgotten constituents. We see in the area of mental health insufficient services, and when there is a crisis situation, many times people suffering from mental illness cannot get urgent needed prompt attention as a result.

We see gaps in services such as long-term supervised care, and crisis intervention is just not properly covered by the PC government. We see a lack of continuity of care. There's no continuum of care in the area of mental health. Families are frustrated. There's an array of systems, and they simply don't know how to access many of these systems that are there. We see inadequate number of trained staff in this area. We see underfunding in this area. Absolutely no creativity on the part of the government to solve the problems that exist in the area of mental health in Saskatchewan, and no vision on the part of the government.

Home care in this province has been grossly underfunded. Home care which is real preventative health care for the people of Saskatchewan, for people needing long-term care, and for our elderly people, our seniors. Home care which can help people who are physically disabled and people who are elderly to remain independent and to stay in their homes where they want to be, has been grossly underfunded by this government — grossly underfunded. This entire area needs vision and revamping and proper funding, Mr. Speaker.

One does not want to do this simply because of the costs that you save, but the fact of the matter is that if we can keep someone in their home and out of the long-term care facility, we save considerable funding. But we want to do it first of all because of the fact that it preserves human dignity and self-esteem and self-respect for our people who are physically disabled and our people who are elderly. That's why we want to do it. And if we save costs as a result, that's even better. And I predict, Mr. Speaker, that we will save costs in that area when a New Democratic government forms this government and we implement proper funding for home care.

Northern Saskatchewan is met with appalling health care conditions. They're deplorable, Mr. Speaker. There's low levels of education and high levels of unemployment and poverty. We have overcrowded, substandard, unserviced housing in northern Saskatchewan.

Northern Saskatchewan residents have a poor health status, Mr. Speaker. They have high mortality, high infant mortality and morbidity rates. There are high rates of suicide and homicide in northern Saskatchewan, poor

nutrition. Services for infants and elderly care continue to lag far behind that available to the general provincial population, Mr. Speaker. Many communities in northern Saskatchewan don't have sewer and water today, Mr. Speaker.

These needs must be addressed. They are urgent and they require immediate urgent attention. I urge the government to do something about the problems that northern Saskatchewan residents are facing.

But the current system fails our northern Saskatchewan residents and there's nothing forthcoming from the government except for rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. They have lots of money for George Hill and Paul Schoenhals, but nothing for northern residents.

Government underfunding and cut-backs, Mr. Speaker, have affected disadvantaged groups the most. And this was pointed out by the public health association in a brief that was done some time back where they stated that a number of disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, the people who are sick and require drugs, people who are mentally ill, Northerners, young children, are being affected by government cut-backs, by the government hacking and slashing away at health care and social programs.

And why have they engaged in this form of tactic? Well they did it deliberately, Mr. Speaker, to make the people pay — those who can least afford it — pay for their mismanagement, their waste, their patronage, and their deficit. And now they try to sell the line that costs are spiralling out of control. They try to say that costs are spiralling out of control, but we know that's not true. In fact, the Saskatchewan Health-Care Association has said as much in their brief to the health care commission. And I might just quote from the Saskatchewan Health-Care Association brief, Mr. Speaker, which says:

In terms of current dollars and taking into account the consumer price index, Saskatchewan Health's real expenditures over the past decade reflects a growth rate of approximately 4.5 per cent compounded annually. While it is not a rate to be ignored, it is not a rate that can accurately be described as out of control.

I would like to add that the association goes on to say:

To serve the people of this province, any examination of the health care system must not be conducted with the intention of reducing costs or expenditures. It must be done with a view to improving the effectiveness of health care programs for Saskatchewan residents. Our priority setting is best done through consensus seeking at the grass roots level.

Well the government has hardly done that, Mr. Speaker. The government has hardly sought consensus at the grass roots level. Instead, while their own health care commission is meeting, they have engaged on a massive integration of hospitals in Saskatoon without any consultation even with their own commission on the issue, not to mention many of the doctors in Saskatoon.

And as far as I'm aware, not even the mayor in Saskatoon knew it was going to take place. There has been no consensus with the public on all of their major initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

Now the government will say, well we've put in a massive injection of government funding into health care in this last budget. That's what the government might argue. But, Mr. Speaker, if you take a close look at their statistics and remove the supplements that were in there from last year, if you take a look at that, you take a look at the money being paid to the property management corporation, and you take a close look at their statistics, you will see that the increase is substantially less than what they said. And the Minister of Health himself told the press that most of it was going to be taken up in back pay and salaries for health care professionals.

So it hardly becomes him at this point to suggest that they have remedied the wrong that they wreaked on the province of Saskatchewan and the men, women, and children of this province as a result of their heartless and cruel cut-backs in earlier years, Mr. Speaker. In fact the increase in this year doesn't even address the accumulation of cut-backs and lack of funding in the previous seven years, Mr. Speaker. They have not made up for the damage that they have done.

So let's just summarize some of the implications of this arbitrary and unilateral approach to health care with respect to their cut-backs and underfunding that has been displayed by the present government. There have been limitations on service. One of the most obvious effects of government cut-backs has been the limitation of health care services under the auspices of cost containment.

(1630)

They've pursued strategies, PC strategies, that have resulted in manpower shortages throughout provincial health services. The direct effect has been increased work-loads for remaining staff, inconsistency in staff levels throughout the province, and expanded waiting lists — waiting lists that are unprecedented in the history of this province, and totally unacceptable. Cut-backs to health care agencies have forced them to reduce manpower, shorten hours of operation, and centralize operations, and create or increase user fees.

Lack of rural services, facilities and medical staff are continuing problems that are expressed by rural residents, Mr. Speaker. Rural communities have been hurt by restrictions on dental care by centralization of hospital services away from rural centres and by program reductions in rural areas.

For example, shortages and geographical maldistribution of physicians and allied health professionals has created a serious problem in rural Saskatchewan. There is an immediate need for rehabilitation therapists, speech therapists, respiratory technologists, medical social workers and critical care nurses, Mr. Speaker, in our rural communities.

Waiting lists are expanding for hospital admissions, surgery, special care homes, home care, and mental

health care. Preventative health care services have suffered. The school-based children's dental plan, which was a model of preventative health care, has been destroyed — privatized, I might say, Mr. Speaker. Its elimination has meant a reduction in the utilization of the plan on the part of rural residents in Saskatchewan.

There's been a reduction in the number of public health nurses. The twinning of the health care regions that I was describing earlier is another example of preventative health care services suffering in Saskatchewan, because public health nurses are your front-line workers in the area of preventative health, and any cut-backs to public health and public health nursing staff is a cut-back to preventative health care, Mr. Speaker. There's a serious shortage of qualified public health inspectors across the province, and this ultimately means, Mr. Speaker, increased risk and compromised public safety.

And let's just compare how this . . . let's just take a look at how this compares to other provinces, Mr. Speaker. I think that that might be in order. And the most recent statistics that I have from StatsCanada shows as follows that Saskatchewan's commitment to a high quality health care system has been slipping in recent years.

Saskatchewan ranks seventh in Canada in total hospital expenditure per patient-day. Saskatchewan ranks seventh in Canada in paid nursing hours in hospitals per patient-day. There are close to 9,000 people on our hospital waiting lists, and this problem is not caused by doctors keeping our people in hospitals for unreasonably long periods of time, because Saskatchewan ranks ninth in average length of hospital stay. Saskatchewan ranks ninth in Canada in total hospital operating expenditure per capita. And total hospital operating expenditure per approved bed, Saskatchewan ranks tenth.

And I believe that those figures demonstrate very clearly that the current provincial government has not made health care a priority, Mr. Speaker. It's not made health care a priority.

So rather than developing a long-term, strategic plan and making health care a priority, as the residents of this province have repeatedly told the government, we see the government transferring costs to the people, because that's what cut-backs and underfunding mean, Mr. Speaker. They mean a transfer of costs to the people. Because, in effect, the ultimate goal of the cost-cutting agenda of this government is to reduce its funding commitment to health care because health care is not their priority.

Individuals, families, and communities will have to increase their contributions, so costs are effectively shifted by creating or increasing user fees, by withdrawing service commitments in areas of high demand and need, and by not funding health care agencies for the cost increases of inflation and growing case-loads. Some examples of this are in the prescription drug plan, for example. This has serious long-term health care implications if people cannot afford what is now a 20 per cent deductible of 125, plus 20 per cent of the costs.

We see studies from other provinces that show that

seniors and the elderly people, because of cut-backs that have taken place in those provinces, seniors and elderly people begin to ration their prescription medication, contrary to their doctor's orders. Well this can only have serious health care implications for the people of Saskatchewan and it will mean further costs, more expenditures in the future. It is better to spend a few dollars on that prescription medication today than to pay for huge hospital bills in the future. But of course that may be too much for this government to understand, Mr. Speaker.

Other examples of the transfer of costs to the people are fees to home care clients . . . were increased by 60 per cent. There's a monthly charge to residents of special care homes — increased some 14 per cent. Local ambulance boards have had to increase their fees in order to meet increased levels of service. Community fund raising is now everyone's business as they strive to maintain programs and facilities within their regions.

And we find people who have been providing social programs across this province that may not be directly health care, that may be not be under the heading of health care, finding it very difficult to raise money for their particular social program such as the Family Service Bureau in Saskatchewan . . . in Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Because what has happened is government underfunding has forced hospitals and health care organizations to raise their money through lottery and bingos and fund raising in that fashion and, as a result, money is being spent there. And these other programs are suffering because they don't have access to this funding any longer because it is being used for health care purposes when the government should be taking its responsibility and properly funding those health care programs. The government should be taking that responsibility, Mr. Speaker.

So what does this do when the government transfers costs? What does that mean when they transfer costs to individual citizens? Well in effect what this means is that the government is trying to tell us that they cannot afford health care. And we heard the member from Melville say as much today in the Legislative Assembly, that we couldn't afford social programs, that the New Democrats had created programs that could not be supported.

What they are telling us is that in effect it is no longer economically viable for this country to support a universal, accessible, comprehensive public care system, and that we can no longer afford a universal system, Mr. Speaker. That's what the government is trying to tell us. And I say that's hog-wash.

The government is trying to tell us that we must accept cut-backs; that funding does not keep pace with inflation, so in effect privatization of health care should occur which would, as you know, Mr. Speaker, result in a two-tiered system of health care where people who could afford to pay, would receive better health care than those who could not afford to pay. That's what such privatization does.

And the government will say, oh no, we're not going to

privatize. And I say, Mr. Speaker, don't you believe them for one minute. Don't you believe them for one minute. They said they would not privatize public utilities and what have we witnessed in the last few weeks but a major initiative on the part of the PC government to privatize SaskEnergy, the most effective . . . that component of SaskPower that makes the money, Mr. Speaker, to in effect privatize one of our major public utilities. That's what this government is doing, even though they said no, they'd never do it.

So don't you believe them for one minute, Mr. Speaker, when they say no, they're not going to privatize . . . do more privatization I should say, because they've already started in the area of health care. You can bet that if they ever were so lucky as to form government yet another time, which I don't believe for one moment they will, that that would be one of the first things on their agenda, as well as every other public corporation that is making money and serving the public in this province — serving the public by paying for health and education and social programs.

And so I have described some of the inequities that exist as a result of government underfunding — inequities to communities in northern Saskatchewan, inequities for the elderly, for the mentally ill, for rural communities and rural families — inequities created as a result of long hospital waiting lists. And, Mr. Speaker, that is as a result of this government's policy.

But there's one other area I want to touch on, and that's the erosion of health professions that is occurring in this province, a terrible erosion of the health care professions, because this government for the last seven years has chose to pay for their deficit by cutting and underfunding health care.

No other group, in addition to the specific client groups in health care, have been more affected than health professionals. Health professionals have been demoralized by the lack of consultation by the provincial government and through cut-backs in the health care system. For example, quality, experienced health professionals are leaving this province because of the poor climate for constructive health care planning. And I'm just going to refer you to an article dated February 24 in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* which quotes Dean Macdonald as referring to this specific problem.

Macdonald says the school's 8.2 million research budget should be doubled if the university is to compete with other provinces.

Macdonald doesn't buy the government's view that there's no more money available. He says it's a matter of priorities. For instance, why don't they put at least part of the nine million allocated for Saskatchewan's 85th Anniversary into an endowment fund for medical research.

And the article goes on to repeat the similar comments:

Cut-backs in the health care system are affecting the Faculty of Medicine at the university and resulting in a shortage of specialists and health

care professionals across this province.

Another article, February 17 in the *Leader-Post*:

The delivery of specialist health-care services in Regina and southern Saskatchewan has been put in "severe jeopardy" by a "critical shortage" of manpower . . .

"The delivery of speciality health care in southern Saskatchewan is like a card house ready to come tumbling down with the next prairie breeze," . . .

There are shortages of specialists in heart disease, internal medicine, infectious diseases, respiratory disorders, blood diseases and many others . . .

And the article goes on to say:

. . . there is a nationwide average of one cardiologist per 37,000 population, but there are only five (cardiologists) in Regina . . .

There are two respiratory specialists in Regina serving a population of 500,000 south of Davidson . . .

. . . the national average is one (respiratory specialist) per 86,000 population.

Regina has half as many internists as Saskatoon and (about) one-third the national average on a per capita basis . . .

And, Mr. Speaker, we have to look just at the new Wascana Rehab Centre. A newspaper article, February 19:

Wascana Rehabilitation Centre faces serious staff shortages in its new multimillion dollar facility, says executive director, Gren Smith-Windsor.

Another example of cut-backs. And I could go on and on reciting the examples of cut-backs in this province and underfunding that have resulted in a specialist shortage in Saskatchewan. These unilateral and harmful cut-backs and changes illustrate a dismal record for this government, a dismal record. And it is going to take a very substantial commitment, Mr. Speaker, by the government in order to attempt to repair the problems that have been created through seven long years of neglect by the PC government — seven long years of neglect.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, I am simply going to wind up my comments at this point by referring to the fact that the health care commission has not handed in its report yet, the fact that the Health minister announced a major initiative to specialize services in Saskatoon hospitals and apparently said it was a *fait accompli* without any consultation. And I want to reiterate that, because here's a government that at the very same time is drafting a budget where they talk about community involvement, and at the same time they are precluding the community, precluding their own health care commission from any input into this massive

initiative in Saskatoon.

So it's clear you can't believe what this government says; you simply can't believe it. If this government were truly serious about future directions, they would develop and pursue a far-sighted master plan for health care in Saskatchewan. A province-wide strategic plan for all levels of the health care system is required — all levels of the health care system. It's not good enough to just pay lip-service to consultation and community involvement. It's not good enough to pay lip-service to preventative health care, and cut and slash and underfund public health nurses and home care and many of the other preventive health care services.

Mr. Speaker, in the conclusion of my remarks I wish to move the motion that I read earlier. I don't believe I have to read it again at this point. It's seconded by the member from Regina North. I'd like to so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague, the member for Regina Lakeview, has outlined what this government's health cuts have meant to, for instance, the Regina mental health association, to the home care system throughout the province, to public health nurses, to public health inspectors, the cuts and changes in the prescription drug plan and how they have hurt families. My colleague has outlined how the firing of 400 dental plan employees has gutted what was once the finest children's dental program in the world. My colleague has also spoken about the very lengthy hospital waiting list that is a result of the actions of this government, the lack of long-term health care planning, the lack of movement towards a strategic plan for Saskatchewan's health care.

I want to add to that, Mr. Speaker, some points that my colleague did not raise, and that is that there's been much talk about deterrent fees. There's been much talk about there being a two-class health care system. And I submit to you, sir, that we already have a two-class health care system right now in this province. These government members opposite have slipped it in through the back door, slipped in deterrent fees.

And I want to explain how it happened for the handful of people, particularly on the government benches, who have not used our hospital system in the last half-dozen years. The situation with regard to staffing — I'm referring to nursing in hospitals — is critical. There are wings of 30 patients that have at times one nurse only responsible for entire wings, Mr. Speaker.

And in fact, I was just talking last week with a constituent of mine who had to hire a private-duty nurse to be with this constituent's wife while she was in the hospital convalescing because the nurses that are in the hospital are so overworked they are run ragged, literally run off their feet. If they have one patient in a ward that's in trouble, all of the other patients will get ignored until that trouble is taken care of. And as I'm sure you can appreciate, it is not always possible for a nurse to leave one patient simply because another one rings the bell or lights up the light, calls for help, calls for assistance.

So increasingly we have got those with money, people with money, paying for private-duty nursing. Those without money, of course, don't have that option. People without money are required to accept, in Saskatchewan's case now, the lowest common denominator, in other words, whatever nurse is available, is on staff. They simply have to wait, and at times patients are waiting in excess of an hour. It is unusual to wait that long, but it is certainly not unheard of. I've had some firsthand experience with waits — waits, plural — in excess of an hour, simply for a nurse to be able to come and help a patient with some much needed care.

So the question we have to ask with this two-class health care system is: are you wealthy? If you are, it's no major burden as long as you're wealthy. But what if you're a welfare recipient, Mr. Speaker, or what if you're employed, but at a low-paying job? What happens is clearly we have a two-class health care system. There's no up-front deterrent fee when you go into the hospital, but it's certainly there, if you expect to get reasonable nursing care, in far too many instances.

Mr. Speaker, hospital waiting lists are incredibly long, and then when you get in there, hospitals are understaffed. It's a tragedy. Nurses are leaving the province — understandably so. They don't like working at a job that is so desperate, at a job that they clearly cannot fulfil their duties as they would like to. I am sure that nurses, as people in every walk of life, want to provide the best possible service they can. But you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and nurses find that out all too often.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen the children's dental program gutted. We've seen 400 dental plan workers fired, outright fired by the government members opposite — fired. Then in recent days, when the Provincial Auditor escapade or fiasco has come to the light, we ask questions about what happened to the \$2 million worth of dental equipment that was sold after these 400 dental plan workers were fired, and we were told in this very Legislative Assembly, in answer to those questions, that well, some of the equipment has been transferred to other departments.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely ludicrous for government members to have sold \$400 million worth of Highways equipment and replaced it with dental drills that should be used for repairing children's teeth. I have this wild visual image in my mind of Highway's workers out there with the drills, trying to patch our province's highways — drills and bubble gum. And of course we're seeing the result in our highways. But the topic today is that of this government's lack of long-term planning, lack of health care priorities.

We see the government saying, well, we're spending more money than ever before on health care. And, Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I do that it is an absolute myth. What has happened is the government has transferred costs that previously were in other departments into health care and then they say, oh, we're spending all this money on health care.

Over the last several years the government has shifted

many of these programs out of government departments to the Department of Health. Some examples would be: the continuing care expenditures which used to be funded through Social Services; the minister's salary, which used to be funded through Executive Council, now funded through the Department of Health; and the routine support services which used to be funded through supply and services, now done through the Department of Health.

These transferred items, Mr. Speaker, amount to more than \$240 million per year. And then we have the government saying, oh, but we're spending so much more than ever before on health care. And it's just a sham; it's just nothing but smoke and mirrors.

The people of Saskatchewan deal with it daily. People of Saskatchewan know that the health services have gone backwards.

They know that the prescription drug plan, as it used to be, was set up to get people well. The emphasis was on wellness. When you're sick, if the doctor prescribes medication, certainly you should be taking that medication. So the prescription drug plan was to provide, at a nominal, very nominal fee, prescription drugs for those people, with the intention that once those people were well they could get off of that medication.

We have seen major changes to that, and we've seen the number of prescriptions being filled in Saskatchewan drastically dropped. Government members would have us believe that it's because people are no longer filling unneeded or unnecessary prescriptions, but what they're really in effect saying is that, well, doctors were prescribing unnecessary prescriptions. I don't believe that.

I think that what is happening, Mr. Speaker, is that families who know they don't have enough money for food, they know that it is pointless to take or to go to a doctor and seek a prescription or seek whatever medical help, because what's the purpose of getting a prescription written out if you don't have the money to fill that prescription? And there are many, many, tragically many people out there throughout Saskatchewan that do not have the money for the prescription drugs.

The stress and the financial hardship that that has caused on the thousands of families is just indefensible. It will be interesting later to hear any government member try and stand up and defend the indefensible. It is a task that I don't envy them because I don't how in the world you could defend the indefensible.

We have a government that has got \$9 million for a birthday party that nobody wants, or maybe I should say, it's going to be a farewell party because it's in what is normally an election year. And it's going to be the biggest farewell party this province has ever seen — 9 millions of dollars spent to say, goodbye, PCs, goodbye; welcome, NDP.

We have a government that has squandered away \$40 million worth of Highways equipment — \$40 million gone. Should have been, instead of worrying about

privatizing, instead of this plunge into privatization, this ideologically driven push for privatization, instead of that, government members should have been paying attention to health care, should have been listening to your neighbours, listening to your friends, listening, indeed . . . I'm sure that out of the number of Conservative MLAs that were elected, some have got some illness in their families. Listen to the people in your own families who are ill. Listen to what they say about health care, and then act. Have the courage to act on it.

We have a government that has . . .

The Speaker: — Order. It being 5 o'clock, the House now stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.